



BARRIERS IN BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

A case study of how certain organizational practices
lead to non-inclusion from employees' perspectives

Reshma Sriram Ramamurthy

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Abstract

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Purpose: The purpose of this master thesis is to explore the specific organizational practices acting as barriers in promoting inclusion at the workplace from employees' perspectives. The same is explored with a two-fold approach, regional and international teams.

Theory: In order to examine the above purpose, inequality regimes are referred to understand what and how organizational practices create non-inclusion. Secondly, inclusive management is referred to comprehend manager-follower relationships and interactions within the teams.

Methodology: To investigate the reasons and barriers for inclusion, a qualitative case study has been conducted through interviews and observations. 25 interviews were conducted complemented by five observation meetings and three consultation meetings with diversity and inclusion representatives.

Result: The empirical findings of the thesis yielded different organizational practices that could create non-inclusion. Namely, salary setting, hierarchy, promotions, training and development, work environment and communication practices in the regional teams. Whereas differences in salary, benefits, promotions and communication challenges in the international team.

Foreword

My personal experiences of living abroad and coming across people from various backgrounds and cultures motivated me to write my master thesis in the field of diversity and inclusion. The whole of the thesis period has been an exciting and educational journey. I have personally gained a lot of knowledge in the field during this period.

My sincere thanks to Jennie, Johan and Peter for giving me the amazing opportunity to conduct my research at the case organization. My special thanks to diversity and inclusion representatives at the firm and all the interview participants for their time and honest opinions. I extend my gratitude to my thesis supervisor Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist for guiding me through every step of this thesis research. Last but never the least, I am thankful for my family and my husband Vishnu for their constant support and encouragement which kept me motivated.

Reshma Sriram Ramamurthy

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1. Introduction

Globalization has greatly influenced workplaces as people from diverse backgrounds are more easily connected (Pless & Maak, 2004). Participation of individuals in the labour market from various racial, national minorities and ethnic groups is witnessed in many countries across the globe (Mor Barak, 2000). Societies are growing more diverse and corporate firms are expected to make efforts in order to make use of these varied talents through diversity management (Dobbin, 2009). Otherwise they might lose the opportunities and experiences these diverse talents bring to the table. This can confine the need to create an inclusive work environment. In such an environment the goal is to make all the employees feel equal, valued and respected (Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez, 2018). Conferring to previous studies the benefits of workforce integration and inclusion include, enhanced employees' productivity (Shore et al., 2018), job satisfaction, organizational commitment (Vohra et al., 2015) and help in gaining full potential of the employees (Pless & Maak, 2004).

According to Shore et al. (2018) many of the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) studies in various business sectors are mostly conducted in the United States (US). Correspondingly, Romani, Holck, Holgersson and Muhr (2017) stated D&I studies are comparatively less in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries. While looking at diversity management in Sweden, it was found that companies in Sweden are actively working towards diversity and inclusion. In a survey conducted by TNS Sifo for Proffice among 400 Swedish managers (both private and public) indicated that the percentage of those who are fervently working towards diversity has increased from 69% in 2013 to 80% in the year 2015 (Proffice, 2015). Regardless of organizations' efforts, diverse teams, varied educational and cultural backgrounds, gender and age are some of the characteristics that can multiply the complexity of creating an inclusive work environment (Shore et al., 2018).

In relation to D&I, changes can be seen in the way organizations recruit, compensate and fire employees. That is, the roles of professions (particularly, human resources management), organizations and government with regards to discrimination and diversity management has also broadened (Dobbin, 2009). During the 1990s and 2000s, areas like, work-family

programs and anti-harassment programs were comprised to build more inclusionary practices at workplaces. Arguably, all these efforts resulted in expanding diversity programs which encompassed inclusion (Dobbin, 2009). This way through covering more D&I areas and programs, the scope for overcoming discrimination at workplaces has increased over the years. In an online article published by Harvard Business Review, economist and management consultant Sherbin and Rashid (2017)¹ argued that sustenance and advancement of businesses through their diverse workforce cannot be possible without inclusion. The authors further quoted the activist and inclusion strategist Verna Myers who said, “Diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance” in order to emphasize the difference between diversity and inclusion. In terms of business and corporate sectors, one could opine that the above quote signifies the importance of celebrating diversity and involving employees fairly and justly through inclusion irrespective of their diverse background.

Inclusion and inclusive practices here is referred to within the purview of Shore et al.’s (2018, 177) explanation who described inclusive practices at the workplace as “Practices sought to create equal access to decision-making, resources, and upward mobility opportunities for the individuals”. The implementation of inclusive practices and building inclusive teams is vital for the employees to feel equal, especially the ones who feel are being discriminated against on various grounds (Shore et al., 2018).

Many of the previous studies (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998; Allison, 1999; Prime & Salib, 2014; Vohra et al., 2015) are quantitative oriented and/or examined if employees at workplaces experienced inclusiveness or not. And, only a handful of studies were found regarding non-inclusion in relation to organizational practices and processes (Daya, 2014; Healy, Bradley & Forson, 2011). Conducting interviews through qualitative case study method might assist in exploring the reasons for non-inclusion in detail. And, particularly understanding how specific organizational practices act as barriers in creating an inclusive work environment in relation to employees’ characteristics like age, gender, sexual orientation, culture or ethnicity.

¹ <https://hbr.org/2017/02/diversity-doesnt-stick-without-inclusion>

Organizational practices are the functions in different areas of a company addressing the needs of stakeholders based on professional values (O'Connor & Netting, 2009). Arguably, these practices like, salary system, training and development, supervision and promotions, and work environment can influence the actions and behaviours of the employees within the organization which could either enhance inclusion or the contrary. Therefore, organizational practices play a significant role in building an inclusive work environment. Hence, the purpose of this qualitative research is to explore particular organizational practices acting as barriers for the promotion of inclusion at the workplace and to understand the same from employees' perspectives. Based on the above purpose the research question is framed as below,

- ❑ **What are the different organizational practices hindering the growth of inclusion and how are these practices creating non-inclusion at workplace from employees' perspectives?**

1.1. Outline of the report

In this introduction chapter, the purpose of the study and the research question followed by background of the case organization has been presented. The following chapter contains a review of the relevant previous studies referred. Theory concepts namely inequality regimes and inclusive management that guided throughout the research are explained in the third chapter. This is followed by the description of research design and data collection methods in the fourth chapter. Fifth chapter represents empirical data collected during the research elaborated with interview quotes. The collected data is interpreted and the contributions and limitations of the study are discussed in chapter six. Last chapter of the report outlines the main conclusion of the research. That is, different organizational practices creating non-inclusion from employees' perspectives.

1.2. Background

A multinational organization was chosen in order to investigate the above research problem. Further description of the case organization and its relevance to the research case is explained below.

1.2.1. Case organization:

The case organization is a Swedish manufacturing company spread globally and headquartered (HQ) in Gothenburg, Sweden. The master thesis research was conducted in the HQ, Operations division of the organization in Gothenburg, Sweden. There are thousands of employees in the division and around 500 employees are based in Sweden including both, the employees from regional and global functions.

1.2.2. Background of the research case:

During Spring 2019, an internal survey was conducted by the organization among the employees working in Sweden regarding organizational and social work environment as well as experiences of discrimination. Results of the survey found that there were certain number of cases who find that they are not treated equally and that they have been subjected to discrimination based on their age and/or gender. Due to the results of the survey which stated employees have experienced age and gender discrimination, it is important to contemplate the characteristics age and gender for this research. Furthermore, it is vital to consider the diverse workforce and explore beyond the Swedish context as there are international employees from different cultures and ethnicities working in the operations division of this multinational company. Therefore, this research involved a specific international team who participated in the study. Regional teams refer to employees from various teams working in Sweden for both global and regional functions. Whereas, the international team consists of employees functioning from different countries namely, Belgium, Brazil, France, Russia including Sweden.

Scholars have found various challenges to function and create an inclusive work environment with team members from different ethnicity and nationalities as work ethics, attitude towards

hierarchy, communication and behaviour styles vary from one country to another (Brett, Behfar & Kern, 2009). Therefore, in addition to age and gender, culture or ethnicity of the employees also acts as an important aspect. Furthermore, as the US sociologist Joan Acker emphasized that examination of multiple categories leads to better analysis and results (Acker, 2006). Thereby, exploring the different organizational practices acting as barriers in building an inclusive work environment irrespective of employees' age, gender, sexual orientation and culture or ethnicity. The same will be investigated with a two-fold approach that is, regional and international teams.

2. Previous research

In this section, a brief overview of the previous studies in the field of diversity and inclusion, inequality and discrimination at workplaces are presented. In addition, the findings and shortcomings of the studies are also discussed.

2.1. Benefits of inclusion

Having a diverse workforce in terms of age, gender and culture and considering and including their opinions in decision-making have been found to pave the way for creative ideas and innovative solutions. Prime and Salib's (2014) study among 1,512 employees in six countries namely Australia, China, Germany, India, Mexico, the United States found that the more employees feel included, the more they proved to be innovative in their work. Focusing on inclusionary practices and policies can in turn assist the organizations in gaining the advantages of having a more diverse workforce (Shore et al., 2018). Diversity and inclusion can hence become a competitive advantage for the organizations (Pless & Maak, 2004).

2.2. Studies on inclusion in an international context

According to Jonasson, Luring, and Guttormsen (2018), both the studies related to inclusion in international organizations and differences in the way management practices can influence local and foreign employees are scarce. As mentioned in the introduction part of this thesis report, while looking at previous studies on inclusion at workplaces (Mor Barak, 1998; Allison, 1999 and Dobbin & Kalev, 2018) it was found that most studies are based on the American context or conducted in the United States. Similarly, Romani et al. (2017) in their book mentioned that diversity in the field of business has a shorter history in Swedish and Danish context when compared with that of the United States and other Western countries because of no major demographic diversity until the 1950s. Therefore, more research in the Swedish context can be beneficial.

2.3. Pioneer studies on inclusion

As Shore et al. (2018) stated Mor Barak was one of the first researchers to methodically investigate the inclusive work environment. Michalle E. Mor Borak is a US Professor in the field of social work and business. Mor Barak, Cherin and Berkman's (1998) study found that there were conceptions of diversity and inclusion in two dimensions – personal and organizational, in their case organization. Furthermore, in another study Mor Barak and Cherin (1998) identified a concept of inclusion-exclusion bridge as an instrument to measure the level of inclusiveness that employees from diverse backgrounds perceived at workplaces in terms of decision-making, group involvement and access to resources. They conducted a quantitative study and merely measured if employees felt included or excluded. Mor Barak and Cherin's study however did not reveal if the inclusion or exclusion feeling of the sample population was based on gender, age and/or culture or other specific organizational practices. Nevertheless, both the concepts from the aforementioned studies cannot be generalized as the barriers to build an inclusive environment may vary from one organization to the other. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the reasons and problems that are acting as barriers in promoting an inclusive work environment specific to the case organization.

2.4. Laws, legislation, diversity and inclusion policies

There are various legislation to ensure diversity and inclusion at workplaces (Shore et al., 2018) which might vary from country to country. In Sweden, Discrimination Act exists to “Counter discrimination and promote equality regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, ethnic affiliation, religion or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation or age” (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 2014, §1).² Additionally, organizational and social work environment (OSA) regulations are framed to ensure favourable work conditions and environment in the companies (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2018). Most organizations in line with the legislation, promote inclusion, undertake diversity and inclusion training and change recruitment and promotion procedures. However, exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities can be witnessed at

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https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/diskrimineringslag-2008567_sfs-2008-567

workplaces despite the emergence of multiple anti-discriminatory laws (Mor Barak, 2008). Allison's (1999) study in the United States based on diversity and inclusion in parks and recreational agencies also revealed that regardless of the existence of diversity policies, employees still felt the need for inclusion.

Not all the diversity and inclusion programmes generate desired results. As Pless and Maak (2004) highlighted, sometimes these diversity and inclusion programmes can result in assimilation rather than inclusion and integration. Assimilation results in retracting from one's cultural identity and maintaining that of the dominant group in the society or workplace whereas integration is maintaining one's own cultural identity as well as that of the dominant group's (Berry, 1992). Thereby, arguing that in spite of regulations and organizations' readiness to implement inclusive practices, it is unclear why in reality employees experienced exclusion or unequal treatment at workplaces. In addition to employees' experiences one could also look into the results of the diversity training. Accordingly, Dobbin and Kalev (2018) in their article 'Why Doesn't Diversity Training Work?' published in *Anthropology Now* mentioned that diversity training is often ineffective because most corporations undertake such training for the purpose of legal compliance rather than business or management objectives.

2.5. Antecedents of exclusion at workplaces - Practices and processes

Exclusion or discrimination sometimes might result because of employees' behaviour. A study conducted among 225 participants in a Canadian company by Tremblay (2017) revealed that offensive humour behaviour of supervisors reduced the feeling of inclusion among followers and team-members. On the contrary, Forscher et al., (2018) suggested that sometimes non-inclusive behaviour of employees could be unintended. Additionally, non-inclusion can be rooted in organizational practices and processes as well (Daya, 2014; Acker, 2006). For instance, the process of hiring within one's network especially amongst men produces gender inequality. Brink and Benschop (2014) stated that male candidates more often get access to top positions in organizations through their connections and interactions with other men and this restricts the opportunities for other potential candidates. Based on Acker's (2006) framework of inequality regimes, a study conducted by Healy et al., (2011) in

public sector firms in the United Kingdom revealed that ethnic women (Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani) encountered exclusion as interactions at workplaces were racial and gendered. In the same study authors also found that Black Caribbean women experienced exclusion in the promotion process as they were deprived of promotion opportunities in comparison with white men and women. Research by Alfrey and Twine (2017) using the same framework among women tech employees from different companies in San Francisco revealed an interesting fact that the 'geek culture' acted as an inequality regime. Personality traits (like their dressing, interests) of women employees that reflected masculinity and, white and Asian women who identified themselves as lesbian, queer, bi- or pansexual felt more included by their male colleagues than other women.

Besides, Mor Barak (2000) opined that the major issue with regards to diverse workforce is practices like exclusion of some employees from organizational information and in decision-making. In a similar manner, Vohra et al., (2015) in their colloquium of review of academic literature on diversity and inclusion, recognized the importance and effectiveness of having inclusive workplaces. However, there is little empirical evidence in their article on the challenges faced by the organizations and requisites needed to build inclusive workplaces. Moreover, in line with Shore et al.'s, (2018) argument, it could be beneficial if the experiences of inclusionary practices could be understood and differentiated from managers' and non-managers' perspectives as the authors claimed there are no studies on this approach so far. In doing so, one could argue that a latent gap could be identified between managers' and non-managers' opinions on inclusion which could help in identifying the workgroup experiencing non-inclusion.

Finally, recapitulating the studies referred in this section arguably more studies in the Swedish context would be valuable. One could also argue that discrimination covers certain themes of non-inclusion but not all. According to Shore et al. (2018) there is no well-constructed understanding of what practices and behaviours form inclusionary experiences and the same lacks empirical evidence. Further, as Acker (2006) stated informal communication and processes that lead to inequality, informal exclusion based on age and ethnicity are most often not recognized. Thereby arguing that it is significant to empirically investigate reasons for

exclusion in relation to certain factors (like age, gender) and particular organizational practices. Additionally, more research to identify the barriers and understand the inconsistency between organizations' policies and employees expressing the need for their employers to be more inclusive will be beneficial. Because the business world is expanding and employees across the world are connected, one could only agree that it is crucial to create an inclusive work environment for the diverse workforce. It is agreeable as Pless and Maak (2004) claimed that it is necessary to research the challenges in building an inclusive stakeholders relationships and reflect upon the current barriers in the organizations that prove to be a problem in creating an inclusive environment. Therefore, more studies on inclusive practices at workplaces would be valuable to apprehend the barriers that are stalling from creating an inclusive work environment.

With regards to the purpose of this research, identifying organizational practices creating exclusion among employees at the case organization will add to research in Swedish context. Furthermore, recognizing different themes and behaviours causing exclusion can provide a clearer understanding of what constructs exclusionary practices at the workplace through empirical evidence.

3. Inequality regimes and management tools

Based on the research problem of how certain organizational practices can act as barriers in creating an inclusive work environment, the theory concepts below were chosen in order to gain further understanding of the issues throughout the research. Firstly, inequality regimes served as a foundation to look into practices and processes on an organization level. Secondly, the concept of inclusive management helped in comprehending how employees at team level can feel included and gain equal opportunities as others working at the same level, through inclusive managers and management.

3.1. Inequality regimes

A study was conducted by Acker (2006) on reproduction of inequalities and ways to identify inequalities at workplaces. In more detail, Acker (2006) in her article *Inequality Regimes* described two problems, firstly, mutual reproduction of inequality in terms of class, gender and race. Secondly, recognising the barriers to building equality at workplaces. Acker (2006, 443) defined inequality regimes as, “inter-connected policies, practices, meanings and actions which results in and maintains class, gender and racial inequalities within a particular organization.” Hence arguing that ‘inequality regimes’, an analytical method as an answer to recognize and comprehend the barriers to creating equality at workplaces (Acker, 2006).

Inequality in organizations can arise when there is a distinction in the opportunities received by employees for power and control, resources, decision-making, promotion, employment security, monetary rewards and considerations in the work relations (Acker, 2006). Arguably such practices establish bias and unjust treatment of the employees and reproduces inequality. Likewise, Shore et al., (2018), Dobbin (2009) and Mor Barak (2000) have highlighted the importance of sustenance of inclusion and inclusionary practices at workplaces. Hence inequality regimes helped in exploring and analysing in detail how certain organizational practices hinders the growth of inclusion.

According to Acker (2006) bases of inequality like class, gender, race, religion, sexuality, age, physical disability; organizational practices and processes producing inequality; control and compliance; inequalities’ extent; legality and lastly noticeability of inequality are the various

characteristics and components of the framework inequality regimes. Acker further stated that the degree of inequality may vary from one organization to the other and that inequality can be reproduced through different organizational practices. Such as, regulating the general requirements of work, establishing hierarchies, recruiting and hiring, determining wage and supervisory practices, informal interactions during the work (Acker, 2006). Therefore, investigating organizational practices that form components of inequality regimes and acting as hurdles in building an inclusive work environment in the case organization was helpful during the research. Moreover, inclusiveness and an inclusive work environment can be attained only when such inequality regimes are identified.

Inequality regimes by Acker (2006) has focussed on the bases namely class, gender and race of the employees and additionally, Acker (2006, 444) argued that “ethnicity may accompany race” as one of the factors for inequality. Similarly, this research aimed to focus on age, gender and ethnicity or culture of the employees. Further, the analysis of inequality regimes is centrally based on processes and practices carried out in the organizations across the US which leads to inequality at workplaces. Although Acker and her colleagues have conducted studies in Sweden, Norway and Finland, only those studies that are similar to practices and processes in the US organizations are considered in the analysis of inequality regimes (Acker, 2006). However, this research study could contribute more in the Swedish context.

3.2. Inclusive management

The significance of inclusive management practices with regards to local and foreign employees has been explored by Jonasson et al. (2018). Based on the survey responses from 792 local and 620 expatriate academics in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and the Netherlands the authors theorized and generalized the concept of inclusive management in international organizations. Thereby, providing insights on inclusive management especially in terms of integration of minority and majority employees through communication practices. In the words of Feldman, Khademian, Ingram and Schneider (2006) inclusive management can be described through two broad premises. Firstly, improving policies and practices by accompanying people with different mindset and perspectives and, appreciating each other's

opinions. Secondly, creation of equal opportunities by an inclusive manager that allows employees to work together and resolve the problems in hand. Feldman et al., (2006) believed that inclusive management assists in solving organizational issues and that the practice of inclusion should be seen in all sectors and across organizational boundaries. Through inclusive management, Feldman et al., (2006) aimed to assist managers to undertake important activities by implementing practices of inclusion. Inclusive management in international organizations could be better understood through two different groups – locals and expatriates and, two different types of inclusive management practices – a general one and a practice specific for minority's needs (Jonasson et al., 2018). For instance, the authors emphasized that English management communication can be an inclusionary practice as one could argue that English is an international language and commonly spoken by employees at workplaces. Therefore, this initiative can promote inclusion of foreign employees (Jonasson et al., 2018). Accordingly, Luring and Selmer (2012) outlined that through the inclusive management practice of consistent usage of common language lead to inclusion among employees especially in terms of access to information.

Furthermore, inclusion has also been applied in the field of leadership. According to Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon and Ziv (2010) the concept of leader inclusiveness was first coined by Nembhard and Edmonson (2006). Carmeli et al., (2010) described inclusive managers as those who are open, receptive and are available for their followers to interact. The authors further stated that leaders' relationship with the followers is vital in gaining valuable work-related outcomes and should also focus on whether employees feel the manager is available to them and if the manager is considerate to employees' needs (Carmeli et al., 2010). Additionally, managers' efforts are crucial to involve all the team members in the discussions, decisions and their opinions which otherwise might have been absent (Nembhard & Edmonson, 2006). Moreover, inclusive leaders should consider followers' interests, feelings and expectations and should be available to provide aid and assistance because support from inclusive leaders will enhance employees' involvement and attachment to the organization (Carmeli et al., 2010). Carmeli et al.'s, (2010) study also stated that inclusiveness is extremely important in providing support by the leaders as it builds high quality relationships between leaders and followers.

Arguably, the practice of inclusive management by the managers at the case organization can aid in reducing the feeling of non-inclusion and help in attaining employees' work engagement and psychological safety, that is, employees feeling safe and being themselves (Edmonson, 1999). Because the findings from Carmeli et al., (2010) and Nembhard and Edmonson (2006) suggested that inclusive leadership enhances psychological safety among employees. However, the studies did not state if employees feel included in the organization and gain equal access to resources, decision-making and promotion opportunities by implementing inclusive leadership and management practices.

As for the purpose of this research, inequality regimes facilitate in locating various practices and processes like regulating the general requirements of work, establishing hierarchies, recruiting and hiring, determining wage and supervisory practices, informal interactions during the work (Acker, 2006) that can reproduce exclusion. Secondly, inclusive management aid in the comprehension of fairness in career opportunities provided to all the employees in the organization as well as inter-team dynamics and work relationships.

4. Methodology

In order to understand and explore the barriers for an inclusive work environment, the qualitative research method is chosen. As Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls and Ormston (2014) explained, qualitative research aims at providing detailed description and comprehension of the research case. More precisely, it is a qualitative single case study design. Yin (2014) argued that case study method is appropriate when ‘how and why’ questions are involved in the research and when there is a specific case to be investigated and the focus is on the contemporary circumstances. Accordingly, the research is an empirical and thorough investigation of the barriers in creating an inclusive work environment in a real-life organization. Single case study’s approach of in-depth and holistic comprehension of the research case in hand enables either questioning or conferring the theory in relation to research’s single case (Yin, 2014) as well as generalizability of the results (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The units of analysis for the study are the employees and managers in the Operations division of the case organization (Yin, 2014).

4.1. Sampling strategy

The sample selection should be done carefully and well-thought as the analysis of the whole research will mainly be based on the data collected through sample population (Flick, 2014). In the lookout for samples, an email invite was sent by the thesis supervisor at the case organization to all the employees working in different parts of Sweden within the Operations division mentioning the theme and purpose of the thesis. And additionally, as mentioned earlier in this report, an international team was also chosen as a sample group for the thesis research.

In total, 25 responses (Appendix A) were received of which 11 employees were from the international team and the other 14 responses were from regional, that is, employees spread across the division within Sweden. All the interview respondents were voluntary. Interviewees represented various educational and cultural backgrounds, positions, gender and age groups. To summarise the demographic details of the sample population, there were 11

female employees and 14 male employees, 12 native and 13 non-native respondents, ranging between 26 and 65 years old.

Table 1: Tabular presentation of sample population

Age	25 to 65 years
Gender	Female: 11
	Male: 14
Ethnicity	Natives (Swedes): 12
	Non-natives: 13

Post receiving responses from the employees, interviews were scheduled by the researcher and interviews were conducted at the workplace. A consent form (Appendix B) was shared with the interviewees and signed before or during the interviews were conducted.³

4.2. Data collection strategy

Primary data was collected through two qualitative methods namely, interviews and observations. The process implemented in collecting data through these methods are presented below.

4.2.1. Interviews

Interviews were semi-structured and interviews allowed to establish a good rapport with the respondents, detailed study of respondents' circumstances and their perspectives (Ritchie et al., 2014). Interviewing also helped in gaining unpredicted and unexpected information (Charmaz, 2014) as many people tend to open up more when spoken to them in person. This helped in identifying the personal experiences of interviewees and finding out the potential barriers in creating an inclusive work environment. Interviews were conducted during the months of February and March that is, from 6th February to 11th March, 2020. Interview questions were framed by the researcher based on theory, previous studies (Acker 2006;

³ Five of the signed consent forms could not be received as the researcher was unable to get in touch with the respondents because of COVID-19 pandemic crisis. However, email confirmation was obtained for the content of the consent form.

Shore et al., 2018) and results of the internal survey conducted by the case organization. To gain holistic comprehension of the research topic, the interview guide (Appendix C) comprised five broad themes namely - *background questions, experiences of inclusion and non-inclusion, challenges in creating inclusive practices and inclusive work environment, visibility to the management and concluding questions*. Primarily, open ended questions were asked based on the aforementioned themes. In addition, probing questions (Ritchie et al., 2014) like, reasons behind non-inclusive concerns shared by the respondents, examples of such incidents and questions like how often employees noticed or experienced non-inclusiveness in relation to those concerns were asked to know more about the non-inclusive experiences. Interviews were held either face-to-face or through Skype for Business (either video or audio), which is the common communication channel used throughout the organization. Such online interviews were beneficial when participants were spread across different locations and for those who were on a busy work schedule (Ritchie et al., 2014). The length of each interview varied between 34 and 75 minutes (see appendix A).

4.2.2. Observations

Observation as another source of primary data collection for this research was done by participating in the related meetings. They were helpful in gaining additional information for the research (Yin, 2014). Correspondingly, observations assisted in gaining knowledge on the efforts of the organization to stabilize and overcome the issues related to inclusion. In relation to regional teams, a meeting was attended with the team who dedicatedly are working with active measures and ensuring organizational and social work environment at the workplace. Henceforth referred to as Active measures and OSA team. However, the researcher was unable to attend the second follow-up meeting because of COVID-19 pandemic crisis. And with regards to the international team, the researcher was given an opportunity to participate in four weekly meetings with the team through Skype for Business and all four meetings were attended. These observation meetings offered understanding into processes carried out in the organization and provided insights to interactions and behaviours on inclusionary practices in the organization. Observations also aided in interpreting how the behaviours described during interviews were implemented in practice (Ritchie et al., 2014). Additionally, the researcher

consulted two of the Diversity and Inclusion representatives to gain further insights on initiatives taken by the case company. All the meetings attended are presented in the table below.

Table 2: List of meetings attended

Name	Description	Date	Duration
Observation meeting 1	Active measures and organization and social work environment meeting (Regional)	04.02.2020	01:00:00
Observation meeting 2	International team - Weekly meeting	17.02.2020	01:00:00
Observation meeting 3	International team - Weekly meeting	24.02.2020	01:00:00
Observation meeting 4	International team - Weekly meeting	06.03.2020	01:00:00
Observation meeting 5	International team - Weekly meeting	13.03.2020	01:00:00
Consultation 1	Discussion with Diversity and Inclusion representative 1	19.02.2020	00:45:00
Consultation 2	Discussion with Diversity and Inclusion representative 2	16.03.2020	01:00:00
Consultation 3	Follow-up discussion with Diversity and Inclusion representative 2	18.03.2020	00:30:00

Results, feedback and statistics from previous survey (Spring, 2019), company's policies on inclusion and discrimination and related PowerPoint slides formed the sources of secondary data.

4.3. Analytical strategy and analytical considerations

In gaining complete comprehension of the research, interpretation of the data is crucial (Flick, 2014). Employees' experiences, thoughts and organizations' practices relating to inclusion

were identified and interpreted for better understanding and further analysis. The data gathered through interviews were primarily transcribed by the researcher for the purpose of analysis as Flick (2014) argued transcribing the interviews is an unavoidable step in qualitative data analysis. Post transcribing collected data was examined through the method of thematic analysis. As a first step of the analysis, texts were primarily coded by the researcher through the software NVivo 12 Pro to describe the content. Coding played a significant role as it acted as a link between the collected data and developing the data (Charmaz, 2014). Later on, themes were identified by grouping multiple related codes. That is, evaluating these initial codes aided in aligning the codes with themes relevant to the data collected. In more detail, different codes like *'network and connections, more Swedish middle-aged managers, less promotion opportunities for female employees and younger employees, homogenous hiring, need for inclusive managers'* were connected to the common theme of *'hierarchy and promotions'*. The mapping of the themes with the frequency of their occurrences assisted in understanding and answering the research question (Ritchie et al., 2014). The main themes derived from the coded texts are represented below (Figure 1) divided between regional and international teams and are further explained in the empirical findings section.

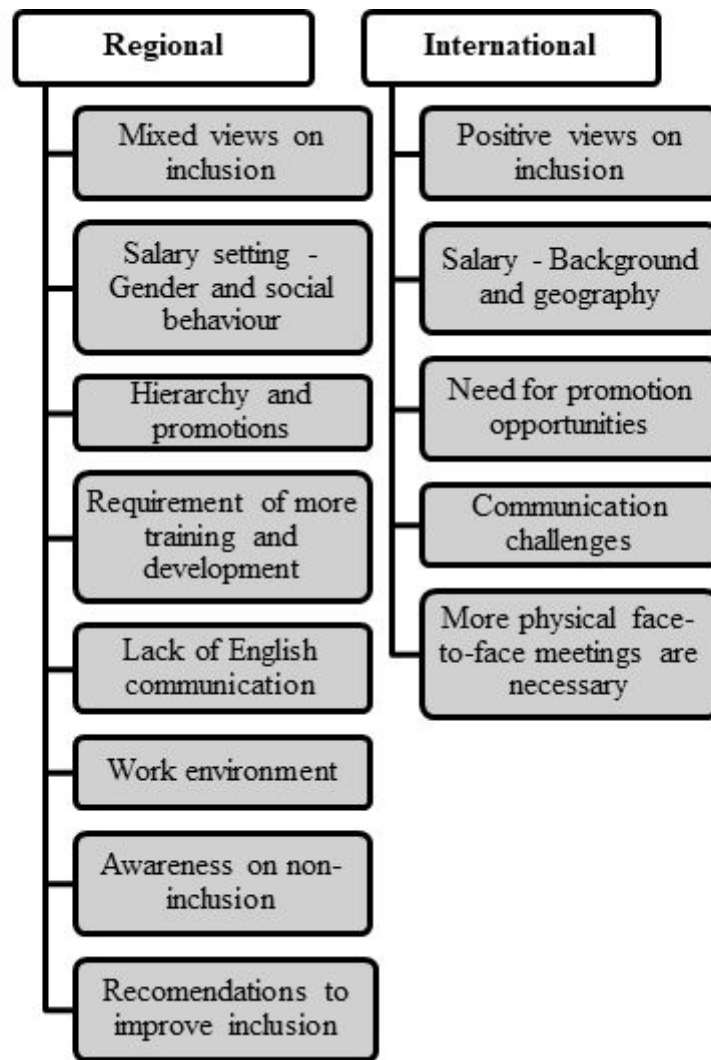


Figure 1: Diagram representing the themes derived from analysis of collected interview data

Source: Own compilation

In relation to observation data gathered, the notes taken by the researcher during observation meetings and consultation meetings were read through once again during the analysis stage of this research. Topics and initiatives that were found significant by the researcher were highlighted. Relevant notes were mapped with the themes derived from interview data. The same was incorporated while presenting the findings and discussion chapters of this report.

With regards to analytical considerations, quotes used in this report are represented in verbatim however the researcher has decoded a few quotes to ensure the anonymity of respondents. The actual position titles of the respondents are not mentioned either in order to ensure anonymity as certain job positions were very specific to individual employees. Hence

for the purpose of this report, interview respondents who had direct reports are referred as managers and the other respondents are referred as employees.

4.4. Ethical considerations

Swedish Research Council (2017) outlined that ethical considerations deal with identifying the balance between various concerns that are legitimate and highlights the difference between acceptable and non-acceptable questions and behaviours. Building an inclusive environment irrespective of gender, age and/or ethnicity is a sensitive subject. Therefore, initially the respondents were familiarized with the research process. The foremost principle of ethics is to consider and safeguard respondents' rights, interests and to respect their privacy. As Ritchie et al. (2014) highlighted Bryman's (2012) notes on main elements of ethical considerations, precaution was taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. Hence, the name of the case organization is anonymized, respondents' names are not revealed to safeguard the anonymity of their identity and respondents were ensured of protecting the data collected. Prior to the interview, it was made sure to seek the permission of the respondents to record the interviews through consent forms (see appendix B) or emails. All the collected details, data and recordings were protected in a file which only the researcher could access. Furthermore, the locations where the interviews were held were chosen carefully because the respondents might not open up when there is a risk of their views and opinions being heard by others. Therefore, both face to face interviews and Skype interviews were held in meeting rooms at the case organization where there was no risk of over-hearing the conversations.

All in all, the research design aimed to produce reliable and valid data. Nevertheless, there are certain challenges associated with interviewing and observations. During the interviews, the facts considered to be significant by the researcher and events observed and presumed to be vital might not be valuable. However, sufficient quotes are added to validate the researcher's statements (Ritchie et al., 2014). Additionally, conversations were interrupted during two of the online interviews because of technical errors or network issues which could have deviated respondents from sharing something important that they intended to share.

5. Empirical findings

Empirical data gathered during the study in relation to the purpose of the research is presented in two parts. Namely, Regional that is employees belonging to different teams working in Sweden and located in different parts of Sweden and secondly, the International team. The division is done as the issues related to inclusion vary from one another with regards to characteristics like age, gender and cultural differences. Further, the chapter is structured based on the themes (see figure 1) emerged during the analysis of the data. Few of the inter-related themes are merged and summarized under one sub-heading while presenting findings in this section. Thus, the main themes found during the research are, *Salary and benefits, hierarchy, promotions, training and development, communication and work environment.*

During the data collection phase of this research, primarily when respondents were asked about inclusion in general it was quite evident that employees embraced diversity and inclusion and its importance and advantages as quoted below,

What attracts me in xxxx [case organization] is that we are openly stating we are working with diversity and inclusion and one reason I enjoy working here is we have these different cultures um .. the organization is working actively and I should work actively too, to include everyone um .. wherever we are coming from and whatever background we have and whatever age and gender we have. Um, and I think the mix of culture, gender and ages is creating a fantastic mix to go into the future. (Manager 6)

However, further sections will elucidate in more detail why employees felt non-inclusive and what has hindered inclusion from employees' perspectives.

5.1. Organizational practices creating non-inclusion - Regional teams

Employees working for a long time in the company, especially in Sweden shared that the company has come a long way in terms of diversity and inclusion. Nevertheless, when it comes to practicing and implementing inclusion in the everyday work life, there were mixed responses from the respondents.

By experience, inclusion wise yes it's better now than in the past, for sure. Is it good enough? No, I wouldn't say so. If you talk about gender or religious or ethnic background so it is.. it is, yes it's better but I don't think it is good enough. I don't think so. No, not yet at least.. people in certain positions, sometimes I get the feeling or I perceive that are a little bit resistant to involve people, engage or include people. Somehow pushing back or um do not let people in or something like that.. (Employee 1)

As shared above, the interview data and themes derived from the analysis also yielded specific organizational practices from the view of the employees that are creating or leading to non-inclusiveness in the division. The main findings with regards to each organizational practice are presented below.

5.1.1. Salary based on employees' gender and/or social behaviour

While discussing about inclusiveness with regards to salary setting, few employees opined that sometimes the social behaviour of the employees and their network and connections with managers affects salary. Those employees who are more expressive, portrayed as confident and strong as well as those employees who interacted well with others were seen as more competent. And as explained by Employee 1 and Manager 4, these factors influence and are compensated during the salary review of the employees and not just based on their job performances.

Um, the manager setting the salary has to have a strong opinion about .. the person itself.. if it is like a gender I think then it of course has an impact. You are not only measured by your performance I will say my perception, of course. You are also measured on your social behaviours. (Employee 1)

The above quote signifies the factors like social interactions and behaviours influencing salary other than the job performance of the employees which actually adds value to the business. Additionally, the quote also manifests gender affecting employees' salaries. In more detail, some respondents highlighted that salary varies between male and female employees. As stated by another employee, “um, some areas where they [unions] really found salary difference and they forced the company to add money on those persons that they have found where that, the gap is biggest..” (Manager 3). Female employees in certain areas of jobs like Logistics, Finance, IT or blue collar earn lesser salary than their male counterparts according to the interviewees (Manager 3, Employee 12).

5.1.2. Hierarchy and promotions

Although the company has a flat hierarchical structure, a couple of respondents mentioned that the hierarchy is growing day by day. They further added that many teams or parts of the division are dominantly led by male, Swedish employees and there are a limited number of female managers (Employee 3, Manager 5). The management is working on initiatives to meet the gender balance in the teams and at managerial levels, but it is a long process and requires time to balance the gender proportion (Consultation 1, 19.02.2020; Consultation 2 16.03.2020).

So, if you want to.. go somewhere in your career and you are not a guy then you have a problem. I mean it's known it's worked on but still um, doing interviews and stuff like that it's those people who get the jobs anyway. So, it does not matter if you talk

about it but don't change it.. I think that the recruiting manager is probably older than 40-45ish but still um white male Swedish background. (Manager 3)

Respondents opined that one way of working on gender balance is by improving the recruitment process as the recruiting managers tend to hire homogenous people or within their network (Employee 1, 2 & 3, Manager 3). As shared in the above quote male Swedish recruiting managers tend to hire employees with similar characteristics like them. Recruiting within one's contact or hiring internally the similar employees either for different positions or for promotions is leading to frustration among the rest of the employees because it leads to reproduction of inequality. Adding to this, many respondents also expressed that sometimes gender as well as age of the employees influence the opportunities for promotions within the company. Often middle-aged, male employees are given the managerial positions although women candidates for the same roles possess all the necessary skills (Manager 3 & 5, Employee 7). Also, it is hard for younger employees (late 20s and early 30s) to promote their ideas and opinions. Quoted below was shared by one of the youngest interviewees,

You know youngsters have to wait for a kind of a shift where all of the ones, all of the white men they retire and youngsters get a new um.. you know really that is what I think .. I still want to be in a place that is diverse and that you know treats everyone equally and doesn't promote the fifty-year-old men because I am sorry but I am tired of them.. (Employee 3)

As most senior positions are held by middle aged male employees, younger employees have to work for a longer period to get to higher positions and to replace the already existing managerial positions (Employee 3 and 7). In addition to the above, Employee 2 and 3 shared that female employees are mostly seen in support functions or secretarial roles whereas men hold higher positions in the hierarchy.

.. there is this tendency I think that mainly women positions are being treated more in a secretary direction.. even in 2020. Um, it is not that many many women who have very technical jobs here.. it is also of course because of the history and the traditional aspect of the company um, but it is.. the most technical jobs usually belong to men here while in xxxx [other division] I think it is a little bit more diverse. (Employee 2)

When asked about the approach towards female managers, some of the respondents mentioned that sometimes female managers were not taken as seriously as the male managers. Secondly, not all the male employees but some are “slightly condescending towards female managers” (Employee 2). Furthermore, while few respondents shared that having inclusive managers has aided them in overcoming exclusion related issues through transparent dialogue and feedback. There were also employees who expressed the need for inclusive management and inclusive managers within their teams so that all the team members get equal support and opportunities regardless of their age, gender and/or sexual orientation (Employee 2, 3, 5 and 17).

..manager is the one that is driving the team and as soon as you have some differences may be, manager should pay more attention.. know that this person could be affected by the others. Most of the things that happened in the team I believe it's not equal.. (Employee 5)

Employee 5 mentioned the above when discussing about the delegation of tasks amongst the team members as some were favoured while assigning specific tasks over the others. Respondents mentioned that managers should be more careful and make sure everyone in the team is happy and delivering the required tasks (Employee 5 & Manager 5).

5.1.3. Training and development

All the respondents mentioned that everyone in the organization has equal opportunities to attend training related or connected to their work. However, some respondents expressed that

more often it is difficult to attend advanced and expensive training as it is not usually approved for female employees. And these training needs to be approved not just by their immediate supervisors but sometimes managers in much higher positions (Manager 3, Employee 5).

but those um, specifically expensive training [leadership training, leadership programs] that are given to people that show a specific talent that the company wants to grow more.. they are much more often given to men than women. (Manager 3)

On the other hand, some of the respondents expressed that older employees and employees closer to retirement age have lesser opportunities in terms of development, job-rotations and change of roles. Like, one of the respondents explained how older employees are sometimes categorised and left out,

..it is so easy for us to put people in categories, I think we should be more, um, careful then actually look for the person who is he or she.. what experiences does he usually have etc that is what we look for.. And not put them in boxes like that [old people].
(Manager 2)

Respondents urged that employees and the organization need to benefit from such employees' extensive experiences and knowledge rather than disregarding them as older employees (Manager 1, 2 and Employee 1).

5.1.3(a). Diversity and inclusion training

Diversity week is organized every year in the company. But most respondents mentioned that diversity and inclusion talks should be more open and part of everyday work culture. Employees should be able to speak openly about such issues so that it is considered normal. Diversity and inclusion week once a year is seen as ineffective unless the managers and employees implement them in practice and are open to gaining advantages of having a diverse workforce.

We have diversity and inclusion week per year usually in the company. But then it um, it is a lot about just sharing that we have different cultures in the company but it is not really about what we do with inclusion.. It should be more about how to benefit from this. (Employee 7)

Discussion of diversity and inclusion related subjects to be spoken more openly and casually both by the management and among employees was the recommendation of many respondents to improve inclusion. Because, one week of diversity training might not change the attitudes or behaviours of employees unless implemented and practiced in everyday work life.

5.1.4. Lack of English communication

The corporate language in the organization is English. Respondents who are both non-natives and natives, that is, non-Swedish speakers and Swedish speakers explained that many times the local language Swedish is used during the meetings and before or after the meetings. Be it work-related discussions or non-work-related talks (Employee 1, 2 and 7) and sometimes even during Skype meetings (Manager 2) local language is used.

I will need to go to that person who has been presenting the subject and ask him or her to help me understand.. unless I understand enough to ask a question during the meeting and then they get slightly confused and they answer in English. So that is usually the drill. (Employee 2)

Non-Swedish speakers have to repeatedly ask for their colleagues to switch to English (Employee 2 and 7). This has made non-Swedish speaking employees feel excluded when they cannot follow the conversation. When asked if it has affected their work, they opined that because of work related discussion not held in the common language they might have missed important information related to their work (Employee 2 & 7). Besides locally operating employees, during the interviews it was also mentioned that employees tend to speak in the local language when there are foreign visitors and that it is non-inclusiveness (Employee 1 &

7). Few of the interviewees highlighted that in spite of asking their colleagues to use the common language English no changes has been witnessed.

All work-related things [documents], they are in English. But inclusion is about the environment and how to make the environment um, language friendly or language free.. I think in general it is, it [speaking the common language English] should be part of the corporate culture.. (Employee 7)

As emphasized in the above quote, it is fundamental to create a work environment and culture where everyone feels included. And a language friendly environment can be a huge step towards inclusion. Because, for those who experienced non-inclusion because of lack of English communication practices in the teams, speaking in the common language English will lead to an inclusive work environment within the teams (Employee 2 and 7).

5.1.5. Work environment

According to the case company's internal statistics, the overall percentage of female employees in the division is only around 18% (Consultation 3, 18.03.2020) thereby indicating a major gender imbalance in the teams. Female respondents shared that the gender imbalance changes the dynamics of the whole team because of differences in the behaviour and attitudes of men and women colleagues. Employees also have experienced hearing or receiving inappropriate comments from the male team members, sometimes during the meetings or during coffee breaks (Employee 2, 3, 7, 12 & 17). Moreover, sometimes inappropriate comments were tacit and subtle so it becomes complicated for the employees either to confront or to report their concerns (Employee 2, 3, 7, 10 & 17).

Um so we are kind of not adding on because we are not able to retain them [female employees] as well and I think that is also that the company is not able to, to create this critical mass where females feel that they are not in the minority and by that they kind of tend to may be loose .. confidence .. (Manager 4)

The organization has strict policies against unjust treatment of employees (Employee portal) nevertheless, inappropriate comments and gender imbalance has led to few of the female employees feeling unfavourable in an environment to work at. Furthermore, few interviewees also stated that there is a need for the organization to create a work environment where employees with different sexual orientation felt comfortable coming to work and to be able to speak openly about it (Manager 2, 3 and 5).

In Sweden we have 10% gay people but you hardly don't know anyone here at work which is very hard because we are quite big workplace and most likely uh, it would be very strange if we have in one way, have attracted only people who are bisexual. If you see what I mean? (Manager 5)

Manager 2 and 4 shared that the organization should create a work environment where everyone felt psychologically safe and everyone felt okay to be themselves. For instance, quoted as shared by an employee, “Sometimes you simply get scared because if your name goes out everybody will know. Why do you pick on this? Why can't you just follow everybody? So, I would fully understand um if, people were hesitant to raise different issues” (Employee 2). Hence it is crucial to build an environment where employees are not reluctant to raise concerns if there are any issues related to inclusion without being labelled as ‘always complaining and picking problems’ (Employee 2 and 3, Manager 3).

Besides, few interviewees opined that some non-inclusive acts could be unintended and unintentional, hence organization needs to work with people’s mindset to make them aware and conscious of their actions (Manager 2, 4 and 5). This could be accomplished through personality development training or sending awareness emails periodically (Employee 2 and 17). Noticeably, the Active measures and OSA team dedicated to work on creating a conducive organizational and social work-environment is working on initiatives like discussion forums and conducting training modules to overcome unconscious bias and create more awareness about inclusion and eliminating discrimination (Observation meeting 1, 04.02.2020; Consultation 3, 18.03.2020).

5.2. Organizational practices creating non-inclusion - International team

First and foremost, employees within the international team viewed inclusion positively both in terms of experiencing and practicing it in their everyday work life. All the respondents opined that having employees from different countries and cultures has enabled them to come up with efficient solutions through their diverse background which in turn is beneficial for the organization as well. Findings also indicated that there are no major cultural differences in the team. It is rather personality differences directly or indirectly connected to the cultural or ethnical background of the team members - like French versus Swedes.

There are so many different aspects that if you have several individuals.. with different cultures, different um backgrounds, gender, age then you have a kind of um, sample of the country or the population and then you have a different approach and you can create something in the team that you cannot create with all the same individuals.

(Employee 8)

Most importantly, the team members are aware of the differences and try to resolve it through dialogue and feedback in order to avoid future problems. Listed below, the subsections describe different organizational practices from the views of employees that could create a sense of non-inclusiveness within the international team.

5.2.1. Differences in salary and benefits

During the interviews, mixed responses were shared by the interviewees with regards to salary and benefits. Few employees shared that salary is based on the background of the employees (could be, technical or non-technical) and suggested that salary should rather be aligned with employees' actual involvement in the work and their competencies. "The gap sometimes, I feel that the gap in salary is too big. Between each other. And that.. that might create some um, frustration for some people as well" (Employee 14). Interviewees shared that

the discussions regarding salary reviews or salary increments and benefits could be more transparent in the team. (Employee 8, 11 and 14).

And in terms of benefits, few respondents expressed that the bonus system is not inclusive. There were differences in the bonuses received based on the geographical locations of the employees (Employee 6 and 13). “..within each country I believe inclusion is there. But on a global level, yeah it is going to be depending on the nationality. So, the bonus systems are not inclusive in our team. Because we have a global team” (Employee 13). All the employees are based in their local or regional offices but working for the global team. As quoted above, the bonus system created an obstacle for equal treatment of the team members because bonus was dependent on the location. So eventually all employees within the international team perform similar tasks however bonuses were distributed depending on their geographical locations.

5.2.2. Less promotion opportunities because of geographical locations

All the team members have equal possibilities for promotion and development. Nonetheless, once again the geographical aspect confines the growth chances. Because in some locations where a few of the current team members are working, there are a very limited number of opportunities for employees if they wish to move to different roles (Employee 11, 13 and 19). “In certain plants where my colleagues work, in their case, the promotion or development you would get without having to move with your family is limited within what exists in the demography..” (Employee 13). Respondents did not highlight this as a major concern however employees wished for more opportunities as there are limited possibilities for change of roles or positions based on the location (Employee 11, 19).

5.2.3. Communication practices

During the interviews it was found that all the team members were aware of the challenge of communication. While in the regional teams it was more connected to lack of English communication, in the international team it was related to the differences in behaviour and accents as it varies from country to country.

Communication and personality differences might affect day-to-day practices and risk in the delay of activities. Respondents shared that it is sometimes hard to come to a common final

decision as discussions are held over Skype and also because of the varied opinions and contradictions. The most common example given by the respondents was that, French employees tend to make quicker decisions and Swedes are a bit diplomatic. But the team takes these differences in the cultural behaviours as a strength especially at times when either spontaneous decisions have to be made or the contrary. Additionally, because of the various locations (Belgium, Brazil, France, Russia and Sweden), lack of geographical proximity to the employees within the team and time differences, they tend to work in separate groups. Thereby signifying the need for more physical face-to-face meetings for the team members to coordinate. This could have led to the feeling of non-inclusion however, by far, these concerns have not resulted in any severe issues as team members shared that they are open-minded, respect each other's opinions, and give each other time to react. Team members were always considerate and respectful of others views, ideas and opinions (Observation meetings 2-5) during the weekly Skype meetings. And with the new manager in the team there has been more regular face to face meetings, all the information is communicated within the team so that everyone has equal access to the information and it avoids the risk of working on their own.

It is really a bit um, cultural differences and mindset differences. And sometimes it seems like when one representative from France is speaking, others from France support, then it can be some arguments from Swedish [employee laughs]. Then it can be some kind of argument. Sometimes you really can experience cultural difference but it is not really something that prevents daily work. (Employee 9)

From the above quote, one could interpret that communication practices vary from culture to culture in addition to fluency in English. However, the virtuous cooperation between the team members has aided in overcoming communication challenges and leading to effective performance of the team.

Moreover, all the interviewees also highlighted the importance of having an inclusive manager and inclusive management style that is assisting in the smooth functioning of the

team. “Our manager is really taking um, into consideration our experiences more than our age actually and never referring to gender or culture. You really feel that um, xxxx [manager] is more transparent..” (Employee 6). The same was evident during the observation meetings. The manager made sure everyone is given equal and fair chances to discuss and communicate their concerns (Observation meetings 2-5) and such practices arguably enhanced inclusion in the team.

In terms of the purpose of this research of identifying various non-inclusive organizational practices, one could learn from the above that there are certain practices in the case organization forming the components of inequality regimes. The same is summarized in the table below.

Table 3: Summary of the findings

Teams	Non-inclusive practices	Affecting characteristics
Regional	1. Salary setting based on employees' gender and their social interactions	Gender, social behaviour
	2. More Swedish middle-aged male managers in hierarchy and less promotion opportunities for female employees	Gender, age
	3. Less opportunities for advanced training for women and career development possibilities for older employees. Need for D&I related discussions to be part of everyday work culture.	Gender, age, culture/ethnicity
	4. Lack of English communication and use of native language especially during meetings	Culture/ethnicity
	5. Absence of conducive and inclusive work environment for employees	Gender, sexual orientation
International	1. Differences in salary and benefits received	Background, geographical location
	2. Minimal opportunities for promotion and change of roles	Geographical location
	3. Challenges in communication practices because of different norms and behavioural styles	Cultural and personality differences

Source: Own compilation based on empirical findings

6. Discussion

The structure of this section is outlined based on the empirical findings of the study and presenting further discussion of the themes in relation to previous studies referred and theory concepts used in the study that is, inequality regimes and inclusive management. As in the findings section, the discussion section is also divided into regional and international teams as the reasons for non-inclusion can be distinguished in terms of age, gender and cultural differences. Furthermore, contributions of the study, limitations and recommendations are also discussed.

The purpose of this study was to identify different organizational practices acting as barriers in promoting inclusion at the workplace. Accordingly, it is evident from the findings that there are certain practices in the organization that are reproducing non-inclusion thereby forming the components of inequality regimes. Namely *salary setting, bonus, hierarchy, promotions, training and development, communication practices and work environment*. Each of these practices are further elucidated in the following subsections.

6.1. Regional

Findings demonstrated that in the regional teams, employees experienced non-inclusiveness in practices like salary, hierarchy, promotions, training and development communication and work environment. Further, such organizational practices were based on characteristics like age, culture, gender and/or sexual orientation of the employees.

6.1.1. Salary, hierarchy and promotions

From the results of this research, it was found that there were differences in the salary setting on the ground of employees' gender and/or their social interactions with the managers and colleagues. Inequality in the distribution of salary can sometimes be seen even with the most equitable compensation system according to Acker (2006). She further argued that this could be inter-connected with hierarchy and supervisory practices. According to Acker (2006) top level managers who set the salary are often held by white male employees in large

organizations. The same was witnessed at the case organization according to responses from the interviews. Hence uneven distribution of salary or increments between male and female employees could reproduce gender inequality. While reviewing an individual's salary and promotion it could be important for those top-level managers to consider the performance of the employees (Acker, 2006) regardless of employees' gender and/or social interactions. Besides gender, female employees in their late 20s and early 30s shared that they are considered young thereby reducing their promotion opportunities. By that, adding to gender the research contributes more knowledge on age to the study conducted by Acker (2006). Because findings of this study indicated that middle-aged male employees gained more promotion opportunities whereas younger female employees gained less promotion opportunities. As Acker (2006) has presented inequality regimes namely, wage setting and supervisory practices producing inequality with regards to gender, race and class the current study adds knowledge on how age affects the promotion of women.

Although this study found little differences between managers' and non-managers' opinions in terms of inclusion (Shore et al., 2018), differences could be noticed between male and female employees (especially those who were trying to move up in the hierarchy with all the required skills and potential) at the case company. In a similar manner, the results from Mor Barak et al.'s (1998) study found that from the personal dimension of ethnic women employees, they were deprived of promotion opportunities whereas male employees shared organizational practices as inclusive. Likewise, female employees at the case company felt excluded because of lack of growth and promotional opportunities in comparison with middle-aged white male employees, while no male respondents shared that they gained less promotion opportunities. Hence arguably, the results of the study accords the observations of existing extensive literature on white male employees having more promotion opportunities than female employees at workplaces (Healy et al., 2011; Acker, 2006; Mor Barak et al., 1998).

Furthermore, the existence of non-inclusion could be rooted in the organizational history and culture (Forscher et al., 2018; Acker, 2006) like, implementing homogenous practices without paving way for new and improved changes. Empirical findings of this study indicated that female employees received less promotion opportunities because of the existence of practice

of homogenous hiring. In more detail, both male and female respondents shared that hiring managers tend to recruit employees similar to their characteristics and within their contacts. The process of hiring through networks is arguably one of the reasons for the sustenance of non-inclusion. Brink and Benschop (2014) in their study on gender and networking also argued that men use their formal and informal networks to benefit from each other and these connections are purposely used at workplaces. This once again reproduces gender and racial inequalities as white male managers tend to hire homogenous people within their network (Brink & Benschop, 2014; Acker 2006). And, it depends on the hiring manager's (who are mostly white, middle-aged) judgement who often sees white male employees as more eligible candidates than the others (Acker 2006).

6.1.2. Training and development

Interviewees during this research stated that diversity week at the case organization should be utilized to share how the company can attain benefits of diverse culture and conveying employees and managers to make inclusion a part of everyday work life. With regards to diversity and inclusion training, organizations have been recommended to take proactive measures not just to conduct such training but also to implement practices that provide a favourable environment for all the employees irrespective of their age, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity (Acker, 2006). D&I training can help curtail unconscious bias however as Dobbin and Kalev (2018) stated, employers cannot anticipate advancement in inclusion from D&I training unless non-inclusive practices and behaviours are overcome by the organizations. Besides, these D&I training needs to be planned and coordinated with the right type of programs (Dobbin and Kalev, 2018). Because, if the diversity issues and concerns are not communicated to the employees in the right manner, it might lead to an uncomfortable environment rather than integration of employees (Pless & Maak, 2004) or simply could become ineffectual (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018).

Additionally, according to results of the study older employees (both male and female) at the case company who are closer to retirement age received less development opportunities like job rotations and change of roles and female employees lacked opportunities for advanced training. Arguably, this leads to a feeling of exclusion because providing equal career

development opportunities to all the diverse employees has been found to be a crucial component in enhancing inclusiveness among the employees (Daya, 2014). In order to create inclusion and equality, organizational practices and processes will have to offer equal opportunities for its diverse employees to train and develop their skills and capabilities (Daya, 2014). As in the case of promotions, the findings connected to lack of career development possibilities for older employees at the case company also contributes insights to the study by Acker (2006) as to how the age of older employees reduced or restricted their career development chances.

6.1.3. Communication

Absence of English communication during some meetings and work-related interactions led to lack of access to organizational information for non-natives at the case company and resulted in exclusion. Integrating employees from different cultural backgrounds and nationalities through inclusive management practices helps in integrating foreign employees with the locals and their work culture in the local context (Mor Barak, 2016). Inclusion can be possible only when foreign and local employees are treated equally and English management communication is found to be the grounding prerequisites for inclusion of foreign employees (Jonasson et al., 2018). Using the common language English will aid in equal access to information for all the employees as stated by Luring and Selmer (2012) and arguably even during informal interactions. The respondents in this research demonstrated that lack of common language communication during informal conversations at the case company made employees, especially non-natives feel excluded. Jonasson et al. (2018) claimed that previous studies on inclusive management have not looked into English communication as an organizational practice in an international context. Taking Jonasson et al.'s (2018) study into account, this study contributes knowledge on how lack of English communication as a practice can lead to non-inclusion or exclusion of employees from organizational information in a multinational workplace.

6.1.4. Work environment

The lack of equal opportunities and support to the employees by their managers indicated the need for more inclusive managers within the teams to gain equal chances to grow professionally at the case organization. Trust in the managers could build a more inclusive and constructive work environment. Whereas, displeasing behaviour and humour styles of managers can promote a weak and non-inclusive work environment (Forscher et al., 2018; Tremblay, 2017). Arguably, the same applies for non-managers and all the other employees. Managers and organizations are expected to become more inclusive because exclusionary organizational practices detriments individuals or employees who are under-privileged economically, emotionally and socially in addition to being detrimental to the organization as well (Mor Barak, 2000). As Mor Barak (2000, 344) referred Carnevale and Stone's (1995) "platinum rule, that is, valuing diversity involves treating others as they wish to be treated". Hence signifying that everyone needs to be treated equally regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. And, perhaps diversity and inclusion workshops can be used as an opportunity by the companies to reframe their D&I objectives by exploring and understanding employees' perspectives on how they wish to be treated or how to improve inclusion. Unless the companies make an effort to work towards creating an inclusive workplace, it can be challenging to reach their D&I objectives (Mor Barak, 2000).

Employees also shared the need to create an inclusive work environment especially for women and sexually oriented employees. In order to achieve that, organizations can examine their current norms and practices. This can be accomplished by conducting more surveys periodically to understand the issues and initiating new policies and programs to implement the required changes (Mor Barak, 2000). Accordingly, the Active Measures and OSA team at the case organization is working on preparing a short training module to be shared with the managers, focusing on unconscious bias. This could be further shared within the team members which helps create awareness among employees and reduce unconscious bias (Consultation 3, 18.03.2020). Moreover, the division is also working on conducting exit surveys which is not mandatory as of now (Consultation 1, 19.02.2020; Consultation 2, 16.03.2020). Such initiatives could be advantageous in identifying barriers at an early stage.

Lastly referring back to results of the internal survey conducted by the case company which stated that employees experienced non-inclusion based on age and/or gender (section 1.1.2), one could argue that the results of this research are in coherence with the survey results. But additionally, the findings also answered 'how and why' employees felt excluded or discriminated against based on their age and/or gender in relation to different organizational practices like salary, hierarchy and promotions, training and development, communication and work environment.

6.2. International Team

Unlike the regional teams, in the international team non-inclusiveness was more connected to the geographical factors and cultural or ethnic differences rather than age and gender of the employees. Capturing from the empirical data, it could be seen that the multicultural background of the team members has resulted in coming up with innovative ideas and solutions as well as competitive advantage for the team and the organization. Hence adding more acumen to the already existing literature on how having employees from diverse backgrounds leads to efficient work performance and generates resourceful solutions (Prime & Salib, 2014; Pless & Maak, 2004). On the contrary, the practices identified during the research characterizing inequality regimes are discussed below followed by significance of inclusive management.

6.2.1. Salary, benefits and promotion

The results indicated that salary setting could be made more inclusive by aligning it to team members' performance, involvement in work and competencies. It is necessary for the leader to identify each individual's performance and their proficiency in the given tasks in order to ensure team-members' psychological safety (Nembhard and Edmonson, 2006). In terms of benefits, findings of this study demonstrated that there were differences in the bonuses received based on the location of the employees. Adding to that, the same reason as in the case of bonus, the geographical location of the employees also restricted the chances for promotion or change of roles among the team members which could lead to feelings of non-inclusion. Differences in salary and inequality in promotions in multicultural workgroups

has been discussed in previous studies with regards to gender, race or ethnicity (Acker, 2006; Healy et al., 2011; Shore et al., 2018). However, the same has not been addressed from the prospect of geographical location of the employees. Thereby, the study adds knowledge to the current literature on how geographical location of the employees could potentially lead to non-inclusiveness in relation to benefits and promotion opportunities in a multinational workgroup (Acker 2006; Shore et al., 2018).

6.2.2. Culture and communication

The study found that behaviours and personality differences based on team members' cultural origin has resulted in different communication styles and decision-making norms. As Brett et al. (2009) argued, cultural differences act as a barrier in performing effective teamwork. The authors stated that less fluency in the language and conflicting decision-making norms are the major barriers when working in multicultural teams. Team members might not benefit from the expertise of those who cannot communicate fluently in the common language and, time required to analyse details before taking decisions might vary based on their norms. This creates frustration among the team members (Brett et al., 2009). The team-members at the case company were very well aware of the downsides and acknowledged each other's dissimilarities and distinctness which could be related to the adaptation strategy discussed by Brett et al. (2009). That is, acknowledging and adapting to team-members' cultural differences will result in a good work environment within the team as well as integration rather than assimilation (Brett et al., 2009). Additionally, as respondents shared, having open dialogue and feedback has aided in overcoming concerns if there are any, related to non-inclusion. Particularly, to avoid misunderstandings because of differences in language fluency and behaviour styles. Hence one could opine that 'open dialogue and feedback' could act as a best practice for other teams in the organization to follow and implement which enhances inclusion and helps in smooth functioning of the teams. As Boxall and Purcell (2000) argued recognizing and actualizing best practices at workplaces leads to advancement in employees' performances.

6.2.3. Inclusive management

With regards to inclusive management, the characteristics of an inclusive manager stated by Nembhard and Edmonson (2006) and Carmeli et al. (2010) could be witnessed in manager's inclusive practices (Observation meetings 2-5) and as described by the team members during interviews. In more detail, practices like the availability of managers for team members (Nembhard & Edmonson, 2006), open discussions and feedback, involvement of the team members in decision making and appreciating their ideas (Carmeli et al., 2010) were noticeable. And one could argue that these inclusive management practices have aided in building quality relationships between the team members and the manager hence emphasizing the significance of inclusive management style.

6.3. Limitations

A limitation of the study is that the sample of regional teams did not consist of any male employees in their late 20s or early 30s. It would have been helpful to analyse if there are differences in the opportunities available for young male and young female employees in terms of promotions and career development. Secondly, the analysis of the international team is based on just one of the many international teams operating in the division. Hence the result cannot be generalized for all the global teams working in the division however, it could be related to other international teams working in a similar context.

6.4. Recommendations for future research

The study's detailed findings of what and how different practices lead to non-inclusion might enable the generalization of the result. As Flyvbjerg (2006) stated, the tactical choice of the case that is, one that can provide information relevant to the research problem and single case studies' nature of thorough and in-depth investigation allows generalizability of the findings. Therefore, other similar multinational and multicultural corporate organizations with diverse workforce can benefit from the findings to understand how certain practices result in exclusion of employees. However, since the thesis research was a single case study design future studies can adopt multiple case study approaches within the manufacturing sector or

different business sectors. Because, to understand inclusion on a global level more studies in different national contexts and business sectors will be beneficial (Shore et al., 2018). Furthermore, the research was conducted with a focus on inclusion from employees' perspectives. Thus, future studies can look into the efforts to promote inclusion from the management or employer's perspectives. More specific to Human Resources (HR), as Shore et al. (2018) has emphasized future research can also focus on identifying particularly the role of HR in creating an inclusive workplace.

6.5. Company implications

The thesis research has been successful in presenting the company with specific practices creating a non-inclusive environment in the organization. Hence, the results of the study can be further communicated within the division and to other divisions of the case organization which could help in identifying barriers at an early stage and preventing non-inclusive experiences among employees. However, with regards to the international team future studies can focus on considering multiple international teams in the sample population and looking at the similarities and differences. Besides, one could argue that the issue with the regional teams is dominantly connected to gender imbalance in teams and need for more opportunities for female employees at all levels. That being said, the company can focus specifically on overcoming gender imbalance, methods to improve the recruitment system to overcome homogenous hiring and providing equal opportunities to male and female candidates as well as creating a work environment where female and employees with different sexual orientation feel comfortable to work. The starting point could be looking at the responses received from the exit interviews or exit surveys.

And as for ensuring the wellbeing of the current employees, the HR team can have personal discussion forums where employees get to share concerns individually. As Daya (2014) argued, open and transparent communication is a key element to drive inclusion on an individual level. This helps in apprehending feelings of exclusion among employees. Although exclusion feelings need not always correlate to a non-inclusive workplace, such feelings could be seen as a result of actions and behaviours of colleagues or could be a sign towards non-inclusive practices and processes in the workplace. Therefore, in addition to

evaluating organizational practices and processes, employees could be reminded of being conscious about their attitude and behaviours through awareness emails. These emails could be sent out by the HR periodically mentioning the importance of inclusion and its implementation by individual employees and within the teams in their everyday work life.

7. Conclusion

Through qualitative interviews, analysis and discussion of the empirical data, the study manifested different organizational practices hindering the growth of inclusion at the workplace. To summarize, in the regional teams non-inclusion was based on characteristics like age and gender in relation to the practices of salary setting, hierarchy, promotions, training and development, work environment; and culture in relation to the practice of communication. As for the international team, non-inclusion was more connected to the geographical factors restricting promotion, change of roles and differences in salary and benefits. Whereas cultural differences affecting the communication practices within the team.

As elucidated in the discussion chapter, some of the findings of the study are in coherence with current literature with regards to few organizational practices but also sheds light on further understandings. Thereby a vital contribution of the study is that it has been able to add empirical acumen on the significance of inclusive management in the corporate sector as Jonasson et al.'s (2018) study was conducted among academic personnel. And also, contributing further practical insights to the existing literature (Acker, 2006) on reasons for non-inclusion based on age, gender, sexual orientation, culture or ethnicity of the employees in relation to different organizational practices. However, to overcome reproduction of inequalities through various organizational practices and to eliminate exclusion of employees, it is crucial that organizations apprehend non-inclusive practices at an early stage.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Table of informants

Name	Team	Interview mode	Interview duration
Employee 1	Regional	Face to face	00:59:05
Employee 2	Regional	Face to face	01:15:41
Employee 3	Regional	Face to face	01:05:13
Employee 4	Regional	Face to face	00:34:17
Employee 5	Regional	Face to face	01:11:59
Employee 6	International	Skype video	00:45:28
Employee 7	Regional	Face to face	00:39:56
Employee 8	International	Skype video	00:34:37
Employee 9	International	Skype audio	00:42:00
Employee 10	Regional	Face to face	00:36:16
Employee 11	International	Skype video	00:37:01
Employee 12	Regional	Face to face	01:01:00
Employee 13	International	Skype video	00:50:33
Employee 14	International	Skype video	00:34:50
Employee 15	International	Skype video	00:32:02
Employee 16	International	Skype video	00:37:14
Employee 17	Regional	Face to face	00:50:06
Employee 18	International	Skype video	00:31:47
Employee 19	International	Skype video	00:45:42
Manager 1	Regional	Face to face	00:45:42
Manager 2	Regional	Face to face	00:56:23
Manager 3	Regional	Skype video	00:46:13
Manager 4	Regional	Face to face	00:47:28
Manager 5	Regional	Face to face	00:56:39
Manager 6	International	Skype audio	00:35:44

Appendix B: Consent form

Interview Consent Form

Master Thesis Project Title: Barriers in building an inclusive work environment

Research investigator: Reshma Sriram Ramamurthy

Programme: Master's in Strategic Human Resource Management and Labour Relations, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as a part of the above master thesis project. The interview will take approximately 45-50 minutes. You do not have to answer questions that you are not comfortable with and we can end the interview anytime you wish. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be produced
- The transcript of the interview will be analyzed by me (Reshma Sriram Ramamurthy)
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to me as a researcher and when required, parts of it might be accessed by my thesis supervisor – Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist, Professor, Gothenburg Research Institute, to provide me with guidance
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through thesis report, academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- The actual recording will be deleted once the thesis research is completed

By signing this form, I agree that:

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the interview consent form;
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have.

Printed name –

Participant's signature/ Date

Research student signature/ Date

Appendix C: Interview guide

Interview Guide

Hello! My name is Reshma and I am a masters student in the programme Strategic Human Resource Management and Labour Relations at the University of Gothenburg. As a part of my master thesis I am conducting interviews to explore and understand the barriers in building an inclusive work environment.

During the interview, you do not have to answer questions that you are not comfortable with and we can end the interview anytime you wish. With your permission, I would like to record the interview and it will be further transcribed and analysed. It will be made sure to keep the organization name and details of interview respondents anonymous.

Theme 1 – Background and origin questions:

1. Where do you come from?
2. What is your educational background?
3. How long have you been working in the organization and can you tell me about your work experience?
4. How do you feel working for the organization and for your team?

Theme 2 – Experiences of inclusion and non-inclusion:

5. Inclusion in this context refers to equal treatment of employees working at the same level, in all the organizational matters irrespective of employees' age, gender and/or culture. What are your experiences of inclusion and inclusive practices in your organization?
6. Can you tell me a bit about your team? Is your team diverse (age, gender, culture or ethnicity)?
7. What are your team's experiences of inclusion and inclusive practices in your company?

8. How do you think inclusion works with regards to the practices and processes? (Example, salary and benefits, hierarchy, informal interactions at work, recruitment and training, mixing parenting and employment)
9. And how is it with regards to access to information, attitude towards you and involvement in decision making?
10. Have you seen your colleagues not being included or discriminated against based on age, gender and/or culture? (For example, in taking decisions, promotions, monetary benefits and access to other resources)
11. In case of non-inclusionary practices, how is it affecting you like, psychologically or in your performance at work? If any issues, have you approached your HR or your manager or safety representative?

Theme 3 – Challenges in creating inclusive practices:

12. What kind of challenges are faced in running your team in terms of age, gender and/or cultural differences?
13. What are the other barriers in creating inclusion that you can think of?
14. How often do you have individual dialogue and feedback sessions with your manager/teammates? During those sessions, do you get to share non-inclusion related concerns, if any?
15. In case of non-inclusive practices (questions 8, 9, 10) – why do you think such non-inclusive practices are sustaining in the organization?

Theme 4 – Visibility to the management:

16. Are you aware of organization's policies and measures to overcome discrimination and the consequences of not following these policies? Or, are there any consequences?
17. In your opinion, are the non-inclusive experiences and challenges (themes 2 and 3) visible to the management? How are they reacting?
18. If not visible, how are employees trying to make it visible?

Theme 5 – Concluding questions:

19. How can the organization work to make you and your team more inclusive? Do you have any suggestions or changes you would like to recommend?
20. Do you have something that you would like to add that we have not discussed so far?

Appendix D: Tables and figures

(In the order of their appearance)

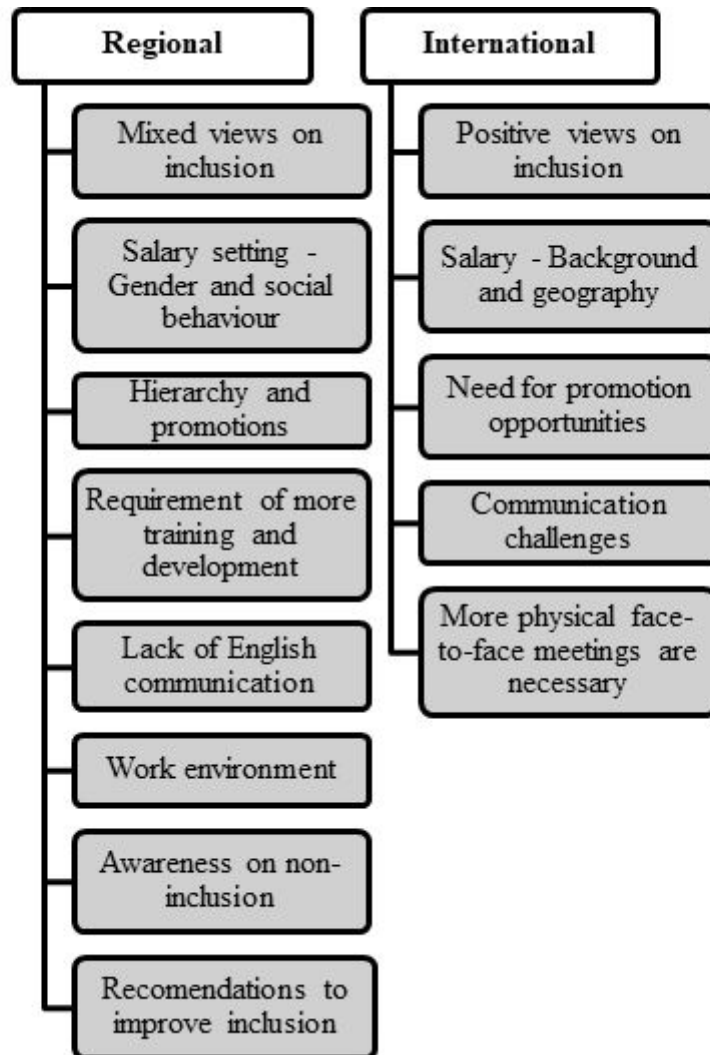
Table 1: Tabular presentation of sample population

Age	25 to 65 years
Gender	Female: 11
	Male: 14
Ethnicity	Natives (Swedes): 12
	Non-natives: 13

Table 2: List of meetings attended

Name	Description	Date	Duration
Observation meeting 1	Active measures and organization and social work environment meeting (Regional)	04.02.2020	01:00:00
Observation meeting 2	International team - Weekly meeting	17.02.2020	01:00:00
Observation meeting 3	International team - Weekly meeting	24.02.2020	01:00:00
Observation meeting 4	International team - Weekly meeting	06.03.2020	01:00:00
Observation meeting 5	International team - Weekly meeting	13.03.2020	01:00:00
Consultation 1	Discussion with Diversity and Inclusion representative 1	19.02.2020	00:45:00
Consultation 2	Discussion with Diversity and Inclusion representative 2	16.03.2020	01:00:00
Consultation 3	Follow-up discussion with Diversity and Inclusion representative 2	18.03.2020	00:30:00

Figure 1: Diagram representing the themes derived from analysis of collected interview data



Source: Own compilation

Table 3: Summary of the findings

Teams	Non-inclusive practices	Affecting characteristics
Regional	1. Salary setting based on employees' gender and their social interactions	Gender, social behaviour
	2. More Swedish middle-aged male managers in hierarchy and less promotion opportunities for female employees	Gender, age
	3. Less opportunities for advanced training for women and career development possibilities for older employees. Need for D&I related discussions to be part of everyday work culture.	Gender, age, culture/ethnicity
	4. Lack of English communication and use of native language especially during meetings	Culture/ethnicity
	5. Absence of conducive and inclusive work environment for employees	Gender, sexual orientation
International	1. Differences in salary and benefits received	Background, geographical location
	2. Minimal opportunities for promotion and change of roles	Geographical location
	3. Challenges in communication practices because of different norms and behavioural styles	Cultural and personality differences

Source: Own compilation based on empirical findings