



Vaasan yliopisto
UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Mari Räsänen

Fostering Talent Retention through DEI Practices in Multinational Companies operating in Finland

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Author:	Mari Räsänen		
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Supervisor:	Muhammad Sarfraz		
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ABSTRACT:

Multinational companies (MNC) increasingly rely on migrant employees to address talent shortages as both workforce and population become more diverse. However, migrant employees often encounter distinct workplace challenges. Consequently, fostering a stable and motivated workforce requires MNCs to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices that support migrant employees' everyday work experiences. Therefore, it is important to broaden the understanding on how DEI initiatives shape migrant employees' workplace experiences and retention. Accordingly, this study explores how migrant employees experience these initiatives in MNCs operating in Finland, and how these experiences influence their intentions to stay.

The literature review of this study integrates research on DEI, DEI practices, and talent retention in order to examine the relationship between inclusive organizational practices and talent retention. The study was conducted with a qualitative approach, and the data was collected with eight semi-structured interviews with migrant employees working in different MNCs operating in Finland. The interviews explored themes related to migrant employees' experiences of DEI in their workplaces as well as factors connected to talent retention. The collected data was analyzed by using thematic analysis, as this method offered a clear and structured way to generate insights into the complex social phenomenon of how DEI initiatives influence migrant employees' everyday experiences and their intentions to remain with their organizations.

The findings confirm a positive link between DEI initiatives and migrant employees' retention. Specifically, DEI initiatives were found to shape migrant employees' intentions to stay through their effect on everyday work experiences, sense of inclusion, motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceptions of fairness. Importantly, the positive effects of DEI initiatives were strongly influenced by how effectively these initiatives were integrated into everyday organizational practices. Participants who perceived DEI efforts as authentic and consistently implemented reported higher levels of organizational commitment. The findings therefore suggest that solely implementing DEI initiatives is insufficient to positively influence migrant employees' workplace experiences and their retention. For some participants of this study, DEI represented a fundamental organizational value that influenced their organizational commitment and intentions to stay even more strongly than financial initiatives.

The study further extends existing literature by providing empirical evidence from Finland, a context that remains relatively underrepresented in DEI and migrant employee research. In practice, the findings of this study offer practical guidance for MNCs in designing DEI initiatives that genuinely support the long-term retention of migrant employees.

KEYWORDS: Management, diversity, equity, inclusion, talent retention, job satisfaction

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1 Introduction

In 2024 only 43,000 children were born in Finland, while approximately 60,000 people retired and this trend is expected to grow over the coming decades (Eläketurvakeskus, 2025; Statistics Finland, 2025). At the same time, Finland was home to more than half a million people with a foreign background in 2024 (Statistics Finland, 2025). As both the population and workforce are becoming more diverse, organizations are required to respond to these demographic shifts by ensuring that their practices support inclusion, equity, and long-term retention in order to promote and maintain stability of the workforce (Karlstedt & Mennala, 2024).

While many organizations have introduced DEI initiatives to support diverse workforces, an important question concerns how these practices are experienced by migrant employees themselves. Employees' perceptions of inclusion, fairness, and equal opportunities can significantly shape their workplace experiences and attitudes toward the organization (Shore et al., 2011). Understanding how migrant employees experience DEI in their everyday work environments is therefore essential for organizations seeking to attract and retain international talent. MNCs provide a relevant context for this study, since they often manage culturally diverse workforces and depend on international talent (Green & Hogarth, 2017).

Previous research highlights that although many companies recognize the value of DEI, concrete and effective organizational DEI practices often lack consistency in their application, or they may remain underdeveloped (Ranta, 2025). Studies in the Finnish context highlight that although organizations commonly adopt initiatives such as onboarding programs, mentorship, and awareness training, their effect varies significantly depending on how migrant employees experience these practices in their everyday work (Amin, 2024). It has been acknowledged that even though DEI is frequently discussed at a strategic level, organizations still struggle to translate broad DEI principles into practical actions that would contribute effectively to inclusion (Eronen, 2024).

When inclusive cultures are not actively fostered, organizations face a range of negative outcomes, such as migrant employees experiencing exclusion, reduced engagement, lower job satisfaction, and diminished perceptions of psychological safety and fairness (Amin, 2024). These experiences can also make it more difficult for migrant employees to fully integrate into the workplace, which subsequently can weaken their sense of belonging (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). All the aforementioned factors further affect talent retention, which is a critical strategic priority for organizations operating in Finland (Jäämaa & Strandberg, 2024).

According to Jäämaa and Strandberg (2024), difficulties in retaining talent are associated with increased costs related to recruitment, onboarding, training, and reduced productivity. At the same time, attitudes towards work are shifting, especially among younger generations in general. Deloitte's (2025) study shows that diversity and inclusion are increasingly seen as central factors contributing to trust in an employer, and that many employees would actively avoid organizations whose values do not align with their own. These trends and findings together highlight the importance of actively implementing and applying DEI practices.

The need to retain talent is further boosted by the current labor market situation in Finland. According to Pulkkinen (2024), approximately 60 percent of companies identify the lack of skilled professionals as their most significant challenge and more than one in four reports that this shortage is already restricting their business operations. This labor market issue is closely connected to broader demographic developments that are signaling a rapid decline in the working-age population.

In response to these developments, DEI has already become a central consideration for Finnish companies, with FIBS' (Finnish Business & Society) Sustainability in Finland 2025 survey showing that 95 percent of organizations are engaged in DEI work (Karhi et al., 2025). Although Finnish organizations express a high level of commitment to DEI, the

empirical evidence describing the link between DEI practices and talent retention remains still limited. Prior studies point out that although companies demonstrate commitment to DEI, concrete actions that employees could observe, or experience are lacking, or these initiatives remain solely theoretical (Amin, 2024; Ranta, 2025; Opoku et al., 2025). Consequently, it has been suggested that future research focuses on migrant employees' perceptions of DEI efforts and how these perceptions shape their commitment and intentions to remain with the organization.

1.1 Research question and objectives of the study

The present study examines how DEI initiatives are experienced by migrant employees working in MNCs in Finland, and how their experiences shape their retention. The aim of this study is to recognize different DEI initiatives that migrant employees encounter in their workplace, explore how their experiences of these initiatives affect their sense of organizational commitment, and examine how both commitment and experiences of DEI initiatives influence their intentions to stay. By focusing on migrant employees' lived experiences rather than solely on formal organizational policies, the research provides insights into the mechanisms through which DEI initiatives influence talent retention.

The research question guiding this study is:

“How do DEI practices foster retention of migrant employees in multinational companies operating in Finland”

This study contributes to a more experience-based understanding of the topic in the context of MNCs in Finland, which is still relatively unexplored. While prior research has identified that the effect of DEI initiatives depends heavily on how migrant employees experience these initiatives, it has also been noted that the outcomes of DEI initiatives should be explored more, especially from migrant employees' perspectives (Amin, 2024; Opoku et al., 2025; Ranta, 2025).

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured into six chapters. The first chapter is an introduction that provides a brief overview of the topic, the significance, the scope and objectives of the study. The second chapter provides a theoretical background for the study by drawing on previous research and literature on DEI practices, talent retention, and the role of organizational commitment and intention to stay. The third chapter focuses on the methodology of the study, presenting the research approach, the methods utilized for the data collection, sample selection, and data analysis, and discusses the validity and reliability of the research. The fourth chapter presents the research findings and the collected data. The fifth chapter discusses the research findings and links them to relevant theory. Finally, the sixth chapter concludes the study by presenting the contributions of the study, practical implications, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

2 Literature review

This section outlines the theoretical background of the study. It defines the key concepts related to DEI and talent retention, and reviews relevant literature and previous research that form the basis for the empirical part of the thesis.

2.1 Diversity, equity and inclusion

DEI has become an established framework in both organizational research and management practice. This development reflects increasingly diverse workforces and greater attention to fairness and inclusion in working life. To understand the concept comprehensively, the following paragraphs discuss each of its three dimensions: diversity, equity, and inclusion, separately.

Diversity is defined in the literature as the presence of differences among individuals (O'Donovan, 2018; Chen, 2011). The range of similarities and differences among people is extensive, thus diversity involves various factors that shape how individuals think and act (Lieberman et al., 2003). According to O'Donovan (2018), diversity concerns both visible and invisible characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnic background, nationality, and physical ability, while Chen (2011) expands this understanding to a phenomenon that includes factors such as marital status, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. Supporting these perspectives, Morfaki and Morfaki (2022) argue that diversity can be understood as covering a wide spectrum of socially constructed and biological attributes, identities, and perspectives that influence individuals' experiences of inclusion. The complexity of diversity is further highlighted by Davis (2022), who describes diversity as an iceberg, emphasizing that many of its dimensions lie beneath the surface and that these invisible dimensions shape individuals' experiences and interactions in ways that are not immediately observable.

One important distinction in DEI discussions is the difference between equality and equity. While equality suggests treating everyone identically, equity recognizes that individuals come from diverse backgrounds and may face unequal circumstances. According to Davis (2022), equity therefore aims to allocate resources and opportunities in ways that respond to differing needs and ensure fair access to opportunities. Davis states that unlike equality, which assumes that identical treatment leads to fairness between individuals, equity aims to achieve fair outcomes by tailoring practices and support, especially for individuals from marginalized or disadvantaged groups. Thus, an equity-oriented approach focuses on responding to differing needs and circumstances in order to achieve fair outcomes (Green & Young, 2019). It can be argued that equity is not only a principle but also a guiding strategy for organizations to actively assess needs, adjust policies and allocate resources thoughtfully to ensure fairness in outcomes.

The third element of the framework is inclusion. Inclusion, as defined by Davis (2022), refers to the extent to which individuals feel respected and valued members of the organization and encouraged to fully participate in all aspects of workplace activities. Davis emphasizes that inclusion reflects the overall organizational environment, that promotes belonging, psychological safety, and equitable opportunities for all individuals to contribute meaningfully and succeed. Complementing this perspective, Shore et al. (2011) define inclusion at workplaces as the extent to which an employee perceives themselves as a valued member of the work group through experiences that satisfy their needs for both belonging and uniqueness. Importantly, O'Donovan (2018) adds that inclusion efforts should not be limited to those who feel marginalized but must also sustain the engagement of employees who already experience a sense of belonging. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2022) states that inclusion can be considered achieved, when all employees feel valued for who they are, for the skills and experiences they bring to the organization and for the sense of belonging they experience in relation to their colleagues.

O'Donovan (2018) notes that it is critical for organizations to understand that inclusion is not static and that fostering it requires constant attention and effort. O'Donovan argues that experiencing inclusion at a given moment does not automatically guarantee that the sense of inclusion will remain stable throughout an employee's career. O'Donovan further highlights that experiencing inclusion is not straightforward. An individual can simultaneously feel both included and excluded. For instance, an employee might experience inclusion within their own team but feel excluded at the departmental or organizational level (O'Donovan, 2018).

Although diversity, equity, and inclusion are conceptually distinct, they are interdependent and most effective when they are implemented together. Diversity brings a variety of perspectives, experiences, and identities into the organization. However, without equity, structural inequalities and unequal starting points may continue to limit fair access to opportunities and resources. Equity seeks to address these imbalances by ensuring that individuals receive the support and resources they need to succeed. Inclusion, in turn, ensures that diverse employees feel respected, heard, and able to contribute fully. These three elements together create fair work environments where all employees are able to participate.

2.1.1 The meaning of DEI for migrant employees and MNCs

Although the discussions around DEI frequently remain at a general organizational level, it is important to acknowledge that its implications for migrant employees are often significant. Starting from the recruitment processes, migrant employees may encounter specific challenges related to language, cultural differences, professional recognition, knowledge sharing, career development and building networks (Vasic et al., 2022). From an equity perspective, these employees might begin from unequal starting points compared to native employees, especially in contexts where language fluency and cultural familiarity shape access to opportunities (Davis, 2022). In this regard, inclusion, in addition to representation, requires that employees feel that they can fully participate in

discussions, express themselves, and be acknowledged for their competencies even if there are potential linguistic or cultural differences.

MNCs can achieve broad organizational benefits through DEI practices, including strengthened cross-border collaboration, diverse perspectives enhancing innovation, and a greater employer attractiveness in global talent markets (Everett & Hill, 2025). However, the context of MNCs also adds further complexity to the implementation of DEI practices as these companies often operate with globally standardized policies, including DEI strategies, while simultaneously adapting to local organizational and cultural settings.

This dual structure can create inconsistencies between formal DEI commitments and everyday employee experiences in local subsidiaries. Therefore, Brown et al. (2023) emphasize that DEI initiatives should be designed in ways that they remain adaptable to varying cultural, business, and social contexts. This highlights the importance of aligning global DEI strategies with local realities in order to ensure that formal commitments can be experienced by the employees' in their everyday work lives.

2.1.2 DEI experiences of migrant employees

Previous research shows that migrant employees experience challenges that hinder their integration into the workplace (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). Taking this into account, Tharenou and Kulik argue, that migrant employees benefit from sustained organizational support that includes practices designed to facilitate communication, collaboration, and long-term workplace integration.

DEI initiatives often contribute positively to migrant employees' workplace experiences. Previous research indicates that migrant employees perceive DEI initiatives and their influence on the overall organizational cultures as valuable in relation to their everyday work life (Amin, 2024). Amin found that migrant employees perceive DEI initiatives as

supportive and as strengthening their sense of belonging in the workplace. Migrant employees' perceptions of DEI have a positive effect especially when the efforts are visible and embedded throughout the organization (Usanova et al., 2023). According to Usanova et al., for instance seeing diversity at the leadership level is perceived to enhance migrant employees' feeling of being represented and heard.

However, migrant employees sometimes experience that DEI policies are not consistently translated into effective practices, which subsequently affects their perceptions of fairness and inclusion. Prior research by Dimingu (2025) found that migrant employees sometimes experience that organizational DEI policies are designed with limited intersectionality, which leads these policies to fail in addressing different dimensions of diversity. These experiences lead migrant employees to perceive DEI practices as ineffective, rhetorical statements (Dimingu, 2025).

2.1.3 DEI and migrant employee attitudes and behaviors

The way DEI initiatives are implemented in organizations often strongly influences migrant employees' attitudes and behaviors at work. Findings by Amin (2024) suggest that DEI initiatives, such as inclusive team behaviors, language support provided by the organization, cultural orientation and social activities positively contribute to migrant employees' commitment by enhancing their sense of inclusion and job satisfaction.

In addition, organizations that recognize migrant employees' skills and ensure their knowledge and expertise are meaningfully utilized further contribute to migrant employees' job satisfaction and promote a sense of professional value (Farashah et al., 2025). The way an organization manages DEI initiatives also influences aspects related to the career development of migrant employees. A study by Hirt et al. (2017) found that if a company provides cross-cultural training or supportive leadership, migrant employees are more likely to develop their professional skills further, gain better understanding of

organizational processes and widen their networks across the organization. Career development opportunities are one of the key elements in the overall employee experience (Sukanto & Rizky, 2024).

Prior research suggests that when organizational support such as DEI initiatives is limited, migrant employees may try to manage these challenges on their own (Usanova et al., 2023). The findings by Usanova et al. reveal that migrant employees may feel the need to work harder to compensate for their perceived limitations or make extra efforts to connect with colleagues and become part of the workplace community. In this sense, effective DEI practices can play an important role in reducing these pressures by creating a more supportive and inclusive environment

Overall previous research highlights that when organizations implement DEI initiatives, they can significantly shape migrant employees' experiences of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and sense of belonging. On the other hand, when support is limited, migrant employees may feel the need to rely on their own coping strategies to navigate challenges.

2.1.4 Importance of DEI for talent retention

Prior studies have identified that successful implementation of DEI practices requires a strategic approach (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Atwater & Fernandez, 2023). To achieve effective results, DEI efforts should be integrated into the organization's overall strategy. Everett and Hill (2025) argue that embedding DEI initiatives into the organization's strategic planning increases the likelihood that they will receive enough resources and sufficient managerial attention. They further state that aligning these initiatives with overarching organizational goals also signals a genuine commitment to prioritizing DEI and enhances the potential for achieving meaningful and effective outcomes.

Brown et al. (2023) have identified that companies that adopt a structured approach to DEI have made successful progress in fulfilling their longer-term DEI commitments and developed their employees' day-to-day work experience. According to Brown et al. this kind of approach to DEI includes setting clear and achievable DEI objectives aligned with the organization's broader mission, goals, and strategic objectives. Atwater & Fernandez (2023) further support this by highlighting the importance of implementing clear processes for promoting DEI in organizations. Clear and achievable objectives in practice contribute to better results when organizations focus on a few large, mutually reinforcing DEI initiatives rather than smaller standalone efforts that may compete for resources and leadership attention (Brown et al., 2023). In addition, Brown et al. emphasize that leaders in global organizations should design these initiatives to be adaptable to different cultural, business, and social contexts. These contextual considerations should guide the development of a comprehensive DEI roadmap.

According to Roberson (2025), the most efficient way to move DEI practices from rhetorical statements to concrete actions is to systematically integrate them into organization-wide processes, including recruitment, promotion, training, leadership and measurement systems. This is further supported by Everett and Hill (2025) according to whom, integrating DEI principles thoroughly into critical organizational processes helps to ensure that these values are embedded into the organization's core functioning, thereby creating more sustainable and meaningful change. In contrast, Everett and Hill (2025) point out that focusing on superficial initiatives such as one-off training sessions or featuring diverse imagery in communications is unlikely to generate considerable or sustained organizational change.

Karlstedt and Mennala (2024) note that organizations have multiple opportunities throughout an employee's career to demonstrate commitment to DEI, like during recruitment, onboarding, career development, and even termination and retirement processes. Everett and Hill (2025) highlight that the effectiveness of DEI initiatives can be enhanced

by actively engaging employees at all organizational levels in these efforts through training, feedback mechanisms, and inclusive decision-making. This contributes to a shared sense of ownership and responsibility.

In practice, these initiatives can take several forms, for example, inclusive job descriptions aiming to remove biased language and attracting a diverse applicant pool, while mentorship programs for underrepresented employees support them in career progression and bias-awareness workshops help leaders and employees recognize implicit categorization processes that may lead to prejudice and reinforce inequities (Karlstedt & Mennala, 2024). Everett and Hill (2025) further argue that allocating concrete resources such as dedicated time and personnel, signals genuine organizational commitment to DEI, making initiatives more likely to be perceived as meaningful rather than merely symbolic.

2.2 DEI practices

The organizational framework discussed in the previous section translates into concrete organizational actions with DEI practices. DEI practices refer to the range of concrete actions, strategies, and routines specifically designed to promote fairness, inclusivity and equal opportunities within the workplace, including inclusive recruitment initiatives, mentoring, structured advancement processes, and leadership efforts (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). These practices aim to address systemic biases, promote diversity in the workforce, and create an environment in which all employees feel valued and able to thrive. An effective implementation of DEI initiatives depends on the alignment of organizational practices, leadership engagement, culture, and strategic diversity management (Everett & Hill, 2025).

2.2.1 Leadership and inclusive culture

Implementing DEI practices at the workplace requires a strong commitment from the leadership level and a willingness to promote inclusivity throughout the entire organization (Karlstedt & Mennala, 2024). This aligns with Everett and Hill (2025), who argue that an approach that integrates across all levels and departments including leadership, mid-level management, and entry-level positions can lead to more consistent outcomes. However, if DEI initiatives are implemented only within certain functions, such as HR or limited to teams, they are less likely to produce meaningful change and may instead be viewed as surface-level efforts (Everett & Hill, 2025).

While integrating DEI as a core organizational value requires a strategic approach, studies emphasize that inclusive leadership is important to ensure that these practices are applied consistently and effectively (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Atwater & Fernandez, 2023). Inclusive leadership, as defined by Randel et al. (2018), refers to the variety of positive leader behaviors that help team members to feel a sense of belonging within the group, while also maintaining their individuality, enabling them to fully participate in and to contribute to group processes and outcomes. In practice, this involves behaviors such as actively listening to and appreciating diverse perspectives, recognizing individual contributions, and creating a welcoming environment where team members' unique skills are valued (Randel et al., 2018). Leaders define the priorities and expectations for organizations and thus, their efforts are the foundation for the success of DEI initiatives. There is a higher probability to observe improvements in employee engagement, trust, and organizational commitment when leaders actively support and engage to DEI initiatives (Brown et al., 2023; Roberson, 2025).

In addition to leadership efforts, organizational cultures shape the success of DEI practices (Randel et al., 2018). According to Green and Young (2019), organizational culture relates to the shared assumptions and values that define the way work is done. The authors also highlight that especially inclusion is affected by organizational values, beliefs, and social norms that guide everyday behavior. Green and Young further point out that

formal DEI policies alone are insufficient if differences are not genuinely valued or if power structures continue to privilege certain groups over others. In line with this, Everett and Hill (2025) explain that these shared values, assumptions, and norms also affect employees' perceptions of DEI efforts and the degree of their engagement to these efforts. Employees are more likely to feel confident presenting their views and engaging with inclusive behaviors when openness, respect for different perspectives, and collaboration are actively encouraged by the organization. Furthermore, Everett and Hill point out that organizational norms can contribute to the development of mutual understanding and to a more inclusive organizational climate if they encourage employees to share personal experiences and to actively listen to others.

In addition, Everett and Hill emphasize the importance of accessible and psychologically safe feedback mechanisms enabling employees to raise concerns related to DEI without fear of negative consequences. These mechanisms provide a foundation for developing effective and responsive DEI strategies by supporting the recognition of challenges and inequities within the organization. In contrast, Everett and Hill point out that DEI initiatives can be undermined if organizational cultures tolerate exclusivity or reinforce stereotypes.

2.2.2 Training and employee development

The quality of training and the guidance employees receive ultimately define whether DEI practices translate into everyday actions. Diversity training and awareness programs help to increase understanding, reduce biases, and encourage inclusive behaviors, making them especially important for building and maintaining an inclusive organizational culture (Salvas, 2023). According to Salvas it is essential that employers provide the support employees need to actively contribute to an inclusive work environment.

In line with this, Ertorer et al. (2022) emphasize that incorporating values of diversity and inclusion into organizational practices, while improving intercultural skills and cultural

awareness through training, can help to increase employees' and managers' understanding of experiences of different groups and address barriers to integration. Furthermore, Karlstedt and Mennala (2024) state that in addition to raising awareness of unconscious biases, inclusive communication, and equitable decision-making, DEI training also supports behavioral change and creates a shared understanding of inclusion across the organization. Complementing this, Roberson (2025) notes that training should be continuous and tailored to different roles. According to Roberson, organizations can this way ensure that all employees from new hires to leaders have the tools and knowledge they need for contributing to a more inclusive workplace. Together, these studies suggest that DEI training is a critical component of inclusive organizational culture, serving as a practical mechanism through which awareness can be translated into meaningful behavioral change.

2.2.3 Monitoring, evaluation and measurement

Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of DEI practices provides organizations with greater clarity and is therefore an essential factor in ensuring their effectiveness. According to Karlstedt and Mennala (2024), it is critical to establish concrete and measurable objectives to ensure continuous advancement in diversity and inclusion within the organization. They state that ongoing evaluation of these objectives helps organizations to identify the areas that require further development. They note that in addition to supporting organizational change and development initiatives, the results obtained from measurement also enable the celebration and recognition of successes as well as learning opportunities. However, Karlstedt and Mennala acknowledge that in the context of DEI practices, measurement can be challenging due to the qualitative nature of many diversity and inclusion dimensions. Therefore, they suggest addressing this issue by integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. They emphasize that the evaluation of DEI practices adheres to the same fundamental principles as other performance measurement processes: establishing strategic objectives, selecting appropriate metrics and methodologies, and actively monitoring progress over time (Karlstedt &

Mennala, 2024). This is further supported by Brown et al. (2023), who suggest that companies establish ways to analyze their state of diversity, equity, and inclusion with both quantitative and qualitative analysis. As an example of tools for quantitative analysis, they suggest monitoring internal pipeline data and conducting benchmarking, such as comparing the organization's metrics with those of other companies in the same industry or with broader sector-wide trends. For qualitative analysis they suggest focus groups, interviews and anonymous surveys.

2.2.4 Key takeaways

To summarize, DEI practices can be successfully implemented when organizations address multiple related factors: leadership commitment, strategic alignment, consistent policies and practices, continuous training, and regular evaluation.

In practice, this can include leaders actively participating in mentorship programs, formation of employee resource groups, adoption of inclusive recruitment and promotion processes, offering continuous training on unconscious bias and cross-cultural awareness, and establishing clear metrics to monitor representation, engagement, and overall satisfaction. These initiatives contribute to employees' day-to-day experiences and are therefore closely connected to favorable outcomes, including factors like engagement, job satisfaction, and finally retention.

Finally, organizations that invest not only in broad strategic frameworks but also in concrete everyday DEI practices are more capable of supporting diverse employees and building workplaces in which migrant employees feel authentically valued and motivated to stay. Transparent communication, targeted training, strong leadership engagement, and meaningful opportunities for open dialogue and feedback are required to reach this goal.

2.3 Talent retention

DEI practices are closely linked to talent retention, as they affect migrant employees' everyday experiences and their willingness to remain with the organization. Aggelidis et al. (2021) define talent retention as a concept that refers to an organization's ability to retain its employees over long term while simultaneously reducing staff turnover and ensuring a consistent and skilled workforce.

The benefits of talent retention for companies include lower recruitment and replacement costs, preserved skills and knowledge, and greater incentives to invest in employee training and workforce development (Aitken et al., 2023). Aitken et al. further note that high employee turnover can disrupt work processes, reduce productivity, and increase recruitment and training expenses, while also negatively affecting morale, interrupting teamwork and limiting knowledge sharing, all of which constrain an organization's ability to fully leverage its workforce.

According to Aggelidis et al. (2021), talent retention involves the use of various strategies to improve employee satisfaction, promote engagement and strengthen loyalty to the organization. DEI initiatives can play a critical role in talent retention by fostering inclusive environments where employees feel valued, supported, and fairly treated. These initiatives strengthen employees' commitment, and reduce their intention to leave the organization by influencing factors such as engagement, motivation, satisfaction, career development, social integration, and organizational reputation. The following sub-sections examine these key factors in detail.

2.3.1 Employee engagement

Employee engagement refers to the degree to which employees are willing to invest themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in their work roles (Kahn, 1990). Similarly, Shuck and Wollard (2010, p. 106) define employee engagement as "*the cognitive,*

emotional, and behavioral energy an employee directs towards positive organizational outcomes". Together, these definitions highlight that engagement goes beyond observable behavior and also reflects a deeper psychological connection to one's work. Kahn (1990) further proposes that engagement is shaped by three psychological conditions: meaningfulness, safety and availability. By psychological meaningfulness Kahn refers to the extent to which individuals perceive their work as personally meaningful and valuable. Psychological safety according to Kahn is the belief that one can express themselves without fear of being judged or negative consequences. Finally, by availability they refer to one's physical, emotional and cognitive resources to succeed in their role (Kahn, 1990). When these conditions are present, employees are more likely to engage fully in their roles.

Further research has expanded on this framework. For instance, Shuck et al. (2013) highlights that for sustaining engagement, meaningful work and its alignment with individual purpose are important. They argue that when employees experience their work as meaningful and aligned with a broader purpose, their engagement becomes more authentic (Shuck et al., 2013). Similarly, Amabile and Kramer (2012) highlight the significance of employees' *"inner work life"*, with which they refer to the ongoing mix of thoughts, feelings, and motivations that individuals experience throughout their workday. According to them, even small achievements at work can have a significant effect on motivation and engagement. Their findings show that engagement is shaped by formal organizational initiatives and everyday work experiences, further supporting the perspectives of Kahn (1990) and Shuck et al. (2013).

Given that engagement represents employees' emotional and psychological attachment to their work, it is also closely connected to commitment and the intention to remain with an organization. Based on this, DEI initiatives promote inclusion, belonging, and equitable participation, thereby reinforcing engagement and supporting long-term retention.

2.3.2 Motivation and job satisfaction

Motivation, as defined by Mathe et al. (2011), can be understood as an internal force that drives individuals to achieve goals aligned with their personal needs and values. According to them, it does not only shape the choice of actions but also their direction, intensity, and persistence over time. They explain that in the workplace, motivation is strongly influenced by how organizations create conditions that encourage employees to engage in achieving organizational objectives while simultaneously satisfying their own individual needs. Mathe et al. emphasize that motivation becomes effective when employees' personal needs align with organizational goals, allowing individual effort to translate into performance.

While motivation explains how and why employees invest effort at work, job satisfaction reflects how employees evaluate their work experiences. Alniacik et al. (2011) see job satisfaction as the result of an employee's perception of how effectively their job provides the elements, they consider important. This is further supported by Altinoz et al (2012, p. 322), who define job satisfaction as "*a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the evaluation of individual's jobs and work experience*". Together, these perspectives suggest that job satisfaction is achieved when work conditions meet employees' expectations, values and needs.

Altinoz et al. (2012) further classify the variables affecting job satisfaction into two main groups: environmental factors and individual factors. According to them, environmental factors affecting job satisfaction are organizational reputation, work conditions, organizational communication, promotion opportunities, wage, relations with seniors and colleagues and degree of autonomy. In turn, they note that individual factors that influence job satisfaction reflect the employee's need for autonomy, personal growth, and development. Altinoz et al. highlight that the motivating aspects of job characteristics are especially important for those who seek continuous improvement and enjoy challenges, noting that talented and ambitious employees tend to achieve greater satisfaction from

engaging in complex and demanding tasks, often valuing the process and effort involved more than the final outcomes.

Job satisfaction is not only an indicator of employee well-being but also a key determinant of talent retention, as higher satisfaction reduces turnover intentions and encourages employees to stay in the organization (Tran, 2017; Fahed-Sreih, 2020). Since job satisfaction develops through employees' ongoing evaluation of how well their work meets their needs and expectations, it is also shaped by motivational conditions within the organization. When employees experience their work as meaningful, rewarding, and supportive of their career development, their motivation and satisfaction reinforce each other, strengthening their commitment to the organization and reducing their intention to leave.

2.3.3 Career development and advancement opportunities

Career development is an ongoing process through which individuals acquire, refine and apply skills and experiences throughout their career (Fahed-Sreih, 2020). It has been acknowledged that while some individuals are able to manage their careers in a purposeful way on their own, others need support especially as economic, job-related, and social changes increase (Hieber et al., 2010). Therefore, it is essential that organizations provide support to their employees by aligning their development systems and opportunities with both individual interests and organizational objectives (Fahed-Sreih, 2020).

Aitken et al. (2023) emphasize that promoting lifelong learning is essential for retaining talent, arguing that high-performance work practices, including effective career development and performance management, and organizational training enable employees to apply and expand their skills, strengthening both individual and organizational capabilities. Aitken et al. further argue that by investing in employee development, organizations can further reduce turnover and maintain a skilled, committed workforce. Empirical evidence further supports this relationship. For instance, a study by Sukanto and

Rizky (2024) found that career development has a positive and significant effect on employee retention. Their findings indicate that initiatives such as training programs, promotions, job rotations are effective in enhancing employee loyalty and reducing turnover (Sukanto & Rizky, 2024).

Nevertheless, existing research points out that the wider organizational context affects the effectiveness of career development initiatives. In line with this, Davis (2022) states that organizations should not assume that the same support will lead to equal outcomes but adopt an equity-oriented approach to assure that development opportunities reach employees with different backgrounds and circumstances. Davis argues that career development systems can unintentionally advantage those who already have better access to informal networks, organizational knowledge, or managerial support, when an equity-oriented approach is not adopted. Correspondingly, Everett and Hill (2025) highlight that organizational culture and leadership practices affect whether employees feel supported to participate in development activities and perceive such opportunities as reachable. Employees might disengage from career development processes although they would be formally available if inclusive norms and transparent communication are lacking. Finally, equitable and inclusive practices can support the retention effects related to career development by ensuring that opportunities for growth are both visible and relevant across the workforce.

2.3.4 Workplace collaboration and social integration

Workplace collaboration relates to the common efforts of two or more individuals working to achieve joint goals within an organization (Drake & Chen, 2023). The concept of social integration is closely related to this. Li et al. (2025) describe social integration as the quality of relationships and connections at work, including supportive ties, collaboration, shared goals, and a sense of belonging. They find that employees tend to be more engaged and committed to their organization, when they feel more socially connected, and experience better well-being. In addition, studies in coworking and collaborative

work settings further demonstrate that higher levels of workplace collaboration are strongly linked with individuals' well-being and happiness at work (Berdicchia et al., 2023). In summary, these studies indicate that employees' engagement, commitment, and overall workplace well-being can be strengthened by fostering both collaboration and social integration.

Inclusion is critical for enabling effective collaboration in diverse workplaces. Green and Young (2019) state that while diversity introduces different perspectives, inclusion shapes whether these differences can be successfully integrated into everyday work practices. In addition, the authors point out that inclusive environments allow diverse teams to function more productively, and contribute to outcomes like improved decision-making and innovation by reinforcing knowledge sharing and joint problem-solving.

Complementing this, Dhir and Vallabh (2025) conducted research on social relationships at work and found that both formal and informal interpersonal dynamics define employees' experiences of support and connection. They suggest that the emotional atmosphere shaped by leadership behaviors and shared team norms, determines the emotional tone of collaboration, while informal workplace friendliness builds trust and supportive relationships. According to their findings, these elements work together to provide organizational and personal support, which are essential for psychological safety. The authors conclude that this psychological safety strengthens collaboration, social integration, and overall employee well-being.

Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of workplace collaboration, social integration and supportive relational climates in creating psychologically safe workplaces. As such environments directly influence engagement, well-being, and commitment, they may also play an important role in shaping migrant employees' intentions to remain within the organization.

2.3.5 Organizational reputation and employer attractiveness

Alniacik et al. (2011) argue that a strong, favorable organizational reputation provides a strategic advantage for organizations and is critical for retaining high-quality talent. Their findings show that employees' perceptions of a company's reputation are positively associated with affective commitment and job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions. This suggests that a good reputation fosters employee loyalty and satisfaction, which in turn supports key organizational outcomes such as commitment and retention.

Closely connected to organizational reputation is the concept of employer attractiveness, which Berthon et al. (2005, p. 151) define as "*the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization*". They argue that employer attractiveness serves as the basis of employer brand equity, suggesting that a more positively perceived organization develops a stronger employer brand equity. (Berthon et al., 2005).

From this perspective, DEI practices can be understood as an important contributor to both organizational reputation and employer attractiveness. Current and prospective employees' perceptions of an organization as an employer can be positively affected by the way the organization promotes fairness, inclusion, and equal access to opportunities. According to Everett and Hill (2025), systematically and visibly applied DEI efforts demonstrate authentic organizational values and influence whether employees perceive the organization's commitments as credible and trustworthy. Thereby DEI practices can simultaneously reinforce emotional commitment among existing employees and promote employer attractiveness by matching the organization's external reputation with the internal experiences of its employees.

To summarize the literature review, Everett and Hill (2025) point out that the adoption of DEI practices is connected to multiple organizational benefits, especially in the context of international and multinational businesses. When organizations make a visible commitment to DEI, they are often seen as socially responsible and forward-thinking, which

in turn enhances their reputation and strengthens their brand image (Ciuk et al., 2023). Inclusive workplaces are more attractive to skilled professionals and are associated with higher employee satisfaction and lower turnover, enhancing employer attractiveness and supporting both talent attraction and retention (Everett & Hill, 2025). Moreover, Everett and Hill emphasize that inclusive environments, where employees feel valued and respected regardless of their background are associated with higher levels of engagement and productivity, as equitable opportunities for recognition and growth increase motivation and commitment. Finally, a culture that values diversity can attract top talent from around the world, further boosting organizational competitiveness (Everett & Hill, 2025). Collectively, these findings suggest that DEI practices function not only as a moral or social initiative but as a strategic driver of workforce stability and competitiveness.

Through their influence on employees' daily experiences, DEI initiatives can strengthen migrant employees' connection to the organization and reduce turnover. Fairness, inclusion, and support perceived by migrant employees enhance their engagement and job satisfaction, as employees who feel valued and treated equitably are more likely to invest cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally in their work (Kahn, 1990; Li et al., 2025). When employees experience purposeful work, psychological safety, and sufficient resources, they tend to be more engaged (Alniacik et al., 2011; Altinoz et al., 2012). Job satisfaction in turn is shaped by both organizational factors, including reputation and supportive work environments, and individual factors, such as autonomy and opportunities for personal growth (Alniacik et al., 2011; Altinoz et al., 2012).

Definite DEI related practices further strengthen retention. Organizations that invest in fair career development through accessible training, transparent promotion criteria, and job rotation opportunities signal their commitment to employee growth and thereby foster sense of loyalty and commitment (Sukanto & Rizky, 2024; Aitken et al., 2023). Supportive relationships and shared goals not only strengthen engagement and commitment but also contribute to overall workplace happiness, making practices that support

social integration and workplace collaboration important for enhancing a sense of belonging and well-being (Drake & Chen, 2023; Berdicchia et al., 2023; Li et al., 2025). Moreover, visible and systematically applied DEI practices strengthen existing employees' intention to stay but also attract future talent by signaling organizational commitment to inclusion and fairness by reinforcing organizational reputation and employer attractiveness (Alniacik et al., 2011; Berthon et al., 2005).

Collectively, the literature demonstrates that DEI practices influence talent retention in several, interrelated ways. DEI practice contribute to sustainable workforce stability by shaping employees' daily experiences, fostering engagement, supporting career development, promoting social connectedness, and enhancing the organization's perceived value as an employer. Therefore, a strategic approach to DEI can be a fundamental mechanism for long-term talent retention in international business contexts.

3 Methodology

In this study, a qualitative, exploratory approach is adopted. As Saunders et al. (2007) note, the aim of an exploratory study is to understand the nature of a phenomenon and to uncover new insights into it. According to them, its purpose is to approach the topic from a fresh perspective and pose relevant questions that enable a deeper understanding. The way migrant employees experience DEI practices can vary considerably depending on their personal backgrounds and workplace contexts, thus this approach suits the present study well.

The primary aim of this study is to examine how migrant employees working in Finnish MNCs perceive DEI practices and how these perceptions influence their organizational commitment and intentions to remain with their organization. As the attention to DEI in international business continues to grow, and its importance in shaping global workplaces, particularly MNCs is recognized, the study explores what kind of specific initiatives employees encounter in their workplaces, analyzes how these initiatives influence their daily experiences and examines how these experiences contribute to their organizational commitment and retention intentions.

The focus of this study is on migrant employees, since they often encounter cultural, social, and structural barriers that can affect their inclusion and career progression within organizations. Therefore, their perspectives provide especially valuable insights into how DEI practices are experienced in day-to-day organizational contexts and how these practices influence migrant employees' retention in MNCs operating in Finland.

This focus is further supported by broader organizational trends in Finland. According to the survey conducted by the Finnish Venture Capital Association (FVCA) and PwC, MNCs face increasing pressure to implement DEI initiatives (Santavirta & Lehtinen, 2022). Their findings indicate that due to labor shortages and demographic changes, private-sector firms' need to attract and retain highly skilled employees has increased, which in turn

makes the effective integration of DEI practices critical for sustaining workforce commitment and organizational performance (Santavirta & Lehtinen, 2022).

3.1 Sample selection

This study uses purposive sampling. As Saunders et al. (2007) define, purposive sampling is a technique in which the researcher is allowed to select sample that they believe will best support in addressing the research question and meeting the research objectives. More specifically, the sampling strategy chosen for this research is what Saunders, et al. describe as heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling. Accordingly, the criteria for participation were that the individual works in a MNC in Finland and is originally from abroad. Interviewing migrant employees from varied backgrounds allows the study to capture firsthand experiences of inclusion, support and workplace climate, which are essential to assessing the effectiveness of DEI initiatives.

The interview participants were recruited through three methods. First, the author used personal and professional networks, asking contacts within these networks to help to identify potential participants and approach individuals who might be willing to participate in the study. Five of the interviewees were recruited through this process. Second, the author contacted two potential participants directly via LinkedIn messages. Third, one interviewee connected the author with an additional potential participant after discussing the study with them, reflecting a snowball sampling element (Saunders et al., 2007). All the approached individuals agreed to participate.

Once participants had confirmed their willingness to participate, they were sent an introductory letter outlining the purpose of the research and interview process. Sending this kind of introductory letter is a method strengthening the transparency and credibility of the research suggested by Saunders et al. (2007).

Table 1. Participants background information

Participant	Sector and role	Nationality	Gender	Age	Years in Finland	Time in organization	Interview length
1	Industrial Business Services, Service Designer	Mexican	Male	30-35	10	6 months	39 min
2	Industrial Services, Service Designer	Turkish	Female	30-35	8,5	2,5 years	35 min
3	Professional services, Assistant Manager	Vietnamese	Female	25-30	9	5 years	28 min
4	Professional services, Software Developer	Vietnamese	Female	25-30	10	5 years	24 min
5	Technology, Junior HR Business Partner	Ghanaian	Male	35-40	11	9 months	25 min
6	Energy Technology, Content Production Manager	Czech	Female	25-30	8	5 years	21 min
7	Technology, AI Engineer	German	Male	35-40	3	3,5 years	21 min
8	Healthcare, Senior Product Designer	Russian	Female	25-30	11	8 months	29 min

The total sample of this thesis consisted of eight participants.

3.2 Data collection

The data of the study was collected through semi-structured interviews. This is consistent with the exploratory nature of the study, since interviews are typically the principal data collection method in exploratory research (Saunders et al., 2007). The scholars highlight that unlike fully structured interviews, semi-structured interviews are more flexible, as the researcher has a list of themes to be covered, but the questions and their order can vary in different interviews, depending on how the conversation naturally develops (Saunders et al., 2007). This flexibility is especially valuable when studying a sensitive topic, such as DEI. DEI as a topic is highly contextual and subjective, thus nuances and personal experiences are critical factors for understanding the phenomenon comprehensively.

A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 1.) was created to support the data collection. The interview questions were designed following the aim of this study. The questions focused on migrant employees' experiences and observations of DEI practices and initiatives at their workplace. While the primary focus was on migrant employees' experiences, the interviews also examined DEI from a broader organizational perspective. The interviews consisted of six open-ended questions. Open-ended questions typically begin with "*what*", "*why*" or "*how*", and therefore are especially useful for uncovering participants' attitudes, perceptions, and factual experiences as they allow the participants to explain their thoughts freely and describe situations with their own words (Saunders et al., 2007).

The interviews were conducted via Zoom from December 2025 to January 2026. Each of the interviews lasted between 21 to 39 minutes. To ease the processing of the interview data, each of the interviews was audio-recorded with Zoom's built-in recording, with the participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed with the transcription tool provided by Microsoft Word. The transcription of each interview was saved as a separate Word document. To ensure the accuracy between the spoken words and the transcribed text,

the transcriptions were reviewed shortly after each interview. Audio-recording and transcribing of the interviews further ensured the reliability and quality of the data. (Saunders et al., 2007).

Before the interviews, participants were informed how the interview would be conducted, the purpose of the study and how the results would be used. The participants were asked for permission to audio-record the interview and were explained how the recordings would be transcribed. They were informed that their answers would remain strictly confidential.

As Saunders et al. (2007) note, once confidentiality and anonymity are promised to participants, the researcher has a responsibility to consistently honor them to preserve participants' trust throughout the research. In line with this, the names of participants and companies were anonymized.

3.3 Data analysis

In qualitative research, the data can be analyzed using various techniques. In this research, the data is analyzed by using thematic analysis, which is a method that aims to identify, organize and interpret patterns of meaning within the collected data (Guest et al., 2014). Guest et al. state that its primary purpose is to reveal reoccurring ideas, concepts, or experiences that provide insight into the phenomenon. Thematic analysis allows for insights that capture not only what participants say, but also how and why they express their perspectives (Guest et al., 2014).

Thematic analysis was chosen for this study, as it is a suitable method for exploring complex social phenomenon, such as the effect of DEI initiatives on migrant employees' retention. In this approach, the interview data is systematically coded and organized, which helps to uncover different patterns in how employees experience and perceive DEI initiatives in the workplace. The analysis was guided by the research question and

interview themes, allowing patterns and recurring observations to emerge from the data. This method provided a structured way to understand the factors that influence retention and the ways in which DEI initiatives are experienced in practice.

In practice, the analysis began with a thorough reading of the transcripts, followed by coding, organizing, and categorizing the data into initial themes. These themes were then reviewed and refined until the final themes were identified. Both positive and negative experiences were captured within each theme, reflecting the range of participants' perspectives.

The interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The transcribed interview data was analyzed and categorized based research aims and the themes emerging from the data. This approach allowed for the exclusion of information that was unrelated to the focus of the study. In line with Grodal et al. (2021), identifying categories is a key step in qualitative data analysis, as it helps in identifying patterns and themes from the data and provides a clear structure for examining participants' experiences of DEI practices.

3.4 Reliability and validity of the research

Saunders, et al. (2007), note that data collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews can involve quality-related concerns such as challenges related to reliability, potential biases and constraints on validity and generalizability. They explain that reliability is often understood in terms of the replicability of findings, however, in qualitative research replicability is not necessarily the primary goal. Rather, the data depends on the context and captures participants' experiences and perspectives at a specific point in time, meaning that conducting the study under different conditions or at a different moment could lead to different outcomes (Saunders et al., 2007).

Furthermore, Saunders et al. (2007) argue that qualitative data is often influenced by various forms of bias. They note that these can include interviewer bias, which can arise from the researcher's own expectations, interpretations, or ways of posing questions, as well as participant bias, which can arise when interviewees aim to provide socially desirable responses or adjust their answers on perceived expectations. Scholars highlight that these factors can affect the consistency and credibility of the data and therefore should be carefully considered throughout the research process. The sample of the present research consists of migrant employees from diverse backgrounds working in MNCs in Finland, which adds further complexity. This diversity makes it particularly essential to recognize and consider the potential biases and cultural differences that can influence both participants' perception of the questions, their responses and the researcher's interpretation of the data. Thus, it is suggested that the analysis will be conducted with a careful and reflective approach.

Moreover, it is acknowledged that the author's own experiences and background inevitably influence how the data is interpreted. For instance, factors including familiarity with DEI frameworks, understanding of corporate environments and previous exposure to multicultural work contexts can affect how the author recognizes and categorizes examples of inclusive or exclusive practices.

To address potential biases, the author has cross-checked themes against the interview transcripts and based interpretations in participants' direct statements and supported by relevant literature.

The credibility of this study depends not on strict replicability, but on careful, thoughtful analysis and transparency in how the interpretations are made. By being mindful of the context and reflecting critically on potential biases, both on participants and the researcher, the study aims to provide a trustworthy and nuanced understanding of migrant employees' experiences. While the findings are specific to this sample and organizational

setting, this approach allows for meaningful insights into the role of DEI practices in shaping workplace experiences and retention.

4 Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study, based on eight semi-structured interviews with employees of migrant backgrounds. The findings focus on participants' perceptions and experiences of DEI practices, as well as the ways in which these practices affect the key factors contributing to talent retention. The chapter is organized into sub-sections that follow the thematic structure of the semi-structured interview guide used in this research.

4.1 DEI practices or initiatives experienced or observed by migrant employees

Each of the interviews began with participants introducing themselves and providing overview of their background. This included information such as their role, the organization they work for, their nationality, time in Finland and relevant professional experience.

Once the background information was gathered, the first question focused on DEI practices or initiatives that they have encountered within their organization. This question aimed to uncover how existing DEI activities and initiatives are perceived, experienced and understood by the participant. The responses to this question varied, which highlights that DEI activities are not always visible or transparent to employees at different levels within MNCs operating in Finland. While all interviewees were able to mention at least some DEI activities or initiatives, many of them expressed uncertainty or a lack of detailed knowledge about the specific practices and their effect.

“It is not like something that is being, you know, like explicitly said to everyone and it is not like something secret, but it is something that feels like it is a part of the core set values of the company and practices. But yeah, I think that that is so far what we actually do. There has not been a lot more than that up to this point, but it is getting there.” (Participant 1)

“I think that there were some like type of trainings or meetings that we had regarding how to act, I suppose, or kind of what is appropriate, what is inappropriate when it comes to communication.” (Participant 6)

In contrast, few participants provided clear and detailed accounts of multiple DEI initiatives that expressed confidence in their company’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. One participant, for instance, pointed out formal structures within organization including HR documents that outline the organizational culture, guidelines for respectful communication and behavior, and clear procedures on how to report harassment or inappropriate actions. These procedures enabled employees to raise their concerns safely, either through anonymous virtual reporting channels or appointed contact people. Other participants highlighted efforts that were visible and actively communicated, including regular training on inclusivity, bias-awareness workshops for managers, DEI reporting groups, and whistleblowing systems through which concerns could be raised. Together, these examples reveal that DEI was promoted in these organizations through a combination of formal mechanisms and structured programs.

“So, we get regular monthly updates on diversity, equity and inclusion. We have trainings that we have to do and repeat. I am not sure about the exact interval, but every 6 to 12 months, I think somewhere between that. And then we have to repeat the trainings. I think we also have contacted people in case we are encouraged to report DEI breaches.” (Participant 7)

“They do have especially unconscious bias training for managers and so on to enhance their decision-making, especially even in hiring processes or dealing with people. And also there are other trainings, like we have a system, a learning tool where you also learn about diversity and inclusion. So, there are like courses you can undertake.” (Participant 5)

Furthermore, most of the participants highlighted language accommodations such as the use of English as the official working language of the company, which they perceived as essential for equal participation in everyday work. In addition, two of the participants also noted, that their company supports them in learning Finnish.

“The company language is English, and you just have to work in English, and everything happens in English.” (Participant 7)

“The company offers a free Finnish language education for anyone who wants to take it.” (Participant 2)

Further examples of organizational commitment to DEI and inclusive practices were cultural events and international clubs organized by employers. The international club described by one participant aimed to gather the employees from diverse backgrounds to get to know each other and to share their experiences in Finland. In addition, some of the participants noted that there are visible organizational sponsorships, for instance support for Pride.

“We have cultural evenings every three or few months that we can present our own culture and talk about our culture, like, you know, so, and that was actually the first thing that I got to attend in the company.” (Participant 8)

Many of the participants also emphasized that DEI principles are reflected throughout the organization’s everyday practices and culture, rather than existing solely as a structured set of discrete activities. One participant also highlighted that organizational values related to inclusion were clearly communicated already during the recruitment process.

“I think it's just so normal that everybody is respecting each other, that this is not a big topic for us, no matter where you're from, what you're identifying as. It's so normal that it's not a topic.” (Participant 7)

Participants noted that everyday gestures such as remembering names, using correct pronouns, and showing respect for different cultural backgrounds further contribute to their sense of inclusion. One participant, for example, described a company onboarding training with a dedicated focus on inclusivity through which employees were specifically instructed to respect one another's backgrounds, learn the correct pronunciation of names, and honor each individual's pronouns. This underscores that even small, day-to-day practices can act as concrete manifestations of organizational values, making clear that diversity is both acknowledged and respected in practice. These micro-level behaviors seemed to contribute to a culture of mutual respect, which in turn points out that inclusion is achieved not only through formal programs or documents but also through everyday social interactions in which individuals feel seen, valued, and accepted.

“So, some of the things I remember was that when we joined the company, we have this training basically about inclusivity and we would be taught to basically respect each other backgrounds. By first of all, remember their name and how to speak it properly. We have a really good emphasis on that because it shows that we are respecting where they come from and their background, and of course we respect the pronouns.” (Participant 4)

4.2 DEI practices' and initiatives' effect on migrant employees' everyday work experience and sense of inclusion

The second question aimed to capture how DEI efforts influence migrant employees' everyday work experiences, including how included, respected, and supported they feel in their daily interactions at work. The interview findings suggest that DEI efforts have a

strong influence on migrant employees' everyday work experiences, especially by shaping how safe, respected, and comfortable they feel at work. Positive day-to-day experiences were a recurring theme among many participants. These participants placed particular emphasis on feelings of calm and diminished stress, as well as the capability to be their authentic selves without fear of judgment or negative evaluation.

"You are not stereotyped and it brings peace to you." (Participant 5)

"I feel I can be myself, which of course is a great thing because I mean, mentally I think work requires a lot of power from you." (Participant 8)

Supportive and inclusive environments enabled participants to concentrate on their work instead of managing uncertainty or anxiety. This sense of psychological ease was directly connected to better focus and efficiency for some participants.

"I think it matters a lot because, of course, I really enjoy the environment that I'm in, like where I feel heard and no discrimination, especially there is no this kind of like politics that you have to fight against and it has already reduces a lot of stress and it helped me to just focus on my work instead of on other side, like dramas or politics at work." (Participant 4)

"When you have your mind at rest, you become efficient. You work without any thought of how people view me, so you don't really doubt yourself. You see yourself as a family." (Participant 5)

Participants also highlighted equal treatment as an important factor contributing to their everyday experiences. They noted that they did not feel treated differently from Finnish colleagues and that they felt included in everyday activities and interactions at their workplace.

“To be honest, when I’m at work, I don’t see any difference between how I was treated versus how Finnish people were treated.” (Participant 4)

“I always feel included in every activity.” (Participant 3)

Further to formal DEI policies and organizational-level initiatives, participants consistently emphasized that their direct managers were in a central role in shaping their daily work experiences and sense of inclusion. Although organizational values and practices set broader guidelines for DEI, it was often the behavior of direct managers that determined whether these principles were experienced in everyday interactions. The participants perceived supportive managers as key actors in creating and maintaining psychological safety, ensuring inclusive communication, and addressing individual needs. The absence of such support was seen to weaken the perceived influence of formal DEI efforts.

“Whatever I need to like do my work the best, she helps.” (Participant 2)

4.3 DEI practices’ influence on motivation, job satisfaction, career development, collaboration, employer attractiveness, commitment and intention to stay

Third question aimed to examine how DEI practices influence key factors contributing to talent retention, including motivation, job satisfaction, career development, collaboration and employer attractiveness, each of which have been highlighted in the literature reviewed in chapter 2.

Subsequently the participants were asked to describe how the DEI practices influence their organizational commitment and intention to stay. Building on participants’ descriptions of everyday inclusion, the findings highlight how DEI is experienced not only as a

set of values or policies, but as a factor that shapes employees' willingness to contribute, develop, and remain with the organization over time.

4.3.1 Motivation and job satisfaction

The findings indicate that DEI practices have a meaningful influence on migrant employees' motivation, especially by shaping whether they feel psychologically safe, respected and able to be themselves at work. Several participants emphasized that an inclusive environment reduced stress and allowed them to focus on their tasks without having to navigate discrimination, exclusion, or workplace politics. Feeling heard and treated fairly was described as energizing and supportive of work engagement, as one participant noted that a calm and inclusive environment enables greater efficiency and motivation. Similarly, participants highlighted that being able to express their skills and expertise without fear or judgment strengthened both confidence and sense of purpose at work. Feeling respected by the organization appeared to foster correlative attitude, where employees were more motivated to meet the organization's expectations and contribute positively to the workplace.

"I feel that I'm respected in the company and I want to respect what the company requires as an answer." (Participant 8)

At the same time, participants made it clear that motivation was closely tied to authenticity. One participant noted that the inability to be oneself would be strongly demotivating. This underscores that inclusion is not only an added benefit but essential for sustained engagement. Some participants also expressed that motivation could further be strengthened by greater diversity and transparency at the managerial level, as visible role models from diverse backgrounds were seen as inspiring and as signals of real advancement opportunities.

“Mainly it would serve for us as a great inspiration and good mirror or example for us to feel like it is possible in a way. If you have somebody and you can ask them like if they have any obstacles, if they face any challenges, how they overcome it, what is their education, background... but the truth is that there are not many examples like that in my company. It would be interesting to see more diversity in the upper management level.” (Participant 4)

Job satisfaction was described multifaceted, with DEI representing one important component among others such as salary, meaningful projects, and collegial relationships. However, participants emphasized that diversity and inclusion significantly shaped how satisfying work felt on a daily basis, especially through enabling equal participation and recognition. Being able to contribute on the same terms as others fostered a stronger sense of purpose and fairness at work.

One participant highlighted that DEI practices are experienced most powerfully when they are expressed through concrete behaviors by colleagues and managers. According to the participant, these practices foster motivation and sense of inclusion by creating an environment where employees feel safe to voice concerns, share expertise, and contribute to projects.

4.3.2 Career development

With regard to career development, many participants perceived that DEI practices support fair advancement opportunities. Several participants noted that when the organizational culture emphasized talent and effort over background, they felt confident that career progression was achievable.

“I never thought that there is anything that is stopping me from going higher because of my background. Definitely, if you asked me anything, it would have been because of my talent or something else.” (Participant 4)

“There was a time when I asked for a raise and I asked for a promotion and it’s something that I got. So, I never felt like, excluded from any opportunities.” (Participant 6)

The presence of diverse leaders or international colleagues in managerial roles was especially meaningful, as it served as concrete evidence that advancement was possible regardless of background. These examples reinforced perceptions of a level playing field and reduced concerns about invisible barriers.

“My colleague who doesn’t speak any Finnish still got up to the manager role, when he worked hard enough.” (Participant 3)

4.3.3 Collaboration

Collaboration was strongly influenced by everyday interpersonal dynamics and the inclusiveness of team interactions. Participants consistently emphasized that open-minded colleagues, transparent communication and non-judgmental attitudes made collaboration easier and more effective.

Participants described their direct colleagues and team environments as central to their experience of inclusion. For instance, one participant emphasized that inclusivity was reflected in the team’s collective effort to understand different working styles and to collaborate in ways that allowed everyone to perform at their best.

“All of my colleagues are very open-minded, they really discuss with you. I am not talking just international colleagues, but also among Finnish colleagues, very openly, and we respect each other’s opinion and we evaluate each other’s opinions equally.” (Participant 4)

“I don’t think there were ever any issues, any problems. Maybe like cultural misunderstandings, but never in like a negative way or never in any like malicious way. So, there’s definitely some time that needs to be to get used to these things when working in an international environment.” (Participant 6)

Supportive managers, especially those with international backgrounds, were described as creating welcoming environments where employees felt comfortable contributing.

“I think it is my luck that we have a very good boss. He also, he is fully Finnish, but he has an international background. Like he used to study masters in the US and work in Italy and was exposed to the culture. So, he is very open and likes to have an international team. So that is why I think I don’t have any barriers, but I always feel welcome to be here.” (Participant 3)

4.3.4 Employer attractiveness and organizational commitment

DEI Practices also shaped perceptions of employer attractiveness and organizational commitment. Participants emphasized that they would be unwilling to work for organizations where their identity could be perceived as a problem or where exclusionary practices were tolerated. External information, like employee reviews, was mentioned as influential in shaping expectations about workplace culture and inclusivity.

“But if I go to Glassdoor and I read anything like the office is very stressful, or about the politics, then that definitely would make me rethink of joining that place.” (Participant 4)

Commitment was closely linked to experiences of respect, appreciation, and belonging. When managers demonstrated fairness, encouragement, and visible support, participants felt a stronger sense of commitment and motivation to contribute to their work. Participants described how inclusive environments made them motivated to stay longer,

perform better, and invest in organizational goals. Some participants described DEI as a core value that outweighed even financial incentives, which in turn underscores that DEI can be critical for long-term commitment.

“I think that the people and the culture that we have is definitely the reason why I have stayed this long, I would say.” (Participant 6)

“It definitely would affect, I mean, if I would have to choose between living for the companies that do not have these values, but for example, have a bigger salary and staying in this company with the same salary I do have, but these values included, I would probably stay because those values are quite, I mean, it makes my life on everyday frictionless.” (Participant 8)

Conversely, participants noted that discrimination or unequal access to opportunities would strongly undermine their willingness to remain with an organization.

“If it was a place that was discriminating against others or excluding other people from the same opportunities from being included, then yes, it would drive me away. So yes, I think it’s contributing to my commitment that I feel that everybody’s respected and appreciated.” (Participant 7)

Finally, intentions to stay were strongly connected to interpersonal relationships, especially with managers and colleagues. For many participants, having supportive managers and welcoming teams were among the most important factors in determining their decision to remain with their organization.

“I think the people are the reason why I stay this long in the company, like for sure, because of my boss and my colleagues who joined the team. From the beginning I have liked working with people here and sometimes I am afraid that if I move to

the next company and I don't get treated the way I was treated here.” (Participant 3)

4.4 Challenges related to diversity or inclusion

Although many participants described DEI practices as having a positive effect on their work experiences, the interviews also revealed several challenges related to diversity and inclusion in everyday work life. Participants linked many of their challenges to uneven implementation of DEI practices, organizational structures that unintentionally limited participation or access to opportunities, and the language use in daily interactions.

Many participants noted a gap between organizational DEI policies and their lived experiences. Inclusive principles were not always reflected in everyday practices, although they had been communicated at a strategic or policy level. One participant described that surface-level inclusivity was not sufficient if the underlying cultural norms that shape everyday life in the organization remained unchanged. This highlights the need for DEI to be incorporated more deeply into organizational culture. In addition, one participant described that policies that fail to take into account individual needs further deepened these tensions.

“So, from my experience they are saying that we are applying these DEI principles, taking actions, listening to our employees, but they are not at the moment. So, I have had better experiences when there were no DEI trainings.” (Participant 2)

“It doesn't necessarily feel yet that it is like a real part of the culture. It is more like it's a nice thing to say that we have. We tell people why it is, but it doesn't feel yet that we are in that maturity there in DEI, that I would feel like, oh yeah we live the DEI and it is like our culture.” (Participant 1)

Particularly in informal communication, language use appeared to be a recurring challenge. Some participants felt excluded or unable to fully participate in social aspects of the workplace, since casual interactions often happened in Finnish.

“So, it is a bit stressful and confusing because yes, you know that you are working there, so everything goes in English when it comes to work, but when it comes to the other parts, then it becomes like a bit, it makes you a bit like excluded.” (Participant 1)

However, language-related challenges were not experienced uniformly. While some participants described these situations as exclusionary, others interpreted them as a motivation to learn Finnish in order to feel more integrated.

“I am sometimes very urged to learn Finnish and to be a master in it, so I can be one of them, you know, because I feel like sometimes if you sit next to your colleagues and they make a joke and laugh and then I don’t understand a thing.” (Participant 3)

“I think that it kind of comes to the office, like being in the office in Finland and kind of not really being able to be a part of kind of the office banter or just not necessarily the official things, but the non-official part of the communication. But then also, I don’t really hold it against the employees or the company because that’s my own thing, the fact that I’m not able to speak the language fluently. Like, I always kind of took it as, okay, that’s on me. Like I would never hold it against the company or the employees.” (Participant 6)

Although experiences between participants differed, informal communication in Finnish still remained problematic for some participants. Casual interactions, such as jokes or informal catch-ups were experienced as moments in which inclusion was not fostered. Finnish language requirements were perceived to limit access to certain roles, networks,

and projects, even while English was the official working language. In addition, some participants described that sometimes work-related materials were more comprehensive in Finnish than in English. This led participants to feel like their access to information is unequal compared to Finnish speaking employees.

“Like they do English version of Finnish document of 70 pages and make it into a couple of lines in English. That makes it feel like you’re missing out something.”
(Participant 1)

“Obviously if you um if you know Finnish, you could have more clients, you could have broader network, so it would help you have certain advantages in the project and that may reflect in your career progress.” (Participant 4)

In addition to language-related barriers, one participant pointed out broader structural obstacles that affected their access to career opportunities within the organization. They perceived career advancement as being strongly influenced by informal networks, visibility, and internal lobbying rather than solely by performance or competence. From this perspective, progression was seen as dependent on “who you know” and how well one can navigate informal expectations, which raised concerns whether opportunities were truly fair or inclusive.

In addition to structural challenges, one participant described experiences related to stereotyping and assumptions based on their cultural background and neurodivergence. The participant explained that disclosing their background sometimes led colleagues to change their behavior toward them. However, in certain situations this had a positive effect and resulted in increased openness and engagement. Nevertheless, the participant noted that prior negative experiences with individuals of a similar background were occasionally generalized with them.

The participant further described an incident during an informal conversation involving a member of upper management. During a discussion, a comment was made suggesting that individuals with neurodivergence either lack focus or do not know what they are doing. The participant expressed uncertainty about how to respond to this, especially given the higher position of the speaker. This situation was perceived as uncomfortable and highlighted how assumptions expressed in informal settings may create anxiety for employees who identify with the group being discussed.

Although such experiences were not widely reported among participants, this experience demonstrates how implicit assumptions and offhand comments can shape perceptions of inclusion, especially when expressed by individuals in positions of authority.

4.5 The effect of challenges to work life experiences or intention to stay

The challenges described in the previous section did not remain isolated issues but had clear consequences for participants' everyday work experiences and their intentions to stay with their organizations. For some participants, ongoing challenges related to language use, combined with unmet individual needs and uneven inclusion directly affected how safe, motivated, and valued they felt at work. Weakened sense of belonging was an overarching effect. Participants described feeling emotionally distanced from the organization, when their individual needs were not understood or accommodated. For one participant, the lack of understanding of their needs led them to feel like they are being gradually pushed out, which in turn made them actively question their willingness to remain with the company.

“Right now, I don’t feel like I belong in this company. It feels like I’m being pushed out because of my needs. Even though they don’t say it openly, it makes me question, whether I want to be here.” (Participant 2)

Beyond belonging, participants' emotional energy and motivation at work were influenced by these obstacles. Some participants described feeling the need to compensate for linguistic or cultural disadvantages by putting in extra effort or by performing beyond expectations. Everyday work became more demanding to some participants, since the need to self-adjust and prove one's capabilities created additional mental and emotional load.

"I guess that sometimes you need to do extra kind of things to get like further, to like really make something very interesting or impactful for work." (Participant 1)

"Like when you go meet client a lot of the part is networking and like knowing people who know somebody and obviously if you know Finnish it is easier to break through that and yes, it is hard to say for sure, but well that is why I said like maybe if I try hard enough and there wouldn't be any limits." (Participant 4)

The challenges also reduced some participants' sense of psychological safety. Participants avoided openly expressing specific needs or aspects of their identity due to their concerns about being perceived as "difficult" or negatively judged. This limited their willingness to ask for support or accommodation, which further shaped their daily work experience and sense of inclusion.

Perceived barriers also affected how participants viewed their long-term career prospects. When access to opportunities was seen as dependent on informal networks, visibility or language skills rather than competence alone, participants began to question the fairness of career progression. This uncertainty made participants feel less confident that putting in consistent effort would result in fair opportunities over time.

Finally, these experiences had a direct effect on participants' intention to stay with their organizations. While some participants remained committed to their work and col-

leagues, challenges related to inclusion reduced their emotional attachment to the organization itself. In some cases, participants described actively reconsidering their future with the company and expressed a preference to look for more inclusive and diverse workplaces, where they would feel that their need and identities are better understood.

“I know that the next company that I will work for, I’m looking for more diversity in the workforce. So, more international people, more different age groups, more balanced with like women and men as well, and then neurodiversity as well.” (Participant 2)

5 Discussion

The aim of this research was to explore how migrant employees observe and experience DEI practices in MNCs operating in Finland and how these practices affect talent retention. By interpreting the findings presented in previous chapter in relation to existing literature, this chapter discusses how DEI initiatives are implemented in Finnish MNCs and how they shape migrant employees' experiences and intentions to remain with their organizations. It is important to note that the interpretation of these connections is informed by author's prior knowledge of motivation and engagement theories.

First, the findings reveal that there is variation in how DEI activities are recognized by migrant employees in Finnish MNCs. This suggests that there are differences in the visibility and communication of these initiatives between different organizations. Some participants lacked detailed knowledge of these initiatives in their organizations, while some were able to describe these initiatives in detail. This supports a previous finding by ILO (2022), that signaled a significant gap in awareness of organizational DEI strategies. Together, these findings therefore highlight the importance of clearer communication and visibility of DEI initiatives.

Second, according to the findings of this study, DEI is fostered through a combination of formal and informal mechanisms in MNCs in Finland. These initiatives include regular inclusivity trainings, bias-awareness programs for managers, organizational policies and guidelines for e.g. respectful behavior, clear communication of organizational values and language support. In addition, participants described mechanisms that allow employees to report inappropriate behavior or raise concerns. In line with this, prior research has highlighted that inclusion in organizations is often supported through formal structures such as DEI training, reporting channels and organizational policies (Brown et al., 2023; Everett & Hill, 2025). At the same time, the findings of this study suggest that DEI initiatives are often strongly embedded in the organizational cultures of MNCs, shaping not only formal policies but also everyday practices, communication norms and ways of

working. This finding is encouraging, as previous literature emphasizes that the outcomes of DEI are more consistent when they are an integrated part of organizational practices (Everett & Hill, 2025)

Third, findings reveal that DEI initiatives influence migrant employees' everyday experiences at work. Many participants described these initiatives having a direct, positive effect on their sense of inclusion, psychological safety and how valued and respected they felt at work. This reinforces the findings by Amin (2024), who found that migrant employees perceive DEI initiatives as supportive and as strengthening their sense of belonging in the workplace. The findings of this study also strengthen the insight by Farashah et al. (2025) who argued that organizations that pay attention to and adapt to migrant employees' skills and needs increase their employees' job satisfaction and promote their sense of professional value. In this study, concrete DEI efforts encouraged migrant employees to express openly their opinions and perspectives, voice their concerns, share expertise and contribute meaningfully to projects. These experiences align with Kahn (1990), who argued that employees are more likely to feel engaged and invest themselves when they experience psychological safety, inclusion, and a sense of being valued. DEI initiatives were also perceived to enhance communication and collaboration with their colleagues and direct supervisors.

Several participants perceived their direct managers as a key factor determining whether DEI principles were translated into everyday practices. This finding is consistent with earlier research by Shore et al. (2011), suggesting that supervisors are in a central role in implementing inclusive policies and practices within organizations. This also strengthens Everett and Hill's (2025) argument that diversity is most effectively implemented when leaders act in an inclusive manner. Shore et al. (2011) note that direct supervisors influence daily team dynamics and thus, their behavior significantly shapes how inclusion is experienced, especially in diverse work groups where different cultural backgrounds, values, and perspectives exist. This study reinforced this perspective by revealing that the way leaders address DEI related topics shapes employees' perceptions of inclusion, for

example, insensitive comments were found to create feelings of exclusion and unequal treatment. In this sense, supervisors were in a critical role in determining whether organizational commitments to DEI are experienced by migrant employees in practice or do they remain solely symbolic. Participants reported stronger trust in the organization and a clearer sense of belonging when their supervisors demonstrated inclusive leadership. This is in line with Deloitte's (2025) findings that show that diversity and inclusion are increasingly contributing to employees' trust in an employer.

Although several participants described DEI initiatives having a positive influence on their everyday work life experiences, the findings also revealed structural barriers that migrant employees encounter within Finnish MNCs, and that consequently limited the effectiveness of DEI efforts in practice. Therefore, some participants experienced that there is a gap between the initiatives and the lived reality of the workplace.

One of the identified barriers related to the effect of DEI initiatives on career development, as it was perceived differently among participants. While some perceived their career opportunities to be comparable to non-migrant employees, others experienced barriers or limitations related to career progression which further created a need to prove themselves with extra efforts. This finding is consistent with Usanova et al. (2023) who argue that making additional efforts is a strategy that migrant employees commonly adopt to prove their worth.

Seeing greater diversity in senior management inspired some participants and was perceived as an important aspect of their own career development. However, some participants described a lack of visible diversity in senior leadership and top management, which made it difficult for them to feel that inclusion was genuinely embedded across all levels. This aligns with a previous insight by Atwater & Fernandez (2023), who argue that homogeneous management can create a sense of exclusion. In contrast, when management is diverse, employees are more likely to feel acknowledged and included (Usanova et al., 2023).

Although English as an official language signals an intention to promote inclusion in the MNCs included in this study, the continued dominance of Finnish in informal contexts restricted full participation for some migrant employees. Several participants identified language use as the most significant constraint at their workplace. This is in line with previous research that suggests that limited language proficiency is a common constraint for migrant employees' as for instance developing relationships becomes more difficult (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). According to Green and Young (2019, p. 18), informal social actions such as participation in "*water cooler*" conversations play a significant role in fostering employees' sense of belonging.

Fourth, findings of this study suggest that inclusive environments shaped by DEI initiatives motivate migrant employees to stay longer within the organization. For some participants, DEI was a core value that even outweighed other retention related factors such as financial incentives. At the same time, even those who prioritized other factors, DEI still played a meaningful role in shaping their commitment. This pattern has been observed in previous research where participants reported that they would not work for an employer whose values do not align with their own (Deloitte, 2025).

Some participants described that difficulties in ensuring that DEI was reflected consistently throughout the organization weakened their sense of belonging and lead some of them to express interest in finding a more diverse workplace in the future. In line with this, previous research has suggested that when organizations do not provide enough support for migrant employees, these employees may leave for other employers to find roles that better match their skills and help them gain local experience (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020).

DEI initiatives shape migrant employees' intentions to stay with the organization not only through formal initiatives, but more importantly through their effect on migrant employees' everyday work experiences, sense of inclusion, motivation and the level of fairness they perceive. These experiences strengthened their motivation, job satisfaction, and

organizational commitment, which in turn reinforced their intention to stay with the organization. These results support prior research linking positive workplace experiences to reduced turnover intentions (Train, 2017; Fahed-Sreih, 2020).

In line with the concept of motivation (Mathe et al., 2011), participants described that they were more willing to invest effort and remain committed to their work, when their individual needs for respect, recognition, and development were met within the organizational environment. DEI efforts appeared to reduce stress among migrant employees by creating an environment where they felt able to focus on their actual tasks without worrying about being accepted or included. The work itself became more motivating when DEI initiatives encouraged them to contribute with their full professional capacity without limiting their perspectives. This aligns with Tharenou and Kulik (2020) who found that migrant employees tend to perform and integrate better when inclusion is promoted, the challenges faced by migrant employees are recognized and organizational practices are adjusted accordingly. The ability to bring their full input increased not only motivation of migrant employees but also strengthened their overall commitment to their work and the organization.

Participants who perceived DEI initiatives as authentic and consistently applied described stronger attachment to their organization. This is consistent with previous literature suggesting that consistently applied DEI efforts signal authentic organizational values and priorities, which in turn influence whether employees perceive the organization as credible and trustworthy rather than symbolic in its commitments (Everett & Hill, 2025).



Figure 1. Conceptual framework based on research findings.

6 Conclusions

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the main research findings in relation to the research question and objectives. The contributions and practical implications of the study are presented in this chapter as well as the limitations, and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Contribution of the study

This study contributes to the literature on DEI practices, talent retention, and migrant employees by exploring how DEI initiatives are experienced and how these experiences influence migrant employees' attitudes, behaviors, and intentions to stay. The study addresses research gaps identified by Ranta (2025) by exploring how minorities experience diversity management in everyday organizational practices, and by Opoku et al. (2025) by examining the outcomes of DEI initiatives from employees' perspective more closely and providing insights from real-world observations. Unlike studies that solely focus on formal policies or theoretical frameworks, this study reveals the lived experiences of migrant employees.

This study provides empirical evidence of DEI initiatives from MNCs operating in Finland, thereby extending the existing literature and research to a context that remains relatively unexplored. It makes a clear contribution to the literature by demonstrating that, although MNCs in Finland implement a variety of DEI initiatives, these practices are not always consistently applied across everyday organizational contexts, a pattern that has also been noted in previous research (Amin, 2024; Ranta, 2025; Opoku et al., 2025). Importantly, the findings show that the effectiveness of DEI initiatives depends on their proper integration into daily organizational practices. The findings highlight that simply having initiatives in place is not sufficient to positively influence migrant employees' experiences. Therefore, this study offers insights into how DEI initiatives can better support migrant employees' in MNCs.

Extending the findings of Amin (2024), this study focuses specifically on how retention-related outcomes are shaped by DEI initiatives. Consistent with Amin, this study confirms that migrant employees' overall workplace experiences are positively influenced by organizational DEI initiatives and further demonstrates a clear connection between DEI practices and employees' intentions to remain with the organization. The findings of this study show that DEI practices foster as a stronger sense of inclusion, perceived fairness, and motivation, which in turn shape migrant employees' attitudes and behaviors that support their intentions to stay. This research therefore also provides guidance on how to design DEI initiatives that genuinely enhance migrant employees' talent retention.

6.2 Practical implications

The findings of this study provide several practical insights for MNCs operating in Finland that aim to enhance their talent retention through effective DEI practices.

The findings highlight that organizational commitment was stronger when migrant employees perceived DEI initiatives as authentic and consistently applied rather than symbolic. This is in line with the insight by Usanova et al. (2023), who found that especially when DEI efforts are visible and embedded throughout the organization, they are more likely have a positive effect. The present study suggests that MNCs should focus firstly on ensuring that DEI initiatives are concrete in everyday practices. Secondly, MNCs should ensure that the initiatives signal authentic commitment to inclusion. It is essential that MNCs do not allow the initiatives to remain symbolic. Migrant employees described that everyday gestures including the use of correct names and pronouns, acknowledging for individual contributions, and encouraging for input in meetings strengthened their feeling of being a valued member of the organization. This aligns with Amabile and Kramer (2012), who stated that motivation and engagement can be affected by small experiences. Building on these findings, this study suggests that MNCs actively encourage teams to adopt these kinds of behaviors as part of standard working norms, which in turn contribute to more inclusive environment for migrant employees.

The present study emphasizes that direct manager's behaviors strongly shaped migrant employees' everyday work experiences and motivation. The findings suggest that MNCs should address this by providing training and development programs for managers to ensure they have the capability to lead inclusively. The interview data revealed that training was sometimes perceived as solely formal requirement. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that training is implemented and designed in a way that engages and that it is clearly linked to organizational practices, which makes their effect visible for employees in their everyday work. As highlighted by Tharenou and Kulik (2020), migrant employees are more likely to feel a stronger sense of belonging when their supervisors promote inclusion, provide empathic support and facilitate team development. Thus, these training programs should cover not only general awareness of diversity, but also focus on practical leadership skills, such as culturally sensitive communication, transparent feedback practices and the ability to facilitate open dialogue within teams. These were factors that appeared important for migrant employees' everyday experiences. Furthermore, inclusive leadership training should also develop managers' ability to recognize subtle exclusionary dynamics and to actively create psychological safety for all team members.

Another key consideration emerging from this study's findings relates to language barriers. The findings of this study indicate that language barriers can affect migrant employees' sense of inclusion, access to information, and career development. This supports previous research that revealed that limited language proficiency often restricts migrant employees' participation in discussions, informal networks, and decision-making processes (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). MNCs could address these challenges by ensuring that key materials are accessible to all employees regardless of their language background and by encouraging inclusive practices in everyday communication, such as using clear, accessible English, which can help to ensure that all employees can fully participate in meetings, networking, and informal knowledge sharing. Participants noted that stronger language skills could help them deepen relationships with colleagues and strengthen

their sense of inclusion. Thus, it would be beneficial for MNCs to support migrant employees in learning Finnish, not only by offering Finnish language courses, but also by implementing informal initiatives such as language cafés, which support language learning while also fostering social interaction and workplace integration.

Additionally, migrant employees expressed feeling the need to compensate for language limitations through extra effort. This is consistent with Usanova et al. (2023), who found that working harder is a strategy migrant employees commonly adopt to prove their worth. This finding suggests that MNCs should ensure that proficiency in English is sufficient for career progression and that this is clearly communicated to migrant employees, as it can help to prevent situations where employees feel the need to compensate for their language limitations.

Migrant employees reported that clarity about promotional criteria and career development opportunities strengthens their motivation and intention to stay. MNCs should therefore communicate and document career development processes clearly and ensure that these are equitable and visible to all employees.

Furthermore, the interview data showed that greater diversity in management groups would be inspirational, and that hearing career stories from individuals with diverse backgrounds would be especially valuable. Prior research has accordingly highlighted that diversity in the top management would signal that career development opportunities are equal and consequently help in attracting and engaging international talent (Usanova et al., 2023). Beyond its symbolic value, diverse management strengthens migrant employees' sense of belonging and feeling of being heard. To address this, mentorship programs that connect employees with mentors from diverse backgrounds can help migrant employees to understand how to progress within the organization and how to address potential barriers to career advancement.

Finally, the interview data showed that the ability to raise concerns openly, including through anonymous channels, was appreciated and perceived as an important aspect of feeling safe in the workplace. MNCs can reinforce psychological safety by establishing clear and accessible reporting procedures and ensuring that these concerns are taken seriously and addressed in a timely manner.

6.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

While the study provides insights into how migrant employees experience DEI in Finnish MNCs, the researcher's positionality, including familiarity with DEI literature and the Finnish work context may have influenced which aspects were highlighted as significant. The findings of this study should be interpreted with this perspective in mind.

Given the diversity of the participants in this research, there is a possibility for biases and cultural differences influencing both participants' perception of the questions, their responses and the researcher's interpretation of the interview data, as discussed previously in the sub-chapter 3.4. However, the reflective analysis of the data was conducted carefully, and the author has sought to mitigate potential biases by cross-checking themes against the interview transcripts and grounding interpretations in participants' direct statements, as well as relevant literature.

Each of the interviews was conducted in English, which could have potentially limited the study. English is not the native language of either the author or the participants. While interviews were conducted fluently in English, conducting the study in a second language may have influenced how experiences were articulated and interpreted, which subsequently may have led to losing some nuances in expressions or interpretation.

All the participants in this study, with one exception, had been living in Finland from five to ten years. The interview data might have been different if collected from individuals

who have lived in Finland for a shorter period and are still at the beginning of their integration process. However, the relatively long residence of the participants can also be considered as a strength of the study, as it enabled them to reflect on their workplace experiences with greater perspective regarding local workplace norms, organizational practices and cultural expectations. Given this limitation, future research could explore DEI and talent retention from the perspective of migrants who are new to Finland to better understand the importance of DEI initiatives in the early integration stages. The challenges and needs of newcomers can differ significantly from those migrant employees who have already spent several years in Finland.

This study focused on MNCs operating in Finland. MNCs are typically more diverse in terms of workforce than purely domestic organizations, which may lead to perspectives that differ from those of local companies. In addition, this study was conducted only in one country which might also limit the generalizability of the results. Taking these limitations into account, future studies could explore the topic by including participants working in different countries. The topic could also be explored with a sample of migrant employees' working in solely domestic Finnish companies.

Since the findings of this study reveal that supervisor support and attitudes significantly affect how migrant employees experience DEI practices, future research could examine how MNCs can strengthen supervisors' commitment to DEI and what concrete actions or organizational mechanisms would most effectively support this commitment. Additionally, the topic could be explored from the supervisors' perspectives by examining their attitudes toward DEI and how they perceive their role in implementing inclusive practices within their teams.

Another interesting theme concerned diversity at the managerial level. Some participants in this research pointed out that diversity at the leadership level would function as an inspiration for their career development. Thus, future studies could explore the

psychological influence of having diverse role models on employees' career development and organizational commitment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guide

Introductory question:

- Could you briefly introduce yourself (role, nationality, age, length of time in Finland, name and industry of the company, years with the current employer)?
1. What kind of DEI practices or initiatives have you personally observed in your organization?
 2. How do these DEI practices or initiatives influence your everyday work experience and sense of inclusion?
 3. How do DEI practices influence the following aspects of your work life: motivation, job satisfaction, career development, collaboration, employer attractiveness, commitment and intention to stay?
 4. Have you experienced or observed any challenges related to diversity or inclusion? If yes, how did the organization respond?
 5. How did these challenges affect your work life experiences or your intention to stay?