

The Impact of Underlying Stress and Trauma on HRM Recruitment and Selection Bias in Employee Interviews

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The 21st century has seen organizations promoting the use of fair methods to recruit workers. This exploratory study aims to understand conscious and unconscious biases during the acquisition of new talent. Conscious bias usually occurs through intentional means, thus is usually aligned with explicit bias; subconscious bias explains the implicit biases that occur through invisible and unaware means. This study analyzes the influence of the polyvagal theory on recruitment and selection, including the mediating roles of stress and trauma. The introduction section of the study explains the purpose of investigating the root causes of recruitment and selection bias. The literature review explores insights into the origins, severity, and outcomes of bias in talent acquisition. The methodology section explains the process of analysis, and the findings section tabulates the insights elicited. The discussion section proposes effective strategies for dealing with the different forms of implicit and explicit bias. In conclusion, the study's findings can be utilized by modern recruiters to reduce the impact of bias.

Keywords: polyvagal theory, recruitment, selection, talent acquisition, implicit bias, explicit bias, conscious bias, unconscious bias, human resource management

INTRODUCTION

Many modern organizations have recognized that employees are vital for ensuring the continuity of key processes. For that reason, employees have become a major source of competitive advantage in most corporations. For organizations to gain optimal performance and productivity from these workers, it is integral to rely on efficient recruitment and selection processes. The recruitment landscape is gradually evolving with the introduction of new and innovative human resource management (HRM) practices so that corporations can recruit workers who match the organization's vision. However, the main impediment to achieving this goal revolves around the existence of significant bias in recruitment and selection strategies. For instance, implicit and explicit bias are common occurrences in the organizational setting. This exploratory investigation focuses on several cognitive influences affecting recruitment and selection bias, such as stress and trauma. This investigation aims to reveal the negative correlation between stress, trauma, and other psychological issues on talent acquisition. Overall, organizations need to introduce appropriate countermeasures for mitigating conscious and unconscious bias in recruitment and selection processes.

Purpose of the Study

Diversity and inclusion have become major considerations for recruiting talented workers in the modern HRM environment. For instance, race and gender equality are emphasized in most corporations worldwide. Despite the growing awareness of fair recruitment and selection procedures, the reality is that bias often emerges in evident and obscure ways. In this study, the focus is placed on the root causes of implicit and explicit bias. Furthermore, the study also analyzes why stress and trauma should be considered mediating factors in modern HRM recruitment and selection. Traditionally, discrimination was a common occurrence in most organizations due to underlying social and cultural diversity. However, modern times have seen many humanitarian organizations promoting equality for minority members of the society. These individuals are usually discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. While a lot of effort has been achieved in terms of mitigating bias, discrimination remains invisible, deep, and pervasive (Whysall, 2018). Therefore, modern corporations should dedicate significant investments towards HRM recruitment and selection processes in order to promote fairness and equality.

Problem Statement

Most studies on recruitment and selection bias primarily focus on the social, cultural, economic, environmental, and systemic factors. Nonetheless, this study adopts a unique approach by narrowing down the focus towards cognitive and decision-making influences of bias. For instance, the study seeks to analyze how the polyvagal theory and sympathetic nervous system manifest in the conscious and unconscious decision-making factors. Although the organizational, environmental, and systemic factors play a vital role in worsening recruitment and selection bias, scholars should not neglect the effect of cognitive and psychological variables. Issues such as unconscious bias can escalate and cause other unexpected consequences in human resource activities such as recruitment, selection, mentoring, and promotions. Thus, bias in the workplace should be considered a detrimental organizational issue rather than a personal or professional problem. Fundamentally, most organizations prioritize employees who can deliver the highest contributions to the organization. Such 'stars' are often associated with a visible increase in human capital (Boon et al., 2018). However, this recruitment and selection process relies on rational and nonrational mechanisms. In current times, very few studies have been conducted on the cognitive drivers of HRM recruitment and selection bias, so this study will bridge the research gap in the body of knowledge.

Rationale for the Study

This exploratory study is based on the rationale that HRM recruitment and selection processes are dynamic concepts that involve rational and nonrational mechanisms. However, various forms of discrimination exist that reduce the effectiveness of modern recruitment and selection practices. Recent surveys indicate that approximately 84% of candidates feel that current recruiting procedures are ineffective or unfair (Platts, 2020). The same survey revealed that at least 31% of managers feel they acquire sufficient information about potential hires before the interview stage. These statistics reveal the severity of implicit (unconscious) and explicit (conscious) bias on talent acquisition. In essence, most employees seek employment positions that match their professional skills, competencies, and personal ambitions. Regarding personal ambitions, studies show that modern workers prefer organizations that promote diversity and inclusion (Hsieh et al., 2019). For instance, a recent study conducted on 1069 leading corporations across 35 nations revealed that high gender diversity is associated with improved productivity, value, and revenue (Turban et al., 2019). Accordingly, recruitment and selection bias worsen the misallocation of capable talent who can offer unique rewards to recruiting corporations. Some recruiters look at social-cultural factors such as race, gender, and sexuality (Beattie & Johnson, 2012). Contrarily, others target less evident considerations such as appearance, outlook, or speech patterns. In either case, organizations lose out on major opportunities when they reject personnel who do not meet a certain recruitment or selection criterion.

Describing the Impact of Stress and Trauma on Recruitment and Selection Bias

In recent years, many studies have been conducted to analyze the impact of stress and trauma on employee recruitment and selection. For instance, an article published by Maurer (2020) revealed how stress affected recruiters during the recent COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic caused major shifts in talent acquisition because some companies required a reduction in hired employees, while others demanded urgent staff to replace lost workers. The article highlighted that stress levels spiked for most recruiters by approximately 61% due to the complex changes in recruiting procedures (Maurer, 2020). For instance, many recruiters experienced challenges shifting from face-to-face interviews to video conferencing and other online communication channels. Furthermore, other causes of stress involved the reduction of financial resources, increase in job insecurity, and decline in social interactions. These changes have caused negative changes to recruiters' moods and attitudes during recruitment and selection activities, thereby worsening their overall outcomes. Moreover, stress tends to worsen interpersonal interactions between recruiters and recruits. Overall, this study will underscore the impact of stress on recruitment and selection bias.

Similar to stress, HRM recruiters have also faced considerable trauma during their day-to-day activities. For that reason, some employers have recognized that serious gaps exist in research findings of building a trauma-informed workforce (Winter, 2019). However, many employees refuse to recognize the adverse effects of trauma on professional competency. Presently, few researchers have conducted in-depth studies examining the correlation between trauma and employee recruitment and selection. Trauma leads to poor concentration, social withdrawal, anxiety, restlessness, and other psychosomatic symptoms. Accordingly, stress and trauma are known to have negative implications on employee behaviors and key organizational activities. In this context, the exploratory investigation seeks to analyze how trauma influences a recruiter's decisions and the outcomes of talent acquisition programs. The study hypothesizes that stress and trauma amplify employee recruitment and selection bias, thereby reducing the effectiveness of talent acquisition activities. In brief, stress, and trauma contribute to the wastage of significant resources during employee recruitment and selection.

Another important theme lies in the evaluation of suitable methods for addressing implicit and explicit bias in recruitment and selection. The current human resource environment has evolved drastically due to increased globalization, the rapid advancement of technology, and improved social diversity (Potocnik et al., 2021). However, little verifiable data can be found regarding the main behavioral considerations and predictors of recruitment and selection. The main practical recommendation is to create an effective structure for selection and recruitment that counteracts discrimination and bias. Another recommendation is to use feedback to perform recruitment-related activities during the talent acquisition process. For instance, candidates can provide recruiters with feedback that can allow them to tailor the interview and recruitment processes. Alternatively, recruiters can prioritize the use of evidence-based processes, scientific tools, and algorithms to optimize recruitment outcomes. Studies show that structured recruitment and selection processes often demonstrate better performance than unstructured recruitment processes (Potocnik et al., 2021). Therefore, organizations can utilize various approaches to mitigate implicit and explicit bias, while also improving the acquisition of talented personnel.

Research Aims and Objectives

This study aims to elucidate the root causes of bias in modern recruitment and selection practices. Despite reliable evidence highlighting a significant decrease in recruitment and selection bias, many recruiters still rely on irrational strategies to acquire new talent. Instead of focusing on the recruit's personal and professional competencies, many recruiters still use intuition and personal impressions to identify prospective employees (Wolgast et al., 2017). Therefore, this study will analyze how specific cognitive dimensions influence the recruiter's decision-making processes and affect talent acquisition outcomes. The study will focus on several themes: polyvagal theory, implicit bias, explicit bias, stress, and trauma. In the end, the study aims to propose optimal strategies for mitigating bias and enhancing fair recruitment and selection processes. The study is oriented towards the following research objectives and questions.

Research Objectives:

1. To identify the primary sources of implicit and explicit bias in HRM recruitment and selection undertakings.
2. To streamline the recruitment and selection process by improving the quality of hires and streamlining the talent acquisition process.
3. Identify recommendations that can improve the fairness and equality of recruitment and selection processes,

Research Questions:

1. *What is the effect of the polyvagal theory and sympathetic nervous system on HRM recruitment and selection?*
2. *What are the main forms of implicit and explicit bias that impede talent acquisition within an organization?*
3. *Do stress and trauma negatively correlate with adverse HRM recruitment and selection outcomes?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Terms

Bias and Discrimination in HRM Practices

Bias is a common word in the modern economy that is commonly associated with discrimination or prejudicial treatment towards specific groups. Hennekam et al. (2019) define it as “differential treatment based on membership to social groups.” Nowadays, many researchers have investigated the adverse impacts of different forms of discrimination on workers. Among the forms of bias identified, the focus is placed on direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favorably because of a distinct characteristic (Nachmias et al., 2019). Although direct discrimination is prohibited in many nations, its impacts continue to impede organizational processes in the modern economy. Although many groups associate bias and prejudice with harassment, the two categories have different meanings. Harassment refers to unwanted acts performed with the purpose of intimidating, humiliating, or offending another person or their dignity. Currently, the overt forms of discrimination have been gradually replaced with indirect forms such as stereotypes (Nachmias et al., 2019). It is common for discrimination to occur in subtle and less evident means. Therefore, it is essential to define the sub-branches of discrimination to eliminate contextual controversies in the exploratory investigation.

Explicit/Conscious Bias

In recent years, scholars have developed various classifications for bias. According to Clarke (2018), explicit bias refers to the forms of discrimination that are evidently expressed, spoken aloud, or written towards a specific audience based on unique attributes. In this case, “explicit” is not associated with “obvious” but all the forms of prejudice that rely on coded language or symbols that can be deduced through inference. This type of discrimination can emerge due to in-group dislike, discomfort, disgust, fear, ignorance, or false perceptions (Clarke, 2018). Explicit bias carries significant harm because it conveys the message that certain people are less critical, so they do not deserve the same amount of respect. For that reason, considerable research shows that this type of discrimination is associated with adverse psychological consequences. Additionally, in the workplace, the implications can result in the loss of significant financial resources or cause reputational harm through lawsuits (Clarke, 2018).

Implicit/Unconscious Bias

Implicit bias often occurs through unconscious mental associations with specific attributes. Implicit bias is a type of discrimination that occurs because “actors do not always have conscious, intentional control over the processes of social perception, impression formation, and judgment that motivate their actions” (Whysall, 2018). Due to the need to make rapid decisions daily, human beings often rely on simple procedures that allow them to approximate optimal solutions to challenges. As a result, these ‘rules of

thumb' induce certain assumptions or may encourage one to oversimplify situations, thereby leading to implicitly biased decisions (Whysall, 2018). For instance, a person's past experiences can induce negative thoughts or feelings towards objects or topics. During recruitment and selection, implicit bias can interfere with the primary goal of the process. The acquisition of new talent is a complex process that is strongly dependent on various subtle factors. Thus, recruiters should possess in-depth knowledge about the causes of unconscious bias throughout the recruitment and selection **process**. Without a conscious effort to address the cognitive mechanisms behind implicit bias, it will be difficult for decision-makers to properly assess a recruit's competencies and characteristics.

Stereotypes

These forms of prejudice are usually associated with implicit bias. According to Whysall (2018), stereotypes "are categories that encapsulate what a person believes about, and expects from, other people." Correspondingly, stereotypes can influence a person's interpretation and memory, affecting their behaviors and actions when exposed to respective stimuli. Many researchers have sought to understand the mechanisms behind stereotypes because they can also occur in implicit and explicit ways. For instance, an implicit example can be perceived when looking at a group of mixed workers. A black woman's gender will be more evident when she is placed within a group of women; however, her racial identity becomes more apparent when she is situated within a group of white women (Whysall, 2018). This example explains that stereotypes can involve the intersection of various traits and attributes. In real-life scenarios, stereotypes can lead to assumptions and over-extensions towards members of a particular population (Berdahl & Min, 2012). Furthermore, the situation worsens when there is prior information that certain groups are not as effective as others in the workplace. For example, assuming that women should not be placed in particular job positions is quite misleading (Schnurr et al., 2017). Overall, the broad scope of stereotypes makes it more challenging for managers to address them in the workplace.

Another important consideration under this theme is stereotype threat. This phrase refers to the fear or anxiety that employees feel when coping with negative stereotypes towards one's group. Casad and Bryant (2016) conducted a study to investigate the impact of stereotype threat on personnel selection. Traditionally, research conducted on stereotypes focused on their adverse implications on performance among women and racial minorities. However, recent researchers have started investigating the positive and negative effects of organizational performance. Some scholars debate whether stereotypes have positive effects in high-risk domains, whether their impacts can be mitigated, and the underlying mechanisms. Despite the risks of stereotypes on employee recruitment and selection, Casad and Bryant (2016) outline several institutional, structural, and personal measures that can be utilized to curb its adverse effects.

HRM Recruitment and Selection

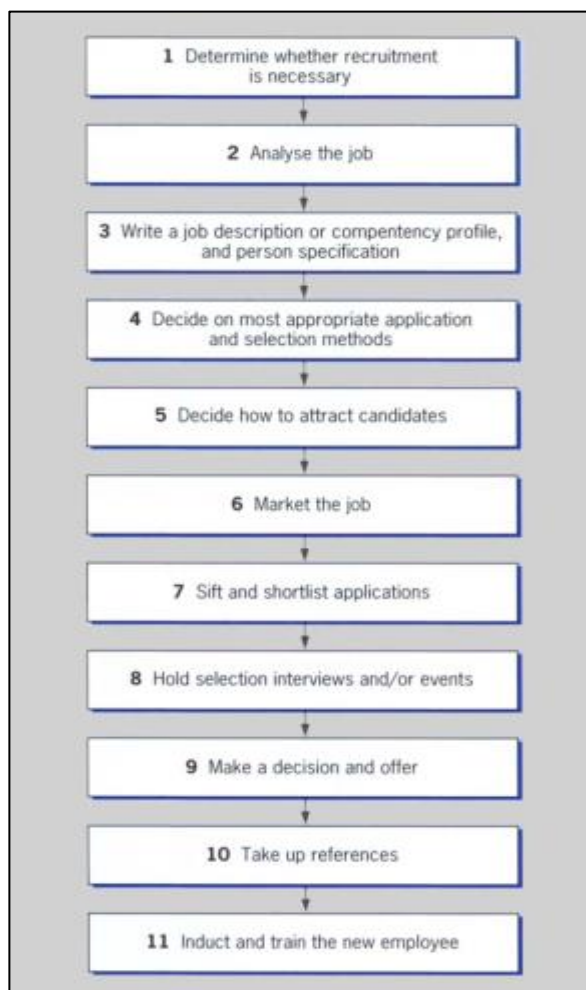
Recruitment can be defined as the process of locating potential workers and encouraging them to apply for existing or anticipated employment positions (Compton, 2009). Therefore, the major goal of recruitment is to create a pool of prospective workers who are appropriately qualified, experienced, and skilled for the position based on specific selection criteria. Traditionally, most organizations targeted employees who show likable traits; however, modern organizations have acknowledged the importance of relying on scientific recruitment methods. By doing so, organizations ensure they are adequately and effectively staffed as required by the stakeholders (Compton, 2009). Therefore, recruitment can be compared to 'selling' and projecting a favorable corporate image to the applicants. In the increasingly sophisticated business environment, employers must demonstrate that they have the capability to communicate a job's requirements and the organization's overall vision.

With regards to the selection phase, this process entails the identification of candidates who show the most potential. The results of the selection stage strongly depend on the findings of the recruitment process (Compton, 2009). This rationale explains why organizations evaluate various candidate materials: application forms, cover letters, resumes, references, certificates, tests, and other documentation. In this context, it is essential to mention that selection is classified as an objective process because it compares and contrasts several prospective candidates (Compton, 2009). In some cases, the selection process can be

instantaneous, but in most cases, the selection process can last several days, weeks, or months, depending on the number of applicants. Furthermore, the selection process also highlights the need to utilize reliable mechanisms to communicate with unsuccessful outcomes. Overall, recruitment and selection is a systematic process where candidates are eliminated as they progress from one stage to the next.

Most literature sources outline that recruitment and selection is a systematic process consisting of several organizational activities. As shown in Figure 1 below, the process begins by evaluating the necessity of recruitment in accordance with existing vacancies. Consequently, the job is analyzed, and the recruiter formulates a job description that describes the qualities and abilities of prospective candidates. The next step is to decide the most appropriate application and selection process and then how to attract candidates to the job market. Afterward, the organization markets the vacant job using fair approaches. When suitable applicants are identified, the recruiter sifts the applications to determine a shortlist of prospective hires. At this point, the recruitment moves to the psychometric tests, interview phase, or assessment centers. The next step is to select the most appropriate candidates using facts and evidence, not gut instinct. Implicit and explicit bias usually emerge during selection (Elearn Limited, 2008). After confirming the candidates' references, the organization inducts the employees and trains them to be effective in their respective roles. This process is recognized as the universal recruitment and selection process.

FIGURE 1
RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS



ELEARN LIMITED, 2008

Impact of the Polyvagal Theory and Sympathetic Nervous System on Decision-Making

The Polyvagal Theory is a neuroscientific concept that emerged in the late 1990s to describe the mechanisms through which human beings control emotions and decision-making processes. According to Stephen Porges, the theory explains the classification of the autonomic nervous system into different functional subsystems. Correspondingly, Porges (2021) developed a framework that explains how social and cognitive issues are analyzed in the brain in accordance with the ‘fight or flight’ response. In other words, the polyvagal theory can be used to explain why the autonomic nervous system responds with fear when a person perceives their safety is at risk. Moreover, the theory demonstrates that the vagus nerve plays a vital role in connecting the brain to the heart, thereby enabling emotional and intellectual decision-making processes (Porges, 2018). Overall, the polyvagal theory aims to explain human responses when people are placed in different environments, social settings, or situations that may threaten their safety.

In addition to explaining cognitive mechanisms of rationality and nonrationality, the polyvagal theory also elaborates on social engagement systems. Fundamentally, the brain is a complex structure containing a multitude of sensory pathways and neural links throughout the entire body. Therefore, these neural pathways strongly determine social reaction and engagement through growth, restoration, and health (Porges, 2018). In some people, the sensory cues for safety differ depending on their experiences, social situations, thinking mechanisms. For that reason, some people have a high tolerance for risks, whereas others prefer to remain in their comfort zones because they typically do not respond well to risks. Porges (2018) explains that human beings can improve their ‘flight or fight’ responses by using strategies such as therapy. Therapy is described as an ideal strategy for maintaining normal autonomic system responses during unsafe situations. For instance, when a person is exposed to a traumatic experience or severe stress in the long term. Therapy can prevent people from alternating between rationality and nonrationality, even when they are subjected to threatening situations.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the correlation between the polyvagal theory and adverse psychological constructs such as stress and trauma. For instance, Kolacz et al. (2019) conducted a study to determine an appropriate integrative framework for justifying traumatic stress and its cognitive and behavioral implications. The authors posit that issues such as trauma, stress, and anxiety pose significant pathological harm, especially when a person has a long-standing history of dealing with those issues (Kolacz et al., 2019). Although the authors focused their findings on financial behaviors, their insights are essential for understanding why trauma and stress induce avoidance of risk-taking behaviors in some people. With regards to HRM recruitment and selection, the polyvagal theory can be utilized to investigate why some recruiters prioritize rational or irrational mechanisms. In summary, the polyvagal theory is essential for explaining the origins of implicit and explicit bias when recruiting and hiring job applicants.

Main Considerations in Employee Recruitment Practices

Traditional recruitment and selection approaches did not emphasize the use of strategic methods to recruit workers. According to O’Meara and Petzall (2013), the traditional methods prioritized organizational profits and growth instead of attracting and retaining the most qualified personnel. For that reason, recruitment and selection decisions primarily focused on the continuity of job roles so that new workers can quickly replace those who leave the corporation. These methods allow organizations to improve the allocation of work and the acquisition of personnel. However, the cost perspective poses adverse effects to employee satisfaction and retention. Many employees were compelled to work lower wages because their positions could be replaced without wasting additional time or financial resources (O’Meara & Petzall, 2013). Thus, the traditional approaches aimed to reduce worker autonomy and improve organizational productivity. The traditional recruitment and selection perspective encourages corporations to perceive staff as expenses rather than vital assets.

The advancement of modern HRM strategies has greatly contributed to the transformation of recruitment and selection practices. The modern approaches address the employees’ needs, thereby encouraging them to improve performance and productivity. In modern society, the high competition for talented employees has compelled corporations to adopt innovative approaches to attract competent job

applicants. For instance, rapid technological advancement has compelled many corporations to embrace online recruitment practices (Edenborough, 2005). These communication channels are more effective than hard media platforms such as newspapers, journals, and printed advertisements. Employers can reach larger target populations and provide more information about vacant jobs in modern times. Therefore, modern organizations demonstrate that employee recruitment is an integral activity that requires significant preparation, and it should be undertaken by both the employer and applicant (O'Meara & Petzall, 2013). Overall, modern recruitment and selection processes prioritize the applicants' needs because they are crucial for corporate growth. Other than interviews, this exploratory study highlights two other popular recruitment strategies: psychometric assessments and assessment centers.

Psychometric Assessments

Psychometric assessments are tests conducted by recruiters to benchmark a candidate's aptitude and mental capabilities. Although psychometric tests have a long history of applications, it has been recently introduced in human resource management practices (Edenborough, 2005). Contrary to traditional testing that focuses on one's education, skill, or knowledge, psychometric tests can explain a person's reasoning, judgment, and situational awareness. In essence, many candidates have remarkable educational backgrounds, experience, and achievements, so recruiters need a rational mechanism to eliminate unfit candidates. In such cases, a psychometric test can provide a comprehensive description of a candidate's memory, aptitude, and problem-solving skills (Edenborough, 2005). In recent years, psychometric tests have been utilized as a preliminary recruitment and selection process. Afterward, candidates who meet the specified benchmarks can progress to the next stage of recruitment. Psychometric tests can also reduce implicit forms of bias, thereby creating a uniform field for competition among the selected candidates.

Interviews

Interviews are recognized as the most popular means of recruiting and selecting workers. Traditionally, interviews entail face-to-face meetings between employers, agents, recruiters, and applicants. In some cases, the employer may appoint a panel of interviewers when filling high-level vacancies. Nonetheless, interviews can also be conducted using indirect channels such as telephone and video conferences (O'Meara & Petzall, 2013). Still, face-to-face interviews are usually preferable in order for the recruiter to analyze the applicant's verbal communication and attitude. From the recruit's perspective, interviews are opportunities to gain significant insights into a specific job. In this case, interviews are classified into structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews target the applicant's skills, abilities, communication, flexibility, and adaptability (O'Meara & Petzall, 2013). For instance, situational interviews analyze the applicant's behavior, whereas experience-based interviews evaluate work knowledge and experience. With regards to unstructured interviews, these instruments allow the interviewer to gain in-depth information about a specific applicant's behavior. Therefore, interviews are tied to different types of recruitment and selection bias, depending on the structure of the formulated interview.

Assessment Centers

Assessment centers have gradually grown in popularity in recent decades. An assessment center can be described as an artificial environment where applicants participate in various activities designed to test their traits and cognitive abilities (O'Meara & Petzall, 2013). Assessment centers allow recruiters to perform difficult tasks in the applicant's natural setting without maintaining a façade for the observers. Furthermore, assessment centers can be developed in innovative ways to evaluate prospective hires matching the employer's long-term vision. Although the duration of assessment centers usually varies, most of them have a similar structure. The most common examples are in-basket exercises, role plays, group discussions, case studies, and creative games (O'Meara & Petzall, 2013). Assessment centers can also be used to improve employee-recruiter relations, while also highlighting the most capable recruits. In summary, the three recruitment approaches mentioned above can be used together or interchangeably within an organization.

Bias and Discrimination in Recruitment and Selection

Bias is a widespread issue that reduces the effectiveness of modern human resource management strategies. According to Kanengoni (2013), bias describes the systemic differences in responses, test scores, and assessments. Concerning discrimination, this term describes the prejudicial treatment people experience on the grounds of race, gender, religion, color, or national origin. While the impacts of bias are usually hidden, discrimination in the workplace can lead to severe legal conflicts with the stakeholders. However, bias and discrimination are detrimental in the organizational setting because they create distorted perceptions towards members of specific groups (Breugh, 2013). For instance, psychometric tests cause significant deviations between group-level and individual-level outcomes. Furthermore, eliminating bias can be difficult, especially when the recruiter has already formed a specific image about recruits. Studies show that an individual's attitude leads the person to process information in a biased manner (Breugh, 2013). Therefore, bias and discrimination are common mental and emotional issues that limit the effectiveness of reliable HRM activities.

In order to explain the severity of conscious and unconscious bias, it is imperative to outline the definitions of implicit and explicit bias. Implicit bias is rooted in the idea that human behavior and judgments occur through automatic processes, whereby people have no awareness of the mental associations of the bias (Macan & Merritt, 2011). In comparison, explicit bias occurs consciously to the extent that a person has awareness and can rationalize its various forms. The theoretical and empirical ties between implicit and explicit bias are major causes of debate. Some scholars argue that forms of discrimination, such as stereotyping, should be classified into either side (Macan & Merritt, 2011). Despite the controversies, scholars collectively argue that implicit and explicit attitudes negatively affect employee recruitment and selection outcomes.

Recruitment and selection processes rely on rational decision-making mechanisms to determine optimal talent acquisition. However, many recruiters continue to use intuition and personal discretion to identify prospective applicants. According to Miles and Sadler-Smith (2014), many managers are too confident in their ability to 'read people,' so they often select choices based on the overall impression instead of objective tools and techniques. The authors contend that decision-making factors are based on a comparison of two cognitive systems: System 1 and System 2. In this case, System 1 reflects the subjective, affective, intuitive, and reflexive through mechanisms. Contrarily, System 2 describes the objective, rational, analytical, and reflective dimensions (Miles & Sadler-Smith, 2014). Both systems are vital for effective problem-solving in any occupational setting. System 1 considerations manifest quicker than System 2 functions because they are based on habitual factors. Still, a large majority of managers prefer their gut instincts when recruiting personnel. Countries such as the United States record that 40% of senior managers use intuition to make personnel or people-related decisions, including hiring and interviewing (Miles & Sadler-Smith, 2014). Although intuition can offer beneficial outcomes, they have a higher likelihood of reducing the effectiveness of recruitment and selection activities.

The talent acquisition process is particularly vulnerable to bias. The hiring decisions usually require recruiters to assess job applicants who are strangers to each other. Accordingly, resumes and job applications are brief methods for deciding entry-level positions (Bendick & Nunes, 2013). Reliable studies demonstrate that bias in the selection and recruitment phase of human resource management results in adverse hiring outcomes. In this case, it is essential to acknowledge the inherent complexity of human behavior. With the introduction of new labor policies for workers, it is unrealistic to assume that recruiters can accurately predict potential recruits' behaviors. For instance, the world has achieved significant results in emphasizing gender equality for all members of society. Despite this progress, some gaps remain due to society's reluctance to accept women's autonomy, especially in male-related jobs (Hardy et al., 2020). Overall, small biases in hiring evaluations can translate and escalate the adverse consequences. In addition, unaddressed bias tends to undermine well-intentioned societal initiatives. Hence, studies underscore the negative correlation between recruitment bias and poor organizational growth.

As mentioned earlier, interviews rely on structured and unstructured questions to control implicit and explicit forms of bias in recruitment and selection. While structured interviews are generally known to reduce bias, these tools are not necessarily immune to bias (Macan & Merritt, 2011). Several qualitative

and quantitative findings illustrate that augmenting the structure of interviews plays a crucial role in increasing the validity and reliability of interview assessments. However, it is common for managers, human resource professionals, recruiters, and organizations to ignore structured interviews during recruitment and selection. The studies conducted on the correlation between implicit bias and employee recruitment are relatively controversial. Some scholars argue that implicit and explicit bias does not have a large effect in the field; in contrast, other researchers claim that its greatest impacts emerge in stranger-to-stranger interactions (Macan & Merritt, 2011). Considering that job interviews are stranger-to-stranger interactions, recruiters and applicants often experience implicit attitudes and stereotypes in the pre-interview, interview, and post-interview phases (Macan & Merritt, 2011). Corporations should undertake measures that mitigate the different forms of bias and discrimination in employee recruitment and selection.

Job Applicant Groups Typically Targeted by Implicit and Explicit Bias

Racial discrimination continues to be an essential factor determining employee hiring in the labor market. Recent studies mention that black people are more likely to be unemployed than white people and other racial groups. Furthermore, any cases have emerged where hiring is performed based on the “whiteness” or “blackness” of the applicant’s name (Berry & Bell, 2012; Derous et al., 2017). As a result, resumes with white-sounding names were more likely to be employed and had more weight than black people with equivalent work experience. Job policymakers have instituted equal employment policies to promote better work environments, but racial discrimination negatively impacts the job market despite such efforts.

While employment vacancies are open for both men and women, workplace gender discrimination creates a critical gap in the job market. Although gender discrimination affects both genders, women tend to experience the most discrimination compared to male workers in the job market (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Koch et al., 2015). In certain work environments, women are rejected due to their gender or are given low-paying positions. Furthermore, women are paid less as compared to equally qualified male employees. This kind of practice is discriminatory and illegal as it affects the terms and conditions of standard employment legislation. Taking legal action may help bridge the gap between gender discrimination. In brief, employers and policymakers should strive to ensure equal pay and equal remuneration for all employees regardless of gender.

Regarding socioeconomic status, low socioeconomic status results in higher job insecurity. In most instances, socioeconomic status is associated with the applicant’s educational level. For example, people in the upper class have PhDs and master’s degrees and are more likely to be hired for high-paying jobs. On the other hand, people who consider themselves to occupy the low class and possess lower education levels tend to face difficulty when applying for jobs (Smith et al., 2021; Bonoli & Hinrichs, 2012). Additionally, people in the low class are unskilled workers and often get low-paying jobs that involve high physical risks. In brief, socioeconomic factors should be disregarded to focus on the job applicant’s abilities and work experience.

Age discrimination in the job market promotes hostile work environments. Older people are discriminated against occupying certain job positions due to age. In certain situations, older adults may be laid off and denied promotions due to their age or excluded from employee training. Recent research states that a wide majority of the employment population above 45 years face age discrimination in their careers (Malinen & Johnston, 2013). In contrast, some employers have baseless reasons for failing to hire the elderly. Owing to the revision of current labor policies, the modern elderly population is protected from ageism, reducing biased decisions against them during job hiring, however ageism continues in the hiring process.

Disability discrimination is a global crisis in the labor market that restricts the disabled from acquiring employment, making it difficult to get a job. Disability discrimination involves an applicant or employee being treated unfavorably due to having a history of a disability (either physical or mental impairment). In addition, research findings claim that a majority of disabled persons are criticized against occupying certain positions, and some people are laid off due to injuries leading to their disability (Lindsay, 2011). The law insists that employers provide reasonable accommodations and equal work conditions to job applicants with

disabilities. In conclusion, policymakers and the legislation should establish policies that protect disabled persons from discrimination.

Discrimination based on one's criminal record has led to unfair employee hiring. In most countries, possession of a criminal record is a barrier for incarcerated people to get jobs. Furthermore, a study shows that most released prisoners remain jobless after a year of being released from jail. This underemployment is caused by employers disregarding job applications from people with a criminal history (Denver & Picket, 2021). In an attempt to reduce such discrimination practices, new legislature has been established, which will make it easier for the formerly incarcerated to be employed. Therefore, having a criminal-record leads to high job insecurity for past incarcerated people.

In the workplace, employees hire people based on physical appearances, resulting in unfair employment conditions. This practice manifests itself in various aspects of employment when an employer hires applicants based on physical appearance (Agerström & Rooth, 2011). For example, the act of hiring employees based on weight, height, and beauty may be classified as discrimination. Moreover, appearance-based discrimination is prohibited by the law because it prevents employers from victimizing people with unique physical features. New research may indicate that some employers claim physical attraction is an essential component of the company's success. This type of bias gives an unfair advantage to others and contributes to unequal hiring.

People of the LGBTQ community continue to face discrimination in the workplace, thereby leading to disparities in the job market. A significant percentage of gay and transgender individuals face more discrimination in the job than typical heterosexual professionals (McFadden, 2015). For example, a gay or transgender person may receive a negative evaluation for a job or may not be promoted due to their sexual orientation. Additionally, many gay people suffer from socio-economical inequalities, contributing to unequal treatment in the workplace. In conclusion, all forms of discrimination should be prohibited in the workplace to promote equal working conditions and fair employment, yet personal biases influence these

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This investigation is designed following the exploratory research method. This methodological approach primarily focuses on generating and building theory since it is conducted on research phenomena that have not been previously investigated (Jupp, 2006). The exploratory research method differs from typical methods because the researcher does not need to rely on any set or scientific formula. In contrast, most research paradigms follow strict qualitative and quantitative methods. Exploratory research usually begins with the researcher identifying the subject of research. Afterward, the researcher creates a hypothesis based on his or her evaluation of the problem. The principal investigator then conducts further research to determine the study's accuracy (Jupp, 2006). The most important advantage of exploratory research is the ability to provide comprehensive qualitative data through secondary research. Although the exploratory research method has several weaknesses, it will contribute heavily to the body knowledge regarding HRM recruitment and selection.

Literature research is one of the most convenient and inexpensive methods for determining a research hypothesis. The researcher can gain crucial insights by analyzing recent materials about the cognitive aspects of recruitment and selection. The main data sources were derived from reliable research articles, governments document, and websites published within the last 15 years. The best sources were analyzed and tabulated in accordance with specific HRM themes. After data collection, the main themes will be underscored to understand the rational and nonrational drivers of recruitment and selection decisions. These themes and subthemes will be analyzed according to themes/ subthemes in the future.

The data collection and data analysis process are based on an analysis of recent literature that discusses the effect of bias and recruitment in the selection and recruitment of new workers. The target articles are books and reliable journal articles published within the recent decade. These articles describe the latest trends in employee recruitment and selection and the primary forms of bias that emerge at different stages of recruitment and selection. Consequently, the data analysis process involves a cross-review of the identified themes. The identified articles offer considerable insight into the key forms of selection and

recruitment bias. Furthermore, the sources also propose suitable recommendations for mitigating the negative impacts of discrimination in modern organizations.

FINDINGS

**TABLE 1
THE CROSS**

Authors	Title	Theme	Discussion
Bendick Jr & Nunes, (2013)	Developing the research basis for controlling bias in hiring.	Implicit bias and explicit bias: in-group bias and hiring bias.	The researchers explain different types of bias and how recruiters should minimize hiring bias during employee recruitment and selection.
Casad & Bryant (2016)	Addressing stereotype threat is critical to diversity and inclusion in organizational psychology.	Stereotypes	The authors describe the impact of stereotype threat on personnel selection. Furthermore, the authors proposed several recommendations for addressing its adverse effects.
Hennekam (2021).	Recruitment discrimination: how organizations use social power to circumvent laws and regulations.	Implicit discrimination, unconscious bias, taste discrimination, and statistical discrimination	The article explains the correlation between social power and discrimination in employee recruitment and selection. The authors focused on outsourcing recruitment and in-house recruitment.
Kanengoni (2013)	Bias in personnel selection and occupational assessments	Bias: gender bias, cultural bias, test bias, and criterion bias	The article explains the impact of bias on psychometric and occupational assessments conducted during recruitment and selection.
Macan & Merritt (2011)	Actions speak too: Uncovering possible implicit and explicit discrimination in the employment interview process.	Implicit discrimination and explicit discrimination	The article explains that employment interviews are social exchanges filled with implicit and explicit bias. The study emphasizes the need to investigate the compounding effect of implicit bias on explicit discrimination during employee interviews.
Miles and Sadler-Smith (2014)	“With recruitment I always feel I need to listen to my gut”	Implicit bias: intuition bias and hindsight bias.	The article explains the effect of intuition on recruitment and selection bias. The study shows that intuition poses both positive and negative impacts on HRM outcomes.
Podsiadlowski and Ward (2010)	Global Mobility and Bias in the Workplace	Implicit and explicit bias: employment bias, and performance bias,	The article explains how bias emerges in the recruitment and selection phases: pre-interview bias, recruitment bias, and selection bias. Furthermore, the article describes the leading causes of bias during recruitment and selection. However, the authors focus on prejudice towards immigrants.

Weeks et al. (2017).	Generational perceptions at work: In-group favoritism and out-group stereotypes.	Implicit bias and stereotypes	The authors studied the perceptions of different generations (millennials, baby boomers, and Generation X) towards stereotypes. The study showed that implicit discrimination has declined significantly in recent years.
Whysall (2018)	Cognitive Biases in Recruitment, Selection, and Promotion	Implicit bias: confirmation bias, selective attention, and in-group bias	Workplace discrimination has shifted from explicit forms of discrimination and moved 'underground' towards implicit forms. Recommendations for addressing implicit bias during recruitment and selection
Zschirnt & Ruedin (2016)	Ethnic discrimination in hiring decisions: a meta-analysis of correspondence tests 1990–2015.	Ethnic bias: statistical discrimination and taste discrimination	The authors conducted a meta-analysis to investigate the trend in ethnic discrimination between 1990 and 2015. Racial discrimination remains a pervasive issue in modern human resource approaches.

Correlation Between the Polyvagal Theory and Sympathetic Nervous System of Recruitment and Selection

In this case, the cross-review discovered that few research articles tie the polyvagal theory and sympathetic nervous system to employee recruitment and selection. Nonetheless, the findings demonstrate that a person's psychological responses are dependent on the influence of physiological states such as fear and anxiety. According to Flores and Porges (2017), the theory can be used to improve how people leverage knowledge in individual and group settings to improve mental and emotional outcomes. Although this approach is not intrinsically tied to stress and trauma, reliable studies reveal that the polyvagal theory can be used to enhance group behaviors as long as the leader is familiar with the social and environmental factors that affect conscious and unconscious bias. Moreover, the leader needs to create an environment that promotes safety for exercising the group's social engagement (Flores & Porges, 2017). The polyvagal theory can also be used to address post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), because it emphasizes that the human body can evaluate risk and make judgments outside the realm of consciousness (Porges & Buczynski, 2011). Overall, the findings reveal the complexity of conscious and unconscious factors in decision-making.

Types of Recruitment and Selection Bias

The research articles emphasize that the main challenges in recruitment and selection processes revolve around different types of implicit bias. In most cases, explicit bias can be addressed by identifying the rational and nonrational drivers of prejudice. However, recruiters often face significant challenges dealing with implicit bias because they occur unintentionally and unconsciously. The main forms of bias identified are:

Selective Attention

This type of bias emerges when the interviewer focuses on specific elements of the recruiters' skills or characteristics, even though the attribute is not a strong determinant of employment. For example, stereotypes can encourage recruiters to develop assumptions based on the first impression. Accordingly, once the image has been formed, the recruiter will disregard information that counters the selective information (Whysall, 2018). Selective attention encourages recruiters to anchor their choices on specific judgments.

In-Group Bias

This type of bias explains the forms of discrimination that occur when a recruiter feels a stronger affinity towards individuals with similar characteristics or traits. In-group bias is usually identified when one shows favoritism towards groups where one belongs (Whysall, 2018). For example, recruiters can seek candidates who share similar principles, beliefs, habits, demographics, leisure pursuits, self-presentation styles, or experiences. Research shows that this bias can cause detrimental impacts on organizational outcomes because it increases group-thinking and worsens functional conflicts (Whysall, 2018).

Appraisal Bias

This type of bias occurs when the performance of a minority group is evaluated more negatively than is their real-life performance warrants. Appraisal bias is usually more apparent in employees who share the same race, ethnicity, or immigrant status (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). These applicants are generally evaluated based on subjective criteria, whereas other recruits are assessed using objective criteria. Rater bias usually occurs in this manner, whereby a recruiter assigns prejudicial scores for disadvantaged minorities.

Attributional Bias

Attributional bias is similar to appraisal bias, but it occurs in a more hidden manner. This type of bias occurs when supervisors or recruiters make causal explanations for an applicant's performance or professional competencies (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). For instance, if there is evidence that the performance of an ethnic minority employee is associated with their upbringing. Appraisal bias can widen the diversities of job applicants in accordance with their unique social or cultural attributes.

First-Impression Bias

This bias stems from the recruiter's first interaction with potential hires. First impression bias usually occurs when the recruiter makes assumptions about the applicants based on their first interaction. In stressful interview situations, interviewees can deliver poor presentations due to unstable mental or emotional states. However, this first impression should not be used to judge the recruit's overall qualification for the position.

Confirmation Bias

This type of bias typically occurs when the recruiter only accepts information aligned with his or her beliefs and perceptions. Accordingly, all other information is neglected because it does not conform to one's opinions. For example, the perception that a well-dressed employee with a good resume is the most suitable candidate. This belief may encourage the recruiter to ignore the recruit's flaws.

Affinity Bias

This type of bias ensues when the recruiter identifies candidates with likable or similar traits. As a result, the recruiter may show a warmer disposition towards them during the recruitment and selection process. In reality, there is no justifiable basis for giving the recruit preferential treatment. The affinity bias is typically based on the recruiter's subjective attitudes, hurting other candidates' chances of proceeding to the next selection stage.

Projection Bias

This type of bias is based on the belief that others share similar goals as the recruiter. In other words, the recruiter desires employees who seem to match the organization's vision. However, most people have their own priorities for pursuing a job. In addition, many employees pursue jobs due to monetary or self-interest goals, so projection bias can cause significant harm to the overall recruitment and selection process.

Halo Effect

This type of bias emerges due to the belief that a recruiter's skills are complementary. In this bias, the recruiter assumes that the recruit's competency in one area indicates their qualification in other traits. For instance, during interviews, recruits who deliver good answers for some questions may develop the viewpoint that they are qualified to answer the remaining questions. Thus, the halo effect implies that recruits are suitable for their positions even though they have several flaws.

Horn Effect

This bias acts in opposition to the halo effect. In this case, the employee's bad quality is used to reflect the recruit's overall performance and candidature. For example, a poorly designed resume could encourage recruiters to conclude the candidate is a bad match. In real-life, a candidate's presentation skills usually do not elucidate whether they are qualified for the position.

Expectation Anchor

This type of bias often emerges when the recruiter narrows the recruitment and selection process towards specific elements. These components act as the anchor that determines the recruiter's overall judgment. Although it is easy to associate a job with specific anchors, this viewpoint encourages organizations to make prejudicial decisions. Expectation anchor is quite unfair because it contends that a specific feature comprehensively represents all the employee's merits and flaws.

Conformity Bias

This type of bias is typically associated with peer pressure. In this bias, the recruiter makes conclusions because the choices of their peers subconsciously influence their decision-making mechanisms. For example, assessment centers and group interviews often create scenarios where the decisions of an individual are influenced by the choices of the other participants.

Contrast Effect

This bias is caused by the recruiter judging performance compared to the previous recruits. In the previous recruitment and selection processes, the recruiter may identify merits or flaws that are used to guide the consequent steps. However, it is wrong to assume that two recruits who do not know each other will share similar traits or flaws. A good example of this bias can be perceived when recruiters provide poor candidate scores simply because the previous recruits scored dimly.

Overconfidence Bias

In this bias, the recruiter is overconfident about his or her ability to select good candidates for a position. This bias is strongly linked to the nonrational concept of intuition. As a result, the recruiter may deviate from the standard recruitment and selection process because of his or her overconfidence. Overconfidence bias creates an illusion of superiority in the talent acquisition process.

Taste-Based Discrimination

Bias and discrimination in HRM undertakings are classified according to several categories. In the hiring process, Zschirnt and Ruedin (2016) claim that the main forms of prejudice are taste-based and statistical discrimination. Taste-based discrimination occurs when an employer develops preferences based on characteristics such as one's race, ethnic status, or sexual orientation. In some cases, the employer may discriminate against a specific group due to personal preferences or false perceptions about the applicants. This form of bias can be discerned in situations where an employer is willing to pay a recruit more benefits than others because of perceived desirable traits

Statistical Discrimination

Contrary to taste-based discrimination, statistical discrimination occurs when a member of a certain group makes prejudicial information due to a lack of knowledge about that group. For instance, employers

who prioritize corporate profits will be highly likely to reject women if they are perceived to be less reliable or productive in the long term. Statistical discrimination occurs because employers will never obtain all information about a candidates' personal attributes or professional competencies (Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016). Hence, taste-based and statistical are distinguished based on the recruiter's knowledge and perceptions.

DISCUSSION

Root Causes of Conscious and Unconscious Bias in HRM Recruitment and Selection

The findings reveal that bias can occur in both conscious and unconscious ways. However, it is essential to recognize that the most common forms of prejudice are implicit bias. In recent years, many organizations have recognized the importance of adopting fair recruitment and selection methods that ensure equality for all workers. The most prevalent causes of bias are: flawed recruitment and selection procedures, social-psychological factors, and situational factors.

Flawed Recruitment and Selection Methods

Bias is a serious impediment to achieving fair employment outcomes for applicants. For that reason, Podsiadlowski and Ward (2010) claim that bias is reflected through the use of poor performance and selection methods. Different recruitment methods have varying goals in terms of the number of applicants, quality of applicants, inclusiveness, and effectiveness. Accordingly, contemporary research shows that recruiters tend to use methods aligned with the recruitment goals. However, it is acknowledged that the recruitment process is relatively complex, so the acquisition of new talents can be quite challenging. The findings show that the inequalities in recruitment and selection are underpinned by significant structural, individual, organizational, and societal factors. As a result, flawed recruitment and selection methods can result in severe inequalities in new hires.

Social-Psychological Factors

Bias in the workplace can be traced to several social and psychological constructs. According to Podsiadlowski and Ward (2010), the social and psychological factors can be classified under the following dimensions: categorization and comparison, similarity and dissimilarity, social identity, inter-group conflict, and personal influences. With regards to categorization and comparison, bias usually occurs because of how people perceive and categorize others. In this case, categorization describes the tendency of people to assign members based on specific demographic characteristics or group traits. On an individual level, people prefer to interact with each other if positive expectations can be determined. These expectations are dependent on perceived similarities in values, behaviors, or attitudes. For example, ethnicity and nationality are considerations that encourage people to embrace applicants who share the same race or ethnic status (Berry & Bell, 2012). At the organizational level, corporations identify candidates who meet the job and environmental fit. As a result, the lack of such a fit results in discrimination and prejudice. At the societal level, individuals assign correlations with social, cultural, and linguistic values that determine one's values and perceived qualification (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). Therefore, the positive and negative expectations people develop towards each other play a decisive role in inducing recruitment and selection bias.

Another important theme in the social and psychological drivers of bias is social identity. In essence, social behavior is usually considered as a function of a person's group membership and the pursuit of one's psychological needs based on his or her social identity (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). Therefore, the theory of social identity can be used to explain why people manifest unhealthy associations due to their belongingness and unique distinctions. For example, superficial traits such as ethnicity can occur in visible and less visible ways because social identity is inherently an in-depth trait (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). In other words, people make automatic cognitive comparisons when they are exposed to individuals who share favorable in-group social identities. On a similar note, stereotypes emerge due to widespread consensual perceptions about people from specific social categories. Stereotypes demonstrate that people

have a high tendency to interpret social behaviors based on in-group and out-group classifications, thereby leading to bias in the workplace. Overall, social identity is a significant driver of discrimination in human resource undertakings.

Additionally, bias in the workplace can also emerge due to inter-group conflict or excessive competition. Fundamentally, the modern corporate environment is characterized by the existence of limited employment opportunities and access to economic resources. This gap often results in high competition between workers to acquire scant professional opportunities or organizational resources (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). This rationale creates the mindset that “more resources for other groups means less opportunities for my group”. In reality, this ideology is flawed because it reduces unity among workers and induces negative emotions that can worsen the inter-group conflict. In such cases, biased judgments and self-serving behavior can develop between specific groups which label each other ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ (Weeks et al., 2017). In some cases, individuals in the in-group can intentionally restrict access to the labor market or impose barriers on economic benefits with the end goal of eliminating competition. The mindset is quite common in highly bureaucratic organizations that use rewards and punishments to improve employee performance (Weeks et al., 2017). Thus, the findings show that inter-group conflict is a major cause of concern among recruits.

Situational Factors

The situational factors encompass the environmental and organizational factors that induce bias in recruiting and selecting new workers. For instance, intercultural contact is a consideration that describes the depth of interactions between workers with diverse cultural origins (Hofhius et al., 2016). Scholars have debated the need for intercultural exchange, with some groups arguing that intercultural contact is essential for eliminating inequalities. These researchers highlight that intercultural contact is vital for creating optimal work conditions and enhancing cooperative encounters between personnel. In contrast, skeptics contend that prolonged intercultural contact can worsen negative perceptions (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). Studies show that workers from minority groups are more likely to interact with other minority members than workers from majority groups. In brief, recruits who experience this situation may be discriminated against due to the toxic organizational culture.

On a similar note, the workforce demographics and group composition can also induce bias. Over the years, organizations have formulated strict approaches for recruiting workers who underscore the characteristics of optimal and diverse work structures (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). Questions about the group size and minority/majority factors are often considered to ensure a proper balance between majority and minority members. With the shifts in modern workforce requirements, ‘fault lines’ have emerged that increase the inequalities between social groups (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). The process of creating a balance between these groups can be exceedingly challenging. For example, recruiting a larger number of diverse workers can cause intergroup competition, fault lines, and perceived threats. Furthermore, it can also worsen coordination and logistics challenges within the organization (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). Despite this challenge, diversity and inclusion are the most effective approaches for reducing intergroup conflict in the talent acquisition process.

Personal Factors

Research findings show that bias in the recruitment and selection phases can be attributed to personal factors. For example, authoritarianism and low self-esteem can be used to predict particular forms of discrimination, such as racism and xenophobia (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). People have different personal values, so they often show varying attitudes and prejudicial perceptions in the workplace. Some individuals value their personal beliefs to the extent of driving group hierarchies and attitudes towards specific collectives. Hence, the personal drivers of selection and recruitment bias are personality and values. In other cases, people have mental or emotional issues that make them aversive towards specific social groups. Although such situations are uncommon, they can cause significant harm to the integrity of employee selection and recruitment practices.

The Emergence of Bias at Different Stages of HRM Recruitment and Selection

Bias During the Pre-Screening of Applicants

Bias in the pre-screening stage occurs when job-irrelevant factors primarily influence a recruiter's employment decision. For example, studies show that immigration status is a significant cause of prejudice in the pre-screening phase that eliminates a large number of applicants. According to Podsiadlowski and Ward (2010), immigrants have a lower likelihood of being contacted for further interview stages when compared to native settlers. Additionally, simulated short-listings can encourage recruiters to place strict requirements on applicants in order for them to fit the organization's vision. Therefore, the person-organization fit is a major variable in employee recruitment and selection. Furthermore, many cases have occurred when recruiters consider different aspects of the person-organization (P-O) fit, thereby causing discrepancies in employee recruitment outcomes (Swider & Zimmerman, 2015). Additionally, many recruiters utilize resumes and application covers to identify irregularities based on the applicant's ethnic status. Therefore, organizations should adopt standardized mechanisms for cross-evaluating applicants during the pre-screening stage.

Bias During the Recruitment of Applicants

Recruiters can utilize a wide range of approaches to recruit applicants. However, some methods are more likely to result in discrimination than others. For example, approaches such as job fairs and newspaper advertisements affect the number and type of applicants, whereas modern methods such as employee referrals direct applications influence the demographics and quality of applicants (Schnake, 2016). In this context, research findings show that employee referrals are more likely to cause deviations in differences in new hires due to in-house recruiting. Moreover, approaches such as the use of personal contacts and word-of-mouth can favor specific populations of the job market, especially when these individuals have regular interactions (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). This problem becomes more severe in situations where employers are allowed to recruit applicants based on their personal discretion. In such cases, employers often use unstandardized methods to seek applicants who match the employers' preferences or the organization's vision. This approach is a major cause of bias in the choice of recruitment methods. Organizations should utilize recruitment methods that emphasize equality for all applicants.

Bias During the Selection of Applicants

Although interviews and resumes are perceived to be more effective in certain locations, these approaches may deviate across organizations and regions. For example, some organizations may view that personality, and honesty tests can best be determined through assessment centers. In contrast, other corporations oppose these methods. Accordingly, the existence of different cultural norms is a significant variable in the selection method. Approaches such as psychometric assessments can cause discrepancies in the variety of applicants discovered, especially when the questions are not standardized (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). The differential outcomes of specific techniques may worsen selection bias in the recruitment and selection process. Additionally, the interpretation of the social and cultural differences may lead to either positive or negative tendencies. On one hand, some recruiters may view the differences as a threat, so they are highly likely to reject diverse applicants; on the other hand, they may perceive the dissimilarities as strengths that match the organization's orientation (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). Overall, studies show that bias and discrimination can occur at every stage of the recruitment and selection process.

Recommendations for Addressing Implicit and Explicit Bias During Recruitment and Selection

Research shows that bias and discrimination pose severe adverse effects on the employees wellbeing and organizational productivity. Foremost, bias in the recruitment and selection processes can prevent an organization from recruiting qualified personnel that matches the job's qualifications. Furthermore, perceived discrimination is detrimental to employees since it can reduce well-being, overall health, and self-esteem while increasing stress, depression, and anxiety (Hennekam et al., 2021). In addition, bias can negatively affect a recruit's attitude towards work and lower organizational commitment. This problem often results in low employee satisfaction and high turnover rates. Although many organizations recognize

the legal and ethical implications aligned with biased recruitment techniques, this problem continues to impede corporations from achieving optimal performance and human resource outcomes.

Research demonstrates that recruiters should focus more on the decision-making process to identify the obvious and hidden forms of discrimination. For instance, during the review of applicants and CVs, recruiters can use structured criteria. On this note, ‘blind screening’ has emerged as a novel approach for analyzing applications without placing too much emphasis on factors irrelevant to job performance (Derous & Ryan, 2019). This strategy can be used to eliminate stereotypes aligned with gender, age, or photograph (Whysall, 2018). Alternatively, other than assessing resumes individually, a suitable recommendation is to compare them in batches. Studies show that assessors are more likely to focus on vital job performance characteristics when they are evaluated separately (Whysall, 2018). These findings explain why group stereotypes often occur when applicants are reviewed individually.

During the interview phase, several approaches can be utilized. Whysall (2018) supports the use of diverse interview panels that rely on structured decision-making processes. This approach allows the interviewers to gather comprehensive and standardized information about all the applicants. However, researchers have debated about the effect of removing interview ‘warm-ups.’ Any studies illustrate that the ‘warm-up’ conversation often involves the exchange of irrelevant social information, which can potentially trigger implicit or explicit forms of bias. Another proposal lies in introducing new recruiters at different stages of the talent acquisition process (Whysall, 2018). These recruiters can be used to carry out a balanced evaluation of the recruits’ assessment information. Other researchers argue that affirmative action is the most efficient approach for creating awareness about bias and discrimination (Foley & Williamson, 2018). A broad range of metrics can be incorporated to identify the candidates who are often subjected to discrimination and to improve the fairness of recruitment and selection processes.

Future Applications of the Study’s Findings

Modern employers and recruiters can incorporate the findings of this study to optimize the acquisition of new talent. Discrimination and bias in the selection and recruitment of new workers can impede an organization from deriving the total value of its workforce. This problem often leads to the loss of human resources through high turnover rates, reduced productivity, and potential legal lawsuits (Hennekam et al., 2019). Currently, many nations have established comprehensive policies for recruiting workers, but a vast majority of employers circumvent these legislations and worsen bias and discrimination in the workplace. Given the adverse outcomes mentioned above, organizations must develop capabilities for addressing the root causes of discrimination at the individual, group, and organizational levels. After resolving the discrimination issue, organizations will benefit from the attraction of a wider talent pool, improved market position, and enhanced working environment that promotes problem-solving, cooperation, and creativity (Hennekam et al., 2019). Therefore, modern corporations should investigate the mentioned strategies to determine which combination of alternatives will generate the greatest financial and human resource benefits.

CONCLUSION

The exploratory investigation reveals that human resource management practices are highly susceptible to implicit and explicit forms of bias. Explicit biases are direct discrimination that occurs in verbal or written means. Subsequently, the most evident forms of implicit bias are stereotypes and several categories of unconscious prejudice. According to the findings, the overt forms of discrimination have declined significantly, but the implicit ones prevent organizations from generating optimal performance. Implicit and explicit biases create a toxic work environment for employees, resulting in high turnover and the wastage of organizational resources. Despite these weaknesses, the study proposes several approaches for mitigating bias and discrimination during employee recruitment and selection. The most effective approaches target multiple facets of the issue: individual, group, and organizational dimensions. In summary, the recommendations are essential for creating fair and transparent recruitment and selection processes for workers.

The study achieved the main findings, but several research limitations need to be highlighted. Foremost, the inadequacy of reliable research information about the use of the polyvagal theory in human resource management is a severe problem. Many studies focus on cognitive and behavioral correlations, but few explain how the polyvagal theory mediates stress and trauma during recruitment and selection. Thus, future studies should analyze how the polyvagal view manifests and induces bias between modern recruiters and job applicants.

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