JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
Jönköping International
Business School

Diversity and inclusion on an organizational level

A case study on the perspectives of Randstad employees

Master thesis

MASTER THESIS WITHIN: *Major General Management*

NUMBER OF CREDITS: *15*

PROGRAMME OF STUDY: *Engineering Management*

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Master Thesis General Management

Title: Diversity and inclusion on an organizational level – A case study on the perspectives of Randstad employees

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Date: 2022-05-19

Key terms: Belongingness, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Management, Organizational level

Background: Diversity and inclusion are daily topics of discussion in the present society because of globalization for example, and it is treated in many different ways across the world. Nowadays, many companies refer to their ED&I departments (Equity, Diversity & Inclusion), which are focusing on the awareness and practicalities concerning those topics within their organization. Various aspects have to be considered to raise awareness about diversity and inclusion management and to put this into practice at companies for current and new employees. This study focuses on Randstad, a global company focused on recruitment and HR solutions, who is enhancing the awareness and transforming this into practice with their EDI&B department (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belongingness).

Purpose: The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the appliance and improvements of the diversity and inclusion approaches at an organizational level by providing advice with target points and possible strategies.

Method: This study follows a relativism approach because the perspectives of the people in the organizations determine the level and feeling of diversity and inclusion. In addition, mixed methods are used for the epistemological position of this study, the critical realism approach is applied which combines elements of both positivism and social constructionism approaches because it consists of the experiences and perceptions of the involved participants. An instrumental case study is applied because it concentrates on gaining insight and creating an understanding by focusing on a particular case to understand a broader research question. The case study is conducted in a corporation with Randstad, a global company focused on recruitment and HR solutions. Semi-structured and open interviews with employees in Sweden and The Netherlands took place to create a deeper understanding based on their perspectives. The empirical findings from the interviews are compared with the literature framework. This is analyzed with coding to reduce the data by creating categories and themes which provide answers to the research questions.

Conclusion: This study concludes that the management of diversity and inclusion on an organizational level cannot be done without the adoption of equity and belongingness in the strategy because those topics are all connected to each other and they are all constantly changing which requires constant management and possible adjustments. To implement this in the work culture it is important to raise a lot of awareness and to put this into practice to keep improving the work culture where all employees feel welcome/at home within the team and company. This can be done with data gathering by asking questions to the employees, with feedback requests to prevent making assumptions, and by considering the social impact. This can be supported with a business case to provide the employees with the necessary information. It is important to realize that this cannot all be achieved by one person and work culture changes cannot be reached in one day, it is a constantly evolving process.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Jonas Dahlqvist for his time to provide feedback and share his thoughts. I would also like to thank my fellow students for their feedback and motivation.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to all the interview participants from Randstad. Without their time and their perspectives on the topics in their professional life and personal life, this study would not exist.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support during the past few months.

Tack så mycket!

Romy B.C. Walraven

Jönköping

May 19, 2022

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1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the purpose of this study. The first subchapter (1.1) elaborates on the background of this study with a focus on previously performed research concerning diversity and inclusion on a conceptual level and organizational level, and an elaboration on diversity and inclusion within Sweden. This is followed by subchapter 1.2 with a clarification of the research problem. The last subchapter (1.3) states the purpose of this study based on the result of the research problem.

1.1 Background

Companies experience daily challenges within their organizational environment concerning diversity and inclusion (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). The continuous challenge is to keep up with the changing world and needs of the employees in order to improve the work culture where employees feel valued and where they want to stay for a longer period. Nowadays, many companies refer to their ED&I department (Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) where they focus on the awareness and practicalities concerning those topics within their organization. CPB London (2022) created a campaign in 2022 to show the importance of those topics with the poster in Figure 1.1, they believe that creating more awareness will decrease the biases of people on different levels within the society.

Figure 1.1 ED&I poster (CPB London, 2022)

1.1.1 Diversity and inclusion on a conceptual level

Diversity and inclusion are matters which occur in many different types of environments within the society. The topics are global matters of daily lives and most people are often confronted by them. For instance, the death of George Floyd resulted in the reflections of many people on how this could happen, and how to move forward to prevent this in the future, this started a renewed interest in diversity and inclusion (Roberson, 2020). Diversity and inclusion are daily discussed topics in the present society because of globalization and they are treated in many different ways across the world. This makes it really important to understand the past in order to change and improve diversity and inclusion in the future (Schmidt, 2021).

Nowadays, global institutional labor organizations such as the European Union (EU), are promoting diversity and inclusion on a conceptual level and in the workplace (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). The United Nations (UN) aims to create more awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion on different levels. The fifth UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) focuses on gender equality and SDG 10 focuses on reducing inequalities (United Nations, 2020). The UN introduced the *World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development* to raise more awareness every year on May 21 for example (United Nations, sd). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) originated the *'Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity'* in 2001 to encourage cultural awareness and to develop cultural exchanges (UNESCO Organization, 2001). The EU introduced the Lisbon strategy in 2000 which ended in 2010, indicators for gender gap employment, childcare rights, and gender pay gap are part of the strategy. The successor of the Lisbon strategy is the Europe 2020 strategy which will be reviewed in 2022.

In addition, diversity and inclusion are important parts of school environments. It is important to provide support for the constantly changing learning variances such as approaches, disciplines, and classroom management and it has to be understood that teachers need help to reconstruct their teaching methods because teachers and students are often nested in a certain culture and context (Tomlinson, et al., 2003). The support requires a constant commitment to achieve the goals including reflections, conversations, and actions. Research from Killpack and Melon (2016) provides a guide to understanding the roles of different faculties to increase inclusion at schools, their research focuses on *Science, Technology, Engineering,* and *Mathematics* (STEM). Their guide elaborates on the privileges, biases, and stereotypes to create awareness (Killpack & Melon, 2016). Student visions of diversity and inclusion are highly affected by their social network (Karimi & Matous, 2018). The research from Karimi and Matous (2018) results in various aspects which influence diversity and inclusion within student societies. Firstly, their analysis of the student membership shows that all faculties have different amounts of common members and membership in other societies, this explains the engagement in social activities of the students. Participation in events is also measured, they measured the participation of the societies as well as the individual participation which shows how connected the students are to campus life. Their last aspect focuses on the network of social interactions between physical locations is researched which describes the level of social interactions. Raising awareness and putting the awareness into practice will result in natural awareness and commitment of the students in their future personal and professional life.

1.1.2 Diversity and inclusion on an organizational level

Diversity and inclusion are becoming an important part of organizations, many companies have a special department focusing on the management and development of diversity and inclusion. When creating strategies and policies, it is important to consider the legal framework (Schmidt, 2021). Various aspects have to be considered to raise awareness about the diversity and inclusion management at companies for current and new employees which are discussed in this study.

One of the first studies about diversity resulted in the Optimal Distinctive Theory (OTD) (Brewer, 1991), this theory stated that individuals feel the need for similarities and validation in a group. Most studies refer to early research from Mor-Barak and Cherin (1998) where one of the first measures concerning inclusion-exclusion is developed. The results of those two researches were one of the initial understandings on the different perspectives of employees within an organization environment focused on the different backgrounds and characteristics of the employees. An elaboration of the OTD resulted in the inclusion framework (Shore, et al., 2010), this framework has been created to provide an understanding of the different aspects and effects of inclusion. The framework divides inclusion into two different aspects; *belongingness* and *uniqueness*. Those two aspects together define the level of inclusiveness within a company based on different factors. The main factors which define the inclusion environment are an *inclusive climate* (contribution value of the employees), *inclusive leadership* (show behavior where all employees are equally accepted and valued within the company), and *inclusive practices* (establish satisfaction of the employees to feel involved in the company). Shore, et al. (2018) provide an update on the inclusion framework, they state that effort has been put into the prevention of discrimination concerning gender, age, and race by creating a more diverse team but there is a lack of pro-active behavior focusing on the inclusion of those employees once they join the company. Based on their research, a model of inclusive organizations is created with steps resulting in either management prevention orientation or management promotion orientation (Shore et al., 2018).

Being aware of the possible biases is an influential part of a diversity and inclusion strategies (Vinkenburg et al., 2021). Biases often occur during job interviews; research has been performed to highlight and understand the origin of the biases and who is affected most by them (Vinkenburg et al., 2021). The study of Vinkenburg, et al. (2021) analyzed the differences between gender and race for both written job applications and in-person job interviews. Different aspects of the process are reviewed and the differences are highlighted with the focus on assumptions for the decision-makers. This study elaborates on specific job interview situations and provides recommendations focusing on the *awareness* (the impact of removing increasing (dis)advantages) with enactment awareness, *accountability* (the impact of all involved people on the decision making) by being aware of active participation, *biased language* (the influence of feedback and language usage) through considering the influence of confidence and standards, *criteria* by applying standard criteria and define vague criteria to prevent misunderstandings, *structure* (assure that evaluation takes place per criteria with the use of inclusion arguments for equal measurements) by asking the same questions, and *time* through spending an equal amount of time on each applicant during job interviews. Furthermore, the study suggests that adding an external observer during the interviews, providing positive and negative feedback from the decision-makers, taking enough time for evaluation and consideration, and being aware of the chairperson's role are all potentials to improve the structure. According to Vinkenburg, et al. (2021), all provided recommendations can result in improved job interviews and decision-making without a major influence of possible biases, leading to more diversity and inclusion within a company.

1.1.3 Diversity and inclusion in Sweden

Gender diversity in Sweden is often compared to other Nordic countries, a comparison with Norway and Denmark is done in the research by Kalpazidou Schmidt (2019). This research (Kalpazidou Schmidt, 2019) analyzed the percentages of involved women in various industries and the initiatives in the countries to raise more awareness and improve those percentages. Moreover, it is important to consider the effects of the characteristics of Swedes when discussing diversity and inclusion. Gender discrimination is illegal in Sweden since 1980 by 'The Swedish Discrimination Act' (Swedish Ministery of Culture, 2015), an expansion of the law took place in 2009 and 2017. Moreover, the government introduced the Swedish Gender Equality Agency in 2018 to create equal opportunities for all genders (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2021). Sweden was one of the first European countries to introduce diversity management supported by the guide *'Diversity in Working Life'* with a council, named *'Council for Diversity in Working Life'*, in 1998 and a law in 1999 (*'Law on Measures Against Ethnic Discrimination in Working Life'*). The council and guide were changed in 2003 into *'Council for integration in Working Life'* and *'Integration in working life'* (Stringfellow, 2018). The study of Stringfellow (2018) states that the Swedish model failed in preventing the integration crisis but it provided a continuous dialogue about the situation which created awareness.

As discussed in paragraph 1.1.1, the EU created strategies to improve the work environment (Khelifa & Mahdjoub, 2022). Research from Tomlison (2011) showed that Sweden reached the employment rate from the Lisbon strategy already before 2000, they created a policy for parental leave where they created equal conditions for men and women, and the gender pay gap in Sweden is below the average of the EU in 2010.

1.2 Problem

Diversity is not a guarantee for inclusion, the world is changing and a variety of skills and competences are necessary to keep adjusting and improving within an organization. Constant adjustments, reconsiderations, and the usage of new technologies are necessary to satisfy the employees and to make the company future-proof to prevent employees leaving the company because of dissatisfaction for instance. The goal of diversity and inclusion is to create a work culture where everyone feels appreciated and welcome, and this requires proactive measurements and continuous awareness moments. It is also important for organizations to work on a sense of justice to create a more diverse and inclusive work environment (Roberson, 2020).

To apply a diversity and inclusion strategy, awareness of various daily behaviors, such as language usage, and standards have to be created to put it into practice. This can be done by introducing training and a special team focused on the appliance of the strategy for instance. Furthermore, several themes must be discussed to include all aspects. Themes like the influential role of external factors, the different levels (such as international level and micro individual level), convergence and divergence, conflicts with implications, overlapping with social responsibilities and business ethics, the implementation, and the consistency of the policies (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). Finally, the role of the leader is an important factor in diversity and inclusion strategies of a company. The role of the leader is influenced by the team and the climate within the office. Being an inclusive leader improves the work environment, and a decoupling approach can influence the perception and activities (Mor Barak et al., 2021).

The management of diversity and inclusion is becoming an important task for companies and there are many different perspectives and strategies. Diversity and inclusion consist of different aspects such as gender, race, age, ethnicity, and religion, all the aspects must be considered and reviewed equally (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). Data analysis can be applied to gain more insight and understanding of the current situation, when one understands the numbers, a changing impact can take place (Schmidt, 2021).

A lot of inclusion research is taking place and people are becoming more aware of its impact of it, the problem is that there is no one fixed way of working because of the many different factors that play a role in the inclusion within companies. Strategies have to be adjusted to the specific office to get the best results. An important consideration for this study is creating an understanding of the needs and wishes of the employees to provide a sufficient and suitable analysis. Their viewpoints and ideas will provide a better understanding of the perspectives of the employees in the company. Various management tools can be used to improve diversity and inclusion management. Such as training, lectures, discussion groups, mentor sessions, meetings, and development programs (Schmidt, 2021). Besides the current employees, the recruitment process adds a lot of value to the diversity and inclusion of a company. Applying blind recruitment prevents influences from possible biases and it will result in the most suitable candidate for the job description for example. This results in the following statement:

The awareness of diversity and inclusion on an organizational level is continuously improving, an overview with target points to enlarge the diversity and inclusion management is necessary to stay up to date, enlarge the knowledge, and to know how to advance the awareness into practice.

1.3 Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the appliance and improvements of the diversity and inclusion approaches at an organizational level by providing advice with target points and possible strategies. Diversity and inclusion are an extremely important parts of the current and future work industry, it is important to work sufficiently with the topics as discussed in subchapter 1.2.

The evaluation and review result in a better understanding of diversity and inclusion management at an organizational level which can be used to provide recommendations to improve the strategies and policies. As mentioned before, there is no one fixed way for the management of diversity and inclusion, this study results in an overview with target points to enlarge and improve diversity and inclusion management within organizations.

2. Theoretical frame of references

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical background to the applicable topics in this study as a frame of reference. The main topics; diversity and inclusion management, theories, and models from previous research are reviewed in the upcoming three subchapters as an enlargement to this study. The fourth subchapter describes the gaps based on the reviewed literature and the last subchapter explains the applicable research questions for this study.

2.1 Diversity and inclusion

This subchapter reviews previously performed research focused on diversity, inclusion, and management aspects within organizations. Diversity and inclusion management of the nowadays work environment is changing constantly. Multiple diversity and inclusion dimensions can be considered in the workplace: gender, race and ethnicity, age diversity, religion and cultures, and sexual minorities (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). With diversity, one means the individual characteristics making people different from each other and it can be divided into two groups; those attributes over which we have little or no control, and those over which we have more control (Treven & Mulej, 2007). The policies and practices of an organization to promote and manage diversity are called diversity management (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). Inclusion within a company means the aspiration of a company to improve the sense of belonging for all employees (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). Articles are found with the use of keywords, the BOOLEAN operator function, and only peer-reviewed articles are used. Details about the used articles for the frame of reference can be found in paragraph 3.2.2 and in Appendix 1 Frame of references.

2.1.1 Gender

With gender equality, one means that your rights, responsibilities, and opportunities should not depend on whether you are born as a male or female or how you identify yourself. Syed and Özbilgin (2015) describe two types of gender segregation, *horizontal* (the workforce of a specific industry or sector is done by a specific gender) and *vertical* (career progression opportunities are narrowed for a particular gender). An often-used phenomenon is the 'glass ceiling' which is used as a metaphor for barriers experienced by minority groups to attain higher positions (Jonsen et al., 2010) (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015).

Research has been performed to understand the effects of gender on leadership styles. Various styles have been researched to understand the most suitable approach to enhance diversity as well as the differences between male and female leadership styles for instance. Leadership is a process that applies power to establish meaning within an organization (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). There are three possible paradigms according to research from Jonsen, et al. (2010): the *gender-blind view* (men and women have no significant differences and should be treated the same), the *gender-conscious view* (men and women have significant differences and should be treated differently), and *perceptions creating reality* (men and women leaders have no significant differences but people believe that there are differences which results in barriers). The research of Jonsen, et al. (2010) shows that for the first paradigm, the Human Resources (HR) department tries to campaign actively without a direct focus on the goal to increase the opportunities for women. The research states that this paradigm lacks the consideration of uniqueness and behaviors. The second paradigm focuses on the particular needs and characteristics of women to increase the value of feeling and commitment but according to the research, this paradigm might result in stereotypes or status differences. With the last paradigm, the HR department is likely to

initiate actions against gender stereotypes for both men and women with role models to empower them for example.

Authentic leadership contributes to the inclusion perception of employees because authentic leaders encourage the employees to be themselves and they apply an open communication strategy which results in employees with high self-esteem and willingness to do extra work in order to help the company and the colleagues (Cottrill et al., 2014). According to the research of Cottrill et al. (2014), there are four elements an authentic leader should comply with: *self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing*, and *internalized moral perspective*. Furthermore, Cottrill et al. (2014) state that an authentic leadership style focuses on a balance between the needs, goals, and perspectives from various mindset for the performance of the organization. Another leadership style that can be useful is *ethical leadership*, this leadership style focuses on being a role model and personal actions by open communication on all levels. For example, the appliance of ethical standards, and making choices that can be reproduced by others (Brown et al., 2005). This leadership style can be applied likewise authentic leadership because of the importance of the employee in the company. Nevertheless, it is important that employees do not copy the leader but they should have the opportunity to be themselves to improve the inclusion level for instance. From this perspective, the authentic leadership style is a better fit compared to the ethical leadership style when the goal is to improve the inclusion perception (Cottrill et al., 2014).

Acker (2012) states that gendered processes intersect with and are shaped by different forms of inequality and exclusion such as race and class, this intersectionality can be researched with an ethnographic or case study methodology. The research of Acker (2012) states that gender inequalities are often perpetuated because of gendered assumptions from the society. Awareness about the gendered substructures can be created by reflecting on components such as the organizing process and culture, interactions on the job, and by looking at the gendered identities. However, studies will not provide a general useable answer, all organizations are structured differently, they have different cultures, and everyone has different perspectives when it comes to inclusion and diversity. It is important to comprehend that general management tools can be created to provide recommendations but they have to be adjusted to the organizations (Acker, 2012).

2.1.2 Race and ethnicity

Race refers to the color of the skin, and with ethnicity one relates to cultural traits (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). The race and ethnicity dimension can be divided into several aspects, such as stereotyping, generalized inference and pre-judgment, negative labeling, intolerance of difference, differential treatment, racist feelings, racist remarks, xenophobia and ethnocentrism, blatant racist behavior, and subtle discrimination. The goal of this dimension is to apply a proactive approach to prevent negative influences such as harassment and discrimination, this can be done with policies starting with the top-level managers for instance (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015).

2.1.3 Age

It is important to consider that all generations are raised during different developments in their personal and professional life which can influence their awareness, understanding, and willingness to adjust for instance. Furthermore, culture and beliefs often differ for each generation based on how they grew up and how they are educated and it is valuable to be aware of cultural gaps between generations to understand each other responses and vision when working together for example. Flexible aging policies

can be applied to react properly to the increasingly aging workforce, this will benefit all employees and will result in a decrease of the gap between workforce reality and structural change (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015).

2.1.4 Religion and cultures

Religion and cultures must be taken into account when discussing diversity and inclusion management. Religion can be discussed on micro and macro-level approaches, to prevent religious discrimination from happening a company must provide a clear policy with legislation related to discrimination against all employees (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). It can be argued whether national culture values facilitate or constrain attempts to change the inclusive climate where a similar perception of involvement within the company is shared by the employees (Stoermer, et al., 2016). The influence of national culture values can facilitate an inclusive climate if there is the right awareness of the culture and how it influences work performance. On the other hand, it can also disrupt the inclusive climate if it has negative effects on work performance because people from different cultures can feel excluded and misunderstood for instance.

2.1.5 Sexual minorities

The last dimension from Syed and Özbilgin (2015) is the sexual minority which are groups whose sexual orientation or characteristics differ from the majority who are presumed to be heterosexual. HR programs can be applied to increase awareness about the challenges faced by the sexual minority groups (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). Improving the inclusion of sexual minorities can also be done by capturing the voice of the employees which is a contribution form to decision making. Research from Bell et al, (2011) describes four different voice types; *articulation of individual dissatisfaction, expression of collective organization, contribution to management decision making,* and *mutuality*, which can all be applied to improve the inclusion by transforming the awareness into practices.

2.1.6 Work environment

For each company it differs who is in charge of the diversity and inclusion, it is mostly done by HR but it is shifting to a specific department who is in charge of the management of it. To have a successful team, a deep understanding of the team members is necessary based on their knowledge, attitudes, respect towards others, and motivation (Treven & Mulej, 2007). Different methods such as agile and lean can be relevant to improve or adjust the diversity and inclusion level in the work environment. The agile method can be applied in different ways such as the personality theory to explore the dynamics (Brown et al., 2005). Lean focuses on reducing and eliminating waste by doing more with less (Agarwal et al., 2006). An example of waste is misunderstandings which can happen if there is no clear diversity and inclusion strategy available at the company or because of language barriers for example. Diversity and inclusion research is often focused on the work environment for current employees but recruitment research is limited. The recruitment process is changing with technologies and generations who are searching for a job, inclusive recruitment is necessary to transform the recruiting process and to have an inclusive company (Schmidt, 2021). Furthermore, the gap for disabled people to be employed and feel part of the organization is a dimension to consider when discussing the work culture. Various aspects of the work environment have to be reconsidered to improve the inclusion of disabled people, such as training processes and job designs. It is important to realize that disabilities can be visible or invisible and the impact differs for everyone (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015).

2.2 Theories

This subchapter explains possible theories resulting from research about diversity and inclusion, the theories are conceptual frameworks based on phenomena.

2.2.1 Social Identity Theory

Theories about diversity are associated with how individuals are perceived and constructed by others as well as by themselves (Holck et al., 2016). There are three perspectives according to their research: the *Social Identity Theory (SIT) perspective*, the *critical perspective*, and the *post-structural perspective*. The research of Holck et al. (2016) states how SIT affects diversity management but that the perspectives have to be adjusted to the target group to be applied successfully. SIT focuses on two different focus aspects, the first aspect is the core of the individual identity which is seen as specific and fixed for each, and the second aspect focuses on the social identity resulting from group classification. The first focus is also seen as a limitation because it assumes that people can be classified and there is only one identity form for everyone. The second focus has limitations as well, stereotypes can result from group classification. Those limitations do not contribute to diversity and inclusion within a company, the critical perspective can be applied when those limitations appear. Moreover, the research of Holck et al. (2016) states that this perspective examines the external influences and powers, such as demographic categories, on the individual to analyze multiple identities. The limitations of this perspective are the self-critical edge and the complete focus on critiques. Another perspective is the post-structural perspective, which sees identity as a combination of overlapping identities, external influences, and consciousness levels. The goal of this approach is to create a destabilized environment with fewer hierarchy levels to broaden individual experiences. A limitation of this approach is overemphasizing power vulnerability and detachment of what is said and what is done. The research of Holck et al. (2016) concludes that the perspectives can add value to the diversity management but the implications must be further discussed to fulfill the required changes in a company it is important to have an engaged commitment to developing a diverse environment.

2.2.2 KLOB

The framework KLOB (knowledge exchange, language, obligations, and biases) is established to think about the effects and impact of barriers experienced by individuals in academic activities (Khelifa & Mahdjoub, 2022). Knowledge exchange depends on the economy of the country, education, and networking potential. Language is an important component because access to content and publication possibilities depends on language knowledge. Thirdly, obligations are responsibilities that prevent or limit an individual from accessing higher education. Biases prevent individuals from succeeding and reaching positions (Khelifa & Mahdjoub, 2022). This research is focused on the academic level but it can also be adjusted to the organizational level.

2.3 Models

This subchapter explains possible models resulting from research about diversity and inclusion, the models provide a visual representation of theories.

2.3.1 Five-factor model

Roberson (2006) created the five-factor model based on three sample studies. The five factors are: *fair treatment issues, representation of diverse groups among stakeholders, top management's support for diversity, employee participation,* and *organizational outcomes*. Followed by the five-factor model,

identity-blindness and *identity-consciousness* can be considered to create a better understanding of the effects on and from individuals as well as on the organization levels. Identity-blind means that decision-making processes are the same for everyone and identity-conscious takes the demographic group identity as well as the individual identity in consideration in the decision-making process (Roberson, 2020).

2.3.2 Conceptual model

To increase the understanding of the influences of culture on diversity and inclusion management, a conceptual model (Figure 2.1) is created for the establishment of an inclusive climate by Stoermer, et al. (2016). This model considers different elements: *cultural values of power distance, society levels, circumstances, masculinity and femininity, orientation,* and *indulgence.* The last element, indulgence can be combined with cultural tightness-looseness to evaluate the effects of culture within an organization (Stoermer, et al., 2016). This conceptual model supports the awareness creation of the needs and considerations to have an inclusive climate. The model suggests that the diversity and inclusion management will increase the inclusion climate which leads to an increment in organizational innovations. The conceptual model provides a systematic overview of cultural influences and the effects of national culture values based on various propositions mentioned in the figure. According to the research of Stoermer, et al. (2016), the model is limited by the literature perspectives on the definitions of the aspects and other factors such as legal and technology are not taken into consideration for this model. This model can be a useful basis for organizations to review their inclusion climate.

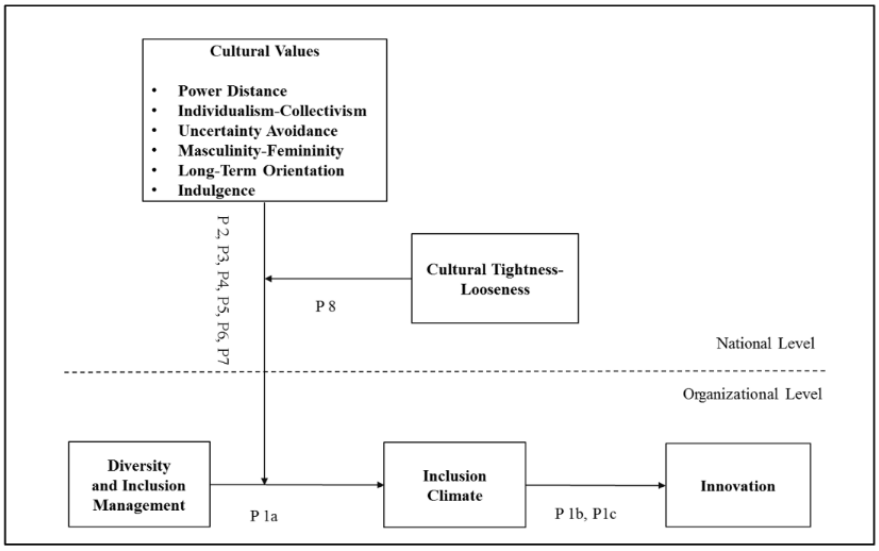

Figure 2.1 Conceptual model (Stoermer, et al., 2016)(page 33)

2.4 Gaps

As discussed in this chapter, leadership, work culture, and job recruitment have broad influences on diversity and inclusion management. It is well known that Swedish organizations and the government put effort into diversity and inclusion management. For example, buildings have to be accessible for people with disabilities and there are often gender-neutral restrooms. A lot of research focuses on the general perspectives of diversity and inclusion management but detailed research focused on a country is limited. Various aspects have to be discussed to create an understanding of someone's point of view, according to various researches, this can be done with models and theories. Being aware of the impact of culture on work performance is extremely important because there are often many differences that are not discussed resulting in misunderstandings, miscommunication, unsatisfaction from the

employees, or a decrease in work performance for instance. Besides national cultures, it is similarly necessary to consider regional cultures. Regional cultures can be more detailed and rooted in employees which might affect possible adjustments. It is important to take into account that companies in the same area might have different cultural perspectives because companies can have employees from one culture but they can also have employees from many different cultures which affects the inclusion climate substantially. It is important to understand all the involved cultures to understand each other's visions and responses. Lastly, all different communities have to be considered to change the work environment.

2.5 Research questions

Based on the gaps in the literature review, several research questions can be established for this study to fulfill the purpose. The following research questions will be studied:

- What is the current situation concerning diversity and inclusion management at an organizational level?
- What are the challenges in the current situation?
- Which factors have to be taken into consideration to improve the current situation?
- How can diversity and inclusion be managed at an organizational level to improve the work culture?

3. Method

This chapter describes the method of this study. The first subchapter elaborates the research approach which is followed by subchapters elaborating the data collection and analysis (3.2), research quality (3.3), and research ethics (3.4) concerning this study.

3.1 Research approach

To determine the approach of this study, the ontology and epistemology position of this study are determined as well as the adopted research strategy to create an understanding of the applied perspectives.

3.1.1 Ontology

The ontology used for this study is relativism, the facts and truths depend on the viewpoint, experiences, and perspectives of the ones observed. The relativist position focuses on the mental capabilities of the involved people (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). This ontology is directly related to diversity and inclusion because as discussed in chapter 2, the perspective of the people in the organizations determines the level and feeling of diversity and inclusion. Nominalism is not applicable because it only focuses on the perception of the people who are involved which leads to no truths.

Using the ontology relativism will result in data from all different kinds of perspectives because everyone experiences similar situation differently with multiple truths. This study focuses on the thoughts and ideas of the involved participants and their truths which all can be correct based on their perception of the situation. The findings from this study are substantially dependent on the individual's perception during the interviews which allow me to relate to the experiences of the involved people.

3.1.2 Epistemology

Mixed methods are used for the epistemological position of this study, elements of both positivism and social constructionism are applied in this study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Elements from positivism such as an independent observer, assuming the employees' answers as the truth, and what the employees are willing to do will be used. I am an outsider to the involved organization and I will apply the knowledge that I gained from literature research to study the answers from the employees. Based on this philosophical stand, I will believe that the willingness and the explanations from the employees are the truths and my recommendations will be based on this. Positivism creates an approach to investigate behavior that will provide explanations for certain reactions of the employees. Social constructionism is applied because the human interest is the main part of this study with the aim to increase the understanding of the situation to provide recommendations. The critical realism approach combines both epistemologies, the feature empirical domain will be used because it consists of the experiences and perceptions of the involved participants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

For the sampling of this study, the social constructionism approach is applied because it focuses on one company which is chosen because of their interest and work with the topics of this study. Positivism is not applied for sampling because of the distinguished focus of the study on experiences instead of numbers and facts. Additionally, the philosophies of pragmatism, critical theory, feminism, and structuration theory from an engaged constructionism viewpoint are considered in this study. Pragmatism is considered because it focuses on the experiences of the individual, critical theory is

related to hierarchy within a company and the influence of the powerful people, feminism focuses on the experiences of women, and the structuration theory emphasizes on social structures and individual behaviors. From an engaged positivism viewpoint, the critical systems theory is considered in this study because it is connected to the critical theory and it is useful to investigate situations at the company (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Lastly, for the outcome of this study a strong constructionism approach is used because the collected data will result in new insights based on the experiences and believes of the participants.

3.1.3 Strategy

The applied strategy is a case study because of the interest to understand the functioning of the involved participants. Grounded Theory is not applied because data will be compared but it is not the goal to create a theory and the comparison does not take place in different circumstances, data will be compared to identify possible differences and similarities between the participants in the same situation because all participants work for the same company (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). An ethnographic approach is used to gain access to the perspectives and experiences of the involved participants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). When researching diversity and inclusion without being an employee of the company, ethnographic observations and interviews can be difficult to apply because there can be access restrictions.

The case study methodology focuses on a real-life situation in one or a few cases over time (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). This approach can be applied for diversity and inclusion research without being an employee of the company because most of the information is gained from interviews with the employees. There are different types of case studies, an intrinsic case study, an instrumental case study, and a collective case study (Stake, 1995). Neither an intrinsic nor a collective case study is applicable for this study because of the focus of the study. A collective case study focuses on several cases. The intrinsic case study cannot be applied because the goal is to understand a specific case. An instrumental case study is being applied because it concentrates on gaining insight and creating an understanding by focusing on a particular case to understand a broader research question (Stake, 1995).

The instrumental case study is conducted in a corporation with Randstad, a global company focused on recruitment and HR solutions founded in 1960 in The Netherlands and the global leader in the HR services industry to help people securing rewarding jobs and to stay relevant in the constantly changing world of work (Randstad Group, 2022). The purpose of Randstad is stated as the following:

"At the center of our business model, we connect clients with talent to support as many people as possible in realizing their true potential throughout their working life." (Randstad Group, 2022).

Their ultimate goal is to touch 500 million work lives by 2030 and they are strongly committed to gender equality, inclusion, and diversity (Randstad Group, 2022). The annual report of 2021 (Randstad Group, 2021) stated that in 2021, 188 million people came in contact with Randstad by visiting the websites and branches, and looking for jobs and guidance. The company is located all over the world, they organize programs, work on initiatives with other companies, and they work together with governments to improve diversity and inclusion at Randstad offices, client offices, and in the countries. Randstad has 4.927 offices in 38 markets around the world and 653.300 people employed every day (Randstad Group, 2021). Randstad has a policy that describes a clear statement about its vision and approach concerning diversity and inclusion within the organization (Randstad Group). They have a

team focused on their diversity and inclusion strategy; the *EDI&B department* (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belongingness). Randstad works with a so-called reverse mentoring system to overcome possible intergeneration communication barriers which is applied at all levels of the company (Randstad Group, 2020). The CEO states the following about the company: "*We are committed to drive change and help develop workforces where differences are not only understood but valued and celebrated."* (Randstad Group, 2022).

The purpose of the study is to evaluate and review the diversity and inclusion awareness of Randstad employees. To provide a recommendation, research about the current situation will be done and observations through interviews will take place. During the research, the focus will be on the current situation, possible challenges, and the necessary developments and improvements for managers and employees at Randstad. The company will provide and discuss possibilities to enhance the diversity and inclusion strategies.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

This study includes qualitative research aiming to understand the perspectives of the employees as primary data. Qualitative research is applied because the goal is to understand interrelationships between all that already exist (Stake, 1995), which are the perspectives and experiences of the employees. Literature research is used as secondary data to create a general understanding of the development and appliance of diversity and inclusion.

3.2.1 Interviews

As mentioned before, interviews with the employees of Randstad will be done. The goal of interviewing is to create a clear understanding of the current situation and the needs and wishes of the employees to make the work culture more diverse and inclusive. Observation will not be applied because the intention is to understand what goes on in the minds of the employees which cannot be determined by observing their workday. Semi-structured and open interviews will be conducted with Randstad employees to create an understanding of the current situation and to have an overview of the needs and wishes of the employees. The semi-structured interviews provide possibilities for the interviewees to elaborate on their answers and share extra information about their unique experiences. The open interviews will be used as brainstorming moments to discuss the topics.

Both laddering up and laddering down will be applied to create a complete overview and to motivate the interviewees to elaborate their answers. Laddering up resulted in an understanding of the reaction and answers of the interviewees. Laddering down is applied to understand why the interviewees have certain ideas and what they believe is important (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

The questions are categorized into different topics to provide guidance. This approach ensured that the interviewees did not feel any pressure and that they could speak freely. The questions are based on the findings from the literature review. All interviews ended with an open question which allowed all interviewees to review their answers, elaborate more, or provide additional information. The data collection took place between March 2022 and May 2022. Once all the interviews were conducted, coding took place to create cognitive maps by creating categories and themes. The interviews are held in English and Dutch and resulted in empirical findings which align with the approaches discussed in subchapter 3.1

3.2.2 Literature research

The literature research is secondary data, which consists of already existing data collected by other researchers. The literature review is presented with a systematic approach and divided into different topics (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021), details can be found in chapter 2. The collection took place from January 2022 until May 2022 and it consists of peer-reviewed articles, books, institutional organization websites, and documentation from Randstad. The data provides background information and understanding of the used topics. Keywords combined with the BOOLEAN operators are applied to select the useful articles in the databases of Jönköping University, Science Gate, and Google Scholar. The used keywords are diversity, inclusion, Sweden, gender, age, culture, management, and optimization. A detailed overview of the used literature can be found in Appendix 1 Frame of references. Findings from the case study and the literature are combined to provide a recommendation for the company.

3.3 Research quality

To establish the research quality, four aspects have to be specified which are discussed in this subchapter. The aspects are; *credibility, transferability, dependability,* and *confirmability* which are described in the following paragraphs.

3.3.1 Creditability

Credibility supports the accurate determination of the meaning of the interviewee's answers (Creswell, 2013). For this study, credibility is necessary to provide trustworthy results which can be applied to persuade organizations. It is established by discussing the data interpretation with the interviews by repeating statements and all interviewees are from the same company and their period of time at the company is considered.

3.3.2 Transferability

Transferability takes place by allowing the reader to judge the appliance of the results. It is reached by providing a complete and clear description of the study (Creswell, 2013) (Guba, 1981). This study focuses on the case study at Randstad but the general concept of diversity and inclusion can be applied to all kinds of circumstances. A sampling description of the case study with instructions will be provided as well as a clear background description of the topics.

3.3.3 Dependability

Establishing dependability is done by providing detailed explanations of the used methodology for this study (Creswell, 2013). Dependability can be examined by reproducing the study but the founded data is affected by various factors because of the specified case study, which makes replication difficult. Feedback and discussions took place during the study which results in different interpretations of the data and extra considerations of the results.

3.3.4 Conformability

Confirmability is connected to dependability and it is related to objectivity, it is reached in this study by comparing the interview data with literature data (Creswell, 2013). The semi-structured interviews increase the confirmability because I have limited my influence on the interviewees, there was no time limit, and the answers were summarized for clarification.

3.4 Research ethics

Research ethics are an important aspect of this study. The interviewees must feel safe expressing their feelings and to express their experiences because the interviews are focused on personal beliefs and perceptions. Before the interviews, a form with information about the (study) background, the study, data usage, confidentiality, and purpose will be shared with the interviewees (Appendix 2 Interviewees information form). Additionally, the privacy of the interviewees will be respected, and gender and age will not be shared in the results. The interviews will be recorded, the data will be stored in OneDrive, and the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) form is signed by the interviewees concerning the use of the data. The ten principles from Bell and Bryman (2007) are applied to prevent unethical situations from happening, the principles can be found in Figure 3.1 and the actions taken in order to comply with the principles are stated in Table 3.1.

1	Ensuring that **no harm** comes to participants	*Protection of research participants*
2	Respecting the **dignity** of research participants	
3	Ensuring a fully **informed consent** of research participants	
4	Protecting the **privacy** of research participants	
5	Ensuring the **confidentiality** of research data	
6	Protecting the **anonymity** of individuals or organizations	
7	**Avoiding deception** about the nature or aims of the research	*Protection of integrity of research community*
8	**Declaring affiliations**, funding sources and conflicts of interest	
9	**Communicating research honestly** and transparently	
10	**Avoiding misleading** or false reporting of research findings	

Figure 3.1 Research ethics (Bell and Bryman (2007), pdf page 406)

Table 3.1 Ethics principles actions

Principles	Actions
1 - 6	An information form with study purpose, data usage, interviewee contribution, influence on the interviewee, and a GDPR form is provided and signed to participate in the interview.
7 - 10	Detailed description with explanations of the execution of the study to provide transparency.

4. Results

A case study is applied at branches of Randstad Sweden, at the head office of Randstad Sweden in Stockholm, and at the headquarters of Randstad in The Netherlands. Interviewees have been asked the same semi-structured questions or an open interview took place, the findings are rewritten in this chapter. Details about the case study and interviews are represented in the first subchapter. Subchapter 4.2 provides the interview details as empirical findings; it is divided per interviewee including quotes to create an understandable overview of the interviews.

4.1 Case study at Randstad

The case study takes place at Randstad and focuses on the work environment in offices. Therefore, the unit of analysis is the employees of Swedish branches, the head office of Randstad Sweden in Stockholm, and the headquarters of Randstad in The Netherlands. As discussed in 3.1.3 Randstad has to goal to touch the working lives of 500 million people worldwide by 2030, they state that this can be achieved by providing equitable opportunities, a diverse workforce, maximizing it by making sure everyone feels included, while creating a sense of belonging for all. Randstad believes the following: "*We believe that everyone, regardless of their background, deserves work that provides dignity, security, and purpose. We want our people and the people whose careers we support to feel included, valued, and respected, as they bring their true selves to work. And we are committed to working towards creating more equitable, diverse workplaces – at Randstad as well as with our clients and partners."* (Randstad Group, 2022).

Randstad offices located all over the world are part of different social programs. For instance, Randstad Sweden collaborates in various programs with other Swedish companies. Randstad Sweden is currently also participating in the program 'Universellt Utformad Arbetsplatsa' (UUA) which is based on a model from the UN, as well as in the program 'Work4Integration' and in the program 'Easier ways to work and skills' (Randstad Group, 2020) (Randstad Group, 2021). Looking at the implementations of Randstad, the company has a global council and 15 groups working on the mission to empower people to be their true selves (Randstad Group, 2022). This is implemented by developing a global, inclusive culture by focusing on diverse views, equal chances, and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the website of Randstad provides several articles written by different departments of the company. The articles provide brief background information about a subject and suggestions to improve the situation in the work environment. Examples of articles are 'The empowering of women in a business' (Randstad Group, 2021), 'Do's and don'ts for the hiring process' (Randstad Group, 2020), and 'The influence of the gender pay gap on the performance of the business' (Randstad Group talent management, 2020). Moreover, the website of Randstad provides an article of the former CEO where he elaborates on the importance of the continuous dialogue and development of diversity within the company (Broek van den, 2021). Randstad states that diversity and inclusion are becoming a CEO-level priority and they want to contribute to a future-proof labor market with their initiatives (Randstad Group, 2020). The current CEO states the following: "*As the global leader in HR services, we recognize the importance and power of a diverse workforce. At Randstad, the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging are enshrined in our core values. We are committed to drive change and help develop workforces where differences are not only understood, but valued and celebrated."* (Randstad Group, 2022).

In 2021, Randstad added questions about ED&I in their '*Randstad In Touch Survey'* which was conducted worldwide (nearly 36.000 employee responses), the satisfaction with the effort of Randstad to support diversity and inclusion resulted in an overall score of 8.4 out of 10 (Randstad Group, 2022). The survey had specific questions about EDI&B and their EDI report elaborated on the meaning of the aspects for Randstad, an overview can be found in Table 4.1 with quotes from the EDI report (Randstad Group, 2022). Based on the sustainability@work report of 2021 (Randstad Group, 2021), Randstad states the following: *"ED&I effectively boosts teamwork, decision making, and overall performance in a variety of ways, although the progress of integration remains slow at the executive levels."*

Table 4.1 Randstad EDI&B (Randstad Group, 2022)

Topic	Meaning	Score Randstad In Touch Survey
Equity	Equity is about taking action to make sure all groups have the same access to opportunities and closing the pay gap.	8.5 out of 10, *"People of all backgrounds have the same opportunities at Randstad"*.
Diversity	Diversity is about the difference. Our global teams not only resect, but also welcome and celebrate the differences among them.	8.3 out of 10, *"A diverse workforce is a clear priority at Randstad"*.
Inclusion	Inclusion is diversity in action. It is about making sure that our diverse teams can work seamlessly together and that every person can bring their whole self to work.	8.4 out of 10, *"At Randstad, people of all backgrounds are accepted for who they are".*
Belongingness	Belonging is our end goal. It's how we want every single person across our teams to feel.	8.2 out of 10, *"I feel a sense of belonging at Randstad".*

The case study consists of interviews with the employees and an analysis of the company strategies to create a complete overview. As discussed in subchapter 3.2, semi-constructed and open interviews are conducted. An overview of the interviewees can be found in Table 4.2 on the next page. Note that limited information about the interviewees is available (age and gender are generalized) in agreement with the interviewees because of the lack of value due to irrelevance for this study and privacy agreements. Further references to the interviewees in this chapter will be done based on the numbers given in this subchapter. Note that not all questions are elaborated on in this chapter, the complete answers of the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix 3 Interview details. The interview questions include personal questions and questions related to Randstad with the result that the answers are influenced by personal experiences, perspectives, and beliefs, and they are influenced by the awareness creation from the company. The interviewees functions are specified because of the influence on their knowledge related to the discussed topics. The following questions have been asked during the interviews:

1. *What do diversity and inclusion mean to you*
2. *Why are diversity and inclusion important to you?*
3. *Has your thinking about diversity and inclusion changed over time?*
4. *How do diversity and inclusion relate to the workplace?*
5. *Do diversity and/or inclusion influence your work?*
6. *(why) Do you believe that it is important to create more awareness for a diverse and inclusive company/branch?*
7. *What do you think is the most difficult aspect of a diverse and inclusive work environment?*
8. *How do you experience the diverse and inclusive environment at the office?*
9. *Who oversees diversity and inclusion at the company/branch?*
10. *What kind of training/information have you received about diversity and inclusion?*
11. *Are you aware of any initiatives from Randstad to increase/improve diversity and inclusion?*
12. *Why do you (not) feel welcome/at home at Randstad?*
13. *Randstad also talks about equity and belongingness, what does this mean to you?*
14. *Have you experienced any challenges?*
15. *Have you experienced disrespectful comments, discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment at the company? How did you react?*
16. *How would you advocate for diversity and inclusion with a coworker who doesn't understand its importance?*
17. *What is your approach to understanding the perspectives/points of view of colleagues with different backgrounds?*
18. *How would you promote diversity and inclusion?*
19. *Do you have anything else you would like to add/elaborate?*

Table 4.2 Interviewee details

Interview	Function	Work location	Interview type
1	Junior consultant manager	Randstad branch, Jönköping/Sweden	Semi-constructed
2	Branch manager	Randstad branch, Borås and Jönköping/Sweden	Semi-constructed
3 and 7	Global head of talent/ global practice lead EDI&B	Randstad headquarters, Diemen/The Netherlands	Open
4	Consultant manager	Randstad branch, Borås/ Sweden	Semi-constructed
5	Consultant manager/ recruitment consultant	Randstad branch, Jönköping/ Sweden	Semi-constructed
6	Talent partner/EDI&B practitioner	Head office Randstad Sweden, Stockholm/Sweden	Semi-structured and open

4.2 Interview 1

Interviewee 1 is a junior consultant manager in Jönköping, Sweden. Based on the first question, "*What do diversity and inclusion mean to you?"* interviewee 1 stated the following:

"For me, it does not matter who you are, if you are a new or old employee, your gender, your level of experience, or your title for example. I believe that everyone is entitled to their own opinion and it is important to listen to each other and respect each other's opinion."

Interviewee 1 says that diversity and inclusion are something that is in interviewee 1s mind all the time when making certain decisions for example, interviewee 1 is not constantly thinking about it but it is always there. Diversity and inclusion awareness is important because it will make you feel better when people listen to what you have to say and that it is good to come every day because if colleagues do not listen to each other, problems will occur fast, attitudes change, and performances deteriorate. Interviewee 1 thinks that you are probably not going to stay as long as you would have if your colleagues would listen to you because you feel like you are not part of the group. It is important to listen to each other's ideas even if they are not great because they can result in new ideas and the colleague feels part of the group for example. The absence of diversity and inclusion or the lack of discussion will affect the work atmosphere negatively. Interviewee 1 believes that generations y and z think more about diversity and inclusion compared to older generations.

Interviewee 1 elaborates on an excluding experience with a former colleague which resulted in more awareness of the effects and it made interviewee 1 realize that an excluding work environment affects your mood in your professional and also in your personal life negatively. Interviewee 1 has experienced various challenges since interviewee 1 started at the company, mainly because of COVID-19. The employees worked remotely which resulted in different and fewer conversations because you only met during meetings which resulted in less inclusion. Currently, interviewee 1 experiences the environment at the office as open-minded end everyone is willing to work on the same level. Even though all colleagues are Swedish, interviewee 1 believes that the atmosphere would be the same if there were colleagues from different countries because they are focused on the person and not on the nationality or gender for example. The influence of diversity and inclusion on the work of interviewee 1 focuses on cultural differences because there are a lot of different cultures in Sweden and sometimes this can require a different approach. As a result of those experiences, interviewee 1 stated the following about advocating and promoting diversity and inclusion:

"Now that I have experienced how my work is affected by an excluding atmosphere as well as an including atmosphere, I would speak up more often and talk about issues because I know that inclusion improves my work and it will result in a better understanding of each other. It is important to know from the beginning how colleagues and clients see these things and you do not need to see it the same way, but it will result in a better understanding of different points of view."

According to interviewee 1, Randstad could elaborate more about diversity and inclusion during the training program for new employees. For example, interviewee 1 says that it would be interesting to discuss more on what they talk about in the head office because for the branches it is interesting to know some sort of strategy on how they tackle both threats and opportunities for example. Interviewee 1 is not really aware of initiatives from Randstad, interviewee 1 believes that it is due to communication

difficulties but also because interviewee 1 has been with the company for a shorter period. When discussing how clients react the diversity and inclusion topics, interviewee 1 states that it differs per client based on their size and location. For example, the branches of Randstad Sweden apply blind recruitment for the clients and most clients respond very well to it. Bigger clients often have more resources compared to smaller clients which results in different perspectives and there are often differences in the way of working and talking for example. Interviewee 1 feels welcome/at home at Randstad because everyone is very welcoming no matter at which level of the organization you are, this is very important according to interviewee 1. After all, it results in more commitment to the company because you are happy to go to work every day concludes interviewee 1.

Besides diversity and inclusion, Randstad discusses equity and belongingness but interviewee 1 has not been thinking about this a lot because according to interviewee 1 it is most important to have a good diverse and inclusive awareness to create the equity and belongingness, especially with all the different cultures within Sweden who are part of the society.

4.3 interview 2

Interviewee 2 is a branch manager in Borås and Jönköping, Sweden. Based on the first question, "*What do diversity and inclusion mean to you?"* interviewee 2 stated the following:

"For me, it means that every human has the same rights, no matter how you look, where you are from, what you believe, or your gender for example, and everyone should be included in the society."

According to interviewee 2, it is important to create more awareness for these subjects because people feel excluded easily which can result in depressed feelings or feeling like an outsider. How people feel at work has a huge impact on their performance and it also reflects on the results of the company in the long term.

Interviewee 2 believes that it is their job to see both competence and potential in people and says the following:

"Whether we like it or not, we all have prejudices, our brain works so that we sort people into compartments. In our work, we need to think actively about this, all the time so that the brain eventually does it itself, automatically."

When discussing the relation of diversity and inclusion to the workplace, interviewee 2 says that from experiences, Swedish leaders are often afraid to work with diversity and inclusion because they need to change themselves and it is a big thing for them to adjust to change. For example, clients often mention the importance of the Swedish language and their reason is often because of safety rules. Interviewee 2 disagrees with this reasoning because there are a lot of solutions for language barriers and often, they are only afraid to speak English even though most Swedes have a good understanding of the English language. Diversity and inclusion influence the work of interviewee 2 on a daily basis, the team is mixed with different genders, ages, knowledge, and backgrounds. Challenges within the team do not occur often but discussions with clients do. An example is the blind job recruitment process applied at the branches of Randstad Sweden. With this process, neither the branches nor the clients are provided with personal information such as the age and gender of the candidate to prevent it from affecting the decision

but not all clients are satisfied with this and they need to be convinced. The clients have to convinced that having a diverse team contribute a lot to a company and the client has to be challenged to take someone who matches the competencies but maybe not the age requests for instance. It is necessary to make the client understand that different points of view can have a positive effect on the long-term performances and social skills, for example. This is often done by sharing research, facts, and materials. The ambition of interviewee 2 to give everyone the courage to ask a client why certain things are important to execute them in the requested way. The teams at the branches know that interviewee 2 is always open for suggestions and discussions concerning diversity and inclusion but interviewee 2 concludes that in the end, you can only hope that all employees are working with it and have the courage to start a discussion with a client or team member if necessary.

When focusing on Randstad, there is already a lot of awareness according to interviewee 2 because it is discussed at all levels within the organizations and employees know that there is a huge support for diversity and inclusion and that any kind of discrimination is unacceptable. It is important to make the employees feel safe and to give them the courage to give their opinion or speak up and also to let them know that the company supports them. Every new employee receives a full day of training where specific situations are presented and discussed with each other. Furthermore, Randstad provides various projects with different themes to increase awareness and to discuss possible problems with colleagues or clients. When asking if interviewee 2 feels welcome/at home at Randstad, interviewee 2 stated the following:

"I feel both welcome and at home in Randstad because their work is included. My manager and management team listen to my opinions, my suggestions, and value my work. I feel that the values match my values."

As mentioned in interview 1, besides diversity and inclusion Randstad discusses equity and belongingness. Randstad plays a major role in society, offering a job, a connection with colleagues, to feel important and valuable is very important for people's well-being according to interviewee 2, who also states the following:

"Belonging means that all people have the right to feel connected and to be able to work in solidarity. For me, equity means that you get decent work conditions both in working life when it comes to following policies and collective agreements for example, but also that everyone can have the same chance to get a job. It should not matter what your name is or where you come from, it is always the competence and potential that determines whether you get the job or not."

4.4 interview 3

This interview is conducted with the global head of talent and global practice lead EDI&B in Diemen, The Netherlands. The interview is done without semi-structured questions, it was an open interview to discuss the different aspects which should be taken into consideration when applying a diversity and inclusion strategy. A follow-up interview is done to discuss the findings, details can be found in subchapter 4.8. In the beginning of the interview, interviewee 3 stated the following:

"We have to ask ourselves; do we want to become more diverse to work towards inclusion, or are we working towards more inclusion to attract people from different communities to increase diversity?"

According to interviewee 3, the most important aspect is the relationship with the communities to improve the company. There are different kinds of communities related to gender, culture, or neurological diversity, for example. The goal of those communities is to learn from each other and support each other in all possible ways. Understanding the importance of recognizing different communities and their different needs within the company will result in a more diverse and inclusive environment because people will feel more welcome and accepted for who they are. Increasing the awareness of the communities can be done in different ways, Randstad has a global agenda with all important/religious days of different communities for example. Companies can also consider changing their regulations about taking days off for certain holidays or they can send out a greeting on religious days for instance. Recognition can be done in various ways, some things to consider are the profiles in the company, locations of the company, and pictures used by the company.

When discussing inclusion, interviewee 3 said:

"If you are not actively including, you are probably accidentally excluding. You can be invited to the party but are you also invited to dance?"

Considering the word *including* as a verb can change your thinking from unconscious biases to conscious inclusion according to interviewee 3. Dialogues or tests from Harvard for example can be helpful to create more understanding and awareness. Providing clear descriptions of the used terms increases the understanding. Randstad uses the following four terms: *Equity* (dividing resources to give everyone what they need to reach equality), *Diversity* (creating a mixed reflection of the society), *Inclusion* (being part of the company while being yourself), and *Belongingness* (feeling at home/welcome, being yourself). There is a fifth term, *Justice* (how does the company react to biases/create awareness), but this term has a different focus and is not a focal point at the moment.

Randstad applies the 2 plus 1 system, this includes 2 bigger projects on a global level and each country picks at least one of the projects to work with depending on the needs. This system shows that less is more. It is important to consider what is most important to increase the awareness, this could be general themes or more education for example. The themes can lead to difficulties because of the different understandings. For example, is the theme 'ethnicity' DNA based or culture based and how does this relate to the theme culture? Another example is the difference between where you grew up and your cultural background, this can influence your perception and how and where you feel comfortable.

When making suggestions for companies to increase their diversity and inclusion, various things can be taken into consideration according to interviewee 3. It will be helpful to provide advice about new things but also about things that are almost successful for example. Furthermore, creating a maturity map with details about the current situations and possible improvements can be helpful. It can also be useful to look into government programs, the most discussed topics within a country or community for example, or projects from other companies or countries.

4.5 Interview 4

Interviewee 4 is a consultant manager in Borås, Sweden. Based on the first question, "*What do diversity and inclusion mean to you?"* interviewee 4 stated the following:

"For me, it means that everyone is welcome, it does not matter where you are from, your gender, or your age for example. It is all about the person and the competencies."

It is extremely important to make everyone feel worthy and give everyone a chance to the same opportunities according to interviewee 4. Furthermore, it is very important to act as one team, to be helpful, and to create a safe environment for each other. The team of interviewee 4 exists of different nationalities and ages, everyone is very open and including each other occurs naturally. Even though interviewee 4 has not received information, training, or direct knowledge about current initiatives, the branch talks a lot about diversity and inclusion and everyone is very open about it. When looking at Randstad in general, interviewee 4 feels welcome every day because no matter your function, work location, or experience, everyone is part of the company and worth the same and everyone shares the same values.

Interviewee 4 has not experienced difficulties or challenges with colleagues but interviewee 4 did have some challenging experiences with clients. Swedish clients often want employees who speak Swedish, mainly for the safety instructions in interviewee 4's opinion. It differs per industry but in general, the language barrier often causes difficulties in the recruitment process. interviewee 4 has a clear opinion about it, interviewee 4 focuses on the competencies and not on the requests from the clients concerning gender and age for example. In addition, interviewee 4 challenges clients to choose a candidate who might not directly fit with their request to show that this person can add a lot of value with a new or different perspective. Interviewee 4 also suggests using coaching sessions for the clients to adjust to the situation for example.

When discussing equity and belongingness at Randstad, interviewee 4 stated the following:

"For me, it feels like everyone who works at Randstad is Randstad. It does not matter where you work or what your job is because everyone is part of the team and respected by all colleagues."

4.6 Interview 5

Interviewee 5 is a consultant manager and recruitment consultant in Jönköping, Sweden. Based on the first question, "*What do diversity and inclusion mean to you?"* interviewee 5 stated the following:

"I believe that all people are equal, we should focus on the competencies instead of gender and nationality for example. Everyone has biases, it is all about how you let them influence your judgment."

At Randstad, interviewee 5 works with people all the time but the previous job of interviewee 5 was as in the engineering industry. Gender differences influence the engineering industry a lot which results in different perspectives on diversity and inclusion. The switch to Randstad has resulted in more awareness of diversity and inclusion over time because it is an everyday topic in the recruitment and HR service industry. Interviewee 5 experiences that clients are often aware of the diversity and inclusion

topics but they have difficulties with putting it into practice because they often prefer a certain type of person for their team. Clients have to be convinced about the candidates usually, interviewee 5 does this with different tools such as a personality test about competencies. This test provides a detailed overview of the personality and competencies of the candidate to show the clients that this candidate can fit into the team even if the client is looking for a specific person. It is very important to look at the personality of the candidate to make sure that the team can perform correctly according to interviewee 5, this is why clients do not always get detailed information about the candidate. Furthermore, interviewee 5 experiences that giving the client some time to think about the offer generally helps. The most difficult aspect is often the language barrier, it differs per industry and it is changing but clients still prefer Swedish speaking people often because of safety instructions or the lack of English understanding at the company. Interviewee 5 experiences that the level of a diverse and inclusive company often depends on the hiring company and companies in bigger cities are more open to it at the moment but it is improving in general. To convince and explain the recruitment process better, interviewee 5 receives feedback from the clients to discuss with the candidates and specific questions are asked. Furthermore, documents and articles are shared with the clients as well as on social media to create more awareness. Looking at the office of interviewee 5, all colleagues are Swedish and they all work in the same HR service industry and HR. Interviewee 5 believes that everyone is aware of the diversity and inclusion aspects and everyone is open about it. Last year, a webinar about diversity and inclusion took place for Randstad employees and clients to raise more awareness.

Interviewee 5 feels welcome/at home at Randstad because everyone shares the same values and works as a team which is very important to interviewee 5. This is also part of equity and belongingness according to interviewee 5 because feeling and being part of a company with the same values will make you feel good and increases your performance.

To conclude, interviewee 5 stated the following:

"It is very important to create more awareness because this will make people work with it more naturally, I think that this already starts with children. The changes will not happen in 1 day of course but it is clear that the world and companies are becoming more diverse and inclusive."

4.7 Interview 6

Interviewee 6 is a talent partner and EDI&B practitioner of Randstad Sweden in Stockholm. This interview was an open interview with a number of semi-constructed questions. Based on the first question, "*What do diversity and inclusion mean to you?"* interviewee 6 stated the following:

"For me, diversity and inclusion mean that we work in a way where we make sure that everyone has the same abilities and rights to feel the belongingness. I believe that everyone should feel welcome and be able to deliver good work no matter the background or contribution by giving the same possibilities to all in the workplace or community."

The way of working with EDI&B differs throughout the company depending on the needs and awareness but there are general global roadmaps and goals which are available for all employees. Interviewee 6 says that the topics are constantly improving to keep it accurate, it is important to be open to new perspectives and all forms of competencies nowadays in order to adjust the work culture.

Randstad Sweden has been working on this a lot in the recent years by creating specialized departments which are constantly working with it and who are measuring the satisfaction and awareness of the employees for example. The most difficult aspect in the work environment is the belonging part according to interviewee 6, it demands active work of the team without judgment which has to happen parallel to increasing the diversity to also increase the level of belongingness. Interviewee 6 says that this can be achieved by adding people to the team who stand for something else in relation to the people who are already working there to increase the diversity.

The office talks to all the managers of the branches similar at the moment, this might have to be adjusted to offices specifically in the future based on their location, way of working, the teams, or the industries for example because the awareness can differ per office. In order to do this, it is very important to have good communication according to interviewee 6 because there is a lot of information available for the employees but there are certain difficulties with bringing it into practice.

Interviewee 6 identifies new challenges often because everyone has different norms, and perspectives. A reoccurring challenge is the language barrier in Sweden, Swedish people often have barriers with speaking English even though they speak it very well. A reason for this according to interviewee 6 could be that Swedes do not want to take up too much room in the community or group which results in high integrity which leads to possible barriers. Furthermore, there are various challenges in the Swedish labor market because there is a lack of competencies, and employees do not want to switch employers because of the all uncertainties resulting from COVID-19 or economic situations for example. Another challenge is the level of understanding and awareness, interviewee 6 provides reports with facts and discusses the issues and perspectives to find the core problem because it is often possible to find common ground and work from that point. Interviewee 6 states the following about the challenges:

"The most important challenge is to understand how we get people to work with diversity and inclusion actively because the awareness has always been here in Sweden but the challenge is to put it into practice."

Interviewee 6 also feels welcome/at home at Randstad, the reasons for this are because interviewee 6 has felt perceived and valued for who interviewee 6 is from the beginning, and the work that interviewee 6 does is appreciated and recognized. This is connected to the equity and belongingness from Randstad, interviewee 6 has experienced that this is often a more difficult topic because of the influence, possible complexity, and because it is more personal. Interviewee 6 believes that sustainable EDI&B start with employees feeling welcome/at home at Randstad. To conclude, interviewee 6 stated:

"Everyone is part of the team and company, you must be accepted for who you are, what you think, what you believe, and that you are seen as someone who adds value to the team and company. The goal is to create more sense of belonging so that we can work for greater equity and a more diverse and inclusive workforce."

4.8 Interview 7

This is a follow-up interview with interviewee 3 (global head of talent and global practice lead EDI&B in Diemen, The Netherlands) and will be referred to as interviewee 3 in this subchapter. The interview was conducted to discuss the results from the previous conducted semi-constructed interviews in Sweden and to gain more detailed insights.

Interviewee 3 notices that a lot of people are aware of initiatives from Randstad and their current work culture but it is difficult to find the time and money to transform the awareness into practice. The difficulties with the active awareness are also partly a result of the intensity of the topics. During the interviews, it was noticeable that the interviewees are aware and had a clear opinion about diversity and inclusion but they were less decisive about equity and belongingness. According to interviewee 3, the reason for this is that it becomes very personal with those topics and because of the fact that subtopics keep increasing. An example of a subtopic is accessibility, this is applied in certain companies in the United States of America for example by having a website with specific colors because of the difficulties experienced by color-blind people for instance. Another difficulty can be all the used terms and the differences between those, this can lead to misunderstandings and less interest according to interviewee 3.

Many interviewees refer to gender differences as an important topic for diversity, interviewee 3 thinks that the reason for this can be linked to social media. A lot of numbers and articles are presented on social media about women at the top of organizations. An example is the leadership position of women, different factors have to be considered when discussing this such as the imposter syndrome for example. The gender topic also depends on the country based on their history and beliefs for example and it is also affected by generations differences. Younger generations are raised with more awareness and understanding of the possibilities, this is possible because of the different goals and knowledge between generations. Furthermore, the language barrier is often mentioned by the interviewees as a challenge. When discussing this issue with interviewee 3, it was concluded that this probably happens because of the culture of Swedes to avoid conflicts and to stay in the background to stay in their comfort zone for example. Moreover, the interviewees refer to the recruitment process that they apply, Randstad Sweden uses blind recruitment and personality tests to see if the candidate matches with the client. An example to extend this is to remove the educational background from a job offer. This is applied in companies in England because they realized that people with experience do not always match the requested educational level with the result that they do not apply for the job even though they would a be good fit because of their experience. To improve the work culture of a company, interviewee 3 suggests to apply different approaches to keep everyone involved. A suggested approach is to create a mix of various general and detailed questions to ask the employees, this will lead to an understanding of the different perspectives, willingness, and levels of awareness for instance. Randstad refers to EDI&B (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belongingness) as mentioned in the previous interviews but they do not mention equality, interviewee 3 stated the following about this:

"Equality is a difficult topic which is best described with an example. Imagen a child, a teenager, and an adult who want to watch a soccer game but the view is (partly) blocked by a fence. There are three boxes available to stand on, it would be equal to giving all three of them one box. With one box, the child would still not be able to see the game but the adult can see it without a box. If the child would get the box of the adult, all would be able to see the game, this is equity. This example shows that

equality does not always give the best solution for everyone. I believe that equality is a result of equity because everyone can see the game in the end."

When discussing the order of EDI&B appliance, interviewee 3 discusses whether there really can be an order because all topics can be applied alone but also together or as a result of each other. Moreover, it also depends on the company and awareness. Randstad applies a so-called hybrid system where numbers and performances are combined to improve behavior for example.

To conclude interviewee 3 stated:

"EDI&B are very important topics which are evolving constantly, nowadays a lot of people are aware of the topics and meanings but the challenge is to actively work it. This can be difficult because it becomes very personal when it is put into practice and this is not easy for most people. Moreover, because of the fact that it is constantly evolving, new topics appear often which can lead to challenges as well. Putting it into practice will make people feel more welcome/at home but at the same time, it is important to realize that you cannot do everything (as a reference, you cannot boil the ocean). It is important to know that effort that companies and the employees put into EDI&B is appreciated by someone within the company."

5. Analysis

Based on the empirical findings from the semi-constructed and open interviews, coding is assessed to determine the main themes. The coding results in categories that are transformed into themes which can be found in subchapter 5.1. An elaboration of the themes with findings from the interviews and the literature review can be found in subchapter 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4.

5.1 Themes

Coding is applied to create an overview of the findings in the conducted interviews and to reduce the data, resulting in various categories. The interviewees' answers are influenced by their personal experiences, their perspectives, and beliefs, and they are influenced by the awareness creation by the company. The overview is divided into various themes which are results from the categories elaborated in subchapter 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4. The final results from the coding are described in Figure 5.1.

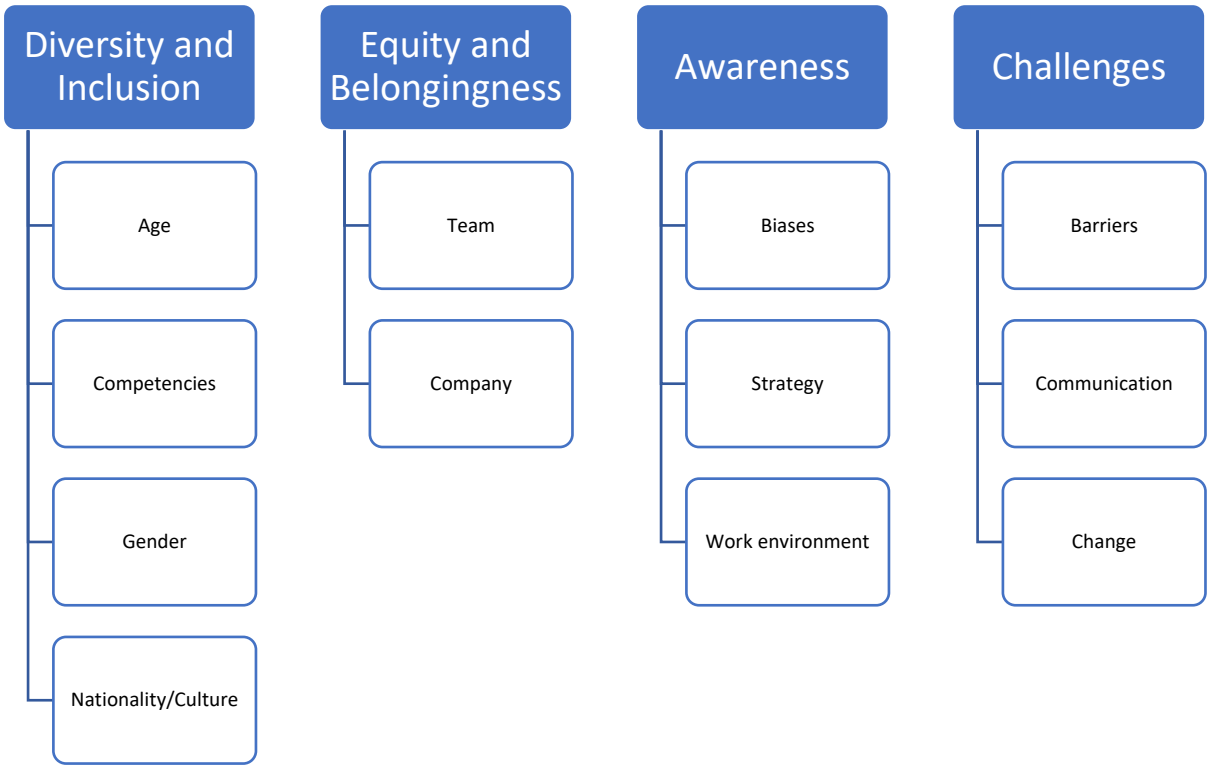

Figure 5.1 Themes

5.2 Diversity and Inclusion

When comparing the results from the interviews with the literature review, similar topics about diversity and inclusion appear. When asking the interviewees about the meaning of diversity and inclusion, the most often mentioned topics are the influences of gender, age, and someone's background. All interviewees stated that those topics do not define someone, it is all about the competencies of the person. A summary can be found in Table 5.1, and details are elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Table 5.1 Diversity and Inclusion analysis

Topic	Literature review	Interviews
General topics about diversity and inclusion	According to Syed and Özbilgin *(2015)*: gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, culture, and sexual minorities.	The interviewees state that your gender, age, or background is not of importance because it is about you as a person, the competencies, and that everyone has the same rights.
Age (5.2.1)	Syed and Özbilgin *(2015)* say that the different points of views based on experience and how generations grew up, will increase the performance.	The interviewees mention that neither your age nor experience should have a negative effect, a mix of different ages results in a different point of view. Generations can have different perspectives on diversity and inclusion.
Competencies (5.2.3)	Treven and Mulej *(2007)* state that in order to have a successful team, a deep understanding of the team members is necessary based on their knowledge, attitudes, respect towards others, and motivation is needed.	This is the most important thing to consider when you create a team according to the interviewees because it has a lot of influence on the performance of the team and company.
Gender (5.2.4)	Jonsen et al. *(2010)* discusses three paradigms that could occur in a work culture. According to Acker *(2012)*, gender inequalities are often perpetuated because of gendered assumptions from the society.	Your gender should not influence your job opportunities or how you are treated because it does not define who you are as a person according to the interviewees.
Nationality/culture (5.2.5)	The conceptual model from Stoermer, et al *(2016)* describes the influences of culture and the awareness about the needs of the different cultures.	Nationality/culture should not influence your job opportunities because it does not define who you are as a person according to the interviewees.

5.2.1 Age

Considering the age aspect, it is important to realize that generations can have different perspectives due to the lack of awareness created in the past for instance. An overview of the discussed topics can be found in Figure 5.2 which also shows the current generation division at Randstad (2021). The interviewees state that your experience should not influence the inclusiveness of the team or company because everyone is worth the same. Both literature and the interviewees state that having a team of different ages will increase the performance because of the different perspectives. In addition, interviewees 1 and 3 say that the younger generations are more actively working with it because it is an often-discussed topic nowadays. Age differences can lead to experience differences but this does not have to define the performance of a person, this is related to the example of job recruitment in England discussed by interviewee 3. Various companies have removed the educational background from a job offer because people with experience do not always match the requested educational level with the result that they do not apply for the job even though they would a be good fit because of their experience for example.

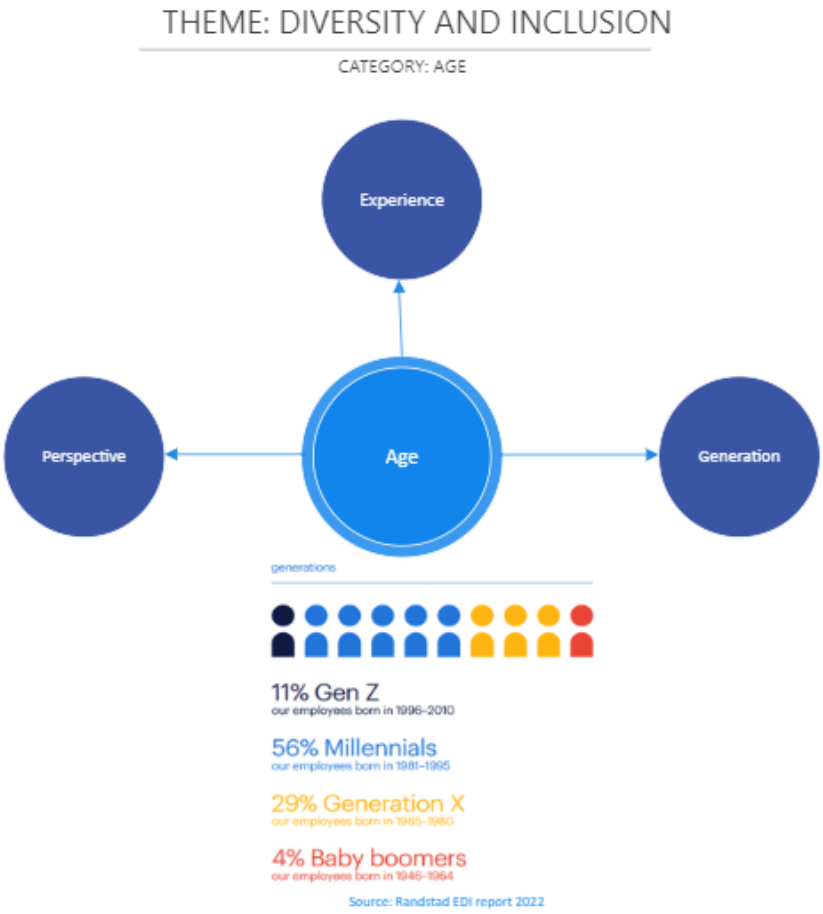

Figure 5.2 Category Age

5.2.2 Competencies

All interviewees stated that competencies are more important compared to age, experience, and gender. An analysis of the competencies category can be found in figure 5.3. The interviewees believe that your competencies show who you are and what you can add to a team and company. Interviewee 5 elaborates on the appliance of this, by conducting personality tests from the candidates it is possible to determine if the candidate matches with the client for instance. When looking at the competencies, the interviewees state that it is very important to consider what the person can add to a team to increase the performances. Interviewee 5 has experienced that team performances often increase when someone is added to the team who might not directly meet certain requirements from the client, such as age or experience, from the client because of new and different perspectives on the way of working. When applying this method, certain barriers occur. Interviewees mention the challenges in convincing the clients to choose this method because it can require changes in their daily business for example. The five-factor model of Roberson (2006) can be applied to overcome barriers with clients and in addition to this, the identity-blindness and identity-consciousness approached can be helpful to persuade the clients for instance (Roberson, 2020).

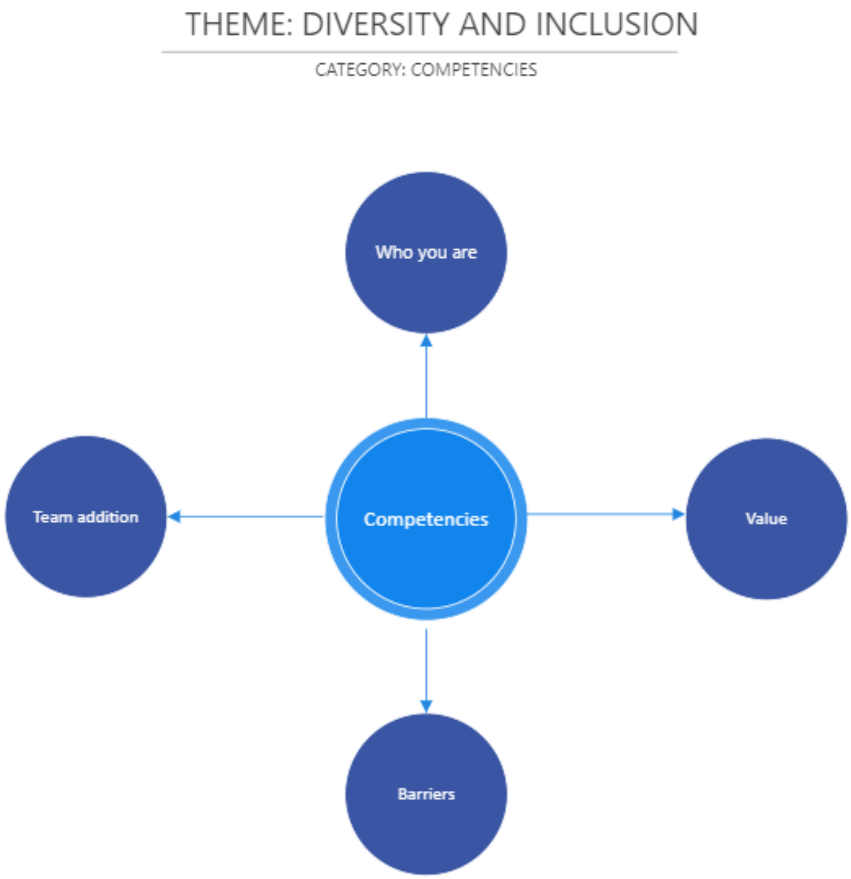

figure 5.3 Category Competencies

5.2.3 Gender

The literature review showed that notable differences concerning gender are at the leadership level, an analysis can be found in Figure 5.4 including numbers from the annual report 2021 from Randstad (2021). The interviewees do not mention differences in gender concerning leadership but interviewee 2 states that the diversity and inclusion are often negatively affected by Swedish leaders. the reason for this is related to the difficulty to change mainly because of possible language barriers which are also connected to competencies according to interviewee 2. In addition, most interviewees refer to male and female, interviewee 3 states that it is important to realize that there are more communities which can be labeled as a gender. There are three paradigms related to gender according to research from Jonsen et al (2010): the *gender-blind view* the *gender-conscious view*, and *perceptions creating reality*. The research (Jonsen et al., 2010) states that the negative parts of this paradigm are the different leadership styles and it might enhance stereotyping instead of dispelling it. Conversely, differences between male and female are not easy to determine because every individual is different and determining differences often leads to stereotyping. Determining differences is difficult because they are based on perspectives and not on facts. This makes it important to consider the work circumstances, the background, and the beliefs of the individual before determining possible differences and how they should be treated.

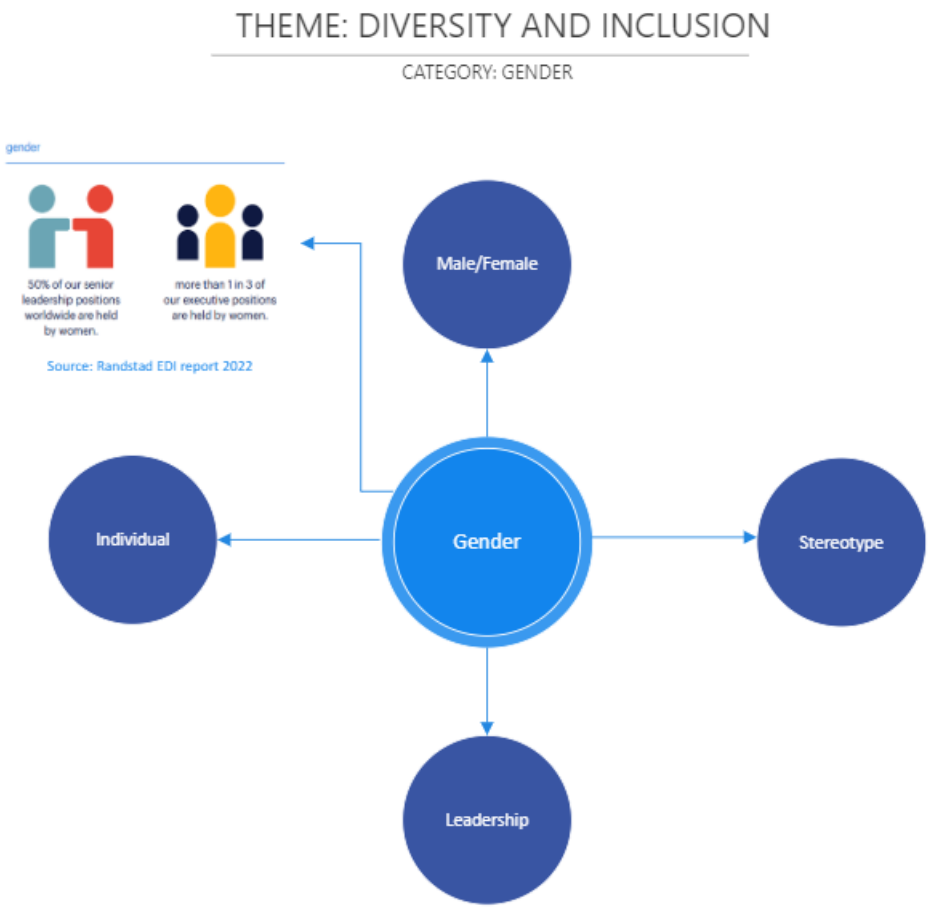

Figure 5.4 Category Gender

5.2.4 Nationality/culture

The last aspect in this part of the analysis is the nationality/culture of people, shown in Figure 5.5. The results from the interviews can be applied to the conceptual model from Stroemer, et al (2016) to create an overview of their points of view. Finally, interviewee 3 and Syed and Özbilgin (2015) refer to the differences between race and ethnicity, interviewee 3 points out that someone's cultural background does not have to define certain behavior, way of working, or perspectives for instance because there can be a difference between how you grew up and your cultural background.

Figure 5.5 Category Nationality/culture

5.3 Equity and Belongingness

Based on the coding, Equity and Belongingness can be divided into *team* and *company*, the analysis can be found in Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7 on the next page. Comparing the Optimal Distinctive Theory (OTD, individuals feel the need for similarities and validation in a group) from Brewer (1991) with the results from the interviews, various aspects can be analyzed. Interviewee 3 believes that equity focuses on what you need to reach equality and that belongingness focuses on feeling welcome/at home. When the question was asked if the interviewees felt welcome/at home at Randstad, all said instantly *yes*. They state that feeling connected to the team and the company, respecting each other, having the same values, and seeing potentials are necessary to create this feeling which results in equity and belongingness. To correlate this to the OTD (Brewer, 1991), the interviewees can relate to the validation which results in the feeling of being seen and valued in the team and company no matter your function or title for example however the need for similarities is not discussed by interviewees because they believe in the individual. Interviewee 6 has experienced that feeling seen and valued is often a more difficult topic for employees because of the influence, possible complexity, and because it is more personal for them.

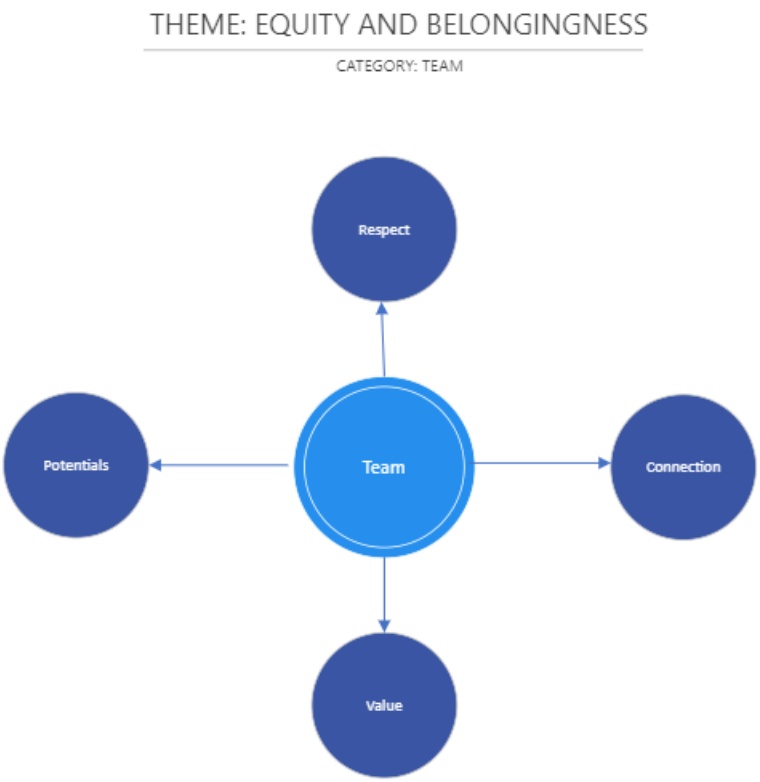

Figure 5.6 Category Team

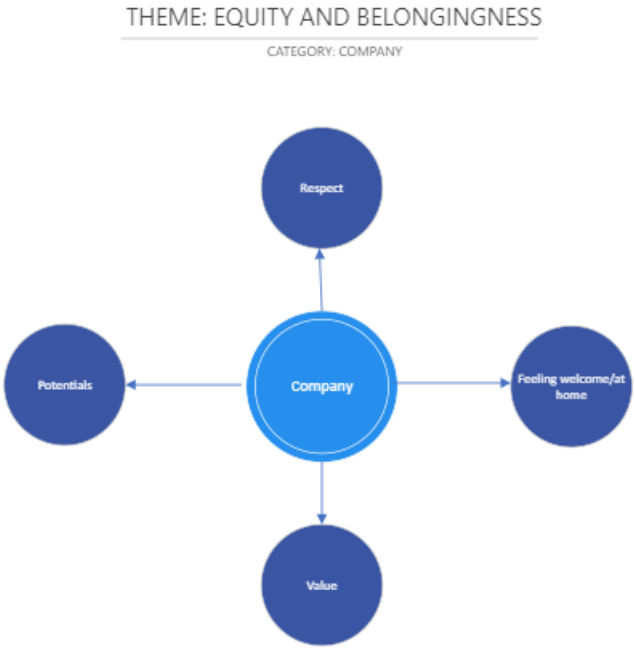

Figure 5.7 Category Company

5.4 Awareness

Awareness can be created in many different ways; the interviewees believe that discussing the topics regularly by talking about different strategies, experiences, and beliefs for example. This subchapter analysis the categories biases (5.3.1) and the work environment (5.3.2).

5.4.1 Biases

It is important to be aware of the possible biases and approaches to overcome them, an overview is shown in Figure 5.8. Vinkenburg et al (2021) elaborates on the awareness, accountability, criteria, structure, and time element during job interviews which all affect biases directly and indirectly. To become more aware of biases, interviewee 3 suggests to use dialogues or tests from Harvard for example to create more understanding and awareness of the possible biases. At the branches of Randstad Sweden, blind recruitment is applied for the offices and for clients as a strategy to reduce the influences of possible biases. Interviewees do experience difficulties with convincing the clients because the branches provide limited information about the candidates and clients often have specific requests based on what they believe fits in their team. Interviewee 5 elaborates on the personality test which is applied before suggesting a candidate, this test focuses on the competencies, skills, and personality of the candidate which results in a clear understanding of the person. Everyone experiences different barriers at work, the KLOB framework looks at the effects and impact of barriers experienced by individuals in academic activities (Khelifa & Mahdjoub, 2022) but it can also be applied in the work environment to increase the awareness. Awareness creating can be achieved in different ways, Randstad is doing this by participating in various governmental and worldwide initiatives and by providing articles and training for example. Interviewee 3 discusses the influence of the communities, collaborating with them will result in different and new points of view. Lastly, the interviewees mention the indirect biases about disabilities, it is important to realize that disabilities can be visible or invisible and the impact differs for everyone (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015).

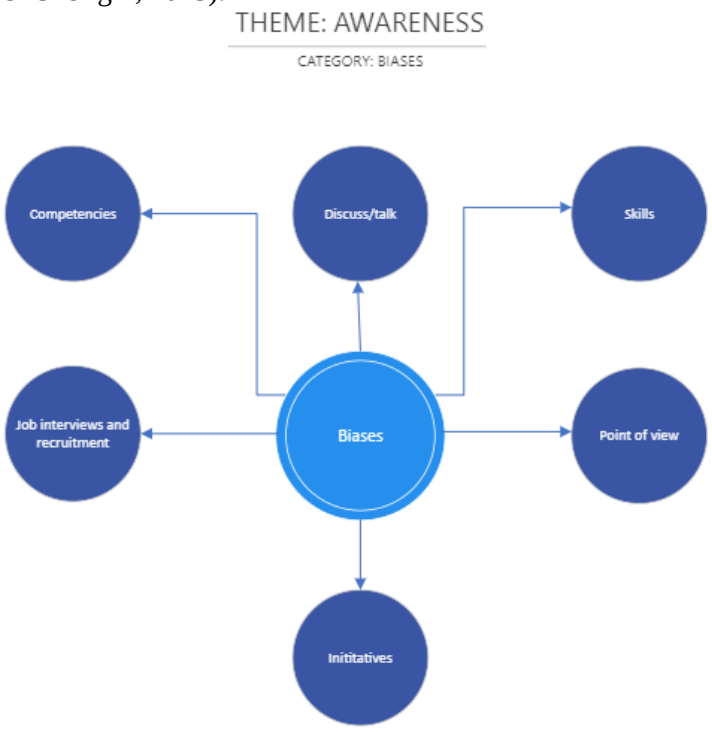

Figure 5.8 Category Biases

5.4.2 Work environment

The work environment has a great influence on the overall feeling and awareness of the employees, the analysis is shown in Figure 5.9. The interviewees state that it must be a safe place for all, everyone has to be free to speak up and work with feedback, it must feel like a team, and the way approaching colleagues and clients have to be considered because this all influences the mood at the office and the performances. Interviewee 6 says that the employees are mostly aware of the topics and the core values, the difficult part is to bring the awareness into practice.

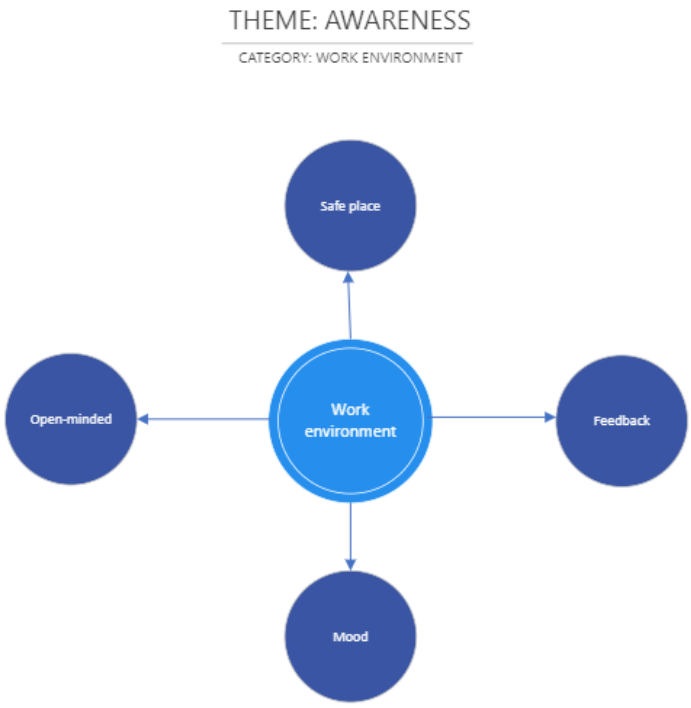

Figure 5.9 Category Work environment

5.5 Challenges

Various challenges are faced concerning equity, diversity, inclusion, and belongingness based on the literature review gaps (subchapter 2.4) and the interviews. This analysis shows that the main challenge as discussed above is to raise more awareness of the impact on both individuals as well as on a company. The analysis can be divided into barriers (Figure 5.10, on the next page) and communication (Figure 5.11, on the next page). All interviewees stated that language barriers have the most remarkable impact which corresponds with the literature review. The reason for the language barrier in Sweden has two reasons according to the interviewees, companies are afraid of the necessary changes in their way of working and they think that it can influence safety instructions. Interviewee 6 suggests that Swedes do not want to take up too much room in the community or group which results in high integrity which leads to possible language barriers. The challenges differ for each country because of the involved cultures, the challenge is to adjust the strategy of the company to the country it is operating in but it all starts with communication. For example, interviewee 1 knows that Randstad is working on different programs but his office is not involved in this, he thinks that this is due to a lack of communication. Another challenge is the willingness of everyone, interviewee 5 states that it takes time to establish changes, especially with subjects involving individuals, moreover changes will not happen as long as not everyone is willing to adjust (Schmidt, 2021). Furthermore, there are various challenges in the Swedish labor market according to interviewee 6 because there is a lack of competencies, employees do not want to switch employers because of the all uncertainties resulting from COVID-19 or economic

situations for example. To conclude, interviewee 3 says that a very important challenge is to evolve the awareness into recognition to really make a change in the work culture but that can be difficult because it becomes very personal when it is put into practice and this is not easy for most people. This makes it very important to approach this carefully and possibly less direct and general questions for example.

Figure 5.10 Category Barriers

Figure 5.11 Category Communication

6. Discussion

The theoretical implications based on the reviewed literature and interviews are elaborated in subchapter 6.1. The practical implications are the answers to the research questions and can be found in subchapter 6.2. The limitations are described in subchapter 6.3 and suggestions for possible future research are discussed in subchapter 6.4.

6.1 Theoretical implications

One of the theoretical implications is connected to the Social Identity Theory (SIT) discussed by Holck, et al. (2016) which concludes that more implication research is necessary to fulfill the required changes in a company to have an engaged commitment to developing a diverse environment. In line with Holck, et al. (2016), this study confirms the need for commitment to transform the current awareness into practices because the imperial findings show that the interviewees are aware of the topics and they recognize the need but they have difficulties with the execution of the tasks.

The inclusion framework from Shore et al. (2010) (2018) elaborates on the belongingness and uniqueness of employees, this is line with the empirical findings of this study because the interviewees state that it the personality and competencies of a person are most important which results in a feeling of being valued and being part of a team according to them. The empirical findings elaborate on the belongingness discussed in the inclusion framework (Shore, et al., 2010) (Shore et al., 2018) because it showed that feeling welcome/at home at the company increases the feeling the feeling of belongingness and it increases performances. Furthermore, similar to Holck, et al. (2016), Shore et al. (2018) expresses the difficulties of putting the awareness into practice, this is in line with the findings of this study because all interviewees show their awareness but discuss various challenges when they have to put the awareness into practice.

In addition, Treven and Mulej (2007) review the team understanding, this is equivalent to the empirical findings of the interviews in this study because both state that a diverse team will increase the performances because of the different points of view within the team. Considering the work environment, Brown (2005) argues the appliance of agile and Agerwell (2006) elaborates the use of lean within organizations. Both topics are not mentioned by the interviewees but the waste approach from the lean method can contribute to overcome certain communication challenges for instance. Other similarities that are related to the work environment, are the research from Vinkenburg, et al. (2021) who discusses the possible biases which can occur during job interviews and Schmidt (2021) who elaborates on inclusive recruitment. Those findings are in line with the empirical findings of the interviews from this study because the interviewees discuss their approaches for job recruitments and they elaborate on their challenges with clients which adds value to the researches of Vinkenburg, et al. (2021) and Schmidt (2021).

Furthermore, Syed and Özbilgin (2015) provide information about a number of topics concerning diversity and inclusion which are relatively often mentioned by the interviewees as well. Acker (2012) reviews the gender assumptions in society and states that it necessary to consider the organizational structures and different gender identities to adjust the management of an organization. This is comparable to the empirical findings in this study because a number of interviewees mention the need to adjust to the different needs. Moreover, the empirical findings of the interviews showed that the interviewees who work directly with the EDI&B strategies of Randstad are aware of the less familiar

topics and communities which are lacking the in literature. Bell et al. (2011) describes 4 types of voices which can be useful to change the awareness of sexual minorities into practice, this is not discussed by the interviewees directly but a number of approaches to transform the awareness into practice are discussed which can contribute to the 4 voices approach.

In addition, the interviews showed that the awareness of the interviewees did not differ on a conceptual level compared to their answers about the organizational level, their perspective and beliefs did not change but they did state that their thinking about diversity and inclusion mainly changed because of the conceptual level experiences. Lastly, this study contributes by including equity and belongingness instead of a total focus on diversity and inclusion because the findings and analysis manifest that the work culture will not change if companies only relate to diversity and inclusion.

6.2 Practical implications

This study results in various practical implications based on the research questions. The first research question "*What is the current situation concerning diversity and inclusion management at an organizational level?"*, is linked to the awareness and experiences of the interviewees. All interviewees have a clear perception and awareness of diversity and inclusion within the organization. As stated in the analysis they believe that is all about the person and competencies, they say that gender, age, and background do not matter for example. When looking at initiatives from Randstad, the knowledge and awareness of the interviewees differs. Randstad is involved in many different programs in different countries focusing on the development of the country and its residents and they have various initiatives focusing on their offices in the world. The lack of awareness about the initiatives can be reduced by improving the communication and by providing more direct information about it to the employees.

During this study, various challenges were discussed in the current situations which led to the research question "*What are the challenges in the current situation?"*. Most of the interviewees talked about the challenging diversity and inclusion experiences with clients but not that much about their experiences at the offices because most of them do not have experienced this at the office with colleagues. The analysis in chapter 5 resulted in number of challenges in the current situation on an organizational level. The most distinct challenge is the awareness of employees and clients because the level of awareness differs often due to experiences or availability of resources for example. Another challenge is the impact of diversity and inclusion on both individuals as well as on a company because adjustments and new perspectives are necessary. Furthermore, the differences and gaps between generations are seen as challenges. Generation Z is currently starting to enter the labor market, they are raised with digital innovations, and they are often more focused on the essence of a person and their story for example. Millennials grew up during the start and development of the internet, they can often easily adapt. Generation X has often more specific knowledge and they are mostly comfortable working with technology as well as face-to-face. Those differences are important to consider to apply efficient approaches because of the different ways of working and the different ideas about the interconnection between the personal and professional life for example. The reverse mentoring strategy applied by Randstad can be used in this situation for instance. An often-mentioned challenge by the interviewees from Sweden is the language barrier, this impacts the company because of the necessary changes to make sure that everyone can communicate with one and another and the possible need to step out of their comfort zone. It is important to realize that challenges differ for each country because of the involved cultures and their current level of diversity and inclusion. The challenge is to adjust the strategy of the company to the country it is operating in. To conclude, the most influential as well as most

difficult challenge is to evolve the awareness into recognition to really make a real change in the work culture by transforming the awareness into practice.

In order to work with the challenges, different factors have to be taken into consideration. The third research question is related to this: *"Which factors have to be taken into consideration to improve the current situation?"*. Firstly, it is important to understand that the work culture does not change with a strategy for a more diverse and inclusive company, equity and belongingness are necessary elements to overcome the challenges. Furthermore, there has to be a clear understanding of the different perspectives and willingness of the employees to improve the work culture. As discussed in the literature review and the analysis, there are many different elements that are part of a diverse and inclusive climate. The interviewees stated that they feel very welcome/at home at Randstad, they concluded this based on their values and the values of the company in general. This proves that it is very important that companies have an overall strategy that can be applied at all levels to empower everyone. However, the applicability and appliance of all elements must be considered individually for company departments because of different functions and influences to really make a change for the employees. Other factors to consider are personal experiences or barriers, the labor market, and generation perspectives for example.

The last research question, *"How can diversity and inclusion be managed at an organizational level to improve the work culture?"*, is used to fulfill the main purpose. Advises with target points and strategies to enlarge the diversity, inclusion, equity, and belongingness within a company can be used as tools and adjusted to specific needs. As a result of this study, the following suggestions are proposed to consider:

- Do not make assumptions but gather data, and take a supportive role to create more understanding and willingness to participate in the changing work culture.
- A business case can be created to provide the employees with information about how the company spends money on their strategy like community investments for example. This business plan can also include future plans, contributions of the company, and certain patterns and trends.
- General questions can be asked to the employees to indirectly create an overview of their opinions of the current situation at the office and their awareness for instance. Examples of questions are:
  - Do you feel welcome/at home at the company?
  - What do you like on a good/bad day?
  - Why are you working at this company?
  - What is your ideal work culture?
- Detailed and directly related questions can be asked as well, examples are:
  - How would you like to be included?
  - What are your concerns about equality, diversity, inclusion, and/or belongingness?
  - (how) Do you feel represented at this company?
  - (why) Do you feel that you can be the person you want to be seen as in the company?
- Feedback from the employees is essential to improve the work culture, this can be done with various approaches. Resource groups, venture programs, feedback meetings, surveys, workshops, lectures, training, or councils can be created for instance.
- The findings from the questions and feedback can be mapped to create an overview.

- The social impact of the approaches and strategies has to be considered to prevent giving people a label when they identify themselves with a community for example.
- It can be helpful to have different roles, to get the best out of a team and each other but it is important to be aware of the effects of titles and the responsibilities.

6.3 Limitations

This study is limited to an instrumental case study based on one company; this results in a limited number of interviews which can affect the diversity of interviewees. Furthermore, the cultural influence is limited because the interviews took place with people working in Sweden and in The Netherlands.

Language barriers can be seen as a limitation, the interviews are conducted in English and Dutch which are not the mother language of all interviewees which can limit their answers due to lack of language skills for example. Moreover, this study focuses mainly on diversity and inclusion management but during this study, it became clear that both equity and belongingness are critical elements as well to consider. Lastly, there is a large amount of literature research available about diversity but the amount of literature research focusing on inclusion, equity, and belongingness is minimum.

6.4 Future research

Numerous elements can be researched in the future to improve and elaborate on this study. This study is focused on a global company with offices all around the world which results in a lot of resources for the management of EDI&B, future research can focus on smaller companies to understand their way of working and perspectives on the work environment. Besides smaller companies, researching other industries can lead to different results. Randstad is a company focused on recruitment and HR services, companies in the engineering industry might have different strategies for their diverse and inclusive climate within the company because of different experiences, focuses, and perspectives.

Furthermore, the influence of COVID-19 pandemic can be used for future research. People have been working remotely unexpectantly for a longer period which resulted in fewer and different conversations and it possibly affected their performances. Employees who started during the pandemic might not feel as included as the other employees because of the missing office experience and lack of conversations. In addition, the role of EDI&B on the labor market can be researched. As mentioned by the interviews, companies are currently struggling with finding employees and keeping employees for a longer period. The presence of EDI&B influences the satisfaction of the employees because it affects their feeling of being valued and accepted for who they are by their colleagues and the company.

Lastly, as mentioned in the beginning diversity and inclusion management is different for each company based on their needs, resources, and possibilities for example and there is not only one fixed way for the management which makes it difficult to provide study results. To change this, future research can focus on realizing certain management tools to provide standards and support which can be adjusted to the company.

7. Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the appliance and improvements of diversity and inclusion strategies at an organizational level, this resulted in advises to enlarge diversity and inclusion management within organizations.

All interviewees have a clear perception and awareness of diversity and inclusion within the organization, they believe that it is all about the person and competencies. Gender, age, and background do not matter. When looking at initiatives from Randstad, the knowledge and awareness of the interviewees differ. Randstad is involved in many different programs and initiatives.

During this study, various challenges were discussed, and the analysis results into a number of challenges in the current situation. The most distinct challenge is the awareness of employees and clients about the different topics. Another challenge is the impact of diversity and inclusion on both individuals well as on a company. Furthermore, the differences and gaps between generations can be seen as important challenges to consider because of the different ways of working and the different ideas about the interconnection between the personal and professional life for example. An often-mentioned challenge by the interviewees from Sweden is the language barrier because of the changes and the possible need to step out of their comfort zone. Likewise, strategy adjustments are challenges for companies based on the involved cultures and their current level of diversity and inclusion. In addition, the most influential as well as the most difficult challenge is to evolve the awareness into recognition to make a change in the work culture. In order to work with the challenges, different factors have to be taken into consideration. It is important to understand that equity and belongingness are necessary elements to overcome challenges. Furthermore, there has to be a clear understanding of the different perspectives and willingness of the employees to improve the work culture. It is important that companies have an overall strategy to apply at all levels to empower everyone. However, the applicability and appliance of all elements must be considered individually for company departments because of different functions and influences.

To conclude, the management of diversity and inclusion on an organizational level cannot be done without the adoption of equity and belongingness in the strategy because they are all connected to each other. The management of it will differ per company because of factors such as the industry, location of the company, level of awareness, and willingness of the employees. It is important to consider that the topics are constantly changing which requires constant management and possible adjustments. To implement this in the work culture it is important to raise awareness and to put this into practice to keep improving and to make all employees feel welcome/at home within the team and company. This can be done by gathering data by asking questions to the employees and feedback requests to prevent making assumptions and to consider the social impact which can be supported with a business case to provide the employees with information for instance. It is important to realize that this cannot all be achieved by one person and work culture changes cannot be reached in one day, it is a constantly evolving process.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1 Frame of references

An overview of the used articles in chapter 2 can be found in this appendix.

Table Appendix 1, Literature review

Author(s)	Year	Title	Keywords with BOOLEAN	Citation	References
Shore, LM/Randel, AE/Chung, BG/Dean, MA/Ehrhart, KH/ Singh, G	2011	Inclusion and Diversity in Work Groups: A Review and Model for Future Research	Inclusion AND Diversity AND Management	548	179
Vinkenburg, CJ/ Ossenkop, C/ Schiffbaenker, H	2021	Selling science: optimizing the research funding evaluation and decision process	Inclusion AND Diversity AND Management OR Optimization	0	22
Nishii, LH	2013	The Benefits of Climate for Inclusion for Gender-Diverse Groups	Inclusion AND Diversity OR Management	359	132
Shore, LM/Lynn M/ Cleveland, JN/ Jeanette N/ Sanchez, D	2018	Inclusive workplaces: A review and model	Inclusion OR Diversity AND Management	121	103
Barak, MEM/Luria, G/Brimhall, KC	2021	What Leaders Say versus What They Do: Inclusive Leadership, Policy-Practice Decoupling, and the Anomaly of Climate for Inclusion	Barak	2	105
Barak, MEM/ Cherin, DA	1998	A tool to expand organizational understanding of workforce diversity: Exploring a	Barak	123	57

		measure of inclusion-exclusion			
Brewer, MB	1991	The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time.	Brewer	Unknown	Unknown
Schmidt, EK	2019	Diversity in diversity policy: the case of the Scandinavian countries	Inclusion OR Diversity AND Sweden	2	27
Chung, BG/Beth G./ Ehrhart, KH/Shore, LM/Randel, AE/ Dean, MA/ Kedharnath, U	2020	Work Group Inclusion: Test of a Scale and Model	Inclusion OR Diversity	24	73
Acker, J	2012	Gendered organizations and intersectionality: problems and possibilities	Gender OR Diversity OR Inclusion	205	Unknown
Cottrill, K/Lopez, PD/Hoffman, CC	2014	How authentic leadership and inclusion benefit organizations	Leadership AND Diversity OR Inclusion	41	Unknown
Holck, L/Muhr, SL/ Villesèche, F	2016	Identity, diversity and diversity management	Inclusion AND Diversity AND Management	40	Unknown
Jonsen, K/ Maznevski, ML/Schneider, SC	2010	Gender differences in leadership – believing is seeing: implications for managing diversity	Gender AND Leadership	32	Unknown
Tomlinson, J	2011	Gender equality and the state: a review of objectives, policies and progress in the European Union	Gender AND Sweden	7	62

Stringfellow, E	2018	Ideas at work: a discursive institutionalist analysis of diversity management and social dialogue in France, Germany and Sweden	Diversity AND Sweden	5	44
Randstad Group	2019	Human rights policy Sweden Randstad	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bell, E/Bryman A	2007	The ethics of management research: an exploratory content analysis	Management	106	70
Khelifa, R/ Mahdjoub, H	2022	An intersectionality lens is needed to establish a global view of equity, diversity and inclusion	Inclusion AND Diversity AND Global	0	43
Roberson, QM	2006	Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion in organizations	Inclusion AND Diversity AND Global	326	45
Tomlinson, CA/Brighton, C/ Hertberg, H/Callahan, CM/Moon, TR/ Brimijoin, K/Conover, LA/Reynolds, T	2003	Differentiating instruction in response to student readiness, interest, and learning profile in academically diverse classrooms: A review of literature	Inclusion OR Diversity AND School	276	127
Stoermer, S/Bader, AK/ Froese, FJ/ Hildisch, AK/Tung, R/Klarsfeld, A	2016	Culture matters: The influence of national culture on inclusion climate	Inclusion OR Diversity OR Conceptual level AND Culture	25	79

Killpack, TL/Melon, LC	2016	Toward Inclusive STEM Classrooms: What Personal Role Do Faculty Play?	Inclusion OR Diversity AND Daily life	29	106
Karimi, F/Matous, P	2018	Mapping diversity and inclusion in student societies: A social network perspective	Inclusion AND Diversity AND Society	7	80
Roberson, Q	2020	Access to justice as a human right, organizational entitlement and precursor to diversity and inclusion	Inclusion OR Diversity AND George Floyd	4	15
Creswell, JW	2013	Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches (book)	Research AND Qualitative	n/a	n/a
Stake, RF	1995	the art of case study research (book)	Case study	n/a	n/a
Syed, J/Ozbilgin, M	2015	Managing diversity and inclusion an international perspective (book)	Inclusion AND Diversity AND Management	n/a	n/a
Schmidt, L	2021	Redefining HR (book)	Diversity AND Management	n/a	n/a
Guba	1981	Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries	Guba AND Research AND Quality	1789	26
Brown, ME/ Trevino, LK/ Harrison, DA	2005	Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing	Ethical leadership	1833	109

Bell/Ozbilging/ Beauregard/ Surgevil	2011	Voice, silence, and diversity in 21st century organizations: Strategies for inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees	Diversity management AND Gender	104	Unknown
Dingsoyr, T/Nerur, S/Baljepally, V/ Moe, N B	2012	A decade of agile methodologies: Towards explaining agile software development	Diversity management	387	72
Treven, S/Mulej, M	2007	The systemic approach to the encouragement of innovativeness through employee diversity management	Diversity management	2	48
Randstad Group	2020	sustainable@work	n/a	n/a	n/a
Randstad Group	2021	sustainable@work	n/a	n/a	n/a
Randstad Group	2022	EDI report	n/a	n/a	n/a
Randstad group	2022	Annual report 2021	n/a	n/a	n/a

Appendix 2 Interviewees information form

Diversity and inclusion interview

Information form

Dear sir/madam,

Thank you for your corporation in my thesis study. I would like to provide you with some information about my (study) background, this study, the data usage, confidentiality, and purpose before the interview. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know. I will provide this form during the interview once more to sign this information form.

My name is Romy Walraven, I am from the Netherlands and I have a bachelor's degree in Aviation Engineering (www.linkedin.com/in/romy-walraven-b78b5414a). I am currently in the last semester of the master of Engineering Management at Jönköping University. I am currently following my last course and I am working on my thesis.

This study focuses on the appliance of diversity and inclusion strategies at an organizational level in a corporation with Randstad. I will conduct several interviews to evaluate and review the diversity and inclusion strategy at Randstad to create a better understanding of diversity and inclusion management.

Your privacy will be respected during this study. The interviewees' gender and age will not be shared, the interview will be recorded, all results will be stored in OneDrive, and confidentiality forms are signed. The questions will not be shared before the interview but it is no problem if you do not feel comfortable answering the question.

Thank you in advance.

Kind regards,
Romy Walraven
Waro21xi@student.ju.se
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_____ _____

Interviewee and date Interviewer and date

Appendix 3 Interview details

This appendix provides the detailed answers from the semi-constructed interviews.

Appendix 3A interview 1

Junior consultant manager in Jönköping, Sweden.

1. What do diversity and inclusion mean to you and why is it important?
- Everyone can give a general opinion about everything
- Listing to each other
- Does not matter who you are, if you are a new or old employee/your gender /if you have a higher level of experience or lower level of experience
- Including everybody's opinion
- It does not matter what title you have or if you are higher up in the ranking order or if you lower down in the ranking to include everybody

2. Why are diversity and inclusion important to you?
- Feel better in your working life if you have people listening to what you have to say. I think that's very important for you to like your job and think that it is good to come every day because if you do not have colleagues listing to you it will be a problem very fast. You are probably not going to stay as long as you would have if your colleagues would listen to you because you feel like you are not in the group
- The culture there might be a culture cultural thing when they found this as a new employee and they're doing things as they always used to do and they don't want to change and they don't listen to you and I think that I do not want it like that in my workplace.

3. Has your thinking about diversity and inclusion changed over time?
- It is not something we talk about in the workplace in general
- There are readings online but it is not something we bring up during work
- You have it in your head every day, like any bracket and you you're not thinking about it, but it is always there in some ways and I think we are very including here

4. How do diversity and inclusion relate to the workplace?
- When you have maybe seen what it is not having an including workplace and having an including workplace and you see what it does to your mood at work here, you're feeling better
- Listening to you and you can change ideas you can. It doesn't matter what you say, they don't really mind if it's a bad idea, they just yeah, maybe that wasn't great, but at least they're listening to it

5. Does diversity and/or inclusion influence your work?
- Many different cultures in Sweden
- Can require a different approach/way of talking

- I have kind of have to act as a chameleon and adjust to the situations and cultures
- Very important to listen carefully
- Bring people with other cultures into the society

6. (why) Do you believe that it is important to create more awareness for a diverse and inclusive company/branch?

- Yes
- It affects how people perform
- Work with each other
- Effect of positive attitudes

7. What do you think is the most difficult aspect of a diverse and inclusive work environment?

- If it is not there or discussed, it brings the whole office down

8. How do you experience the diverse and inclusive environment at the office?

- People are open minded
- We want to work on the same level
- We have an open office; we talk about almost everything and we can say everything
- Good culture right now
- I think that we would work the same if we had different cultural backgrounds in the office because we see the person and not the nationality, where you are from, or gender for example

9. Who oversees diversity and inclusion at a company/branch in your opinion?

- There is no one

10. What kind of training/information have you received about diversity and inclusion?

- In some way
- The boarding program for new employees does maybe mention it but not enough to remember, you can read about it but it is not discussed but I think that maybe they should
- Mention how they work with it on an organizational level
- Elaborate on what they talk about in the head office because for the branches it is interesting to know some sort of strategy on how they tackle both threats and opportunities for example
- The training focused on work culture/systems, and work-related training the work like recruiting, sales and those sorts of things and getting to know each other
- I guess you could throw in just an hour to elaborate on how they work with this, and so you're getting some something to start with

11. Are you aware of any initiatives from Randstad to increase/improve diversity and inclusion?

- No but I think that we should be because I know that they are working with it but it is not communicated to us
- I am only here for a year now so it might have something to do with that but I would like to know more about what they are doing and what their strategy is

- Communication issues (Jonkoping -> Goteborg -> Stockholm -> Diemen)

12. Why do you (not) feel welcome/at home at Randstad?

- Yes
- Everyone is very welcoming on all levels in the organization
- I want to go to work every day because it feels good
- It makes you more willing to do things and you will stay longer at the company

13. Randstad also talks about equity and belongingness, what does this mean to you?

- I have not really thought about it a lot
- It is also very important but I think that diversity and inclusion are more important at the moment
- Think about all different cultures in Sweden

14. Have you experienced any challenges?

- Pandemic
- Working remotely
- Different processes
- Different types of conversations because you do not meet and talk every day, sometimes you did not talk to colleagues for weeks

15. Have you experienced disrespectful comments, discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment at the company? How did you react?

- Six months ago
- Some old colleagues that maybe did not include as much as we do now
- Has maybe after they left strengthened the inclusion we have now
- I was new so I could not really say anything, I worked with this person in the same expertise but did not really talk to this person or to others
- We talked about it more after the person left, we discussed how it was before (everyone worked individually, there was no inclusion, everyone did their job and did not talk to each other, nothing was changing)
- Culture changed after the person left (more talking to each other, including each other even though it is not your expertise, how we want to work now, some kind of strategy), discussed it afterward but it is not discussed recently anymore

16. How would you advocate for diversity and inclusion with a coworker who doesn't understand its importance?

- Based on the experience from question 14: I would speak up/do something now that I know how it affects the office and people because my work has improved since the person left
- See question 14

17. What is your approach to understand the perspectives/points of view of colleagues with different backgrounds?

- Talk/discuss the situation with them

18. How would you promote diversity and inclusion?

- We would mention how we work with these things and what their view are
- You want to know from the beginning how they see these things and you don't need to see it the same way, but you kind of need to have the same sort of understanding
- Just when you are out at the clients and you see how they talk to each other, how they work and so I think you can see more of our bigger clients that have maybe the resources to work with it a lot and a bit less when you go to the maybe meet even smaller clients who might not have the resources, there is sometimes a difference between clients in big cities and in smaller places
- We can promote/discuss more how we work and how we want to improve towards our clients
- We apply blind recruitments and most clients respond very well to it

19. Do you have anything else you would like to add/elaborate?

- I think that our generation (generation y/z) thinks more about it compared to older generations
- It is interesting to know other point of views
- Within the company I think that the communication is lacking to provide us with more information about the diversity and inclusion

Appendix 3B interview 2

Branch manager in Borås and Jönköping, Sweden.

1. What do diversity and inclusion mean to you and why is it important?

- It means that every human needs to have the same rights
- It should not depend on how you look or where you are from or what do you believe in or your gender or things like that
- And it means that everyone should be included in society

2. Why are diversity and inclusion important to you?

- Lot of people would feel excluded
- People might feel depressed or seen as outsiders
- Impact on work, work life and there are a lot of people not working and the economy will be suffering from it in the long term
- Different competencies contribute a lot to the team

3. Has your thinking about diversity and inclusion changed over time?

- It has always been with me; I think a lot about also because of a personal experience (brother with a different skin tone who is sometimes threaten differently even though he is from Sweden)

- I have the position to use some kind of power to push our clients in the right direction because we have the facts and we also have the people from Randstad who have our back if necessary
- Previous work experience at a different company:
  - They take a lot of young immigrants who could not find work and they were still learning Swedish
  - They got friends and were included in the Swedish society
  - They became successful
  - Made me realize that we can have an impact with our position to affect people's life

4. How do diversity and inclusion relate to the workplace?

- Swedish leaders are often afraid to work with diversity and inclusion because they need to change themselves and it is a big thing for them to adjust to change
- Clients often say that the Swedish language is very important but we disagree, their reason is often because of safety rules but there are a lot of solutions for language barriers but they are often only afraid to speak English
- It can feel uncomfortable making changes within the team for clients
- I really took it into consideration when I created my team, to have a mixed team with different genders, ages, knowledge, and background

5. Do diversity and/or inclusion influence your work?

- Yes, all the time. Usually it comes naturally to me, but just like for many others, I also need to go beyond my own prejudices in my profession
- For example, when we make a selection among job applications, to not let for example the image on someone's resume influences my decision, etc. Also thinks daily about including everyone in my own team and inviting them to talk, suggestions and discussions
- Our job is to see both competence and potential in people and whether we like it or not, all people have prejudices, the brain is built so that we sort people into compartments. In our work, we need to think actively about this, all the time so that the brain eventually does it itself, automatically

6. (why) Do you believe that it is important to create more awareness for a diverse and inclusive company/branch?

- There is already a lot of awareness because it is discussed at every level within the company
- The employees that Randstad is a huge supporter of diversity and inclusion
- Any kind of discrimination is unacceptable and we work in a safe environment

7. What do you think is the most difficult aspect of a diverse and inclusive work environment?

- You can only hope that all employees are working with it and have the courage to start a discussion with a client if necessary

- Giving your opinion/speaking up when you are new to the team/client might be difficult, we have to make sure that they feel safe and that they know that we have their backs

8. How do you experience the diverse and inclusive environment at the office?

- We have clients who want a specific type of person because the rest of the team is also like that, we challenge them to take someone different
- Within the team I have made clear that I am very open to feedback and different point of view and opinions
- It is our ambition to give everyone the courage to ask a client why certain things are important to do it in the requested way

9. Who oversees diversity and inclusion at a company/branch in your opinion?

- There is not one specific person for this, we are all aware of it and working with it

10. What kind of training/information have you received about diversity and inclusion?

- Every new employee receives training (onboarding program) with one full day discussing diversity and inclusion with the legal and HR department, specific situations are discussed with good and wrong actions
- We have various projects during the months with different themes connected to diversity and inclusion, we receive materials and discuss it within the team and with the customer to create more awareness

11. Are you aware of any initiatives from Randstad to increase/improve diversity and inclusion?

- See question 9 (themes)
- Not really something locally

12. Why do you (not) feel welcome/at home at Randstad?

- I feel welcome and at home in Randstad because their work is included. My manager and management team listen to my opinions and my suggestions and value my work. I feel that the values match my own values

13. Randstad also talks about equity and belongingness, what does this mean to you?

- For me, belonging means that all people have the right to feel connected and to be able to work in solidarity. Randstad plays a major role in society. Offering a job, a connection with colleagues, to feel important and valuable is very important for people's well-being
- Equity for me is that you get decent work conditions both in working life when it comes to following policies, collective agreements, etc. but also that everyone can have the same chance to get a job. It should not matter what your name is or where you come from, it is always the competence and potential that determines whether you get the job or not

14. Have you experienced any challenges?

- Not within the team because we talk about it often

- All the time with clients, we have recently discussed this in the management group for my region and all the branch managers and also with our regional director but also with our HR Director and HR and everyone we know that we need to improve ourself (for example: we have no one working with us who is in a wheelchair, we are wondering if there is a specific reason for this)
- We need to step up more

15. Have you experienced disrespectful comments, discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment at the company? How did you react?

- I think I have but I cannot think of an example right now

16. How would you advocate for diversity and inclusion with a coworker who doesn't understand its importance?

- Discuss the topics and consider that we all have different point of views and opinions which is of course very welcome
- Talk about it within the team

17. What is your approach to understanding the perspectives/points of view of colleagues with different backgrounds?

- Hire new people to have new point of views and different opinions because an outsider can see things differently which can have a positive effect on the performance
- We share research, facts, and material internally which is provided by Randstad

18. How would you promote diversity and inclusion?

- We explain the importance and long-term effects (better results, economy etc) to our clients
- We explain the benefits such as social improvements, new knowledge/point of view to increase the awareness

19. Do you have anything else you would like to add/elaborate?

- n/a

Appendix 3C interview 4

Consultant manager in Borås, Sweden.

1. What do diversity and inclusion mean to you?
   - Everyone is welcome
   - It does not matter where you are from, your gender or something else
   - It is all about the person
2. Why are diversity and inclusion important to you?
   - To make everyone feel worthy
   - Everyone deserves a chance to have the same opportunities
3. Has your thinking about diversity and inclusion changed over time?
   - It has always been with me
4. How do diversity and inclusion relate to the workplace?
   - Include everyone in the team
   - It is all about the person, not the gender or age
5. Do diversity and/or inclusion influence your work?
   - When I joined this team, it felt like I had been here for a year but it was only 1 week
   - It does not matter at which branch you are, everyone is the same and including
   - It is a safe place
   - Everyone is helpful
6. (why) Do you believe that it is important to create more awareness for a diverse and inclusive company/branch?
   - I have a clear opinion; I provide clients with candidates that suit the job description not with what the clients want (a specific person)
   - It is all about competences
7. What do you think is the most difficult aspect of a diverse and inclusive work environment?
   - Clients often have difficulties with the language barrier, they prefer Swedish (mainly because of safety rules)
   - Differs per industry
8. How do you experience the diverse and inclusive environment at the office?
   - It is natural for me and the team here
   - Team boras exist of different nationalities (Bosnia, Sweden, Syria/Iran, Albania) and different ages (25-55)
9. Who oversees diversity and inclusion at the company/branch?
   - There is not one person, everyone works with it
10. What kind of training/information have you received about diversity and inclusion?

- No real training or information received
- We talk about it at the office, it is something that is there all day because everyone is very open

11. Are you aware of any initiatives from Randstad to increase/improve diversity and inclusion?
    - We are not working with something right now
12. Why do you (not) feel welcome/at home at Randstad?
    - Yes, every day
    - Randstad is a fantastic company because everyone is worth the same
    - You work as a team
13. Randstad also talks about equity and belongingness, what does this mean to you?
    - Everyone who works at Randstad is Randstad, no matter where you work or what your job is
    - Everyone is part of the team, no matter your position
    - Respect each other
14. Have you experienced any challenges?
    - Not really
    - The language barrier is the biggest challenge
    - Example: many people are currently looking for a job (a lot from Iraq for example) but their Swedish is not good enough yet and that is a challenge to present to clients
    - Coaching sessions can be helpful
15. Have you experienced disrespectful comments, discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment at the company? How did you react?
    - Nothing
16. How would you advocate for diversity and inclusion with a coworker who doesn't understand its importance?
    - We challenge the clients to follow our advice and it works out
17. What is your approach to understanding the perspectives/points of view of colleagues with different backgrounds?
    - Discuss the options and reasons why something should be done differently
18. How would you promote diversity and inclusion?
    - Start conversations and talk openly about it
19. Do you have anything else you would like to add/elaborate?
    - It is very good including company
    - Gender, age, background it all does not matter
    - When I worked with a colleague in Oslo, it felt like we had worked together for a long time but it was only 2 times, we had the same values

Appendix 3D interview 5

Consultant manager and recruitment consultant in Jönköping, Sweden.

1. What do diversity and inclusion mean to you?
   - People are equal
   - Focus on the competencies
2. Why are diversity and inclusion important to you?
   - Gender and nationality do not matter it is about your competencies
3. Has your thinking about diversity and inclusion changed over time?
   - Yes
   - Since I am working at Randstad, I work with people all the time and those topics are always there
   - It was always on my mind but now I am more aware of it
   - I am an engineer and worked with a lot of men before but it has never bothered me
4. How do diversity and inclusion relate to the workplace?
   - Clients have to be convinced often
   - Clients are often working with it even though they do not always realize that
   - I conduct a personal test with possible employees for clients to get an idea of their personality and competencies to show the client and to decide if the person fits the team
   - It is important that the team works out, in this case it is often that personality is more important compared to competencies
5. Do diversity and/or inclusion influence your work?
   - Yes
   - Always working with people
   - Focus points
6. (why) Do you believe that it is important to create more awareness for a diverse and inclusive company/branch?
   - Clients can be more aware of it or put it more into practice
   - Everyone has biases, it is all about how to deal with them
7. What do you think is the most difficult aspect of a diverse and inclusive work environment?
   - It is difficult to find people in certain industries because of certain requirements
   - The language barrier can be a big problem for certain industries because not everyone speaks English or Swedish but I do see that it is changing
   - Safety instructions
8. How do you experience the diverse and inclusive environment at the office?
   - Everyone at the office is quite aware of it because we all work with people

- It would be interesting to have someone who is not from Sweden working at the office

9. Who oversees diversity and inclusion at the company/branch?
   - Everyone works with, there is not one specific person in charge
10. What kind of training/information have you received about diversity and inclusion?
    - We have done an online training
11. Are you aware of any initiatives from Randstad to increase/improve diversity and inclusion?
    - Not working with any at the moment
12. Why do you (not) feel welcome/at home at Randstad?
    - Yes
    - Everyone has good values
    - Working in a team
13. Randstad also talks about equity and belongingness, what does this mean to you?
    - Being part of the company
    - Feel good at work to give a 100%
    - Same values
14. Have you experienced any challenges?
    - Clients often want a specific person but for me the goal is to find someone who fits in the team based on personality and competencies, no matter age or gender for example
    - We do not always provide all the information requested by the clients
    - It does not really matter if it is a big or small client, it depends on the hiring manager
15. Have you experienced disrespectful comments, discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment at the company? How did you react?
    - No not that I can think about
    - I am an engineer and I have always worked mostly with men which might have influenced it
16. How would you advocate for diversity and inclusion with a coworker who doesn't understand its importance?
    - Give them the time to understand it
    - Talk about it
17. What is your approach to understanding the perspectives/points of view of colleagues with different backgrounds?
    - We receive feedback from our clients which we can discuss with the candidates
    - We ask questions in a certain way to create more awareness
    - Discuss the recruitment process
18. How would you promote diversity and inclusion?
    - Last year we had a webinar for employees and clients about diversity and inclusion topics

- Share documents and articles with clients and online to create more awareness

19. Do you have anything else you would like to add/elaborate?
    - It is very important to create more awareness to make people work more naturally with it
    - The changes will not happen in 1 day, it will take time
    - Eventually it has to come naturally, this already starts with children

Appendix 3E interview 6

Talent partner and EDI&B practitioner in Stockholm, Sweden.

1. What do diversity and inclusion mean to you?
    - Working in a way to make sure that everyone has the same abilities and rights to feel belonging
    - Feel welcome and do good work no matter your background or contributes
    - Same possibilities for everyone in a workplace or community
2. Why are diversity and inclusion important to you?
    - Personal experience
    - Competencies are very important
    - Being open to new perspectives
3. Has your thinking about diversity and inclusion changed over time?
    - It changes constantly
    - We need to be open to all forms of competencies nowadays
4. How do diversity and inclusion relate to the workplace?/Do diversity and/or inclusion influence your work?
    - We all work in different forms with it
    - Global community with some kind of roadmaps and goals, local offices and opcos get the information from us
    - Strategics, goals, how we work with it is communicated to the other offices
5. What do you think is the most difficult aspect of a diverse and inclusive work environment?
    - The belonging part
    - Raise the diversity of a group or team
    - You need to add people to a team who stand for something else in relation to the people who are already working there
    - Demands active work of the group or team which has to happen parallel to increasing the diversity to also increase the level of sense of belonging

- We currently talk similar to all managers but in the future, this might have to be adjusted to the offices based on their location, way of working, the team, or specialization for example

6. How do you experience the diverse and inclusive environment at the office?
   - It differs per office; smaller offices have less awareness of what we are working on here in Stockholm but everyone knows that we are working with it and that it is in our core values
   - Communication is an important aspect in such a big company
   - There is a lot of information going to the employees daily
   - Currently working on how to carry the information out to bring it more into practice and how to reach everyone
7. What kind of training/information do people receive about diversity and inclusion?
   - All new employees have an onboarding training where EDI&B is discussed
   - Legal aspects and behavioral aspects
   - How to work in practice within the recruitment process to make sure that we make room for everyone
8. Why do you (not) feel welcome/at home at Randstad?
   - Yes, very much
   - Since I started here, I have felt perceived for who I am
   - Appreciation and recognition for my work
   - Values are appreciated
9. Randstad also talks about equity and belongingness, what does this mean to you?
   - In the community or group that you are a part of and that you are accepted for who you are, what you think, what you believe, even if that is something that is different from other people in the community or the group, and that you are seeing as somebody who brings value
   - Connection with the headquarters is important to create more belongingness
10. Have you experienced any challenges?
    - I come with the norms that I have been raised with and when you meet new people you identify new challenges every time
    - We are currently trying to figure out how to carry it out in practice within Sweden
    - Swedish people often have difficulties with speaking English even though we speak it very well maybe it is because Swedes do not want to take up too much room in the community or group which results in high integrity which leads to barriers maybe

- There is a lack of competencies in the Swedish labor market currently, employees do not want to switch employers because of the all uncertainties resulting from Covid-19, economic issues etc
- Differences between generations mostly because of how they grew up
- The most important challenge is how do we get people to work with it actively because in Sweden it has always been here but the challenge is to put in into practice

11. How would you advocate for diversity and inclusion with a coworker who doesn't understand its importance? What is your approach to understanding the perspectives/points of view of colleagues with different backgrounds?
    - Provide facts with reports
    - Discuss their challenges in detail because most of the time you can find common ground and the issues can be solved
    - Discuss different perspectives
    - Find the core problem
12. How would you promote diversity and inclusion?
    - We have done surveys with our employees to measure their experiences and EDI awareness
    - Involve as many different kinds of people as possible without judging different perspectives and make it very personal with the result to create some kind of overview with facts to put it into practice
13. Do you have anything else you would like to add/elaborate?
    - In the recent years we have been formalizing it a lot and decided to have a global program manager for those subjects because it is always changing and always accurate
    - We started with a more local focus to bring it more into practice but we are still trying to figure out how we can do this in the best way
    - Belongingness is a more difficult topic for people, it gets big, complex, and more personal
    - The question is how do we create a sense of belonging so that we can work for greater equity and a more diverse workforce
    - If people feel welcome/at home, that is a great start for a sustainable EDI&I
    - We are probably creating a business resource group which will be in charge of reporting with managers to see how it works practically to reach all employees in the country
    - In the IT industry, diversity has been a topic for a longer time already and you can really see that they have developed this a lot because they are really focused on the competencies
    - It is always changing and the work will never be done