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Melina Aaltonen

**How HR professionals' attributes influence the
adoption of AI in talent acquisition within MNCs**

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Author:	Melina Aaltonen		
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Supervisor:	William Degbey		
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ABSTRACT:

The current themes of digitalization, globalization, and the “war for talent” have created a complex environment for multinational corporations (MNCs). The digitalization of talent acquisition processes in MNCs is advancing toward artificial intelligence (AI) and its possibilities. As AI enters into the picture, MNCs and their human resource (HR) professionals need to re-evaluate their processes, roles, and responsibilities. Although HR and AI have been researched separately and together, several perspectives, contexts, and levels still have not been in specific focus. The adoption of AI into organizational processes is now happening and therefore it is useful to know what attributes are valuable for the successful adoption of AI. More specifically, the attributes of HR professionals have not been directly researched.

This thesis explores the key attributes of HR professionals that influence the adoption of AI in talent acquisition within MNCs. This thesis utilizes the AMO (Ability, Motivation, Opportunity) framework, and examines HR professionals' abilities, motivations, and opportunities as set attributes. To support this, the thesis introduces challenges as a critical focus point. Due to the practical uncertainties surrounding AI adoption, this thesis explores both the enabling and hindering factors that shape HR professionals' attributes for adopting AI into talent acquisition processes.

A qualitative research approach and semi-structured interviews with HR professionals from industrial MNCs were conducted to gather perspectives on this issue. Through these interviews, key findings and attributes were identified. HR professionals have a positive outlook on AI's potential to improve the efficiency and quality of talent acquisition. This requires sufficient IT skills, open-mindedness, data literacy, and understanding of the topic. Personal motivation, with its positive and negative factors, influences adoption, with benefits and concerns being raised. Gaining automated tasks as support and concern toward the bias of AI and its data were cited as common examples. A challenge to this process is the lack of understanding of AI. The operational environment of MNCs also brings its complexities into the discussion.

In order to successfully adopt AI into MNCs' talent acquisition department, MNCs must invest in increasing knowledge and thereby decreasing fear. By adopting secure practices on the AI side and communicating openly with HR professionals and other stakeholders, the positive perceptions HR professionals have of AI in their work can be leveraged. This thesis provides an insight into the current mindset of HR professionals and how to take these attitudes under consideration when adopting AI in talent acquisition becomes relevant to the MNC.

KEYWORDS: artificial intelligence, talent acquisition, HR professional, multinational corporations, AMO framework

TIIVISTELMÄ:

Digitalisaation, globalisaation sekä osaajamarkkinoiden kiristymisen ("war for talent") nykytrendit ovat luoneet monimutkaisen toimintaympäristön monikansallisille yrityksille (MNC). Osaajahankinnan prosessit monikansallisissa yrityksissä ovat jo digitalisoituneet ja seuraavaksi vuorossa on tekoälyn (AI) hyödyntäminen. Tekoälyn tullessa osaksi monikansallisten yritysten toimintaympäristöä, henkilöstöasiantuntijoiden täytyy arvioida uudelleen prosessejaan, roolejaan ja vastuitaan. Vaikka henkilöstöhallintoa (HR) sekä tekoälyä on tutkittu aiemmin sekä yksin että yhdessä, useita eri näkökulmia, konteksteja sekä tasoja ei ole vielä tarkemmin tutkittu. Tekoälyn adoptointi organisaatioihin on jo alkanut ja siksi on hyödyllistä ymmärtää, mitkä ovat arvokkaita HR-asiantuntijoiden ominaisuuksia tekoälyn onnistuneeseen adoptointiin. Erityisesti heidän ominaisuuksiaan on tutkittu vain rajallisesti tähän mennessä.

Tämä tutkielma tarkastelee keskeisiä HR-asiantuntijoiden kyvykkyyksiä, jotka vaikuttavat tekoälyn adoptointiin osaajahankinnan tehtävissä monikansallisissa yrityksissä. Tämä tutkielma hyödyntää AMO-mallia ja analysoi HR-asiantuntijoiden kykyjä, motivaatiota sekä mahdollisuuksia. AMO-mallin tukena tarkastellaan myös haasteita. Koska tekoälyn käyttöönotto on vielä alkutekijöissä, tämä tutkielma keskittyy sekä mahdollistaviin että haastaviin tekijöihin, jotka muovaavat HR-asiantuntijoiden kyvykkyyksiä tekoälyn adoptoimiseen osaajahankinnan prosesseissa.

Tämä tutkimus toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena ja tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin haastattelemalla HR-asiantuntijoita teollisista monikansallisista yrityksistä. Haastatteluiden pohjalta keskeiset havainnot sekä kyvykkyydet tunnistettiin. HR-asiantuntijoiden positiivinen suhtautuminen ilmeni erityisesti tekoälyn potentiaalın näkemisenä tehokkuuden ja laadun edistäjänä osaajahankinnassa. Tämä edellyttää riittäviä IT-taitoja, avointa ajattelutyyliä, datan hyvää hallinnointia sekä aiheen ymmärtämistä. Henkilökohtainen motivaatio vaikuttaa tekoälyn adoptointiin sekä positiivisesti että negatiivisesti, ja siihen kohdistuvia etuja sekä huolia ilmeni. Tehtävien automatisointi apuvälineenä sekä epävarmuus tekoälyn puolueettomuudesta olivat yleisiä esimerkkejä. Tunnistettuna haasteena on puutteellinen ymmärrys tekoälystä. Monikansallisten yritysten toimintaympäristön monimutkaisuus tuo myös lisää pohdittavaa.

Jotta tekoäly voidaan onnistuneesti adoptoida monikansallisten yritysten osaajahankintaan, organisaatioiden on panostettava ymmärryksen ja tiedon lisäämiseen ja siten epävarmuuden vähentämiseen. Turvallisten toimintatapojen adoptoiminen tekoälyn kanssa sekä avoin kommunikointi HR-asiantuntijoiden sekä muiden sidosryhmien välillä voivat tukea myönteistä mielikuvaa tekoälyn adoptoinnissa. Tämä tutkielma tarjoaa näkemystä siihen, miten HR-asiantuntijat asennoituvat tekoälyä kohtaan ja kuinka nämä näkemykset olisi hyvä huomioida, kun tekoälyn adoptointi osaajahankintaan tulee aiheelliseksi monikansalliselle yritykselle.

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Abbreviations

MNC = Multinational corporation

AI = Artificial Intelligence

AMO = Abilities, Motivation, Opportunity

HR = Human Resources

HRM = Human Resource Management

1 Introduction

The “war for talent” has had an impact on talent acquisition functions globally (Tarique & Schuler, 2010, p. 131). There has been a growing need for skilled talent, and as a result, the retention and acquisition of talent holds increased organizational importance. Historically, people have been a crucial resource for organizations and their development but also the development of talent management has affected all industries (Claus, 2019, p. 207). Consequently, talent acquisition holds a valuable position for a company’s competitive edge (Yabanci, 2020, p. 101). For MNCs, the “war for talent” means competing for scarce talent in a global setting. The talent acquisition process needs development and an outlook towards the future requirements of the field. Walford-Wright and Scott-Jackson (2018, p. 228) identify the following factors as current challenges in the talent acquisition process: lack of vision, lack of applicant tracking system, low engagement, lack of people analytics, lack of a referral program, high-cost and long, time per hire, low quality of hires, lack of trust between hiring managers and talent acquisition department, and finally, a lack of individual plans for the acquisition teams future. Organizations are beginning to recognize that their talent management and acquisition practices are not up-to-date and do not answer the needs of employees (Claus, 2019, p. 207). To address this issue, novel frameworks and tools are being discussed, such as agile methodologies and analytical augmentation.

It is important to note that there is now a newcomer in this environment, disruptive technologies and especially artificial intelligence (AI). Currently, industries are rapidly transforming due to technological developments (Shufutinsky et al., 2020, p. 73; Menzies et al., 2024, p. 196). These transformations enable digital, smart, and more capable functions for organizations like MNCs. There lies great potential when these technologies and their benefits are realized, for example in talent acquisition. Artificial intelligence is one of the developing technologies that when adopted can improve efficiency in different parts of an organization such as production or management decision-making (Gans, 2023, p.702). The broader the effect AI has on a company the more incentives it sees to continue adoption. According to Shufutinsky et al., (2020, p. 73), organizations are

preparing for technological, cultural, and managerial changes to come. The resistance towards change has not been in a major role, due to the inevitable nature of technological transformation. Both the loss and creation of jobs are understood, and organizations understand the value of retraining their abilities to adapt to the developing environment and its needs.

AI has been adopted into the HR department by HR professionals (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020, p.2617). Within this department, AI has sparked interest, particularly in supporting talent management and talent acquisition functions. AI can offer transformative solutions to challenges in talent acquisition processes discussed earlier (Paramita et al., 2024, 108). AI can facilitate decision-making and intelligent insights for MNCs (Johnson et al., 2021, p. 42). AI utilizes algorithms to read and analyze data, finding hidden patterns that other users or organizations may have overlooked or missed. For example, in talent acquisition, new algorithms can identify the talent needed and match their capabilities and personalities to the team they would be joining. This saves both time and personnel resources from candidate pre-screening with automatization (Walford-Wright & Scott-Jackson, 2018, p. 229). Organizations such as MNCs have complex operating environments and complex organizational strategies that provide these development steps with their own opportunities and challenges (Larsen et al., 2023, p. 536).

As artificial intelligence (AI) and its applications disrupt the world of talent acquisition, the mindset and capabilities of HR professionals are critical to the outcome of the integration process. This collision of business and technology allows for improved efficiency, and automation of recurring tasks and offers optimization beyond human capabilities. For example, AI has been utilized from beginning to end in personnel life cycle management (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020, p.2617). The work that lies ahead is ensuring AI's successful and sustainable adoption into HR professionals' daily work and workplace. HR professionals' abilities, motivation, and opportunities can influence the breadth and depth of AI's utilization in the talent acquisition process. The perspectives HR professionals hold towards AI can affect the adoption process. Historically, change has been met

with resistance and uncertainty. The rapid pace of technological development has been seen as both a threat and an opportunity, and the same can be said for AI in talent acquisition. If the opportunity lies in the potential efficiency, the threat lies in the ethics of AI utilization. Add to this the global environment of the MNC, and these factors take on a significant scale.

1.1 Definitions of key concepts

The abbreviation **HRM** comes from the concept of **Human Resource Management**. It is a combination of personnel management, human relations, and industrial relations. The organization responsible for these aspects aims to produce a high-performance function that satisfies the needs of its stakeholders (Marciano, 1995). These stakeholders can be the employer, the employee, unions, management, and the community to name a few (Claus, 2019, p. 213). HR professionals are responsible for different processes and departments under this topic. **Talent Management** is an umbrella term for the activities of talent attraction, selection, retention, reduction, and removal. It is also responsible for talent development, performance evaluation, and the reward system (Schuler et al., 2011, p. 510). **Talent acquisition** is one of the processes under the HRM umbrella. Talent acquisition includes candidate sourcing, application screening, interviewing, candidate testing, and many other activities that ensure that new talent is brought into the organization. The word “talent” stands for people in the context of talent management and acquisition (Lewis & Heckman, 2006, p. 141). An **HR professional** is someone who has responsibility for one or multiple areas of the HR function, such as recruitment, training, strategic HR, HR systems, or employee relations. HR professionals may have one or more responsibilities depending on the employer’s resources, structure, and size. HR professionals work under a wide variety of titles, ranging everything from specialists to directors.

Digitalization means adopting and utilizing digital technologies in business processes. For example, submitting applications for open job positions in a digital format in a digital

space instead of handing a paper to a person handling the applications. According to Gans (2023, p. 702), **Artificial Intelligence**, AI, is an improvement in predictive technology. This means that AI can make informed predictions faster and more accurately than humans. The improved predictions allow managers to make decisions based on answers that are efficiently analyzed responses to potential changes in variables. AI has been used as an umbrella term for computer-based technologies that either replace or augment business functions with human-like intelligence (Kot, et al., 2021, p. 868).

AI in the HRM context can be defined as the vast amount of software algorithms that enable computers to perform HRM activities on behalf of humans (Meijerink et al., 2021, p. 4549). These actions previously required human cognition and intervention, but have now been replaced by AI. Meijerink et al. (2021, p. 2546) define algorithmic HRM as the operations where digital data supports HR decision-making, the use of algorithms that process digital data, and the automation of HR decision-making, either partially or fully. Algorithmic HRM is transforming talent management and other HR activities. It is also an umbrella term encompassing areas such as HR analytics and AI-powered HR algorithms. It can also be described as a subset of e-HRM. Hunkenschroer and Luetge (2022, p. 977) define **AI talent acquisition** as “any procedure that makes use of AI to assist organizations during the recruitment and selection of job candidates”.

The Ability, Motivation, Opportunity (AMO) framework is based on the idea that all three dimensions of an individual’s ability, motivation and opportunity must be present for any performance to occur (Blumberg & Pringle, 1982, p. 565). The degree to which each dimension is present also influences the quality or rate of the performance. The best performance can be achieved when all three dimensions are of high value. This framework can be used with either organizations or human individuals as subjects of analysis.

1.2 Research gap

How people should be managed, developed, and acquired has been under research for decades, but the recommendations and findings are contradictory (Lewis & Heckman, 2006, p. 141). It is debated whether talent management is a separate discipline or just another definition of HRM practices that are already in use and have already been under research (Iles et al., 2010, p. 179). Also, the meeting ground of AI and HRM is still in need of further research in many areas (Prikshat et al., 2023, p. 9). Furthermore, there is still a gap between the growing number of academic papers on AI and the understanding of the impact of adopting such technologies in HRM (Vrontis et al., 2022, p. 1237; Rodgers et al., 2023, p. 16). This gap exists in both organizational and individual-level research. Their systematic review found 45 papers linking AI and other technologies to the HRM environment. The newness of research in this area and the rapid rise of AI in the business world have led to several gaps and opportunities to focus on niche interfaces (Menzies et al., 2024, p. 185). Comparisons across industries, countries, and cultures are either being researched or need to be researched.

Applicant or employee perceptions of AI-enhanced recruitment processes have been researched, but the focus has not yet been on the employer's perspective yet (Horodyski, 2023, p. 7). Candidates have positive connotations, expectations, and experiences of AI-enhanced recruitment. Furthermore, according to Horodyski (2023, p. 7), applicants view companies utilizing AI in this process in a positive light. Addressing this gap by focusing on the HR professionals' motivation and abilities, aims to close this gap. Beltrán-Martin and Bou-Llusar (2018, p. 107) recommend further research on HR professionals' perceptions of how professionals' intentions play out in employees' work, analyzing it through the AMO components. As this thesis uses the AMO framework and analyzes how HR professionals' attributes influence technology adoption, it also provides partial insight into this research gap.

To date, studies conducted in the field of HRM have mainly focused on the adoption of digital technologies and tools rather than the attitudes towards AI and the implications

of these views (Del Giudice et al., 2023, p. 4). Vrontis et al. (2022 p. 1258) suggest that employees' reactions to the transformation of technology-enabled HRM and how their reactions affect the adoption of said technologies should be explored further and this is the gap that this thesis will focus on. This gap is linked to the topic of AI in the specific context of talent acquisition at the managerial level, which is a new area of research, and therefore academic research is still developing and growing in number (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020, p. 2617). As suggested by Del Giudice et al. (2023, p. 7), studies should try to shed light on AI technologies and their characteristics that empower humans.

1.3 Research question, objectives and delimitations

This thesis focuses on the interface of AI in talent acquisition and how HR professionals perceive their abilities, motivation, and opportunities to adopt and utilize AI. Following the research gap, a research question for this thesis has been formed.

This thesis aims to answer the research question of "How do HR professionals' attributes influence the adoption of AI in talent acquisition within MNCs?"

The supportive questions that aim to help answer the main research question are the following:

"How do HR professionals' attributes (abilities, motivation, and opportunities) affect their willingness to adopt and utilize AI?"

"How does the MNC environment influence HR professionals' attributes in adopting and utilizing AI?"

The objectives of this thesis are:

- To assess the role of HR professional's attributes: Find the abilities, motivation, and opportunities HR professionals hold towards AI's adoption to talent acquisition processes
- To assess the potential influence of the multinational environment

- To assess what HR professionals see as challenges with the adoption process

The scope of the study is focused on multinational corporations that operate in the industrial sector. Interviewing HR professionals and talent acquisition experts from these companies and industries will shed light on the industry and thus give more insight into the growing field of research in the interface of AI and talent acquisition. This thesis is limited to the HR professionals' perspective, the multinational company context, and the qualitative nature of this thesis. The thesis does not focus on the technical aspect of adopting AI and implementing emerging technologies in organizations' systems and software.

In this thesis, the AI-powered spelling and editing tool DeepL Write has been utilized for proofreading and clarity improvements. Acknowledging that AI has been used as a supportive tool ensures that this thesis was written in an ethical manner and that the text produced is by the author's own hand.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five parts. The first part is an introduction to the thesis and the research area. The topic, key definitions, formulation of the research question, and objectives are presented in this section. The second part provides a theoretical background for the thesis. The part discusses the relevant issues of the multinational company, its operating environment, talent management, and acquisition as important organizational operations. These topics are affected by digitalization which will be discussed and then transitioned to the intersection of all these topics. This intersection is the adoption of AI into MNCs' talent acquisition. The agent driving this change is the HR professional, so the focus will be on the influence of the individual. In the second part, the focus on talent acquisition and AI will be presented with the help of the AMO framework. The third part presents the research design. This part includes discussions on research design, methodology, data collection, and data analysis. The discussion of research methodology

and its sub-categories define the rationale for the methodological choices made in this thesis. The third part concludes with a presentation of the reliability and validity of the thesis. The fourth part focuses on the findings of the thesis, by using the analyzed data, collected for this thesis. The fifth and final part presents a discussion. This discussion is about the empirical findings and the insights provided by the theoretical background. The empirical findings will be compared with the findings of the theoretical background. Finally, the thesis concludes with an overview of the main findings. In addition, suggestions for future research are provided and the limitations of this thesis are discussed.

2 Theoretical background

In this theoretical background, the sections present the MNCs' unique environment and how talent management and acquisition operate in this environment. After going through the environment the thesis discusses how talent management and acquisition have digitalized in MNCs' and how AI has been adopted in the function as well. The following section then discusses how HR professionals hold the strings when it comes to adopting AI into the scene by utilizing the AMO framework to analyze key attributes. Finally, the theoretical background presents challenges found in the literature and concludes with a summary of the theoretical framework.

2.1 The MNC environment

Globalization can be defined as the concept of a large combination of phenomena such as the expansion of trade to a global level, increased competition between organizations, the potential to expand markets and customer reach to a global level, and the increased mobility of talent creating a global labor market (Schuler et al., 2011, p. 507). Globalization has focused attention on how MNCs operate and, for example, most of the largest companies in the world are MNCs. MNCs are, in their literal definition, multinational, which means that they operate in multiple locations. Traditional MNCs have networks of international buyers, suppliers, and partners.

Typical to MNC activity are cross-border operations, including subsidiaries, utilization of business models, and flow of products. MNCs are guided by their internationalization strategies (Meyer et al., 2023, p.577). The buyers, suppliers, and partners, with whom MNCs work, are also sources of knowledge resources, and innovation in both daily activities (Meyer et al., 2023, p.593; Degbey & Pelto, 2021, p. 16). MNCs operate in a unique environment with its own set of opportunities and challenges. The international landscape where MNCs operate is a changing context where the focus shifts between global, transnational, and local scopes (Andersen, 2017, p. 28). Over the years, MNCs have

become integrated with cultural traits and behavioral differences between cultures. Thus, the scalability of resources and strategies promotes success in a diverse and optimal utilization of these resources for the benefit of the MNC. However, where scalability and diversity are discussed, there is also an increase in complexity.

MNCs have three different types of distances that create both opportunities and challenges. These distances are structural, geographical, and social (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013, p. 1771). Structural can be, for example, the talent that subsidiaries want to hold onto even though the talent would be more beneficial in another location. Geographic is simply the distance between locations and countries. Social distance can mean cultural differences such as language or hierarchical elements. MNCs face the “global-local”-dilemma, which is the balance or setting between global and local operations and management decisions (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017, p. 518). This refers, for example, to the location of headquarters and strategic decisions regarding cultural adaptation or global standardization. With structural distance, for example, the transferability of efficiency between MNC headquarters and subsidiaries is variable (Koeppel et al., 2024, p. 299). Thus, subsidiaries sometimes have to develop their practices to better fit the environment and its needs, be it societal or organizational. This depends on the scalability of the global strategy. In addition, there may be challenges that only emerge in local settings and therefore global initiatives do not provide the tools to solve problems in a sufficient and timely manner.

MNCs are made up of diverse and international talent, or human capital in other words. According to Koeppel et al. (2024, p. 296), large MNCs are more likely to have a clear and strong organizational structure and processes, as the complexity of international operations requires strong structures to operate efficiently. Furthermore, large MNCs have the resources and intelligence to operate in competitive markets and also to attract competitive and skilled talent. This in turn can support, for example, global talent management practices and global mobility. Large MNCs have the resources to invest in talent management earlier than smaller MNCs. The exception to this is owner-managed organizations

due to their flat hierarchies. The regulations, rules, or standards are not linear across all borders, which creates work and complexity for MNCs operating across borders (Luo, 2022, p. 346). The international environment and its multitude of regulations shaped by each nation or entity create challenges for MNCs to operate smoothly in multiple locations. For example, MNCs need to individually and collectively analyze and prepare for digital risks when leveraging digitization. This rule also applies when performing typical MNC operations such as local adaptation and cross-border activities when digitized (Luo, 2022, p. 358).

Digital globalization can be defined as a form of globalization that connects business and data across nations (Luo, 2022, p.345). It ensures the flow of information, goods, services, investment, and capital in this global environment. Digitalization has the potential to create both new opportunities and challenges for MNCs. Challenges such as digital risks are defined as uncertainties in the locations where the MNC operates and competes caused by digitization, potentially affecting the organizations' operations (Luo, 2022, p. 345). Digitization of the networks in which MNCs operate, provide connectivity to globalization through digital platforms, information and communication technologies, the internet, and other technologies (Luo, 2022, p. 345). In addition to operating with the internationalization strategies mentioned above, there is also a digitization strategy that comes into the mix (Meyer et al., 2023, p.577). Digital connectivity in the MNC environment is a certain feature of the future of international business but also a way to address new uncertainties and challenges in the field (Luo, 2022, p. 346). Digitization offers a wider marketplace in a global environment and is the reason why MNCs see themselves becoming more dependent on the exchange of information and data infrastructure (Luo, 2022, p. 346). Cybercrime, cyber-terrorism, and cyber-espionage are all security attacks that pose a new threat to international businesses and MNCs as transactions take place and can be disrupted in virtual spaces globally. These threats can also extend to all processes that have been digitized in the MNC, such as talent management and acquisition.

2.2 Talent acquisition in MNCs

MNCs have a specific trait to them which is that they comprise globally dispersed locations and culturally diverse workforce. Talent management offers a unique approach to people-resource which when managed correctly can make a positive difference to the organizations' competitive advantage (Iles et al., 2010, p. 187). The definition is not only a new name for HRM and neither is it a new definition of an entirely new phenomenon. The main difference is the focus of scope which is set wider when defining HRM. Talent management is of key value to MNCs because the talent and its position can be linked to global strategy and then further linked to the effectiveness of the MNC. Furthermore, when the position benefits from distinctive company and industry knowledge, local tacit knowledge, and market know-how, talent management plays an integral role in attaining the best solution to presented needs (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013, p. 1766).

MNCs that have multiple operational locations knowledge and practices are commonly shared between headquarters and subsidiaries. Minbaeva and Collings (2013, p. 1774) present that MNCs should align their strategies and talent management in a way that they have a shared vision of what their global strategy is and have clarity if said strategy is truly global or rather a collection of multiple regional strategies. For example, big German MNCs practice mostly inclusive talent management (Koeppel et al., 2024, p.295). As well as having alignment with talent management strategies, the responsibility of talent management should be thought out. In MNCs, the responsibility of talent management can vary between HR and top management. According to Minbaeva and Collings (2013, p. 1765), the responsibility should be shared for the best outcome. It should be governed by HR and owned by management. For MNCs, there is value in a strategic approach when acquiring talent. Differentiation between roles that are strategic and non-strategic can hold a lot of potential for the MNCs' performance. For example, acquiring the "best" talent to a growing high-potential subsidiary can bring more impact to the MNC than acquiring the "best" to a standard corporate function position. The MNCs' approach to talent management, whether it be general or specialized, influences how talent is developed and where, concerning position level and location (Koeppel et al., 2024, p. 300).

MNCs should aim to build a strong talent management strategy to enable transferring capabilities globally. This needs quality implementation of relevant policies, encouraging organizational culture, strong networks, and cultural sensitivity to function in multiple locations (Farndale et al., 2010, p. 166). Furthermore, talent management on a global scale is a complex and broad concept. The implementation varies across organizations and different contexts (Farndale et al., 2010, p.167). Talent management practices vary between MNCs (Koeppel et al., 2024, p. 293). For example, one organization can standardize talent management strategies in all levels and subsidiaries whereas another can standardize higher-level talent management and localize the lower talent management level strategy.

Even though MNCs discuss their internal but global talent systems, there can be misconceptions on how easy it will be to transfer talent from one location to another and additionally a misconception of a lack of barriers to this (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013, p. 1767). Globalization has created the discussion of fading barriers, but this is not the entire truth. Farndale et al. (2010, p. 162) discuss two challenges that MNCs are facing with talent management. These two issues are global competition and the development of international mobility. Global competition regards the situation where MNCs compete for the same talents from the same talent pool. The development of international mobility on the other hand refers to language skills, and talent retention challenges in emerging markets to name a few. Talent management challenges can also be a shortage or a surplus of talent, the wrong location of talent, and the wrong price of talent (Schuler et al., 2011, p. 513). Furthermore, it is to be noted that not all MNCs are equal in the “war for talent” (Belderbos et al., 2023). The resources to coordinate domestic and foreign talent acquisition differ and affect the scale of potential expansion. MNCs differ in their nature of operations, the skill levels needed from employees, labor costs between home and host countries, and the contextual difference between home and host countries. Thus, MNCs need to use sensitive consideration with their international talent management and acquisition activities with a focus on country-specificity and skill intensity.

It is essential for talent management to understand and be informed about the global-local dilemma, which involves learning about local talent situations such as market demand and regulatory challenges (Koeppel et al., 2024, p. 301). Furthermore, cultural and institutional differences are influencing contexts of talent management and also need an informative approach. MNCs ought to be aware of the limitations of talent management systems and processes that are aimed at standardizing performance evaluations (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013, p. 1771). The misconception is that the standards are a straight answer for organizations across the world. Having diverse sources of input and communication ensures talent decisions get closer to an optimal outcome. There are still discussions going on about should HR practices and management be operated globally or locally. Hong and Minbaeva (2022, p. 120) additionally argue to increase discussions between individual and collective management practices since talents can be multicultural in MNCs and not fit with the equal design approach.

MNCs are employers of international talent and are especially interested in acquiring needed talent across borders. The multinationality of an organization makes the need and utilization of talent more concerned about cultural, national, and geographical traits. If talent is acquired internationally and cultural differences, for example, are not taken into notice, the integration and retention of talent can become challenging. MNCs can even gain a competitive advantage when acquiring multicultural talents (Hong & Minbaeva, 2022, 120). It is possible that even though organizations have set a global talent management strategy, its implementation may vary and depend on local cultural standards (Koeppel et al., 2024, p. 297). Cultural differences, or as mentioned before cultural distance, are raised as a focal point when discussing cross-cultural talent management.

MNCs acquire their talent globally by employing migrants in their home countries or by employing foreign workers in their foreign affiliates. The goal for organizations is to match talent and knowledge to departments and positions in need. The special context MNCs face is the variety of locations, operation sizes, and resources (Belderbos et al., 2023). The talent is not always in the right location and has to be attracted from overseas.

The greater the contextual difference between MNCs' home country and abroad, the knowledge transfer has a greater potential to benefit from diversity and alignment brought on by international talent. Furthermore, MNCs aim to optimize their allocation of global talent to global locations. For example, Morris et al. (2016, p. 731) categorize human capital in MNCs into four categories which are local, international, corporate, and subsidiary. The proportions vary between MNCs due to changes in perspective on how talent is weighed towards each category. For example, if the MNC values common international expertise regardless of location, another MNC might want a balance of local and international talents. Furthermore, there are differences in what skills to operate where such as HR operates in headquarters whereas a local HR operates in a subsidiary. Global skilled talent can be described as scarce and costly due to the resources needed in the search. This creates an MNC-specific approach to acquiring talent globally (Belderbos et al., 2023). Today restraints are fewer than before with the subject of international mobility.

The economy, industry, and market in which the MNCs operate can affect talent management practices (Koeppel et al., 2024, p. 298). For example, talents can be looking for opportunities rather than stability in a growth market area. MNCs' talent management thus needs to adjust their strategies to fit the talent's outlook to retain it and their know-how inside the organization. There is a high demand for talent with digital human capital in some labor markets (Grimpe et al., 2023 p. 668). Only a few such talents return to MNCs' subsidiaries after working elsewhere. This is due to the situation where digitally skilled talent is also needed in host country markets as well as subsidiaries. When the workforce is diverse in the subsidiaries and learning opportunities are provided the likelihood of talent retention grows for subsidiaries. Nevertheless, if the area is clustered with digital expertise other employers may seem a more attractive option for talents. This shows talent management and acquisition are complex even inside an MNC.

In short, MNCs operate in a diverse, evolving, and complex environment (Larsen et al., 2023, p.536). Talent management and acquisition operations are no exception. The

complexity presents itself not only from globalization and the “war for talent” but also from the influence of digitalization. When navigating through these complexities, the development of technology, such as AI, and management frameworks become key factors. These factors will be explored more in-depth in the following chapters.

2.3 Digitalization of talent acquisition

The “war for talent” has required companies to take an active approach to talent acquisition and seek new perspectives on how to keep new talents coming in and additionally keeping current talents satisfied (Tarique & Schuler, 2010, p. 131). Challenges are evident in the areas of competence shortages, the flow of talent, generational differences, and regional differences, to name a few (Tarique & Schuler, 2010, p. 129). The field of HRM and talent acquisition has begun to take steps towards digitalization since the 1980s (Yabanci, 2020, p. 101). HR professionals have been familiar with conventional computer technologies in their work for over twenty years.

Lewis and Heckman (2006, p. 141) argue that talent management has lacked a clear definition and is commonly used interchangeably with HR practices. They suggest that by grounding talent management in strategic frameworks with measurable systems and decisions, the research could be improved with the addition of increasing talent conversations inside organizations. The components of talent management in a hierarchical order according to Lewis and Heckman (2006, p. 149) are: strategies for competitive advantage, implications of talent strategies, strategies for talent pools, talent management systems, and talent practices. These components and many factors linked to talent management development have now fallen behind (Claus, 2019, p. 213). While digitalization has improved talent acquisition processes, it also introduces new challenges such as compliance and transparency. To name a few, legislation, institutional subjects such as benefits, education or privacy protection, and societal norms such as career paths and the value of work are areas that need adaptation or reformation to catch up (Claus, 2019, p. 213). With digitalization, concerns for privacy and data protection are raised in a growing

number and the slow nature of creating and setting legislation that has to be followed does not align. Furthermore, these actions are not standardized in a global manner which means that in MNCs, these variations can create additional complexities. For example, talent management systems must adapt to diverse legislative, cultural, and technological environments.

Claus (2019, p. 210) describes the new talent management field as personalized and customized with the addition of being transparent, authentic, and easy to use. The perspective has shifted towards an optimal experience for the user rather than only following policies and processes. Another shift in perspective could be described as letting go of the idea that one strategy or program would suit all its users. It has been only in recent years that information technologies have taken noticeable steps towards intelligent HR processes (Yabanci, 2020, p. 103). For example, IBM has begun to approach cognitive computing to integrate into daily HR functions. In addition to these developments, the original requirements must still be met, such as fairness, equity, legal compliance, and cultural sensitivity. The development and digitalization of talent acquisition have been around for over 30 years. The evolution of digitalization in talent management, from the nineties to the present day, has influenced HR processes globally. This development will be explored further in the following chapters.

2.3.1 The evolution of digitalization in talent acquisition

Digitalization has taken over the HR function and furthermore talent management and acquisition activities. The following paragraphs will shortly go through the evolution and development of digitalization in talent management and acquisition. A paper from Black and van Esch (2020), has divided this development into three parts which will be utilized as a structure for this section.

In the late 90's, talent acquisition was performed manually (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 216). Potential candidates had to go to job boards or read job postings from the

newspapers. When an opportunity was found, candidates usually went to the physical workplace to express interest and manually fill out applications. Then, "word of mouth" from employees to their friends and family held value for the employer. Utilization of search forms was expensive as was posting job ads to bigger, national-level newspapers. Cognitive biases and lack of efficiency led to the first development of "Digital recruitment 1.0". The "digital recruiting 2.0" started around 2010 (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 217). This stage was enabled by the aggregation of job boards and the ability to have the same job postings on multiple platforms. Furthermore, the growing utilization of digital professionals and social network platforms such as LinkedIn. Organizations were now able to reach a growing number of people from these platforms and gain both visibility and efficiency in job advertising. In addition, these platforms also helped organizations to target their advertisement and opportunities to the platform users. Digitalization simplified the application process which led to an increase in underqualified applicants applying for posted positions (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 218). This in turn increased the number of applications and thus increased the workload to the HR departments. The options were to either increase application processing time or hire more people to screen applications. Furthermore, the shift towards the growing value of human capital drove the 2.0 to 3.0.

The growth of applications, platforms, and development of technology has driven organizations from viewing AI as a potential tool or a possibility for the future to a necessary technology (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 218). With the development of cognitive computing, in other words, AI, there can be seen a developmental shift from electronic HRM towards intelligent HRM (Yabanci, 2020, p. 104; Vrontis et al., 2022, p. 1251). AI is transforming HRM with the automatization of tools and applications. The future of this transformation is yet to unfold, but AI can be said to be a constant presence in the future of HRM. This shift provides more advanced computer systems and Yabanci (2020, p. 104) suggests that the e-HRM abbreviation should be replaced with i-HRM when talking about AI-powered HRM. Technological capabilities have become more developed and common through the years (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 216). Specific technologies

regarding talent acquisition have significantly transformed. Black and van Esch call this developmental stage "Digital recruiting 3.0". This means that the recent developments in technology are the involvement, development, and adoption of AI and other intelligent systems. Next, the discussion will focus on the digitalization of AI specifically and how it functions in talent acquisition.

2.3.2 Talent acquisition and AI

Today, most talent acquisition systems are outdated, meaning manual repetitive tasks, old systems that cannot be integrated into updated ones, or systems that cannot produce wanted information from its data such as reports or analytics. HR professionals face challenges from multiple fronts such as financial, organizational, cultural, and technological limitations which in turn hinder access to modern digitalized tools (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.2). AI is now capable of making decisions and performing tasks normally performed by HR professionals (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 216). The advantages of AI can be seen in tasks such as more effective identification, attraction, screening, assessing, interviewing, and coordinating with potential talents. The difference to HR professionals is the volume and speed that AI is capable of performing. Furthermore, AI-powered tools can overcome the biases that unnoticeably can transfer with human judgment. This additionally increases the reliability and validity of AI in talent acquisition. On the other hand, overcoming human bias can only happen in the case where the algorithms are not developed with human bias which is challenging.

The environment of talent acquisition has developed due to the "war for talent" (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.3). Now HR professionals are selling the organization, organizational culture, and the position to wanted talent rather than talent selling their skills and suitability. To secure talent retention, candidates need to be offered additional opportunities to improve their skills and well-being. Especially in the field of technology, the candidates who are specialized with valuable skills hold the value in their hands and can almost choose the organization that best aligns with their values and employment benefit

expectations (Walford-Wright & Scott-Jackson, 2018, p. 227). This means that employers and the talent acquisition department need to invest thought and care in how they handle these candidates in the acquisition process.

E-recruitment, in other words, digitalized talent acquisition, defines the whole process from talent identification to a formed match between employer and candidate (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.1). Every step of this process can be supported by AI. Identification of talents can be run on social networking platforms, then followed by gamified recruitment, chatbot-run candidate interviews, and lastly connecting suitable candidates to suitable positions with the help of AI. It depends on the talent acquisition strategy and MNCs policy on how much or in which relation can AI be utilized and adopted (Moharrak et al., 2024, p. 368). HR professionals see that the AI toolkit is becoming more relevant by the year and growing into a prominent role (Fritts & Cabrera, 2021, p. 791). The fear is mainly pointed to potential bias and with that discrimination that can be brought on by algorithms and decision-making tools. But this fear only comes second, and the concern of dehumanization holds first place. This feeling could be described as mutual since candidates have mirroring feelings, According to Black and van Esch (2020, p. 224), AI should not take over the entirety of talent acquisition processes. This is due to the candidate's need and want to test and experience the organizational culture which can only be determined in a face-to-face interview run by humans that work in said culture. It is important to remember that whereas AI can analyze candidates optimally, it is challenging for candidates to analyze organizations through AI tools.

HR professionals still perceive value in the human workforce (Mantzaris & Myloni, 2023a, p.185). They believe that technological advances are not likely to dismiss humans overall. The study found that organizational cultures are not yet able to evaluate or exploit all the opportunities brought by machines and systems. According to the study by Shufutinsky et al. (2020, p. 66), HR professionals and hiring managers already see the change happening now or in the near future. The change is seen as inevitable, and the utilization

of AI and other technologies is visible in multiple parts of organizations, industries, and jobs.

Digitalization of HRM and talent acquisition brings the field closer to strategic activities and further from administrative processes (Wiblen & Marler, 2021, p.2596). Furthermore, HR professionals can be seen more as strategic partners than before. With digitalization, talent targeting, and retention can be invested in. Digitalization of talent acquisition brings consistency and structure to the processes. Such areas as recruitment criteria, dialogues, and workflow are developed into a more structured form.

A reason for the fast development of the automatization and digitalization of HR tasks is due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Nankervis & Cameron, 2023, p.245). HR professionals saw the pandemic as a facilitator for this transformation. E-HRM consists of both hardware and software. The balance of the two represents itself differently in every organization (Marler & Parry, 2016, p. 2234 – 2235). The representation shows differences in organizational capabilities to support coordinated and automated transactions. These happen both on an individual and group level and include data capture, creation, and communication by utilizing different technologies. A change in an organization's e-HRM capabilities predicts an impactful change in HR involvement.

New technologies allow mass customization and less bureaucratic management in talent acquisition (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.9). Technologies and tools can support or replace tasks, but the final decision-making power remains with HR professionals. Digitalized talent acquisition can realign the HR professionals' work description (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.9). Development and digitalization are not to answer just current needs but to work in a more open, social, human, and future-oriented manner. The perspective of talent selection changes into capturing and retaining, for example. To keep or gain a competitive edge the new ecosystem that is AI-powered talent acquisition needs to be integrated into company culture in a visible way to guarantee a competitive global approach to the "war for talent" in the world where AI is in active use.

According to Yabanci (2020, p.106), AI-drivenness is a key characteristic when talking about i-HRM characteristics. Utilizing AI in organizational activities for internal and external functions. The level of adoption can vary, for example, only adopting AI-powered talent sourcing or adopting AI to take over routine HR tasks in a more dominating manner. But this drivenness also has some uncertainties to overcome such as in employer branding. The playful nature of gamification in recruitment can shed a negative light on the employer brand in the talent's eyes (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.9). Some talents are drawn back by systems and technologies and see them as unprofessional. In addition, impersonal and artificial communication from chatbots can send a negative experience to candidates. This creates a decision to be made on how AI is being utilized and marketed in MNCs.

Digitalization and the presence of AI have raised concerns among people (Wiblen & Marler, 2021, p. 2592). Fears about losing jobs to robots and the loss of human touch in decision-making are common among professionals. Since HR professionals are the key people when the adoption of AI happens, their abilities, motivation, opportunities, and other actions hold value in how organizations face this new environment.

2.4 HR professionals as facilitators of AI adoption

MNCs are motivated by the “war for talent” , development in the number of applicants and applications, and the digitalization trend to adopt AI into talent acquisition (Roppelt et al., 2024, p. 2993.) The adoption of AI technologies for talent acquisition fosters contact between HR professionals and potential talents in a more efficient and optimized acquisition process (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.8). The talent acquisition process develops into a faster, more systematic, more specific, and more objective entity. Furthermore, many parts of the talent management entity such as talent attraction, integration, and retention can be improved with new technologies. In fact, HR professionals now need to focus on all three working spaces, which are physical, digital, and human environments

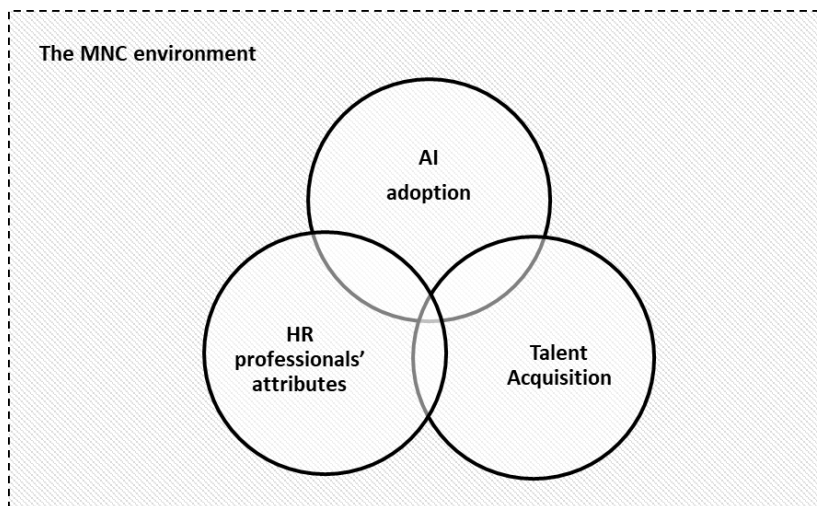
(Malik et al., 2023, p111). Furthermore, contextual factors such as generation, diversity, and technological maturity are factors that need to be assessed and considered when adopting AI. HR professionals' attributes and beliefs about AI influence their readiness to accept AI and their readiness to change (Suseno et al., 2022, p.1226). A positive attitude towards AI increases the transformation readiness towards AI adoption whereas managers who have anxiety towards AI are not as ready for AI adoption and change.

According to Oberst et al. (2021, p. 633), HR professionals still tend to rely on their colleagues' opinions regarding talent acquisition decisions over recommendations provided by algorithms that were developed for the same task. This study was conducted so that the decisions weren't performed as real-life actions which are noted to affect the results. A similar outcome was attained even when the colleague's recommendation was highly subjective according to the study. Oberst et al. (2021, p. 636) suggest that HR professionals at the moment either underestimate or overestimate the ability of AI. In the situation of underestimation, HR professionals do not trust the algorithm or see it as dull which leads to ignorance over recommendations or underuse of the technology. In the case of overestimation, HR professionals are reluctant to utilize the algorithms due to seen lack of human touch and fear over one's job position (Paramita et al., 2024, p. 125). To overcome these challenges, for example, the motivation and abilities of HR professionals need to be understood in more depth.

There is still a gap to be filled between the potential and the reality with the utilization of AI in Human Resource Management (Tambe et al., 2019, p. 15). Discussions about AI and the opportunities it brings to HR professionals have been growing faster than its adoption. The present challenges that appear with AI in talent acquisition processes are both conceptual and practical (Tambe et al., 2019, p. 16). For example, analyzes performed by AI on potential candidates can conflict with factors typically seen as important by the HR professional. A lack of knowledge and understanding of how AI-powered algorithms work has created an environment of stubbornness to use them over human work (Oberst et al., 2021, p. 635). This is the case even though HR professionals utilize

the same candidate databases where they browse manually through set filters. In the following Figure 1, the interconnected nature of the MNC environment, talent acquisition function, and disruptive AI technology are presented.

Figure 1. Interconnectedness of thesis topics.



The above-mentioned stubbornness, underestimation, overestimation, anxiety, and potential are all challenges and factors that affect HR professionals' abilities, motivation, and opportunities for the adoption of AI. These three attributes also make up the AMO framework that constructs the discussion of academic literature below. The framework can be utilized at both the individual level and organizational levels (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023, p.731). Whereas ability and opportunity can be linked directly to individual or organizational performance, motivation can be considered a heavily HR-related mediator (Boselie et al., 2005, p. 79). Next, each dimension of the AMO framework is discussed from individual perspectives found in the literature.

2.4.1 Ability

The ability from the AMO framework in this thesis covers HR professionals' skills and means to adopt AI into talent acquisition processes. In talent acquisition, HR professionals focus on key practices such as recruitment, selection, and hiring strategies (Bos-

Nehles et al., 2023, p.729). Due to the fluctuating development time scale of innovations, platforms, and systems, HR professionals need complex capabilities to adjust to the evolving levels of automation and digitalization when the aforementioned practices are transformed by AI (Wiblen & Marler, 2021, p.2617). Furthermore, the development of the whole HR function and the need for people in said function can decrease in the future to a fully automated and autonomous role (Wiblen & Marler, 2021, p.2617). Currently, HR professionals must maintain relevant skills to manage human-technology interfaces and also expect a decrease in human stakeholders in the future. This means expecting both fewer human colleagues and less human-to-human communication. On the other hand, HR professionals still see that there will remain positions for them to work in HR in the future by taking responsibility for the technologies, such as implementation and the development of future working styles and management styles (Nankervis & Cameron, 2023, p.245).

A balance needs to be set between HR professionals' soft skills and hard skills when implementing new technologies (Shufutinsky et al., 2020, p. 73). Hard skills such as digital and data fluency in addition to technology coaching are skills that HR professionals gain and need when learning about AI and adopting these technologies to active use (Malik et al., 2023, p111). The question of security is one important and frequent discussion that arises when AI-empowered systems and devices are taken into active use (Yabanci, 2020, p. 107). MNCs need to be able to secure new data, applications, and devices if they want to securely and successfully adopt AI into talent acquisition. In addition, the source of data that AI utilizes can be obtained from both verified and non-verified sources. A verified source is, for example, an organizational database whereas a non-verified source is the organization's social media pages. This raises the question of data quality and the utilization of this data need HR professional's data literacy and secure data handling abilities.

With soft skills, HR professionals' emotional intelligence and creativity will positively help with the adjustment and with time become a highly valued skill set in the field of

AI-empowered talent acquisition. In addition, HR professionals need to adjust their leadership style towards an openness and innovation-centered approach to help with adjustments that come with the adoption of AI (Sivathanu & Pillai, 2018, p. 10; Roppelt et al., 2024, p. 2999). Since the adoption of AI also affects the relationships between the talent acquisition department and other departments in the MNC, strong communication skills are needed from the HR professionals. Strong communication skills also ease the adoption of AI when the tools, strategies, and processes can be communicated clearly to the talent acquisition team and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the ability to manage both humans and AI “colleagues” is a needed skill in the future.

Especially readiness of HR professionals and the talent acquisition department hold a valuable role in AI adoption due to their relevant role as the main users of these technologies in talent acquisition processes. The facilities and their condition play an integral part when adopting AI. If an MNC aims to adopt AI, it needs favorable conditions such as positive managerial attitudes, usable infrastructure, and support for professionals to work with this new technology (Cao et al., 2021, p.12). Up-to-date facilities are essential to the HR professional’s ability to work with AI in its intended use and get the intended results from AI. For the adoption to succeed in practice, HR professionals need to see AI-powered talent acquisition services, such as robo-advisors, as useful and easy to employ in their work (Flavián et al., 2022, p.310). This can be achieved by offering clear instructions and apps designed specifically for end users. Trial programs and offering statistics about AI-powered performance can additionally affect the perceived usefulness positively. In addition, HR professionals need to have knowledge and decision-making power over AI applications that are adopted into the working environment to increase employee engagement and employee experience (Malik et al., 2023, p. 98).

When HR professionals understand and internalize the meaning of new practices and AI adoption, only then are they willing to adopt the change and tools both horizontally and vertically into the MNCs’ talent acquisition strategy (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017, p. 533). Additionally, MNCs need effective mechanisms to alleviate personal stress or concerns that

HR professionals can express (Cao et al., 2021, p.12). HR professionals' ability to handle stress and change holds importance in the adoption process. The expression of concern can lead to negative attitudes which in turn challenge the adoption process. It is important to have a balanced consideration for both the positive and negative factors that are associated with the adoption of AI. To learn these important soft and hard skills, and to navigate through different attitudes, HR professionals' motivation holds importance. Key abilities alone cannot guarantee sustained and successful implementation of AI and thus motivation and opportunities need to be brought into discussion.

2.4.2 Motivation

HR professionals' motivation describes and focuses on their willingness to adopt AI into their work. Motivation can be linked to career development and further to job security (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023, p.729). According to Salvador-Gómez et al. (2023, p. 3987), contributing to motivation-enhancing HR initiatives the HR professional's motivation increases, thus investing in interesting and useful tools such as AI can increase motivation in the workplace. The HR professional's motivation toward AI and the adoption process are essential to the success or failure of AI adoption in talent acquisition. HR professionals' position can develop into a supporting one when AI is adopted (Malik et al., 2023, p111). Supportive company culture, transparency, psychological safety, and sharing of feedback enable successful AI adoption and furthermore secure employee engagement before, during, and after the process (Malik et al., 2023, p111; Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020, p. 2617). Having support from the organizational level can help decrease unwanted negative behaviours such as ignorance or deviation from the set adoption plan (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017, p. 515). Employee engagement, in this case, HR professional's engagement with the talent acquisition department in MNCs, depends on the HR professionals' motivation to adopt AI or to ignore the development.

The factor that can decrease motivation toward adoption can be fear. Fear of AI can negatively affect professionals' interest and furthermore negatively affect the professional's

motivation to adopt such applications into their work. HR professionals are most worried about losing human touch in tasks such as candidate identification, interviewing, and onboarding when AI tools are implemented (Fritts & Cabrera, 2021, p. 798). Worries that have appeared in studies have additionally been about human and algorithmic bias but the focus has not yet been on the accountability of AI-based recruitment practices (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022, p. 1000; Roppelt et al., 2025, p.12). For example, if HR professionals feel that they cannot securely handle information through AI technologies, and AI adoption is not an attractive option to integrate (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020, p. 2617). HR professionals value private data concerning the candidates and other data important to the talent acquisition process. Furthermore, if HR professionals see AI as a threat to their employment, they might sabotage the adoption process (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 223). This depends on which tasks the AI is set to automate first and is the task going to be fully or partially automated. This threat creates negative attitudes and thus decreases motivation towards adoption.

Positive incentives are motivational factors for HR professionals. For example, cost-effectiveness is found as an incentive for HR professionals to adopt AI into their talent acquisition operations (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020, p. 2617). Tasks such as job posting, candidate interviewing, and sourcing can be performed more cost-efficiently with time and workforce savings. These cost and time savings are key motivators towards AI adoption. Another study shows that HR professionals can focus and dedicate their time to the most promising candidates after AI has done pre-screening, for example (Walford-Wright & Scott-Jackson, 2018, p. 230). When the base work is done by AI it would mean that the chosen candidates are optimal solutions to hire on paper and thus answer listed needs with listed qualities. With a human-centered approach, suggested by Del Giudice et al., (2023, p. 7) and Paramita et al., (2024, p. 125), employee acceptance towards AI can be encouraged. As mentioned, emotions, social pressures, and cognition can either be hindering or encouraging factors toward acceptance. Thus, investing in a human-centered approach to AI is a way to strengthen the adoption of AI in the organization. With HR professionals' abilities and motivation aligning, the opportunities provided by MNCs are

needed to support the adoption of AI into talent acquisition and thus will be discussed next.

2.4.3 Opportunity

The opportunities that come with adopting AI can be on both organizational and individual levels. Opportunity, in this context, can mean support from the MNC and its stakeholders. Opportunities, whether they are organizational or individual make it possible for HR professionals to engage their motivation and abilities effectively. For the HR professional, opportunity can, for example, mean job design in the sense of how they can design their autonomy and how they can modify their jobs through automatization. This means creating meaningful workflows, structuring tasks to match personal ways of working, and adopting AI into these ways to utilize assistance or automatization in an individually supportive way. The automatization that AI brings, creates new possibilities to focus on personal skills such as problem solving, social skills, strategic thinking and innovation (Malik et al., 2023, p. 111). A change in mindset is needed with reimagining of personal work when AI is introduced and adopted. On the organizational level, the companies' ability to offer learning opportunities and education can affect the HR professional aforementioned abilities to adopt processes and AI (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023, p.733).

Opportunities with AI-powered talent acquisition arise when an MNC is expanding or moving into a new country (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.4). Finding and acquiring talent in an early stage is vital for the subsidiaries to succeed. These technologies provide speed in data analysis and action that help the HR professionals and the organization to settle into a new environment. Technologies can provide sufficient data to potential talents in the host country and converse remotely every hour of every day. For example, Chatbots can take part of the HR professional workload and contact candidates who are not chosen to proceed in the acquisition process (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.4). Furthermore, for the candidates that are not proceeding, chatbots can provide feedback which is not the case in big recruitments for HR professionals at the moment. This can lead to a more

positive employer image compared to a situation where the candidate does not receive any feedback or even an answer overall. Chatbots can also go through CVs that HR professionals do not have the time to go through.

In society, these new AI-empowered platforms have affected social models, management methods and styles, teaching methods, and organizations (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.8). Furthermore, issues facing inequality, training, and inclusivity both in society and in organizations can be battled against with new technologies. This transforms both the talent acquisition function and the candidate experience. Candidates can learn and better themselves to be more attractive with AI and HR professionals can efficiently handle each candidate for each position.

To adopt AI into MNCs, systems, networks, and hardware must be sufficient to work with the new virtual tools (Yabanci, 2020, p. 106). The development of computers, systems, and networks would thus also benefit organizations that are adopting AI. Having HR functions in a virtual space enables HR professionals to perform their tasks anywhere at any time, which is an opportunity for MNCs that run global operations and have talents to acquire and manage in multiple locations. The attitudes among HR professionals so far have been that AI can make work easier (Shufutinsky et al., 2020, p. 66, 68). Factors such as working environment, speed, and efficiency have improved through the utilization of AI. HR professionals seek to find more qualified candidates with the utilization of AI. One opportunity can be seen in the reduction in time spent when compared with reading through applications and CVs without the assistance of AI (Fritts & Cabrera, 2021, p. 791). Nevertheless, over half of the responses by HR professionals agreed that final business decisions should still be performed by humans (Mantzaris & Myloni, 2023a, p.181). Furthermore, nearly 80% of HR professionals agreed that human users are the ones responsible for robot's actions.

With the adoption of AI, passive candidates, such as highly talented individuals can now be reached by HR professionals through digital platforms and developed technologies

(Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.3). These advanced talents do not need to seek available positions due to their attractiveness, which recruiters acknowledge and hunt. Furthermore, they can be hunted before official graduation and retained as best as possible after integration into the team and organization with AI-powered systems. AI and technological developments have created applicant databases that restore candidate profiles (Faqihi & Miah, 2023, p. 7). These profiles and the information are kept even after the position is filled. HR professionals are now able to quickly identify candidates from talent pools by searching through the base and finding talent for new positions even before official job postings. In MNC these pools are naturally big due to multinationality with either localized or globalized pools. Adopting AI is also an opportunity to manage global presence with automatic translation and communication tools between countries and teams (Menzies et al., 2024, p. 188).

AI applications that include a humane and value-based approach, are easy digital platforms and offer easy functionality, increasing employee experience in millennials and Gen Z employees (Malik et al., 2023, p. 105; Roppelt et al., 2024, p. 2993). With the “war for talent” affecting talent acquisition, the importance of candidate experience can increase. HR professionals see that with AI-powered tools such, as chatbots, this experience quality can be improved. By having a high-quality candidate experience it can improve the MNCs' competitive advantage (Roppelt et al., 2024, p. 2993)

AI can help HR professionals choose attractive presentation methods for different candidates, the exact wording can also be adjusted by AI to connect to candidates (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 219). AI has been able to increase the number of applicants and reach out to both active job seekers and passive talents. AI has the potential to analyze what factors make candidates more appealing to different positions as well as connect which organizational features attract different candidates. For example, with chatbots, candidates can request information and get answers to questions at all hours of the day. This is not possible with HR professionals since they are not in reach every hour of the day. If these opportunities are grasped, HR professionals will be able to face the inevitable

challenges that arise in the adoption process and the challenges that arise in the MNC environment. The commonly featured challenges from the literature will be presented in the following chapter.

2.4.4 Challenges

Change resistance is nothing new in management literature and talent acquisition transformed with automatization will be no exception. HR professionals are facing a multitude of challenges that can hinder AI adoption. These AI systems that are intended for talent acquisition are created by humans (Yabanci, 2020, p. 107). That said, AI is a highly logical and non-sentimental system that follows logical principles. This is a challenge due to the nature of talent acquisition tasks. Such tasks include building teams and hiring people for suitable vacancies. These have required human intuition and emotions so far. AI recruitment algorithms and the gamification of recruitment present a challenging setting with delivering artificial values to relationships that have been human-to-human relationships before (Fritts & Cabrera, 2021, p. 797). These artificial values have yet to be a match to human values even despite the efforts programmers have made. For example, AI algorithms never regard the person behind the resume and have a quantified assessing approach.

A challenge with AI development for talent acquisition is the costs it takes to develop and adopt an AI system (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 221). The more tasks the AI needs to handle, the complexity of the tasks raises these costs. In MNCs where talent acquisition functions can be run in multiple locations, the complexity rises. As mentioned, the multiple locations creating complexity its legislation and the growing focus and limitation of data and privacy sets a challenge for the utilization of AI in talent acquisition (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 223).

The challenge with the already discussed bias is that AI cannot detect if it is learning bias from somewhere (Black & van Esch, 2020, p. 223; Roppelt et al., 2025, p.12). This implies

that HR professionals should mindfully present ideal performers to the system. Nevertheless, it is possible to code algorithms to neutralize different features such as gender, ethnicity, race, and religion. Even though bias can be reduced with the adoption of AI in the recruitment process, awareness and analysis should be done when purchasing talent acquisition AI from a vendor (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022, p. 1003).

Explainability is a challenge that factors in talent acquisition and means the HR professionals' ability to explain decisions of AI (Tambe et al., 2019, p. 17). For example, when AI is adopted to screen candidates, how can HR professionals explain these decisions made by AI to candidates who are not proceeding to further steps. HR professionals need to know the attributes that drive decision-making in AI and the predictions performed by AI have yet to be explained to its users. Agrawal et al., (2023, p.1) found an increase in decision variation when relying on AI, which is an issue if these decisions are interconnected in the MNC. This impact can be reduced by dissolving these dependencies between decisions. AI enables more precise decisions, but the challenge arises when one or more decisions need to coordinate with each other. Thus, in the field of HR or even more specifically, talent acquisition, where the process is phased with CV screenings, application letters, psychological and aptitude tests, video answers, and interviews, there is a possibility of interconnected decisions. Furthermore, the interconnectedness of talent acquisition into talent management and talent management into HR are examples of interconnectedness that challenge the adoption of AI and trust creation between HR professionals and AI. Due to the interconnectedness of tasks, AI adoption can require significant changes in the systems. These changes can be seen either as a hindrance or as an opportunity, depending on the resources of the organization.

HR professionals who have stressed about adopting new technologies can find adopting AI appealing due to its automated nature (Flavián et al., 2022, p. 308). With the automation of processes or steps in a process, HR professionals do not have to know or learn about new AI tools in an active manner. To conclude, AI adoption could be accepted rather than hindered by the automating factors it offers and decreasing the need to learn

new complex processes. On the other hand, Flavián et al (2022, p. 308) suggest that the level of user's self-belief in their ability to control new technologies can be a barrier to AI adoption. If one cannot see themselves utilizing AI successfully and cannot see themselves learning to use AI tools, it challenges learning, motivation and in conclusion the whole adoption of AI. Even if HR professionals learn to utilize AI skillfully, massive data analysis can miss information that is only available to the human eye such as human and behavioral factors (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021, p.9). With standardized processes compatibility between MNC and talent cannot entirely be based on the candidate's work experience and skills. If, for example, multiple MNCs use similar or the same technologies that utilize classical correlations, they all can miss talents that are atypical and even more valuable than the stereotypical results provided.

There are notable intergenerational and cultural differences that need to be noticed when adopting AI. The differences can appear in the technical, interpersonal, and working styles of HR professionals from different generations (Shufutinsky et al., 2020, p. 73). Multigenerational change can be presented so that by 2020 half of the workforce will construct millennials (1980-2000 born) which is also a timeframe for technological advancements. People from and onward this generation have grown up with social media, the internet, and smartphones and demand different characteristics from employers. These requirements can, for example, be instant feedback, open culture, and data-driven decision-making (Sivathanu & Pillai, 2018, p. 8). With talent acquisition, there are multiple subjective factors affecting the acquisition process, which are challenging for AI to analyze. This can be connected to the lack of human touch concern that is commonly raised with AI utilization. Concepts of what an "ideal candidate" or "good employee" is depends on personal and generational perspectives which AI lacks, thus disagreements can arise when making decisions in this field (Tambe et al., 2019, p. 17). A generational difference is also the size difference between generations, for example, in Germany the demographic has shifted so that there are more people retiring than newer ones coming into the employment market (Roppelt et al., 2024, p. 2993). In this case, the automatization of tasks with AI could help overcome this challenge.

Differences between cultures can also be a differentiating factor that needs attention. Nevertheless, in MNCs, the cultural differences between locations need to be taken into account such as differences in values. Fritts and Cabrera (2021, p. 800) argue that algorithms will not be able to recreate human values, and functioning with artificially taught values will not be enough for HR professionals to truly rely on AI when it comes to talent acquisition.

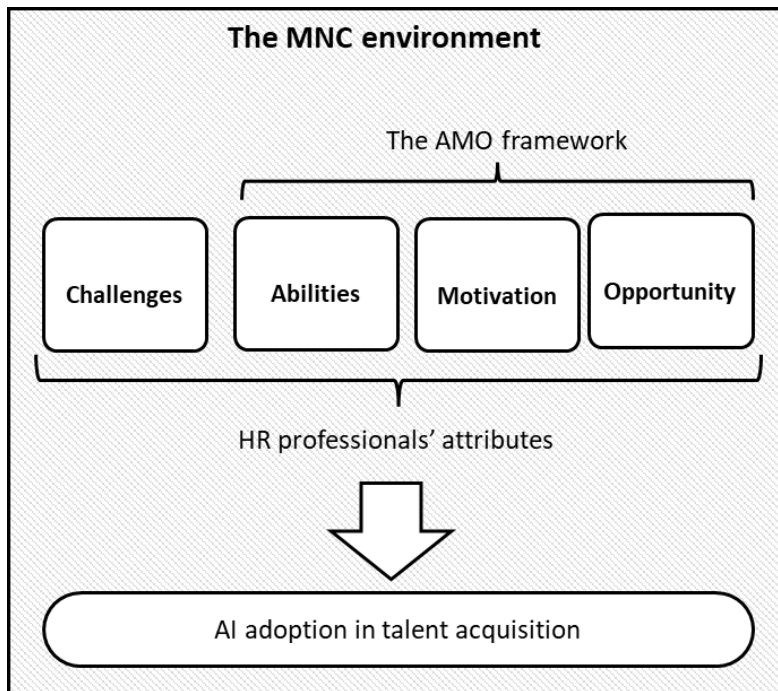
To conclude, there are multiple challenges that HR professionals will face and need to navigate in the AI adoption process to talent acquisition. These challenges fortunately are not impossible to overcome. With collaboration and communication between HR professionals, system professionals, and MNC leadership, successful and ethical solutions can be found or created. As discussed, challenges in AI adoption often intersect with abilities, motivation, and opportunities, emphasizing the complexity of implementing AI. In the following summary chapter, the theory and the AMO framework, which has been enriched with a special focus on challenges, will provide an overarching review of the literature.

2.5 Summary

The aim of this thesis can be summarized as follows: To examine how HR professionals' attributes influence the adoption of AI in talent acquisition. The setting of this study is focused on MNCs and how the MNC environment affects the attributes and the scene of AI adoption. When focusing specifically on HR professionals' attributes, the organizational framework known as the AMO framework approach is utilized to make sense of different attributes and their specific influence on the adoption process. The AMO framework is structuring the study in the theoretical part, in the findings section to come, and in the discussion section at the end. The AMO framework categorizes abilities motivation and opportunities as factors to focus on, to understand individuals' effects on organizational outcomes (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023, p.731). The framework can be utilized in

a variety of settings but has been utilized frequently in studies focusing on HR topics. Adding a focus point of challenges gives this study a current review of issues that discuss both practical and intangible challenges that are apparent in the MNC environment (Andersen, 2017, p. 28). In Figure 2 below, the theoretical background has been summarized in a visual presentation.

Figure 2. Figure of theoretical framework.



The theoretical background began with defining the MNC environment. It discussed the factors making up the MNC environment and why it has individual traits that need to be accounted for when corporations want to operate globally. MNCs require international talent pools, complex strategies to operate talent management and acquisition globally and intelligence to attract, acquire, retain, and develop key talent (Belderbos et al., 2023). Operating in multiple countries means operating under varying national legislations and other regulations (Luo, 2022, p. 346). There are also variations when it comes to culture and the quantity and quality of resources. HR professionals who work in this environment have to have skills, cultural sensitivity, and facilities that enable efficient work.

After discussing the MNC environment the thesis delves into talent management and acquisition in said environment. The discussion also presents current developments in digital capabilities and how they have been adopted and utilized in talent acquisition. Talent management and acquisition focus on ensuring that MNCs have skilled people in positions that match resources, needs, and expenses (Belderbos et al., 2023). Many of the tasks in talent acquisition have been digitalized since the processes are mostly operated online nowadays. The next step in the industry is the automatization of these tasks with the adoption of AI (Nankervis & Cameron, 2023, p.245).

Finally, to figure out the key attributes for HR professionals to handle these next steps, the AMO framework was introduced and utilized with the addition of a discussion focusing on challenges that are apparent with adoption. These factors conclude that HR professionals' skills, attitudes, and potential hold value to successful adoption. In many technology-adoption settings, there are interconnected relationships between scenarios such as internalization and resistance, also the AMO framework itself is interconnected when analyzed in a multinational context (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017, p.533). The added "challenges" focus in this scene highlights the variation of resources, lack of personal interest, ethical concerns, and generational differences, for example (Malik et al., 2023, p111; Oberst et al., 2021, p. 636).

The thesis highlights that HR professionals' abilities, motivation, and opportunities, when connected with their capacity to navigate challenges, are key attributes to the successful adoption of AI in talent acquisition. These attributes and the AMO framework will serve as the basis for structuring the findings and discussion chapters. Before these sections, the methodology chapter will introduce the research design, and methodological choices that guide this thesis.

3 Research design and methodology

This section discusses the reasoning for the research design choices made in this thesis. Research is a process where the aim is to improve theories, adjust them, or delete them. Research can be described as multilayered. For example, Saunders et al. (2007, p. 102) list the layers as: philosophies, approaches, strategies, choices, time horizons, and techniques and procedures. In this chapter, the research philosophy, research design, data collection methods, data analysis, and research limitations with the addition of discussing the reliability and validity of this thesis are presented in such order.

3.1 Research philosophy

Research philosophy leads the reasoning and thought processes for the choices regarding methodology, research approach, and data collection and analysis processes. There are defined ways of how people understand reality and gather information. These in combination make up one's point of view, in other words, philosophical assumptions (Tracy, 2020, p. 49). This is also the case when conducting research and it is considered to have insight on how and why research is conducted the way it is. The adopted research philosophy is moulded by the assumption of the way one views the world (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 101). Furthermore, the way one develops knowledge and then how to proceed to process it additionally affects research philosophy. These philosophies cannot be put in order from best to worst since they are integrated into each situation and contribute uniquely to each setting. These defined ways, paradigms, are commonly discussed as positivist, interpretive, critical, and postmodern. Paradigms differ in what they are based on. Ontology in short describes the nature of reality, epistemology describes the nature of knowledge, axiology describes the nature of value and methodology describes the strategies for data collection and analysis (Tracy, 2020, p. 60). The chosen research method is of secondary importance and the paradigm should be the first focus point (Saunders et al., 2007, p.100).

Since this thesis aims to create new knowledge, as does all research, the development of knowledge becomes an important discussion and focus point. Interpretivism and interpretivist epistemology connect to an empathetic viewpoint so the researcher can understand the worldview of the research subjects (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 107). For example, human resource management is one field where interpretivism is an appropriate perspective. This thesis also relates to human resource literature and research thus it can be said that interpretivism is a key philosophy.

Ontology is the part of research philosophy that discusses the nature of reality in the categories of objectivism and subjectivism (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 108). Subjectivism presents the viewpoint that perceptions and consequent actions create social phenomena that are constantly under revision. This leads to the need to study the subjective meanings motivating these consequent actions to gain a better understanding and answers. This means the same situation might be viewed differently by individuals and lead to different actions based on these views. In the subjective ontology approach, the researcher must try to understand the subjective reality of the focus group to understand their motives, actions, and intentions. From interviewing HR professionals, understanding their subjective reality is a key factor.

Axiology and axiological assumptions discuss the roles of values in research. Having an understanding of how one's values affect research is pivotal for the researcher's and their study's credibility (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 110). Choices reflect one's values and research is full of these choices such as topic selection, research methodology selection, and research framework selection. Values lead to judgments and further on to conclusions, thus being aware of one's values and their effects must be honest and active (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 111). Choosing interviews as a data collection method can present the researcher's higher value of personal interaction when compared for example to a questionnaire. In this thesis, choices of data collection method, choices of framework, and choices of research context can reflect researchers' values.

3.2 Research design

Scientific research aims to present whether human experiences and phenomena actually describe the truth and reality (Groenland & Dana, 2019, p. 3). Furthermore, this reality must be set and defined for universal understanding. Qualitative methodologies do not follow formalized or set measurements or statistics and rather focus on defining characteristics (Groenland & Dana, 2019, p. 2). Grönland and Dana define qualitative research as a descriptive scientific research approach with a holistic focus. It is used to describe phenomena from a participant's perspective and is based on participant supervision in a natural setting. In qualitative research, interviews are an opportunity to collect extensive and detailed information from interviewees which are chosen to fit the research narrative (Billups, 2020). The number of participants can be smaller compared to quantitative research methods. The number of participants needed for qualitative interviews can vary by study (Drudella, 2017). The variation comes from the research setting, for example phenomenological study with sequenced in-depth interviews in comparison can need fewer participants than a study with a grounded theory with multiple data sources and collection methods. In this study, the set number of participants needed was ten, and is argued by the phenomenological nature of the study.

According to Doz (2011, p. 587), qualitative research in the field of international business has decreased and there still lies a need for qualitative research to focus on how multinationals are managed and functioning. This study is answering this need. The meeting ground of multinational corporations, changing demographics, and current topics such as technological developments are areas where qualitative research could help understand the effects and interactions better. Tracy (2020, p. 31) defines the goal of qualitative research as gaining thick descriptions, meaning in-depth understandings, and exploration of context and behaviour. Furthermore, interpretations of the participants' interpretations are another part of the thick description. The interviews aim to explore the meeting ground of HR professionals, AI, and talent acquisition (Billups, 2020). This area has not yet been under significant research which is why the exploratory nature of

interviews is a suitable approach. Reaching a new understanding of this current subject is the end goal.

The nature of the research questions being set on “how” form direct a study into an exploratory research style (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 187). Exploratory research is utilized when trying to comprehend a phenomenon or an issue. When studying attributes such as motivation, personal interests, and professional interests, qualitative research is automatically set as the research style. In qualitative research, interviewing is a known method for collecting data. Interviewing was chosen as the primary data collection strategy. This strategy fits the design and goal of the research because the aim is to focus on how people view the phenomenon of AI adoption into talent acquisition (Billups, 2020). Furthermore, the research needs personal stories and experiences to develop theory into real-life actions and situations. Provided from the interviews, the data source for this study is people and later on, the documents gathered from the interviews (Durdella, 2017). The data types utilized are textual data and visual data. This means that the interviews are first recorded and then transcribed. This brings the data into a textual form. The visual data comes from the interview recording which is done in a video format.

Reasoning is typically categorized as either inductive or deductive (Tracy, 2020, p. 26; Saunders et al., 2007, p. 102). Inductive reasoning can be described as a bottom-up approach whereas deductive reasoning can be described as a top-down approach. Abductive reasoning is the combination of both inductive and deductive approaches (Tracy, 2020, p. 27). This is a back-and-forth process where the researchers move between theory and field investigation and adjust according to emerging discoveries. This thesis has the inductive approach since abilities, motivation, and opportunities are derived from collected data and literature which leads to a theory. The interviews are conducted to get a better view of the topic in practice to be able to create hypotheses, conclusions, and theories based on literature and revelations from the interview data (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 118). The inductive approach fits a smaller sample size approach since the context of where events take place has a higher value (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 119). In

this thesis, the context is set in MNCs operating in the industrial sector and specifically their HR professionals.

The topic of AI is current and rapidly developing, so it can be expected to develop and change soon as well, limiting the findings of this thesis to this time and context. The qualitative case study strategy is commonly used with exploratory research and thus became the strategy for this thesis as well (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 139). Case studies, as the name suggests, examine a specific phenomenon in depth and how it is set in the real world (Yin, 2013). This means focusing on the complexities and influences between the case and its context. Case studies can be challenging to evaluate when the number of cases studied is limited (Yin, 2013). This thesis is a holistic single-case study, as it aims to provide an understanding of the HR professional's attributes that influence AI adoption in MNCs. Even though data has been collected from multiple MNCs, the focus is on the individual's attributes. This said, the context and circumstances provided by the MNC focus hold importance to the study and thus having multiple data sources from six different MNCs provides richness to this single-case study.

3.3 Data collection and sampling methods

This master's thesis employs qualitative semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. The interviews were conducted with HR professionals from multiple MNCs. By conducting a semi-structured interview, the change of title or job profile did not affect the nature and usability of the answers, since companies choose their responsibilities for each position and cannot be exactly duplicated, for example, between a talent manager in company A and talent manager in company B.

For this thesis, semi-structured interviews were held in digital form. Semi-structured interviews can be defined as a setting where interview questions are designed beforehand but the discussion about the questions flows freely (Groenland & Dana, 2019, p.229). This is also an environment where the interviewer encourages the discussion to be as

informative as possible with the aim to receive as conclusive answers as possible even if it means expanding some topics or questions further than others. The standard type for qualitative interview is a 1-to-1 setting where interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee in a set location whether it be in person, virtually, or via phone (Billups, 2020). This interaction is typically recorded, and the interviewer takes notes.

By conducting the interviews in a digital space, it enables participation from long distances and even different geographical areas (Thunberg & Allen, 2022, p. 757). With digital tools, there lies a risk of technical issues that might occur before, during, or after the interview (Thunberg & Allen, 2022, p. 765). Disconnections or lags are typical issues for example. Furthermore, there lies a concern regarding interviewers and interviewees' body language and visual cues. Thus, it is important to approach the interviews as their own and not identical to in-person interviews. Due to the nature of digital interviewing, both verbal and non-verbal communication can be analyzed (Groenland & Dana, 2019, p.227). Additionally, the interview questions were set in an open-ended manner to allow insightful and thought-through explanations. With the live setting of the interview, further questions and clarifications could be asked to avoid misunderstanding and to receive additional information and insight. The interviewees were sent an interview guide beforehand for interviewees to be prepared for the interview. The discussions were conducted in English for all interviews to ensure a strong connection to the theory and harmonize language between interviewees and the thesis. An interview guide is a protocol that presents the questions and topics that the interviewer aims to cover in the semi-structured interviews (Billups, 2020). The list of questions must be in a similar format and include similar if not the same questions to each interviewee to reach relatively consistent data. An emergent sequence of broad to in-depth detail provides a logical flow to the interview. Additionally, individual viewpoints are a beneficial approach to include in an interview guide. The interview guide helps researchers cover important topics but also allows free discussion to gain information that might not otherwise be obtained.

The research site and selection began with setting the research to focus on MNCs that are operating in the industrial sector. Furthermore, to get in touch with research participants a recruitment strategy was made. This meant utilizing LinkedIn and company websites to approach fitting candidates. From this site set, the participant selection could begin (Durdella, 2017). Before contacting the target candidates, the identification of eligibility for the study was set (Durdella, 2017). The wanted candidates had to fit the following criteria: candidates selected should have HR experience from a fitting organization, meaning an MNC, and are familiar with talent acquisition practicalities. There was no set need to be working or to have experience with AI-powered talent acquisition to qualify for this study since the aim is to analyze the influence of personal interests and abilities. The sampling strategy was a combination of criterion and opportunistic sampling (Durdella, 2017). This means that the participants needed to meet set criteria regarding place of work and working background. The opportunistic sampling came from the leads and recommendations from participants that reached beyond the original network approach. There were no monetary or other incentives offered for participation.

This study was conducted with a few limitations on resources and time. The study could not give a time frame of multiple years for data collection, for example. In addition, reaching HR professionals from MNCs was challenging due to limited social networks. After the first interviews were conducted, recommendations from participants were received on who to contact next or who might be a fitting candidate for the interviews. This is one benefit that can come from utilizing interviewing as a data collection method. Multiple other strengths come with conducting interviews as a data collection method. (Billups, 2020). First, access to detailed information on a subject, since data collection occurs in a natural setting for the participant. Also, a diverse range of perspectives can be accumulated on a subject and the potential to immediately ask further questions or clarifications can be taken advantage of. Finally, the opportunity to observe both verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours is apparent when interviews are held in person or in a visual setting. Interviewing can also be connected to further data collection strategies, which can be useful in research.

3.4 Data analysis methods

The study focuses on MNCs operating in the industrial sector. Focusing on this area and finding HR professionals only from these specific MNCs gives more accurate insight into the stage, variations, and approaches to the topic.

Multinational companies where the interviewees were working can all be described with the following features:

- Operating in over 40 countries
- The number of employees is over 15 000
- In the year 2023, their net sales were approximately over 4 billion
- Business focus areas: technology, innovation, heavy machinery, engineering
- All the companies provide solutions and services in their focus areas and have a strong market presence and positioning

The interviews were conducted during a three-month-long period in 2024. The duration of the interviews varied between half an hour to an hour. From six different MNCs, ten interviewees with various backgrounds were found. Having participants from various positions, such as specialists and managers, ensures a broad viewpoint. In the following Table 1, a summary of participants, their background, interview information, and code for referencing are provided.

Table 1. Interview details.

No.	Company	Code	Area of work	HR career in years	Date and duration of the interview
1	A	A1	HR	10	08.04.2024 36 minutes
2	B	B1	Talent acquisition	5	11.04.2024 59 minutes
3	C	C1	Talent acquisition	7	19.04.2024 40 minutes

No.	Company	Code	Area of work	HR career in years	Date and duration of the interview
4	D	D1	Talent acquisition	7	22.04.2024 36 minutes
5	E	E1	Talent acquisition	6	23.04.2024 30 minutes
6	A	A2	Talent acquisition	5	25.04.2024 36 minutes
7	C	C2	Talent acquisition	3	03.05.2024 27 minutes
8	B	B2	HR	8	24.05.2024 50 minutes
9	D	D2	Talent acquisition	3	07.06.2024 33 minutes
10	F	F1	Talent acquisition	10	02.07.2024 36 minutes

The interview guide was initially structured with the AMO framework in mind, and it additionally included the specific context of MNCs and the collection of background information. This guide can be found in Appendix 1. The questions follow the logic of the framework with specific questions delving in-depth into abilities, motivation, and opportunity. The AMO framework was chosen to initially code and categorize data from the semi-structured interviews with the flexibility of adjustments kept in mind. When conducting the interviews the Microsoft Office tool, Teams, was utilized in multiple ways. In Teams, the interviews were conducted, the video and audio footage were recorded, and initial transcriptions were produced. The initial transcriptions were thoroughly checked and corrected since the automatic transcriptions did not correctly record any Finnish language or some of the abbreviations such as AI. After all the interviews were checked and corrected the theory-guided analysis began.

Having a theoretical perspective can be helpful with an inductive approach since it links the research with an existing body of knowledge and suggests an initial framework to work with for the content analysis (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 488). In short, theory-guided analysis resembles the classical content analysis whereas in content analysis the theoretical concepts are found from the data, in theory-guided content analysis the theory

provides an outline of these concepts (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). The transcriptions were categorized and then further coded. The categories followed the AMO framework structure and the additional focus point of challenges. Coding was utilized to highlight discussions of the MNC context, negative and positive remarks, and to find commonalities in transcriptions in the number of mentions regarding different issues.

3.5 Research limitations, reliability, and validity

Validity can be defined as an intention to study what is agreed upon and reliability can be defined as how repetitive the results of the study are. Qualitative interviews can be a challenging setting for the interviewee and lead to answers that are not complete, entirely truthful, or entirely transparent (Billups, 2020). Since the interviews were conducted in English which was not the native language of the interviewees there is a possibility of unintentional miscommunication and misunderstanding. This was tried to minimize by offering the interview guide in advance and by creating an open environment for questions, corrections, and clarifications.

The interview data is under the observer's subjectivity even if actions of objectivity are taken. Since the video format of the interviews was recorded there lies the possibility that body language and other non-verbal cues can be misconstrued by the interviewer (Billups, 2020). Additionally, corporate slang or language might not be entirely familiar to the interviewer which can lead to misunderstandings. During the interviews, the interviewee's tone of voice, speed of talking, arm crossing, leaning, fidgeting, eye contact, and posture were observed and recorded through note-taking. This is to take data on non-verbal communication and behaviour (Billups, 2020). The utilization of AMO theory helps to sensitize and direct focus to meaningful data and to take notes and ask questions with guidance (Tracy, 2020, p. 30).

There lies a question of what good research is when it comes to qualitative research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). The versatility of perspectives such as fundamental or eclectic,

creates different ideas of what research is. It can be argued that consistency is one defining feature of good research. This thesis follows guidelines on what can be considered good research and academic standards in research and writing. Ethical sustainability in this research means complying with a responsible code of conduct and good academic standards. Academic standards comprehend academic ways of working and conducting academic research through agreed methods, standards, and guidelines (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Additionally, including transparency in research methodologies and findings, including all parties of the research and giving appropriate acknowledgment. Ethical research is connected to the quality of the research since qualitative research does not automatically imply the quality of the research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018).

In qualitative research, there is a common discussion about truth and objectivity when it comes to the reliability of research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Since there are multiple views on how truth can be defined there are also different approaches to objectivity. With qualitative research, the question of bias and unconscious bias remains, since the research is conducted by one person and are they able to work without bringing personal effects to the study, such as age, gender, or nationality. It has been agreed that it is inevitable that some of the aforementioned factors affect the research since the researcher is the sole creator and interpreter of the study.

Having six different MNCs and HR professionals from different positions can help with the generalizability of the thesis (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 151). The issue comes with the small number and the shared operating industry that limits the generalizability of this thesis. On the other hand, this opens the potential for future research to focus on new sectors. This thesis has studied a new phenomenon in a narrow setting and thus faces the issue of validity and generalization. If one wishes to increase the number of cases in a case study it usually implies that the in-depth and contextual factors are sacrificed (Yin, 2013).

There is no one way, or guidelines, to evaluate the credibility of research. One basic guideline for quality control of research is the timeframe and the importance that the researcher has enough time to do their work (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Furthermore, the research process's transparency increases the work's credibility. The concerns for validity and generalizations regarding case studies have been discussed in the literature before. In the international setting, utilizing case study findings is general and suitable in variable global settings since the case context cannot always represent the wanted situation (Yin, 2013). Generalizations from case studies aim to present explanations for initiatives that produce or do not produce results (Yin, 2013). The results lead to improved understanding. This is done by basing theory that has been connected to literature. Another way to do this is by utilizing findings to fill gaps found in the literature.

4 Findings

This thesis utilizes the AMO framework to understand and analyze the attributes of HR professionals to further evaluate, what they find valuable and what challenges their views when discussing AI adoption in talent acquisition. The AMO framework has been used in studies where individual and organizational attributes contribute to different topics such as human resources, strategy, and performance, to name a few (Boselie et al, 2005, p.79). As mentioned, the adoption of AI in talent acquisition is still in its early stages. MNCs are not announcing their internal adoption of AI globally, but rather informing stakeholders about the potential AI has in their operating industries and how it could be utilized. In a rapidly developing field, understanding the key elements such as the role HR professionals play in the adoption of AI can shed light on the challenges or successes the MNCs will have.

In this thesis, attributes are the abilities, motivations, and opportunities HR professionals see and own when working in MNCs. By analyzing these through the AMO framework, we can answer the thesis' research question of how said attributes influence the adoption of AI in talent acquisition. These attributes can be positive and negative and thus affect the extent and variation of how these attributes affect the adoption process. Since HR professionals working in MNCs face unique challenges and settings with, for example, resources, it is beneficial to focus on MNCs operating in similar environments such as the industrial sector.

4.1 HR Professional abilities influencing AI adoption

Ability in this thesis focuses on the HR professionals' skills and knowledge when it comes to the digitalization of talent acquisition, AI, and integration of technologies. These abilities are tied into the context of MNCs. Inherently focusing on what HR professionals can do. To present the findings for abilities the following chapter is divided into hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are measurable and technical skills that can be attained through

education, for example. Soft skills on the other hand are interpersonal skills that are more subjective and non-technical.

From the interviews, HR professionals highlighted the importance of technical skills. This means the skills of utilizing digital tools, and platforms and an understanding of processes. All ten interviewees gave this answer, which presents the understanding that technology is developing and has an integrated part in work which cannot be ignored. Technical skills were four times connected to one's eagerness to learn these new tools and skills. If one is eager to learn and utilize these it is a positive force to one's abilities. Additionally, one's skills to work with and understand data were a common example when technical skills were discussed. Understanding how processes work, what their digitalization and automatization mean, and what data is, are key parts of the HR professionals' work in talent acquisition. Working, manipulating, securing, and handling data are all needed when AI is adopted into talent acquisition and thus HR professionals need to be data literate. Understanding where data comes from, how AI processes it, and especially in talent acquisition where personal information of applicants and employees is handled, understanding the sensitivity of such data.

IT skills, you need to be able to use the tools and understand the limitations. (B2)

For example, understanding how to collect data and how to utilize it is also important. How to read data and that comes with understanding, if there might be bias in the data, so whether we are collecting unbiased data or we are ourselves providing the data that could be a conflict of interest or biased set of data. (C1)

As well as being data literate, being law literate is a needed skill as well. Digital tools such as AI are regulated by laws. These laws can be national or international. A relevant example is GDPR. GDPR is a legislation, by the European Union that regulates the handling of personal information. Furthermore, in talent acquisition when the data is primarily personal information, following GDPR is valuable. Thus, HR professionals need to be up to date with relevant legislation whether it is about AI, data handling, or some other regulation that affects talent acquisition operations. The MNCs' environment has

challenges when it comes to legislation since operating in multiple countries means operating under multiple and different regulations. Furthermore, legislation can differ between subsidiaries, parent companies, and other stakeholders as well, and navigating in this environment demands up-to-date knowledge of international and national regulations. Even though organizations have their legal experts to navigate these challenges it is important that HR professionals are aware of these as well. Teamworking skills were mentioned when discussing abilities. Since the adoption of AI or any digital tools overall needs work from different teams in the organization such as the IT team, teamwork skills were highlighted as an important ability. Adoption of AI needs cross-functional teams and their abilities, thus being able to work with people from different backgrounds, professions, countries, and organizational areas holds importance, especially in the MNC environment.

Being open-minded is a crucial skill when adopting AI. Open-mindedness is a soft skill that includes receptibility to new things and in this context new tools and technologies. Six interviewees identified open-mindedness as a relevant skill for AI adoption. This topic will also be discussed in the motivation part. In contrast to the mentions of open-mindedness, critical thinking was also found as an important skill when it comes to AI adoption. Understanding the limitations of AI and digital tools is a valuable soft skill.

Open-mindedness and thinking outside the box and maybe taking steps that haven't been taken. some basic IT skills and the skills to be flexible and think also in a new way if they can be skills. (A1)

Ethical awareness was regarded as a soft skill by some interviewees. Ethical awareness relates somewhat to bias but furthermore to the rightful utilization of technology and data. Utilizing information in the way it is intended. Bias and risks of bias when utilizing AI came across several interviews. HR professionals need to be able to understand what biased data is and notice if AI presents biased results. Discussions about bias also came across when discussing motivation. In the following Table 2 the key abilities from this section have been gathered.

Table 2. Key HR professional abilities

Key abilities of HR professionals		
Hard skills	Soft skills	Key knowledge
IT skills	Open-mindedness	Legislation
Data literacy	Teamwork skills	HR processes
Data handling and protection	Communication skills	AI ethics
	Critical thinking	Development of automatization and AI

The support MNCs provide for their HR professionals can be described as similar in actions. All organizations offer e-learning such as courses and lectures on themes regarding new digital tools, digitalization, and AI. Yet there were no specific mentions of how MNCs support HR professionals with the specific situation of AI adoption to talent acquisition. Some of the interviewees saw that they hold the responsibility to encourage and discuss these relevant topics to share information with the HR operations or other teams inside the organization. Not all these learning opportunities are mandatory which supports the argument that HR professionals themselves are advocates on these topics if they are personally interested and have investigated the topic. One of the participants mentioned that they have promotion specifically on the topic of digitalization of talent acquisition.

4.2 Motivation influencing AI adoption

Motivation in the context of this thesis focuses on HR professionals' personal motivation, willingness, and incentives to adopt AI into their work in talent acquisition. What are the factors that drive HR professionals towards utilizing AI and how does the multinational nature of the organization where they work affect these motivations? The increasing and decreasing factors affecting motivation will be discussed in the context of findings from the interview data.

Four interviewees concluded that they already use AI in their work but rather than having AI-powered systems performing talent acquisition tasks, AI was utilized on repetitive and manual tasks such as job advertisement creation. Furthermore, rather than having a specific AI tool for these tasks, the professionals turned towards CHAT GPT and COPILOT.

If not daily, then at least a couple of times a week to create my job ads or any kind of messages that I don't really want to write. (E1)

Every participant highlighted that no organizational information is given to AI when creating these texts in CHAT GPT to remain secure. When it comes to the utilization of CHAT GPT some HR professionals presented their frustrations with the text quality and rather than simplifying the advert creation the AI-provided text needs proofreading and editing to sound more human-like with for example using more common wordings.

HR professionals want to use AI and thus are motivated to adopt it in their work since it offers them an opportunity to learn and thus upkeep their skills and keep ahead of the development curve. With this potential, they can upkeep their professional understanding and thus career development. The development of AI also keeps the HR professionals' work interesting and opens the possibility of expanding current roles or responsibilities.

When asked about their personal feelings towards utilizing AI in talent acquisition, the answers varied most between being excited about the potential of it and being apprehensive towards it due to lack of understanding. When it comes to fear, most answers were firm that AI will not replace their work or position in the organizations. Some tasks and parts of the work will be automated and handled by AI, but the field will nevertheless need the human touch. Thus, HR professionals are open to reframing their positions, ways of working, and job descriptions but inherently most of the interviewees were firm in their answers that they will not be replaced by AI. On the other hand, the apprehensiveness of AI was still relevant for a few of the interviewees.

I don't see that AI can replace people in talent acquisition, but it can be a very useful tool or let's say a left hand. (F1)

Personally, I'm a bit afraid that the human thoughts will disappear from talent acquisition with the AI. I'm also a bit afraid because I have heard some cases where they have been noticed that AI has been a bit biased in screening. (D2)

HR professionals see the potential of AI and feel excited about these possibilities. HR professionals' levels of trust vary with what they would see AI doing and what not. For example, no HR professional would yet trust or see AI leading decision-making on which candidates will fill an open position. Some would let AI select candidates as an initial screening process, and some would double-check the results in this scenario.

A few points were made that decreased HR professionals' motivation towards AI adoption. One interviewee pointed out that AI has the potential to bring laziness into the workspace since automation relieves the workload. This laziness was connected to the proofreading AI produces job advertisements for example. Furthermore, one discussion pointed out the probable scenario where the applicant applies with AI-created documents, and then the AI tool analyzes the documents and later on either proceeds or eliminates the candidate with AI-generated e-mails. This was not seen as an ideal approach but since applicants already are utilizing AI this scenario is not impossible.

The main driving factors for utilizing AI in talent acquisition according to the HR professionals are time savings and improved efficiency. Other commonly mentioned drivers are improved candidate experience, personal intrigue, and increased stakeholder satisfaction. The time saving opens doors to improved service quality, improved quality in decision making, and increased time for personal development. In addition, adopting AI helps HR professionals to learn new skills and thus develop their careers. Furthermore, AI helps the creative side of HR professionals work with, for example, writing job advertisements that appeal to certain types of professionals, and creating text that is easier to read, or something that catches the applicant's eye. If HR professionals are facing any type of difficulties, they can also consult AI to possibly gain new perspectives on the issue.

Since personal motivation can be negatively or positively affected by one's attitudes, discovering what negative and positive attitudes HR professionals hold towards the adoption of AI into their work is beneficial. HR professionals have a positive attitude towards AI adoption in their work in talent acquisition when they see the potential or the reality of a lightened workload. Having derivative tasks automated can decrease one's workload which will in turn allow HR professionals to focus their work on other tasks they value more. Another aspect that can create a positive attitude is the added business value that AI adoption could bring and thus bring savings in resources such as money. This in turn can bring recognition to HR operations as a valuable part of the multinational organization. The adjustment to personal work was mentioned more than the business benefit.

The ultimate automation of some processes and the helping to save time with and also with helping with some creative blocks for when writing a job ad, for example. (D2)

I can improve my performance and showcase to the businesses which are my stakeholders and my main customers that we are making improvements, and we are developing both the operations and then my own skills. I can create more business value potentially by utilizing it. (C1)

If the multinational organization is already struggling with slow and challenging ways, the potential improvement that AI adoption can bring can lead to a positive attitude towards AI adoption in work. On the other hand, the adoption of AI can be seen as an additional workload because new skills, tools, and ways of working need to be adopted and in the meantime, the normal workload needs to be taken care of. If HR professionals see that AI will not lighten their workload rather than make it heavier the attitudes can be negative. Furthermore, if HR professionals see that the human touch will be lost with AI adoption, the attitude towards its integration will likely be negative. These negative attitudes can be connected to negative experiences as well. Most of these negative attitudes mentioned can be reasoned by the lack of information and poor quality of change management.

I think if we are in a situation where people are not using AI because they think that it is biased, then we need more training to understand to what it is what extent do you have to use your own brain to get the most out of the AI and with the people bias about AI. (F1)

Furthermore, attitudes can lead to or express themselves in positive and negative behaviors. For example, if a new AI tool in talent acquisition is found difficult to use HR professionals might reject the technology, resist the change, and continue working in the way they did before despite the possibility of utilizing AI. One's background can play a part when it comes to the HR professional's behavior in this context. If HR professionals already have up-to-date digital skills and are comfortable with tools their attitudes and behavior could incline towards positive whereas the lack of these skills might incline towards more negative attitudes and behaviors.

4.3 Opportunities in the adoption of AI

Opportunity in this context can be defined as the potential HR professionals see in the adoption of AI into their work in talent acquisition and into their work in an MNC. If HR professionals see the opportunities or favorable conditions to implement AI, they can adjust their attitude to help in the implementation process and ensure the effective adoption of AI into MNCs.

Improvements to the operational part of work such as time-saving, increased efficiency, quality, and consistency, were frequently mentioned opportunities. Time-saving is seen as an opportunity to delegate focus on other areas that HR professionals see as more valuable, pleasant, or critical. The opportunity to automate manual repetitive tasks is seen as an improvement opportunity. Furthermore, cost savings, which could be a result of these improvements, were mentioned to be seen as an opportunity.

In a concrete example, increases in positive candidate experiences were mentioned. Opportunity is seen in the automatization of some tasks, such as job advert creation, some

parts of candidate communication, and utilizing unbiased AI in screening. Some of these tasks are already automated, under development, or on the “to-do” list.

More rarely mentioned opportunities were the utilization of AI-produced predictions, for example, to have insight into talent needs in the future. An analysis of organizational strengths and weaknesses talent acquisition wise for example what talent needs to be upskilled or re-skilled to either keep up or keep ahead in the industry.

Hopefully in the future AI will also support us with kind of identifying our current skills capabilities that we have within our employees and what should we do to be even better in the future. Hopefully in the future AI will support us in developing our company capabilities in a way that we would not be able to do ourselves. (B2)

Opportunity is also seen in the standardization of processes in the MNC environment. Having standardized processes that are intelligent to the cultural and organizational differences. Having a solution that would fit the whole company is still questionable, but potential can be seen by the interviewees. Nevertheless, no solutions to this potential opportunity were offered during the discussions.

The opportunity is that of course, it helps us to harmonize things. I would say a lot of process improvement can be made and then of course, the extent in this sort of a big company with many countries in its, it can really be time and money saver as well. (F1)

One opportunity that was twice mentioned in the interviews is the opportunity to share knowledge and work together. If MNCs are co-operating and sharing information these opportunities could improve the implementation of AI into talent acquisition. On a personal level, interviewees see the development of their work as added meaning from working with new technology. This combined with the opportunity to stay on top of the field and learn new things and skills was important to HR professionals.

Self-development is what drives me so it can also add meaning to people's work if they get to work on new technologies. (C1)

When asked how their organizations support their learning when it comes to AI, the answers were similar regardless of the employer organization. Employers typically offer digital learning materials such as short courses, lectures, and discussions. During the interview, one's interest was highlighted as a key component to being a motivator to adopt AI into their work. Not one interviewee mentioned that their employers offered opportunities to support this before they were asked specifically.

4.4 Challenges in the AI adoption

Challenges in this thesis mean the obstacles, inefficiencies, and difficulties that can or will hinder HR professionals from implementing AI into their work or workplace in an MNC. Challenges are something that HR professionals, MNCs, or the industry need to overcome to adopt AI into talent acquisition successfully. More challenges that are interconnected to the MNC environment will be discussed afterward.

Adopting AI has been connected to a decrease in human interaction and human oversight. With the lack of human touch in talent acquisition, the connection to decreased trust can be made. Since talent acquisition is a human-centric function, automatization can be seen as a threat.

I think the negative side is also to kind of like lose the human aspect. (A2)

I'm a bit afraid that the human thoughts will disappear from talent acquisition with AI. (D2)

A few interviewees discussed the skill gaps and examples of generational differences that challenge the adoption of AI. The sensitivity and stereotypes around age and technical skills, were detectable with body language and caution when choosing words when discussing this topic. The interviewees presented the challenge of introducing new systems and tools at a quick pace to people who take more time and are not initially interested

in new technologies. Age was discussed to in some cases be the combining factor to these attitudes.

Organizations where people have worked and have been used to doing things in this specific way for a very long time...if you haven't even learned how to use Outlook or just basic things, it is going to be very difficult to build on top of those. (A2)

People who have relied on tech the least in the past are not as interested in relying on it in the future as well. People who are currently not interested in using more technologies are not going to be that interested towards adopting AI because they might see it as unnecessary, and usually it's tied to age. (C1)

The fear of bias leading to a decrease in employer branding is a challenge and a threat HR professionals see in adopting AI. This fear means utilizing AI or ways of working that have been guided by judgment that undermines neutrality. Working with people's data and decision-making, being bias-free ensures fair and neutral outcomes. Since there already can be found examples of large organizations having issues with biased data utilized in talent acquisition AI, HR professionals are aware and wary of the implementation of it. HR professionals fear that biased AI can lead to harmful employer branding and organizational reputation, which enhances wariness.

If we are in a situation where people are not using AI because they think that it is biased, then we need more training to understand what it is, what extent do you have to use your own brain to get the most out of the AI. (F1)

4.5 The influence of MNC environment on HR professionals' attributes

The MNC environment covers the opportunities and challenges that operating in a global scale brings. Talent acquisition in MNCs is also an internal function that both gains benefits and faces challenges in this environment. As mentioned earlier, eased global mobility of talents and slowness of change due to complex hierarchies are examples of each. The balance between standardization and localization is mentioned as an influencing factor of the MNC environment from the interviews. The global presence of

the MNCs influence the strategy, location and practicalities of the talent acquisition function. As MNCs can strive for standardization in some processes and functions, AI can be in these cases adopted in a MNC-wide manner and bring its benefits to multiple locations with similar adoption processes. MNCs can also first standardize their processes and then adopt AI to obtain efficiency and streamlining.

The opportunities are that maybe companies can have more consistency across different countries when they have an AI solution that is integrated into every country in the same way. (C1)

In multinational companies, there are hundred different ways of doing talent acquisition, even though we have a similar process but then still the teams are using the system in a different way or doing the daily talent acquisition work in a different way. (F1)

Cultural differences were mentioned by eight interviewees to influence the AI adoption and talent acquisition function overall. These cultural differences have the potential to challenge MNC communication and processes. The opportunities with cultural differences were not highlighted by the interviewees. For example, job advertisements differ in form and tone, between different locations and cultures. As this is a way to take care of the candidate experience AI also can deliver this service language. Cultural differences were seen as challenges but AI can either support this or solve this issue. The reality of how to teach AI such complex entities that cultures are is a true challenge. The dual nature of cultural differences being an opportunity and a challenge is apparent.

In multinational companies where you have multiple countries, there are lots of different cultural contexts. (D2)

For AI to fit regional differences poses a challenge for its adoption to talent acquisition. Such adjustments of functionality, language, software, and hardware, can be challenging and costly. For example, regional digital maturity can cause challenges to adopt AI if the systems in use are not adaptable to such technology. If AI cannot function easily with the resources in use, its utilization can face resistance or even rejection.

A challenge for multinational company that we are working on are different cultures, with different access to digital tools, and then we have different understanding about tools like AI. Globally the legislation and the policies might be different when it comes to AI practices, so that is also a challenge for us. (B2)

A specifically highlighted notion from the interviewees was the legislative and local policies that differ either regionally or geographically. For example, Europe has GDPR, which sets strict policies and laws on data regulation in MNCs. Since in MNCs there are multiple locations and hence multiple policies abiding to all is challenging. Furthermore, the maturity of AI regulation varies also geographically. Finding secure and law-abiding ways to adopt AI is therefore seen as challenging.

Eight interviewees specifically brought up the multinational environment as a challenging factor for adopting AI into their work. Cultural variants mean that locations in different parts of the world operate within local culture and habits even if the organization has standardized strategies. Furthermore, MNCs can also operate in a localized manner which can create more substantial differences between locations. For HR professionals to implement AI into their work adjusting it to multiple settings and considering cultural variants for successful implementation is challenging.

Well, one very specific challenge is of course the fact that companies that operate in different countries will have local and global processes. If you build an AI, for example, for candidate screening... there might not be a one-size-fits-all solution which will make adapting longer, harder, and more expensive. (B1)

The legal variant covers the meeting ground of AI implementation into talent acquisition and the developing legislation around it. In an MNC the locations operate under local legislation, thus differences in legislation create challenges to adopt AI in a standardized manner. AI itself can be restricted in different ways, data utilization can be restricted in different ways, and in some examples, different forms of AI can be banned altogether. The most mentioned example is GDPR which is the European Union's regulations when handling private personal data. It regulates how EU countries and organizations

operating in these countries must handle, store, share, and manipulate their collected personal data. This challenge was also seen in the wanted skills section when knowledge, understanding, and willingness to learn about legislation were mentioned.

Resources such as technology, and skills can differ between MNC locations which creates a challenging environment for adopting AI into the MNCs' talent acquisition. If locations do not have enough monetary resources to acquire AI and needed technology in the organization, HR professionals cannot adopt it into their work. Furthermore, hardware such as up-to-date equipment, running software, and technical skills needed for the adoption are essential resources. If such resources are missing HR professionals have to find solutions for these challenges before being able to adopt AI in such locations. Since not every location has to have its own HR, it is not mandatory but if locations have different software, for example upkeeping employee data it is difficult to modify AI to be compatible with different software which furthermore can be expensive. MNCs can also have HR professionals in both global and local settings. If just one of the two has the necessary skills to adopt AI, it can create challenges in the adoption process.

MNCs have global talents and candidates which enables them to have versatile and rich talent pools. With successfully adopted AI, these talent pools can be utilized in a optimal manner and answer exact needs of the MNC and the future. The digitalization of talent acquisition has influenced the increased number of applications but the global presence of MNCs attract applicants from all over the world.

We are a multinational company so of course the talent pool is huge for many positions, we receive hundreds of applications. The AI can really help with pre-screening with making the first decisions when it comes to choosing the best ones out of the talent pool. (B2)

The following Table 3 captures the key influences from the MNC environment that were discussed in this section.

Table 3. Key influences of the MNC environment

Influence of the MNC environment for AI adoption in talent acquisition		
Positive	Negative	Both
Global presence	Legislative differences	Cultural differences
Global talent pools	Slowness	Multiple locations
International mobility	Differences in resources	Global-local dilemma

4.6 Summary of Findings

The study found that HR professionals' attributes such as abilities, motivation, and opportunities hold insight into what are the keys to adopting AI in talent acquisition. Operating in the MNC environment brings specific opportunities and challenges to these HR professionals and organizations. By utilizing the AMO framework the discussions could focus on multiple perspectives, both negative and positive, on an individual level. By furthering the discussions to include the MNCs' influence, more opportunities and challenges arose.

From the interviews, it can be said that the topic of AI in talent acquisition is current but has yet to take concrete steps since the answers mostly discussed the potential seen, opportunities seen, and actual personal experiences were not highlighted. Even though interviewees found the topic of the thesis interesting, comments arose that they wanted to explore the topic of AI further. This is to gain more knowledge as per the finding that lack of knowledge on the topic is common and having said knowledge is a key factor in the field.

HR professionals see skills, personal attitudes, personal motivation, and the safe development and utilization of AI as key factors for successful adoption. The MNC environment adds challenges with its complexity but also opportunities in automated and standardized processes. The current fear that is present when discussing this adoption stems from a lack of knowledge, past examples, and past negative experiences. At the moment,

fear does not overcome the potential seen but integrates apprehension to the process and the need for certainty. Even though MNCs organize learning opportunities for their HR professionals, there is still a gap to be filled with more HR and talent acquisition-specific training since the interest alone is not enough. In the following section, the discussion between these findings and the literature presented will be presented and followed in more detail.

5 Discussion

In the Discussion chapter, this thesis will interpret the earlier presented Findings in the light of the existing literature. The AMO framework has been utilized to structure the Findings and will be further utilized to structure the Discussion section. This chapter will also relate the Findings to the thesis research question. This discussion section will then provide practical and managerial implications based on the discussion. In addition, the limitations of this thesis will be presented and suggestions for further studies will be discussed in the final part of this discussion.

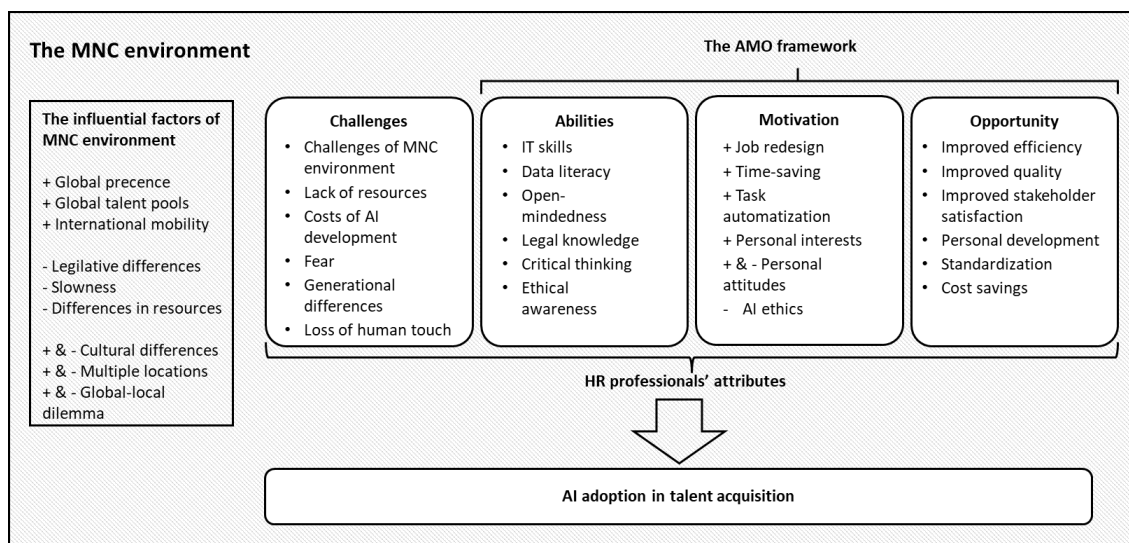
5.1 Main findings and conclusions

The research question was set to be “How do HR professionals' attributes affect the adoption of AI into talent acquisition in MNCs?”. To help find answers to the research question of the thesis, the following supportive questions were set: “How do HR professionals' attributes (abilities, motivation, and opportunities) affect their willingness to adopt and utilize AI?” and “How does the MNC environment influence HR professionals' attributes in adopting and utilizing AI?”.

The umbrella of talent management cannot be understood as a lone phenomenon due to the dependency on the organization where it is designed and implemented (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020, p. 460). In the context of global talent management, MNCs operate internationally which demands adapted talent strategies to answer dynamic and multi-cultural environments (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020, p. 461). Due to context dependency, talent management, and acquisition are highly complex subjects, which explains the countless variations of occurrence, meaning, adoption, and effectiveness of talent management processes in use (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020, p. 466). The findings show that the implementation of technology is slow in MNCs. The complexity of multiple locations, local and international strategies, and other external factors such as geography challenge this (Larsen et al., 2023, p. 536).

The following attributes hold the key to adopting AI into talent acquisition in MNCs. The Theoretical background and the Findings sections have both supportive and contradictory ideas and suggestions that will be discussed next. To combine these in a summarizing visual, below in Figure 3, is an adjusted version of the theoretical framework that now includes findings to give more insight into the topic.

Figure 3. Adjusted theoretical framework.



Key abilities of HR professionals that influence the adoption of AI into MNCs are IT skills, data literacy, open-mindedness, legal knowledge, critical thinking and ethical awareness. There is a balance between the soft and hard skills since interviewees highlighted skills from both categories frequently (Shufutinsky et al., 2020, p. 73). HR professionals' key skills found in the literature align with the findings by highlighting the same skillsets. Where the literature has discussed the readiness of facilities, the interviewees did not point this factor out (Cao et al., 2021, p.12). This could be from the interview's focus on individuals' abilities rather than organizational ones. However, individuals are dependent on the equipment around them and IT skills are not relevant if there is no IT equipment to use, which explains this omission. The level of any of the skills needed was not defined either in the literature or in the findings, which leaves room for further research. Key

abilities were clear to define in the findings and with the highlighted open-mindedness developing these skills does not annoy HR professionals.

Overall, when discussing motivation, previous experiences, and personal attitude play into one's willingness to do things and with what level of interest. Key positive motivational attributes of HR professionals that influence the adoption of AI into MNCs are adjustability of job design, improved efficiency, automatization of tasks, and self- and career improvement. With AI-powered task automatization, HR professionals in MNCs will have more time in their hands to adjust their job design, focus on high-priority tasks, and time to develop their skills (Walford-Wright & Scott-Jackson, 2018, p. 230). This is a motivating factor to adopt and then actively utilize AI. Improved efficiency means increased quality, more time, and improved stakeholder satisfaction. Improved efficiency motivates HR professionals to adopt AI because their work will have better results, fewer mistakes, and improvement in organization key figures.

Negative motivational attributes influencing the adoption of AI in MNCs include apprehension towards ethics in and with AI, biased AI, and job security. While literature frequently discusses the fear of losing jobs to AI, the interviewees were adamant that not every aspect of their work could even be automated and that there would always remain a need for human evaluation. This means that fear of job security was not a significant concern for the participants as the literature suggested (Fritts & Cabrera, 2021, p. 798). The interviewees did not mention that they would be apprehensive about the need for AI rather than its ethical functionality. Walford-Wright and Scott-Jackson (2018, p. 232) highlight that technology is a key facilitator but can either make or break an organization. The findings support this statement. This said, HR professionals have not yet trusted AI-run processes in situations that rely on human-based logic such as ethics, emotions, and norms (Rodgers et al., 2023, p. 16). HR professionals are worried about the loss of the so-called "human factor" in the talent acquisition process with the growing automatization and adoption of AI (Fritts & Cabrera, 2021, p. 791). Especially, ethical concerns regarding algorithms are found. The fear of integrating biased algorithms or integrating

bias into internal data is a relevant concern among the interviewees. On the other hand, having this realization shows understanding and can decrease the risk if correct actions are taken to avoid bias. Ethical considerations create an apprehensive atmosphere towards AI adoption in HR professionals. This apprehension covers fear of bias AI, data security, and ethical utilization of said data. Whereas the interviews concentrated more on the fear of bias and its outcomes, the literature shed light on the data security issues that may come with digitalized talent acquisition (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020, p. 2617; Roppelt et al., 2025, p. 12). Both sources discussed the ethical ways of working with AI which implies HR professionals' critical understanding of the issue. Since both the literature and the participants acknowledge these risks and apprehensions, the risks can potentially be solved or at least decreased.

Key opportunities for HR professionals that influence the adoption of AI into MNCs are time-saving, resource optimization, benefits from job redesign, standardization, personal development and cost savings. These opportunities are interdependent with the motivation section and the findings of the thesis. The opportunity was seen both on the individual level and organizational level which influences personal work. AI adoption offers potential for time-saving and resource efficiency which HR professionals in MNCs desire. Opportunity in standardization on an organizational level was discussed by interviewees and literature (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013, p. 1771). The balance between standardization and localization influences the HR professionals' work but no straightforward solution to this was found. The opportunity with job redesign was discussed as a key motivational factor but re-mentioned on several occasions when discussing opportunities. Opportunities for professional development were highlighted by the interviewees since the newness of AI offers valuable experience and potential for career development and staying ahead of the competition with gained skills and experiences. These opportunities keep HR professionals positively motivated to adopt AI in talent acquisition in MNCs.

The challenges that HR professionals need to prepare for and will likely face are feelings of uncertainty about losing the human touch, generational differences, and negative effects for employer branding. As discussed before, the fear of losing one's employment was not evident in this thesis but the human touch raised a different discussion. Both literature and findings support this (Fritts & Cabrera, 2021, p. 798). The discussion of age and generation and how it can affect the ability and willingness for AI adoption was found both in the literature and in the interviews (Shufutinsky et al., 2020, p. 73). The interviewees approached the subject with a sensitive and indecisive tone. Whereas study findings are certain, the interviewees, in this thesis, acknowledged that the possibility of AI resistance can be connected to age, but it is not always the case. This could be why only a few interviewees specifically brought generation and generational differences as factors whereas it is discussed in literature multiple times (Shufutinsky et al., 2020, p. 73; Sivathanu & Pillai, 2018, p. 8; Roppelt et al., 2024, p. 2993). The discussion of bias and its connection to AI was also brought up as a challenge to the employer brand and brand image. Since the importance of employer brand is crucial in the "war for talent", having public issues with, for example, bias screenings have been a scary example.

The MNC context has a significant influence on the adoption of AI if MNCs want to adopt it on a standard international level. Key influences HR professionals face with the adoption of AI into MNCs are lack of resources, regional differences, underdevelopment in legislation, and slowness and scale of change (Moharrak et al., 2024, p. 368). There are fewer challenges if adoption happens in only one region and is not dependent on other functions from other locations. As one interviewee highlighted, there is no one-size-fits-all solution due to the multinational environment. Developing suitable solutions is time-consuming and costly. The contradiction that can be found in both findings and literature is money. Buying or developing AI is costly and thus is not available to all. This said, adopting AI and utilizing it is a way to save on costs through improved efficiency and a potential decrease in employee hours (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020, p. 2617). Balancing this or finding a beneficial solution was not found in either. Thus, developing a formula or estimates would be helpful. Even though the MNC context was mentioned and clarified

if asked in the interviews, it raised challenges for the interviewees to find answers that would in their minds answer this specific context. The challenges the MNC environment provides were easy to find by the participants, but they struggled to offer answers to the more individual-level challenges. The opportunities brought on by the MNC environment were not broadly recognized by the interviewees. For example, cultural differences were only discussed as a challenge rather than an opportunity. This said, the global talent pool was appreciated as bringing positive opportunities to the talent acquisition function in MNCs.

HR professionals recognize that the integration of AI and other emerging technologies is inevitable (Mantzaris & Myloni, 2023a, p.181). However, in a study by Mantzaris and Myloni (2023a, p. 181), almost 50 % of HR professionals were not fully convinced of the need for automation. HR professionals see implementation as something for the future, not the present. The findings of this thesis support the argument that AI is an inevitable feature of HR and talent acquisition processes. In a study by Malik et al., (2023, p. 110), the case company presented higher employee engagement, trust, reciprocity, loyalty, and commitment to their organization with the adoption of AI-powered HR functions. If AI is able to perform personalized and individualized service, it is likely to lead to a strengthening in employee engagement (Malik et al., 2023, p110). Nevertheless, over half of the responses by HR professionals agreed that final decisions regarding business should still be performed by humans (Mantzaris & Myloni, 2023a, p.181). Lastly, nearly 80% of HR professionals agreed that human users are responsible for the robot's actions. Employee engagement was not specifically mentioned by the interviewees in this thesis, but they agree that the responsibility should remain in the hands of humans. The interviewees did not discuss whether having AI would affect their willingness to stay. Another factor that was not specifically mentioned by the interviewees but found mentions in the literature was managerial support. Having managerial support in integration is vital according to the literature but the participants did not mention it specifically as valuable. This could be because they see themselves as the ones who should be the ones giving said support. On the other hand, this could leave a risk of feeling unsupported.

HR professionals see the efficiency of AI when compared to human workers as an attractive trait to adopt. This efficiency can be applied to most challenges that HR professionals face in their everyday work such as gender equality issues or occupational safety issues to name a few (Mantzaris & Myloni, 2023b, p. 72). Efficiency was one of the significant benefits and sources of motivation that interviewees presented that would come with AI adoption. The time-savings, savings in resources, and improved efficiency were seen as attractive since they allow shifting focus on higher priorities, time for personal improvement, and evidence of improvement to stakeholders.

5.2 Practical and managerial implications

Adopting AI into MNCs is an upcoming step and HR professionals are the facilitators of this adoption into talent acquisition processes. Having up-to-date skills and facilities that are operational in needed locations is a practical implication of the study. Having a clear strategy, support, and strong communication on a global level eases the adoption process. However, challenges such as change resistance, cultural differences, and limitations on resources even with preparation, can be expected. Offering learning opportunities and having an open environment for communication can decrease the negative attitudes of HR professionals.

Individuals' ability and motivation can be increasingly improved by including, for example, training activities and possibilities to participate in the organization (Beltrán-Martin & Bou-Llusar, 2018, p. 107). Providing proactive support for HR professionals' education could decrease the apprehension, and lack of understanding and increase the feelings of managerial support. Providing training on relevant topics and training designed for HR professionals and their work could help with this. Additionally, MNCs should also focus on change management and how to handle change resistance (Roppelt et al., 2025, p. 14). Since HR professionals can have both negative and positive feelings toward the

upcoming shift to automatization, including quality education and professionals of change management in the organization can ease the uncertainty that may appear.

Even though MNCs have yet to adopt AI in an encompassing manner in HR, there are other organizations such as start-ups that have already taken advantage of these technologies. This could be researched, to find guidance and information from experience and practicality even though scalability might not yet be possible. As two interviewees suggested, collaboration in the field could help MNCs navigate the international playing field. This collaboration could happen between MNCs, with professionals from relevant fields, or departments from similar organizations, for example.

Sivathanu & Pillai (2018, p. 10) argue that a flat hierarchy-based organization that operates in a lean manner is a potential environment for the successful implementation of AI. This means organizational levels should be reduced or simplified to ensure more direct communication and reduce the time spent on decision-making.

5.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

This thesis has limitations as does all research. By focusing on industrial MNCs, the limitation of generalizability is present. The findings present a view of a handful of organizations and a limited number of participants. Additionally, having focused on large MNC that operate in several different countries cannot produce precise findings that would fit specific regions or countries. Although this thesis did not focus on MNCs operating in specific countries or areas, the MNCs operate in the researcher's country and thus do not provide a full picture of all industrial MNCs. Expanding the focus to other sectors or increasing and geographically diverting the sample size from six MNCs could help improve the generalizability. Since this is a qualitative study and has limitations acknowledged before about the generalizability perhaps a mixed method approach could be beneficial. In addition, this thesis is conducted with interviews, and potential unnoticed bias from interviewees is possible even though ethical academic manners have been followed.

With the emerging field of AI and its adoption in a myriad of fields and settings, there are a lot of opportunities for further research. The focus from HR professionals' attributes can also be shifted or expanded to other key participants in the process such as IT professionals, AI developers, or high-level executives. By utilizing the AMO framework and challenges perspective, this thesis leaves the opportunity for other dimensions to be found by another research lens. Furthermore, further research needs to be performed to analyze in more depth which specific technologies are most beneficial and suitable for HR professionals especially (Nankervis & Cameron, 2023, p.245). Additional focus and differentiation potential could be found between different industries and company sizes.

Given the highlighted concerns of ethical ways of working with AI, more research could be guided toward HR professionals' concerns about dehumanization. Even though the topic of AI and ethics has been under diligent research, new viewpoints still have potential. For example, the discussion could be guided toward addressing the topic without creating an image of human rights violations or other negative associations it might bring that may not be accurate (Fritts & Cabrera, 2021, p. 794).

The practical aspect of talent management research is still scarce (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020, p. 467). Understanding the practical aspects will help conduct more relevant research. Comprehensive and holistic approaches are needed to delve into the dynamics of talent management. Practical aspects are needed from other perspectives as well since this thesis found a lack of practical experience with the interviewees and in literature as well. In a broader sense, talent management literature could research, for example, the analysis of how global talent management as a strategic operation fits with HR architectures (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013, p. 1773).

With multiple gaps in AI and HRM research there lies potential for future research from multiple perspectives and settings (Vrontis et al., 2022, p. 1237). One suggested path for

future research is to focus on how international environments affect AI-enabled HR practices. Such as country-to-country differences and what challenges might arise when operating cross-borders. The topic of AI and technology-enabled HRM is now rooted in HRM literature (Vrontis et al., 2022, p. 1239). The meeting ground combines literature from HRM research, information management, general management, and international business literature. The research area has the potential to combine concepts from multiple disciplines and leaves up a variety of approaches to utilize and research further.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guide

BACKGROUND

- Could you please provide a brief description of your background? For example, regarding your level of education and training/certifications, position and responsibilities, how many years you have worked in this area, any international experience and in which industries?
- What do talent acquisition and digitalization of talent acquisition mean to you?
- Have you seen/experienced the digitalization of talent acquisition which could be described specifically to the MNC context? How? Or Why not?
- In your opinion, what specific aspects of the talent acquisition process have been most affected by the integration of AI technologies, if any?

ABILITIES

- In your opinion, what skills are crucial for HR managers to leverage AI technologies successfully in talent acquisition?
 - In addition, what specific knowledge do you see as crucial?
 - And what abilities do you see as crucial?
- How does the organization support your ongoing learning and development in the digitalization of talent acquisition?

MOTIVATION

- How do you personally feel about the use of AI in talent acquisition?
- What drives you as an HR professional to use AI in talent acquisition?
- What factors, in your view, contribute to a positive or negative attitude among HR professionals toward adopting AI in recruitment?
- What factors, in your view, contribute to positive or negative behavior among HR professionals toward adopting AI in recruitment?
- What incentives drive you towards or away from artificial intelligence?

OPPORTUNITIES

- From your perspective, what are the most significant opportunities and benefits that AI brings to talent acquisition?
- How would you describe the opportunities or challenges MNCs face in the integration of AI into talent acquisition?

FINISH

Are there any other thoughts, reflections, or additions you would like to discuss about the topic?

Thank you for taking the time to have this interview and sharing your insights.