

What factors do employees of higher education institutes in Finland value when considering potential employers?

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<p>Description</p> <p>The change in the psychological contract between employers and employees, and the fact that there are more high-quality jobs available than there are suitable seekers to fill those places have created a new challenge for firms: how to attract and retain highly skilled employees, referred to as high-quality workforce, when there is competition for the same human resources.</p> <p>This research aimed to understand what factors the employees of Finnish higher education institutes value when considering potential employers. 23 factors of employer attractiveness were identified as a result of the literature review, and grouped into four dimensions: social, development, interest and economic. The research approach was quantitative. Primary data was collected using an online-administrated questionnaire carried out with the online survey tool Webropol. The data analysis was carried out with SPSS and Excel, testing differences between the four dimensions as well as differences between genders, age groups, levels of education and types of employees using t-tests.</p> <p>The dimensions were ranked in order from the most valued factors to the least valued factors in this order: social factors, interest factors, development factors and economic factors. The most valued factor was "Meaningful and interesting work". When it comes to attracting and retaining high-quality employees in Finnish higher education institutes, the social dimension should be invested in. Due to the fact that the focus was only on the general attributes that employees of Finnish higher education institutes value when considering potential employers, further research could focus on how these institutes are currently performing in light of these valued factors. The results cannot be generalized outside of Finland.</p>		
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Työn nimi Mitä tekijöitä korkeakoulujen työntekijät arvostavat etsiessään potentiaalisia työnantajia Suomessa?		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Muutos psykologisissa sopimuksissa työnantajien ja työntekijöiden välillä sekä kasvava kysyntä korkealaatuisille työntekijöille ovat synnyttäneet yrityksille uuden haasteen: kuinka houkutella ja pitää korkealaatuiset työntekijät heidän palveluksessaan, kun näistä resursseista kilpaillaan.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus tähtäsi ymmärtämään niitä tekijöitä, joita suomalaisten korkeakoulujen työntekijät arvostavat etsiessään potentiaalisia työnantajia. Kirjallisuuskatselmuksen seurauksena määriteltiin 23 eri tekijää työnantajan houkuttelevuudelle, jotka ryhmiteltiin neljään eri ulottuvuuteen: sosiaalinen, kehittäminen, mielenkiinto ja taloudellinen. Tutkimusote oli määrällinen. Aineiston keräys toteutettiin Webropolin nettikyselyllä. Aineisto analysoitiin SPSS:n sekä Excelin avulla. T-testejä käytettiin löytämään eroavaisuuksia näiden neljän ulottuvuuden välillä sekä eroavaisuuksia sukupuolten, ikäryhmien, koulutustason ja työntekijäryhmien kesken.</p> <p>Ulottuvuudet asetettiin järjestykseen eniten arvostetuimmista tekijöistä vähiten arvostettuihin. Ensimmäisenä ovat sosiaaliset tekijät, toisena mielenkiinnon tekijät, kolmantena kehittämisen tekijät ja neljäntenä taloudelliset tekijät. Eniten arvostettu yksittäinen tekijä oli ”Merkityksellinen ja mielenkiintoinen työ”. Suomalaisten korkeakoulujen tulisi panostaa sosiaalisiin tekijöihin houkutellessaan ja yrittäessään pitää korkealaatuiset työntekijät itsellään. Tulevaisuudessa voitaisiin tutkia, kuinka korkeakoulut tällä hetkellä huomioivat nämä tekijät joita korkealaatuiset työntekijät yleisesti arvostavat. Tulokset voidaan yleistää ainoastaan Suomeen.</p>		
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Today, the psychological contract between employees and their employers has changed. Instead of having a lifetime employment in a firm, it is more common nowadays to change jobs and have multiple workplaces during your career. (Festing, & Schäfer 2014, 264.) This has created a new challenge for firms: how they can attract and retain the workforce with them, when there are several firms competing for the same human resources.

Competition for attracting highly skilled employees between organizations is increasing (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah 2005, 167). In fact, there are many reasons that effect on the phenomena. To mention few, the development towards more knowledge-based economies has created an increasing demand for these highly skilled and qualified employees (Mahorum 2000, 23). Also, when it comes to the highly skilled employees, there are more jobs available than there are suitable seekers to fill those places (App, Merk, & Büttgen 2012, 263).

Today's workplaces are different than before. Globalization and the increased usage of technology are driving this change in the workplaces (Meister, & Willyerd 2010, 3). At the same time, as new generations are entering the working life, the workplace demographics are becoming more diverse than ever (Ruona, & Coates 2012, 560). It is important to realize that these changes raise questions among firms if we truly understand the expectations that employees have towards work. These new expectations have the possibility to create uncertainties towards attracting and retaining these talented and skilled employees in the workplace (ibid., 560).

Research and theories about competitive advantage earlier written include Porter's five forces model, SWOT analysis, Barney's resource-based view and VRIO framework, that has been developed from the basis of Barney's resource-based view. Through the resource-based view and VRIO framework,

it can be assumed that a firm's resources can act as a source for competitive advantage. Barney and Wright (1997, 4) presents three categories from where resources can provide competitive advantage: human capital resources, organizational capital resources and physical capital resources. In order for a firm to strengthen or gain competitive advantage through human resources, it needs to have knowledge how to attract high-quality employees. Once a firm has attracted these highly skilled and motivated employees – also referred as high-quality workforce, human resource management faces a challenge to retain these people (App et.al. 2012, 263).

When it comes to attracting high-quality workforce, knowledge of the factors what these employees value when considering potential employees is needed. Once these valued factors are known, firms can shape themselves towards of being more attractive employers in the eyes of the high-quality workforce. Also, it is easier to retain the workforce once the valued factors are familiar to firms. The nature of the phenomenon of attracting and retaining high-quality workforce makes it an interesting research for the field of human resource management and competitiveness.

The Finnish education system and it's high-quality is known around the world. According to the Global Competitiveness Report (2016, 176), Finland's higher education and training are ranked the second best in the world. The high quality of education indicates that there must be high-quality workforce working in the industry. For the high-quality employees in the field of education, this research offers the opportunity to change the workplaces towards their own interests and values. This research provides insight to Finnish higher education institutes and their human resource management about the factors that employees value when considering potential employees. With this knowledge, these institutes can shape themselves towards being more attractive and wanted employers among the high-quality workforce in the field of education. Thus, once they have the high-quality employees working for them, they have the opportunity to gain competitive advantage in their field.

1.2 Research problem and objectives

This research aims to understand what factors the employees of higher education institutes value when considering potential employers. The objective for this research is to understand what higher education institutes in Finland need to offer as an employer in order to (1) attract potential employees to apply for a job, and (2) how to keep current employees committed to work within the organization. From the basis of the research problem and objectives, the following research questions was formed:

What factors do employees of higher education institutes in Finland value when considering potential employers?

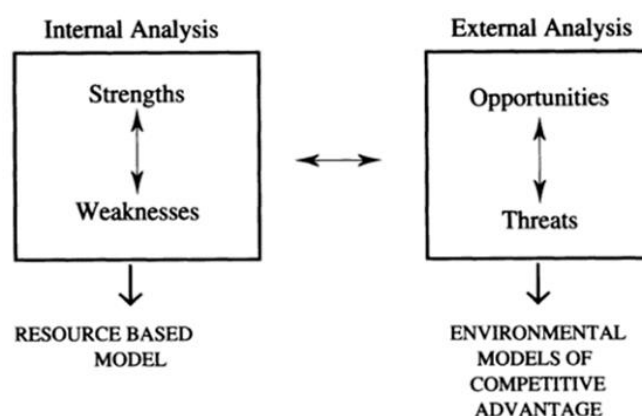
After defining the research objective and question, a suitable research methodology and implementation strategy will be considered. For data collection, a suitable method will be chosen carefully by taking into account the nature of the research topic. When considering the research objective and question, a quantitative research will act as a suitable approach. When doing quantitative research, numerical data needs to be collected in order for the researcher to build an understanding of a phenomenon (Kananen 2013, 35). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest, that the benefit of choosing the survey strategy is the chance to collect a large amount of data from a larger population efficiently. Questionnaire is one of the most used techniques within the survey strategy. (114.) Data collection in this research will be implemented through a self-administered online questionnaire.

After data collection, the data analysis will be conducted. Aims for this research include answering the research question, offering new knowledge and suggestions for the higher education institutes in Finland. Also, suggestions for future research are given.

2. COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Competitive advantage can be defined in different ways. According to Aronson, Halawi and McCarthy (2005, 77), Mahoney and Pandian (1992) define competitive advantage as a way of analyzing an industry and the effects of the firm through its resource advantages and strategies. Barney (1991, 102) states that a firm has a competitive advantage “when it is implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors”. This said, competitive advantage does not solely focus on the competition that already exist on the markets, but it also includes potential competitors that might enter the industry somewhere in the future.

The way of analyzing competitiveness and what brings competitive advantage to a firm has many views. In the earlier research done about competitive advantage the focus has been on the external and environmental forces outside of the firm, also referred to as competitive environment, and how they effect on firm’s competitiveness. An example of this kind of an analysis is Porter’s five forces model. Other studies include the internal attributes, also referred to as resources and capabilities of a firm, as a part of competitive advantage. An example of this is the SWOT analysis. Barney’s resource-based view and VRIO framework are theories that emphasize the importance of firm resources as a competitive advantage to a firm. Picture 1 shows the relationship between the SWOT analysis, resource based model and the competitive environment.



Picture 1. Relationships between different models used to analyze competitiveness. (Barney 1991, 100.)

2.1. Porter's "five forces model"

When considering a firm's competitiveness, Porter's five forces model focuses on the analysis of the competitive environment of an industry. The model evaluates those external and environmental forces that drive competition in the industry. Porter (2008) states, that the composition of these five forces differs from industry to another. These forces are new entrants, bargaining power of customers, substitute products or services, power of suppliers and rivalry among existing competitors. (4.) The forces can help a firm to recognize its critical strengths and weaknesses, specify areas where strategic adjustments can produce the greatest profits, and they can also animate the position of the firm in its industry. Regardless of the firm's collective strengths, the corporate strategist's aim is to seek a position inside the industry where his/her firm can either best protect itself against the forces, or the firm can benefit from them to its favor. (Porter 1979, 137-138.)

2.2. SWOT analysis

Instead of analyzing only the opportunities and threats that lie in the competitive environment, there is an option to include the internal strengths and weaknesses of a firm to the analysis. When the sources of competitive advantage are being evaluated in firms, it might be important to combine both internal and environmental analyses in order to see the whole picture. According to Barney (1995), not even the most carefully and completely made analyses of competitive environments can solely explain a firm's success. Internal attributes, known as resources and capabilities of a firm that include both the strengths and weaknesses, need to be taken into a consideration as sources of competitive advantage. (49-50.)

According to Koivukoski and Laaksonen (2014, 16), SWOT both combines and compares the external analysis of firm's competitive environment through its opportunities and threats, with the internal analysis of firm's resources through their strengths and weaknesses as a source of competitive advantage. The analysis is carried out in order to find the strengths and weaknesses of a firm, and the opportunities and threats that lie in the environment (Dyson 2002, 632), and instead of separating the internal

resources from the external opportunities, the analysis includes them both (Bordum 2010, 246). Barney (1991, 99) claims that with exploiting internal strengths and responding to environmental opportunities, and simultaneously neutralizing external threats and avoiding internal weaknesses, firms have the opportunity to achieve sustained competitive advantages.

2.3. Resource-based view and VRIO framework

Instead of the models where the focus is on the external and environmental determinants (e.g. Porter's five forces), the resource-based view focuses on the intervening links in the internal resources the firm, on its strategy and performance (McMahan, McWilliams, & Wright 1993, 3). A majority of research done regarding the resource-based view concentrates on those characteristics of resources within the firm that can act as sources of competitive advantage (Butler, & Priem 2001, 23).

A resource can be defined as anything that can be seen as a strength or a weakness for a firm (Wernefelt 1984, 172). According to Barney (1991, 101), all assets that are controlled by the firm, and from which it can benefit from through the implementation of strategies that improve efficiency and effectiveness, are seen as firm resources. Barney and Wright (1997, 4) present three categories of resources that can provide competitive advantage: human capital resources (e.g. skills and intelligence of employees), organizational capital (e.g. firm's structure and HR systems) and physical capital (e.g. plants and equipment). However, not all resources can hold the potential of bringing competitive advantages to a firm (Barney 1991, 105).

There are four questions that act as the foundation for VRIO framework. These questions are the questions of Value, Rareness, Imitability and Organization (Barney 1995, 50). As earlier mentioned, there are limitations of which firm resources can hold the potential of being sources of competitive advantage. To open up more these four questions and defining the suitable resources for competitive advantage, Barney (1991) states that in order to have the potential of being an advantage a firm resource must have four attributes. Firstly, the resource needs to be valuable in a way that it benefits

the opportunities and/or neutralizes the threats in a firm's environment. Secondly, among the current and potential competition, the resource needs to be rare. Thirdly, the resource has to be imperfectly imitable. Lastly, there cannot exist a resource that is strategically equal with it. (105.) This said, the VRIO framework can be used as a tool for identifying resources that have the potential to offer competitive advantage to a firm.

3. ATTRACTING AND RETAINING HIGH-QUALITY WORKFORCE

The change in the psychological contract has created a need for employers to find new ways to attract and retain employees within the firm. The term "psychological contract" refers to the expectations of employees and what they owe to their employers, and what the employers owe to their employees (Robinson 1996, 574). Traditionally, the concept of psychological contract between employers and employees meant that employees promised to be loyal to the firm, in exchange for security of a job. Recent trends such as outsourcing, downsizing, and flexibility from the side of the employer have created a new form of a psychological contract where employers offer career-enhancing skills for employees through training and development. As in exchange the employer expects flexibility and effort. (Backhaus, & Tikoo 2004, 504.) The flexibility and learning makes it possible for employees to go where they want to go, call for the money, opportunities and working conditions they want (Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy, & Baert 2011, 37). Giancola (2011, 24) also states that if talented employees feel trapped in their work, they often leave their workplaces to find new challenges.

Attracting and retaining qualified workers is an important aspect in the human resource management (Greening, & Turban 2000, 256). The growing demand for highly qualified and skilled workforce is a result from the shift towards more knowledge-based economies. Organizations are facing challenges in the competition of high-quality workforce. For example, the ageing population, multicultural workforce, increasing number of women in the workplace, couples with dual-careers and single parent families makes it necessary to

address a more diverse workforce, including those at different stages in their lives and careers. (App et al. 2012, 263.)

Due to the changes that workplace demographics encounter, the demand for talented employees increases while the supply declines (Govaerts et al. 2011, 36). App and others (2012, 263) support this argument by saying that when it comes to the highly skilled employees, there are more jobs available than there are suitable seekers to fill those places. This shortage of high-quality workforce is one of the reasons why retaining skilled and talented employees becomes more important for firms. This way, a firm can sustain their competitive advantage (Govaerts et al. 2011, 36). Through effective human resource management, firms can attract, retain and develop their high-quality employees, that are relatively rare and valuable as a resource (Wagar, & Rondeau 2006, 5).

3.1 High-quality workforce

There is no single definition for the highly skilled employees. According to Greening and Turban (2000, 255), Teece (1998) claims that some authors have suggested for example intelligence, motivation, commitment, experience and creativity as characteristics for quality employees. App and others (2012, 263) define high-quality workforce as highly skilled and motivated employees. In addition to these definitions, Salt (1997) adds that it is generally assumed that to be highly skilled, a person needs to have a tertiary educational qualification. Also, the rich diversity of how work is performed and what expertise is required, creates further definitional complications. In order for an individual to perform in a highly skilled competence, it is sometimes linked to former experience, or it combines both experience and formal qualification (e.g. an MBA). There are jobs that are believed to be highly skilled but they might require little by the way of training or experience, relying on natural talent (such as sportspersons, entertainers and artists). (5-6.)

High qualification can also refer to talent. Highly talented individuals can be described through various characteristics. Festing and Schäfer (2014) suggest that these characteristics can include skills, experience, intelligence, abilities,

knowledge, and drive, or the ability how they learn and grow within the organization. Also, compared to other human resources, these individuals can be seen as key strategic resources to a firm. They have a crucial impact on the organizational performance and they can create competitive advantages for a firm. These talented individuals are valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate. (263.)

3.2 High-quality workforce as a source for competitiveness

Greening and Turban (2000, 256) state that human resources, especially in the form of skilled employees, are important resources that can lead to competitive advantages within the firm. Human resources act as an important role for any firm's success, but which ones and how they affect, can vary from a firm to another (Barney, & Wright 1997, 16). The goal for the human resource function is to provide the firm with resources that are valuable, rare and they can't be imitated easily by other firms. In order to do so, they need to develop employees that are skilled and motivated to provide high quality products and services, and also to manage the firm's culture and encourage trust and teamwork. (ibid., 21.) According to Wagar and Rondeau (2006), Barney's resource-based view suggests that firm's human resources can be a source of competitive advantage in a form of a highly productive workforce. These workers as resources are valuable, rare, hard to imitate and somewhat specific to the environment of the firm. (5.)

3.3 Employer branding (and employer attractiveness)

According to Gudergan, Lings and Wilden (2010, 4), in the increasingly competitive markets in employment, it is important to develop strategies towards being an employer of choice, and simultaneously increase the number of suitable applicants. When attracting, engaging and retaining high-quality workforce, Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012, 87) suggest that employer branding has the possibility to become an important and challenging human resource development strategy.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, 502) define employer branding as “the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors”. Employer brand helps firms to communicate to both current and future employees what it is like to work there and what the firm stands for (Love, & Singh 2011, 175). The practice of employer branding is built on the assumption that human resources bring value to a firm, and through investing in these resources, a firm’s performance can be improved. The resource-based view supports this by suggesting that characteristics of firm’s resources can influence on competitive advantage. Those resources that are valuable, rare, non-substitutable and hard to imitate allows a firm to get ahead of its competitors. (Bakchaus, & Tikoo 2004, 503.)

Brand associations and brand image

Potential employees build the brand image from the brand associations. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) suggest that by hearing a brand name, it evokes thoughts and ideas in the minds of people – these are also known as brand associations. Employer brand image can be divided into two sections: functional benefits and symbolic benefits. In the functional benefits employer brand describes desirable elements of employment such as salary and other benefits. Symbolic benefits connect to the perceptions related to reputation of the firm, and the social approval imagined by the applicants that they would enjoy if they work in the firm. (505.)

3.4 Factors of employer attractiveness

As organizations seek both to attract new employees and retain existing staff, employment advertising and employment branding will grow in importance. This can only be done effectively once organizations understand the factors contributing towards “employer attractiveness”. (Berthon et al. 2005, 168.)

At the moment, there is no general classification of attributes of employer branding in literature (Kucherov, & Zavyalova 2012, 88). This said, there is no single way to categorize and divide the factors that contribute on making an

employer attractive. After reviewing the literature, a number of three different frameworks that are relevant for answering the research question were found. These frameworks are presented in this section.

Berthon et al. 2005

Berthon and others (2005) research concentrates on developing and validating a scale that can be used to evaluate employer attractiveness. There are five different factors that measure different attributes of employer attractiveness. The first factor is labelled as *interest value*. It evaluates how attracted an individual is to the elements that make work and/or the company interesting. For example, how attracted an individual is to an employer that offers an exciting work environment. The second factor is called *social value*. It evaluates how attracted an individual is to the social features of an employer. These include a fun, happy working environment, and good relationships with colleagues. The third factor is called *economic value*. It evaluates how attracted an individual is to the financial features of an employer, such as job security and an above-average salary. The fourth factor is called *development value*. It evaluates how attracted an individual is to the development opportunities of an employer, such as recognition from management. The fifth factor is called *application value*. It evaluates how attracted an individual is to an employer that offers the chance to apply prior learnings and to teach others. (156-162.)

Alniaçık, Alniaçık, Erat, & Akçin (2014)

Alniaçık, Alniaçık, Erat, and Akçin's (2014) research focuses on the dimensions of employer attractiveness and identifying perceptual differences between two cultures. Alniaçık and others used the "employer attractiveness" scale developed by Berthon et al. (2005). Those dimensions are interest value, social value, economic value, development value and application value. The authors state that after examining other studies it can be seen that in general, when attracting and retaining employees, non-financial factors were found to be more important than financial factors. (Alniaçık et al. 2014, 336-338.)

Kucherov, & Zavyalova (2012)

Kucherov and Zavyalova's (2012) research concentrates on employer branding and they have four groups of employer branding attributes: *economic, psychological, functional and organizational attributes*. The economic attributes are connected to the financial or material compensations received from work, and that have an effect on the financial well-being of employees (e.g. high salary and job security). The psychological attributes consist of features that have an impact on the social side of work (e.g. the feeling of belonging in the organization and team-working). The functional attributes cover the practicalities of the work (e.g. content of work and training opportunities). The organizational attributes relate to how the company is seen in the market where it operates (e.g. company's history and reputation of top-managers). (88-89.)

3.5 Framework for the research

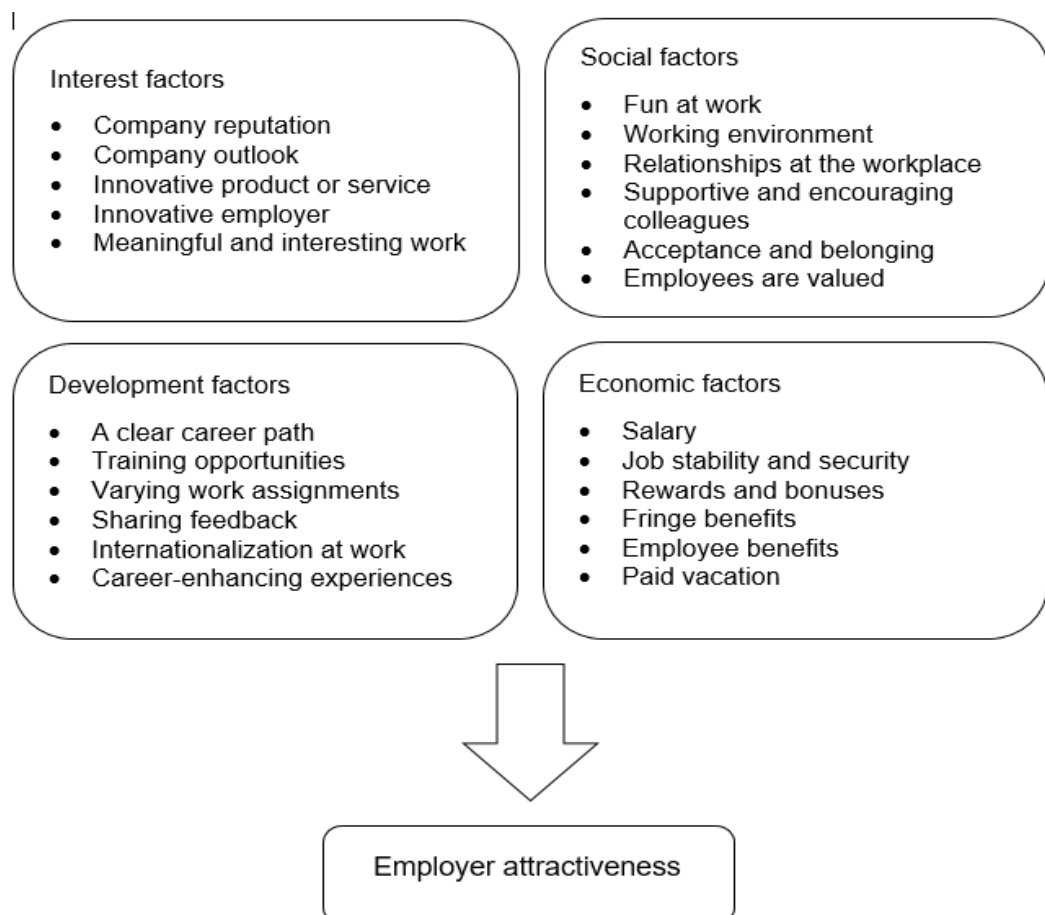


Figure 1. Factors of employer attractiveness. Adapted from studies from Berthon et al. (2005), Alniaçık, Alniaçık, Erat, & Akçin (2014), Kucherov & Zavyalova (2012), and Kolstrup (2012).

The framework for data collection used in this research can be seen above in Figure 1. The framework is divided into four dimensions from the foundation of Berthon and others (2005) research. Inside those four dimensions there are different factors that measure employer attractiveness. These factors are created and applied from the basis of literature reviewed in section 3.4 and also, from Kolstrup's (2012, 5315) research paper.

Interest factors

Interest factors consists of qualities that make work and/or the company interesting to an employee. These factors measure how attracted individuals are to an employer that:

- Has a good company reputation and is a desirable employer among the public
- Company's future outlook is positive, for example the financial balance is good and the company is growing
- The product or service that the company is producing is innovative
- The employer is innovative by offering something new to the way of working
- The employer offers meaningful and interesting work

Social factors

Social factors consist of the social expectations that are connected to working. These factors measure how attracted individuals are to an employer with a workplace where there is:

- Fun at work
- A positive and happy working environment
- Good relationships with colleagues
- Working among supportive and encouraging colleagues
- The feeling of acceptance and belonging
- Employees are valued and respected by the employer

Development factors

Development factors consist of the development opportunities that work offers for an individual. These factors measure how attracted individuals are to an employer that offers:

- A clear career path with promotional opportunities
- Work-related training opportunities, for example learning a new language that is important to your work assignment
- Varying work assignments
- Mutual feedback from colleagues and managers
- Career-enhancing experience for the future
- The possibility to being international at work

Economic factors

Economic factors consist of the financial benefits that the employer offers. These factors measure how attracted individuals are to an employer that offers:

- A competitive salary
- Job stability and security
- Rewards, for example performance-based incentives
- Fringe benefits that are non-monetary benefits from the employer, for example usage of a company car and lunch vouchers
- Employee benefits that are moderate in cost and the employee can decide whether to use the benefit or not, for example sports vouchers and transportation vouchers
- Paid vacation

4. METHODOLOGY

According to Kananen (2013, 27)

A broad approach to a problem is called a research methodology or approach. Research approach is like a philosophic umbrella of science that contains data gathering, analysis and interpretation methods typical to each approach.

Deciding the most suitable research approach is highly dependent on the topic and objectives of a research. It is also necessary to understand what sort of information the researcher is seeking. This research aims to understand what factors the employees of higher education institutes value when considering potential employers. Due to the nature of the research topic and research question, a quantitative approach was chosen.

In quantitative research, in order for a researcher to build understanding of a phenomenon, numerical data needs to be collected (Kananen 2013, 35). The fact that quantitative data is necessary, it doesn't mean that the data has to be naturally in a quantitative form. There are non-quantitative phenomena (such as attitudes and beliefs) that can be transferred into quantitative data through different measure instruments and can be analyzed statistically. (Mujis 2004, 11.) Saunders and others (2009) suggests, that the benefit of conducting a survey is the chance to collect a large amount of data from a larger population efficiently. Also, surveys allow to collect quantitative data. (144.)

Due to the flexibility of surveys, a researcher can design it to suit his/her needs. This way, the researcher can ensure that the data collected is relevant and answers the research question. One of the most used techniques within surveys is a questionnaire (Saunders et.al. 2009, 144). Traditionally questionnaires are administrated face-to-face, by telephone or by postal questionnaires, but the web-based questionnaires are becoming more popular (Mujis 2004, 34). Due to the option of online distribution, the collection of a large amount of data is easier. Also, since the internet is everywhere, it allows to collect responses from various locations.

4.1 Higher education in Finland

The Finnish education system and its high-quality is known around the world. For instance, in the Global Competitiveness Report (2016, 176), Finland's higher education and training is ranked as the second best in the world. The high quality of education indicates that there must be high-quality workforce working in the industry. In fact, teachers are acknowledged as key players to the quality of education (Finnish education in a nutshell n.d., 26). There is a requirement, that teachers have to have a higher education degree, and the most common requirement is a master's degree (ibid., 24).

In Finland, there are 40 higher education institutes in total. According to Statistics Finland (Appendix table 1. Changes from previous year made to educational institutions of the school system by type of educational institution 2016, n.d.), there are currently 14 universities and 26 universities of applied sciences in Finland. In 2014, there were a total of 175,688 people working in the industry of education and research, and out of this a total of 41,397 people were working in higher education (Employed by industry and education, 2014).

The structure of higher education in Finland is dual. There are universities and polytechnics, also known as universities of applied sciences, that provide higher education. These sectors have their own profiles. In universities, the education emphasizes on instruction and scientific research, whereas in universities of applied sciences, a more practical approach is common. (Higher education n.d.) There is an opportunity to complete either a bachelor's, master's or a doctoral degree in higher education institutes. Universities of applied sciences offer bachelor's and master's degrees. In addition to those degrees, universities offer doctoral degrees. (Universities of Applied Sciences Degrees n.d.; University degrees n.d.) There are also over 400 programmes in all levels of higher education offered in English (Over 400 full degree programmes available in English n.d.).

4.2 Data collection

Primary data was collected for the purpose of answering the research question. The primary data collection method in this research was a self-administrated online questionnaire (see Appendix 1). According to Mujis (2004, 34), surveys can appear in many different forms. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) states, that the popularity of surveys results from the chance to collect a considerable amount of data from a large population in an economic way, and it also allows to collect quantitative data. For data collection, a questionnaire is one of the most broadly used techniques within the survey strategy, since each respondent answers the same set of questions and it is possible to collect responses from a large sample before doing quantitative analysis. (144.)

Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains background questions and Likert-scale based attitude questions. When collecting quantitative data, Kananen (2011b) states, that in quantitative research studies, questions related to respondent's background are included in order to establish general attributes of the case. The goal for these so-called background variables is to categorize the respondents and find possible categorical differences between them. (88.) Wilson (2010, 155) sees Likert-scale questions as "attitude questions" that aim to define respondent's attitudes towards one or more themes. In this research, the purpose of Likert-scale questions is to find those factors that the employees of higher education institutes value when they are considering potential employers. The questions are implemented from this research's framework for data collection (see section 3.5). Each dimension has a set of factors that are converted into Likert-scale questions. Participants were also asked to share their contact information, and they were offered the option to receive the final results of the research.

Population

The population of this research is high-quality workforce in higher education institutes in Finland. As Salt (1997, 5) stated, it is generally assumed that to be highly skilled, a person needs to have a tertiary educational qualification.

From the basis of this, employees from higher education institutes are considered as high-quality workforce when they have accomplished at least a bachelor's degree. The population includes both teaching and administrative staff from universities and universities of applied sciences. In 2014, there were a total of 31,343 people working in higher education with at least a bachelor's degree (Employed by industry and education, 2014). This number is the whole population.

To find out how to reach the population best and how to distribute the questionnaire, the researcher discussed with her supervisor. In order to reach the whole population, a representative was chosen from each of the higher education institute. These representatives were employees performing administrative tasks in human resources, and their contact information were found through each institutes' websites. The benefit of choosing these representatives was the fact that they were able to distribute the questionnaire inside their organization easily. Also, this way the email came from a colleague inside the organization, which possibly made the email seem more interesting.

Implementation of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was done with the online survey tool Webropol, since it creates a link that can be posted anywhere. Webropol also collects the data into one place, and from there it can be transferred to other data analysis tools. Since there can be employees from other countries working in higher education institutes in Finland, the questionnaire was carried out in two languages, Finnish and English. Saunders et.al. (2009), suggest that some reliability for a questionnaire can be obtained by comparing alternative forms of the same question or groups of questions. Alternative forms are also known as "check questions". (374) In this research, there were four pairs of check questions included in the questionnaire, one pair from each of the dimensions of employer attractiveness (see Figure 1 in section 3.5). The first version of the questionnaire was created and a pilot study was conducted in order to test the questionnaire contents and to test check questions. After testing and modifying the questionnaire, it was sent to the representatives. The

representatives were contacted via email, which contained a cover letter and the link to the questionnaire. The email had also a smaller introduction for the representatives, including an explanation why they were contacted. To ensure that as many of the representatives received the email request and would forward it, a reminder email was sent after one week of the first contact. Two of the participating institutes required a research authorization before collecting responses from their employees. The questionnaire was held open for several weeks in order to collect the most responses. A total of 159 responses were received through the Webropol link.

4.3 Data analysis

Due to the choice of the research approach, data was analyzed quantitatively with suitable programmes. SPSS statistical software package and Excel were chosen to use for data analysis in this research. After the data collection, the data received from Webropol was transferred to SPSS for data analysis. Instead of entering data manually, the data was possible to transfer directly to SPSS from Webropol. Also, with Webropol the data collected was possible to save directly into a format that was suitable with Excel.

Variables

Variables that were studied include categorical variables and ordinal variables. These categorical variables, referred here as background variables, include data related to the respondents' background information. These variables were gender, age, highest level of education completed by the respondents, and the department where the respondents are working currently. The aim for studying these variables was to categorize and find possible differences between the respondents (Kananen 2011b, 88). Gender had two categories; female and male respondents. In the questionnaire, the age of the respondents was asked through an open-ended question, in order to collect as precise information as possible. In the data analysis phase, the responses were coded into three categories in a way that each group would have almost an equal amount of cases. The categories were 26-39 years, 40-53 years and 54-65 years. Highest level of education had three categories; Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and Doctoral degree. In the questionnaire, there

were a total of six options for respondents to choose from as the department where they were at the moment working. When analyzing the data, the departments were divided into two categories in a way that both groups would have nearly equal amount of cases. These categories were teaching and administration.

Ordinal variables have a clear order, but they do not tell the quantities or relationships between them (Kananen 2011a, 61). The ordinal variables in this research include all the Likert-scale questions that were asked in the questionnaire. Each question acted as an individual variable. There were seven variables in the economic, social and development dimension, and six variables in the interest dimension.

Measuring and computing variables

The background variables were measured quantitatively in SPSS. In the data view, the total number of cases was calculated. Each background variable's categories were measured by calculating the number of cases for the given category. For example, the amount of female and male respondents was calculated through descriptive statistics in SPSS. Firstly, the data file was split into the two gender categories. Following that, from the "Analyze" tab, descriptive statistics and frequencies were chosen. Gender variable was chosen to the variable box. After that, the output file displayed statistics of the number of respondents according to their gender. From the 159 respondents, 102 were female and 57 were male.

The ordinal variables were measured based on their means (= averages). Since there were two alternative forms (see implementation of the questionnaire from section 4.2) for one factor in each of the dimensions, each pair of alternative form was computed into a new variable. This was implemented in SPSS. The function was in the "Transform" tab, then in "Compute variable" the two variables were chosen and added together. After that, the sum was divided by two. After computing the alternative forms, economic, social and development dimensions had six variables, and interest dimensions had five variables in total. As it can be seen from the framework

for data collection (see section 3.5), there are four dimensions that have different factors of employer attractiveness. To make it possible to analyze data according to these four dimensions, the individual ordinal variables were computed into new variables according to the dimensions. The economic variables, social variables, interest variables and development variables were each computed into new variables. As an example, the computing of social variables is explained. From the “Transform” tab, “Compute variable” was chosen. The new variable was named as SocialAverage. All six variables were added up, and then the sum was divided by six. After this, the new variable was shown in the data set. After these dimensional variables were done, the actual data analysis started.

Analyzing the data

The data analysis aimed to find possible differences between the cases in various categories. The data was analyzed with the background variables, and overall results for the whole sample were also analyzed. The data analysis was executed in five categories; overall, by gender, by age, by level of education and by the type of employees. The data analysis focused to present possible differences between categories inside the background variables.

Descriptive data was analyzed by calculating the means of the computed variables for each dimension. Taanila (2016) suggests, that when using means with ordinal variables, for example Likert-scale results, it would be good to present also the standard deviations. Standard deviations present the variation of the opinions, and by looking at the deviations, it can be seen how much the opinions have been varied. The larger the standard deviation is, the more there has been variations in the opinions. (ibid.)

The overall descriptive analysis was executed in the following way; from “Analyze” tab, “Descriptive statistics” was chosen. The computed variables were moved to the variable box. After this, the descriptive statistics were shown in the output file. To present the results graphically from these descriptive statistics, a table and a figure were created using Excel (see Table 1 and Figure 6). For the rest of the categories the descriptive analysis was

performed differently. When aiming to differentiate the categories inside the background variables, the data file needed to be split first. For example, when analyzing differences between genders, the data needed to be split according to the gender variable before conducting any descriptive analysis. After this, the descriptive analysis was possible to conduct, and it showed the results by the intended categories. Also, to present the results graphically, tables and figures were created using Excel.

The data was also analyzed with a one sample t-test in SPSS. The aim for doing the t-tests was to see if (1) there are any statistically significant differences between the dimensions of employer attractiveness, and if (2) there are any statistically significant differences between genders, age groups, level of education and the type of employees (teaching vs administrative).

4.4 Verification of the results

A risk when collecting data with a questionnaire, is that the respondent misinterprets the questions (Wilson 2010, 149). Saunders et.al. (2009), suggest that some reliability for a questionnaire can be obtained through comparing alternative forms, also known as check questions, of the same question or groups of questions (374). These questions also show if the respondent has been consistent with the answers. Increasing the level of validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was done prior administrating the questionnaire to the population. The aim for the pilot study was to ensure that the questions are clearly defined and easily understood by the respondents. The test group consisted of five people, both Finnish and English speaking people so that the testing was done in both languages. The pilot study also tested the functionality of the check questions by ensuring that the test group had similar answers in each of the pairs of check questions. After the pilot study, the questionnaire was revised and modified from the basis of feedback received from the test group. Ensuring that the research followed ethical guidelines, few of the participating institutes required research approvals. Also, the confidentiality for both of the responses and respondents' contact information collected was emphasized in the questionnaire.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Demographical/Background information

The background information of the respondents are presented on this section. A total of 159 responses were received. The responses were received from 11 different higher education institutes around Finland. The division between genders can be found from Figure 2. Out of the 159 respondents, 64% are female and 36% are male participants.

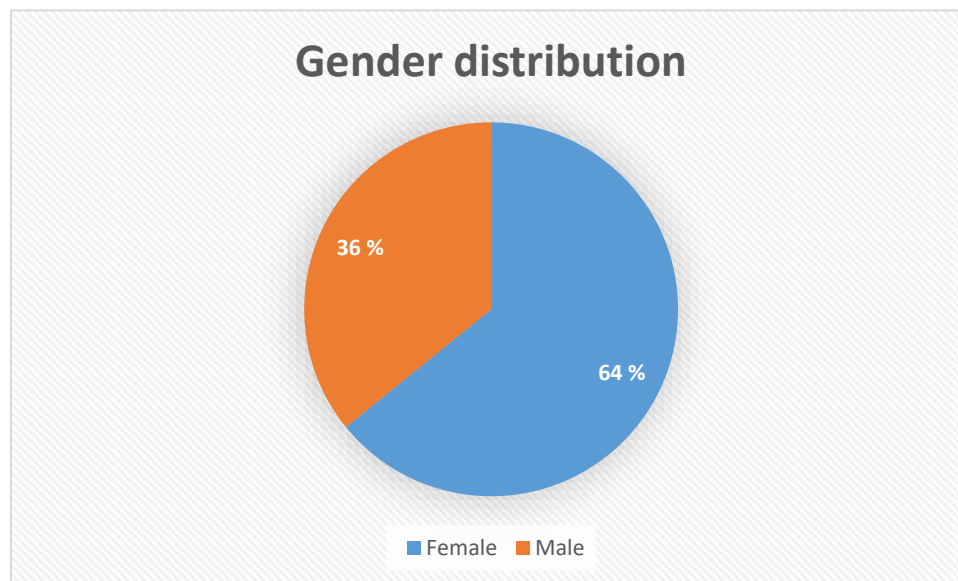


Figure 2. Gender distribution

The age distribution can be found from Figure 3. As it can be seen, 29% of the respondents are between 26-39 years, 39% are between 40-54 years, and 32% are between 54-65 years.

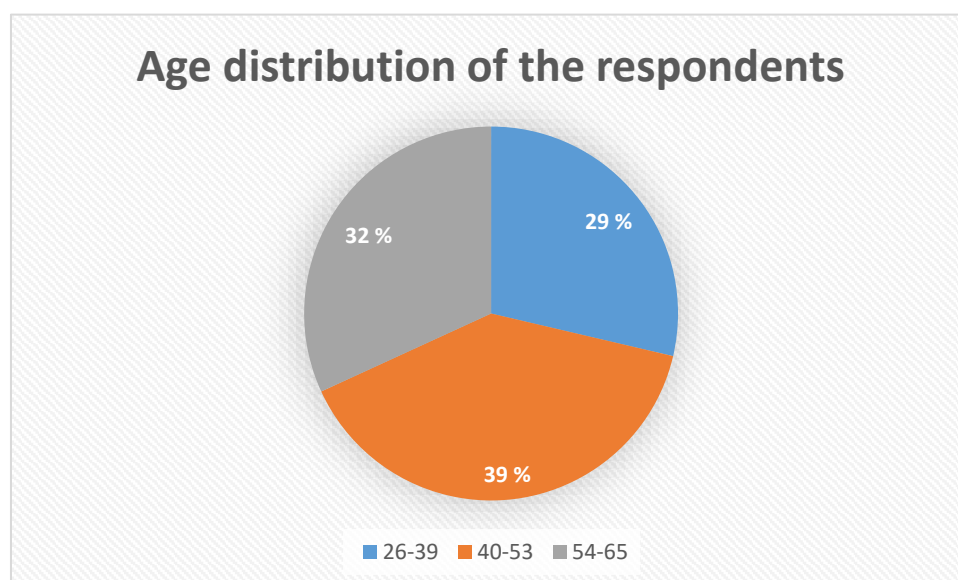


Figure 3. Age distribution of the respondents

Highest level education completed by the respondents can be found from Figure 4. A majority of the respondents (72%) has a Master's degree as their highest level of education, 16% of the respondents has a Doctoral degree, and 12% has a Bachelor's degree.

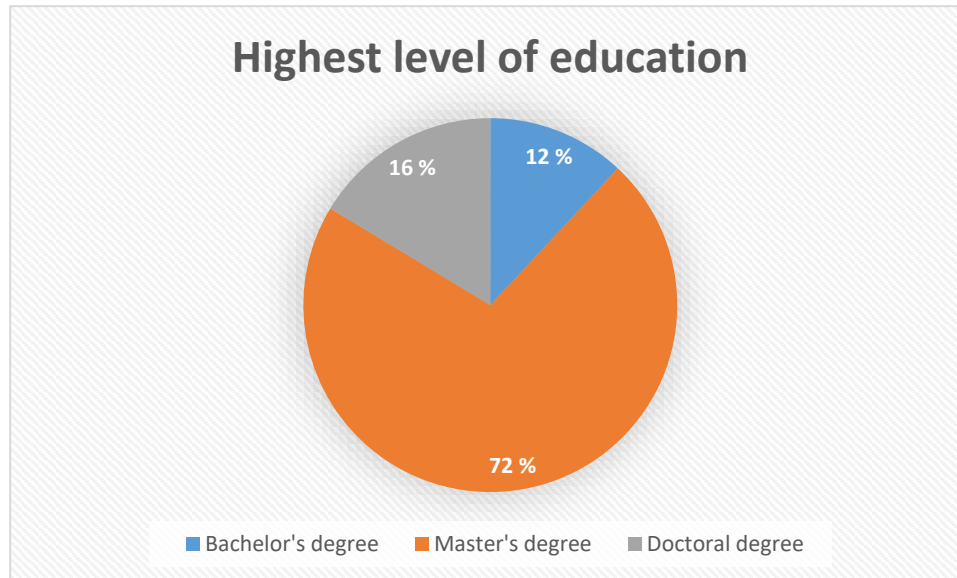


Figure 4. Highest level of education

Respondents were divided into two groups based on the type of department they are working; teaching and administration. The distribution between these two employee groups can be found from Figure 5. 55% of the respondents are working in teaching and 45% are working in administration.

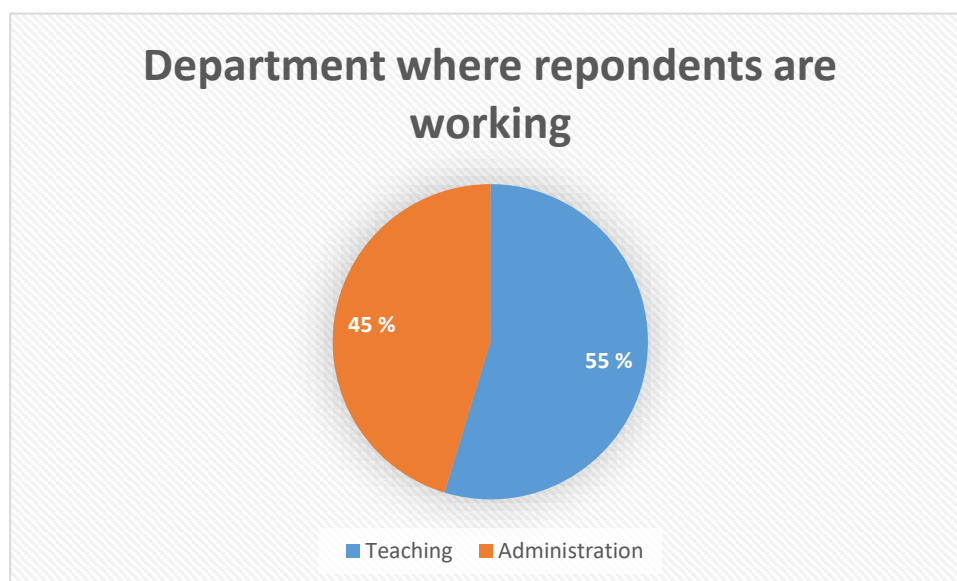


Figure 5. Division of the respondents by their department

5.2 Factors valued by high-quality workforce in Finnish higher education institutes

As earlier mentioned in the framework for data collection (see section 3.5), 23 factors of employer attractiveness were identified and grouped into four dimensions: social, development, interest and economic. The results in this section are presented with these four dimensions and the factors in them. These results show what factors does the employees of higher education institutes value when they are considering potential employers.

5.2.1 Overall results

In this section the overall results for the whole sample are presented. Table 1 shows both the overall averages and the standard deviations for each dimension. Standard deviation indicates how much the responses differ from the average. It can be seen that in the overall responses, development and economic dimensions have slightly higher deviation than social and interest dimensions.

Table 1. Overall dimension averages and standard deviations.

	DIMENSION AVERAGES	STANDARD DEVIATIONS
Social	4,29	0,76
Interest	3,93	0,86
Development	3,81	0,97
Economic	3,56	0,96
N	159	159

Table 1 and Figure 6 shows the averages for each dimension. As we can see from both, the social factors are most valued among all the respondents. Interest factors are second, development factors third and economic factors are fourth most valued.

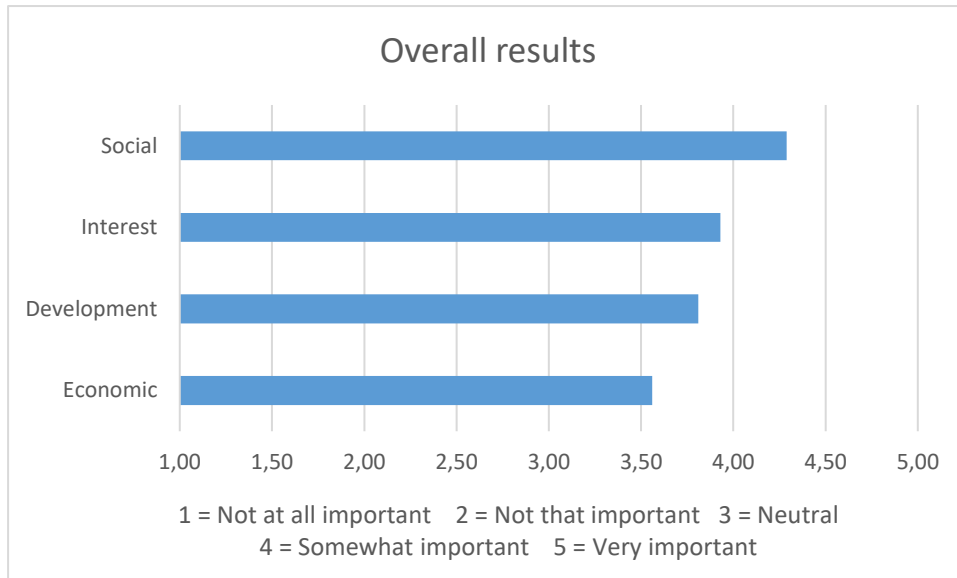


Figure 6. Overall results

A t-test was also done. The aim for doing the t-test was to see if there are any statistically significant differences between the dimensions of employer attractiveness. The results for the whole sample from the t-test are shown in Table 2. The results are statistically significant ($p = 0,000$). The mean for social dimension is statistically significant from the other dimensions. The confidence intervals for each dimension are shown in Table 2. With 95% confidence, it can be said that if responses would be collected from the whole population, the means for the responses would be somewhere between the lower and upper confidence intervals in each dimension.

Table 2. Overall t-test results.

One-Sample Test						
Test Value = 0						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
EconomicAverage	69,229	158	,000	3,52291	3,4224	3,6234
SocialAverage	99,468	158	,000	4,23989	4,1557	4,3241
InterestAverage	75,419	158	,000	3,88050	3,7789	3,9821
DevelopmentAverage	73,015	158	,000	3,71518	3,6147	3,8157

In addition to the overall averages for each dimension, the averages for each factor are presented in Table 3. Even in the overall results the social dimension is most valued and economic dimension is least valued, there are significant differences between the individual factors. For instance, the most valued individual factor is an interest factor. Also, there are three economic factors above the overall average for the economic dimension (3,56).

Table 3. Overall averages for each factor.

FACTOR	DIMENSION	AVERAGE
Meaningful and interesting work	Interest	4,65
Employees are valued	Social	4,49
Varying work assignments	Development	4,38
Working environment	Social	4,38
Supportive and encouraging colleagues	Social	4,36
Fun at work	Social	4,29
Paid vacation	Economic	4,28
Acceptance and belonging	Social	4,28
Job stability and security	Economic	4,23
Training opportunities	Development	4,11
Salary	Economic	4,09
Company outlook	Interest	3,97
Innovative employer	Interest	3,94
Relationships at the workplace	Social	3,94
Career-enhancing experiences	Development	3,91
Feedback	Development	3,79
Company reputation	Interest	3,65
A clear career path	Development	3,48
Innovative product or service	Interest	3,43
Rewards and bonuses	Economic	3,33
Internationalization at work	Development	3,17
Employee benefits	Economic	2,95
Fringe benefits	Economic	2,46

5.2.2 Results by gender

This section presents results by gender. Table 4 shows both the averages and the standard deviations for each dimension by gender. Standard deviation indicates how much the responses differ from the average. It can be seen that female respondents have slightly higher deviation in their responses compared to the male respondents.

Table 4. Dimension averages and standard deviations by gender.

	DIMENSION AVERAGES		STANDARD DEVIATIONS	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Social	4,34	4,21	0,79	0,71
Interest	3,97	3,85	0,88	0,81
Development	3,86	3,71	0,96	0,96
Economic	3,63	3,43	0,97	0,94
N	102	57	102	57

As shown in Table 4 and Figure 7, female respondents have slightly higher averages for each dimension than the male respondents. However, the averages have the same order of importance in both genders. In both genders, the social factors are most valued. Interest factors are second, development factors third, and economic factors fourth most valued.

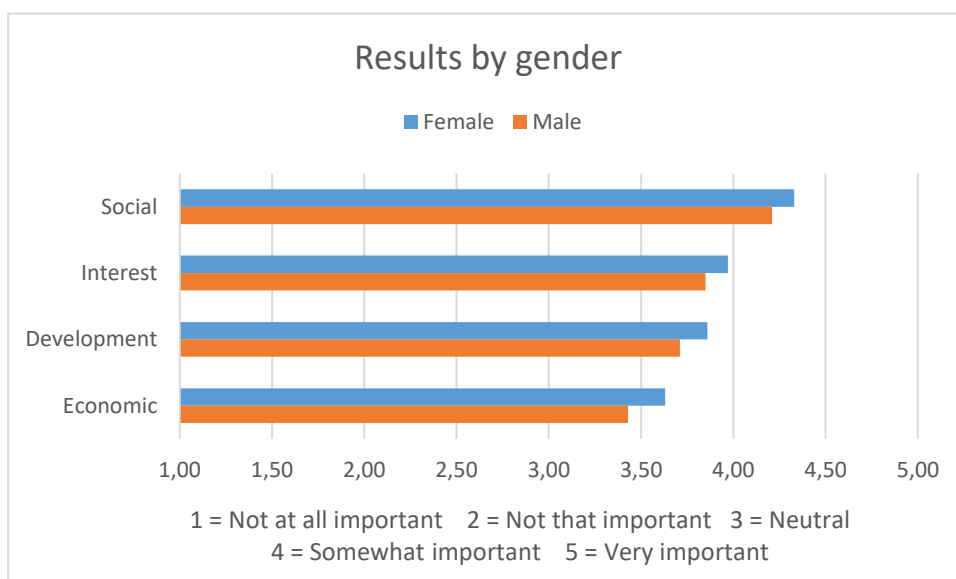


Figure 7. Results by gender

A t-test was also done. The aim for doing the t-test was to see if (1) there are any statistically significant differences between the dimensions of employer attractiveness, and (2) if there are any statistically significant differences between genders. The results for both male and female respondents from the t-test are shown in Table 5. The results are statistically significant ($p = 0,000$) for both genders. The mean for social dimension is significantly higher than for any other dimension for both males and females. There are no statistically significant differences between genders. The confidence intervals for each dimension are shown in Table 5. With 95% confidence, it can be said that if responses would be collected from both males and females of the whole population, the dimensional means for the responses would be somewhere between the lower and upper confidence intervals.

Table 5. T-test results by gender.

		One-Sample Test					
		Test Value = 0					
Gender		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Male	EconomicAverage	41,270	56	,000	3,40852	3,2431	3,5740
	SocialAverage	68,340	56	,000	4,17794	4,0555	4,3004
	InterestAverage	47,396	56	,000	3,80409	3,6433	3,9649
	DevelopmentAverage	44,410	56	,000	3,63910	3,4749	3,8032
Female	EconomicAverage	56,096	101	,000	3,58683	3,4600	3,7137
	SocialAverage	75,099	101	,000	4,27451	4,1616	4,3874
	InterestAverage	59,081	101	,000	3,92320	3,7915	4,0549
	DevelopmentAverage	58,100	101	,000	3,75770	3,6294	3,8860

5.2.3 Results by age groups

This section presents the results by age groups. Table 6 shows both the averages and the standard deviations for each dimension by age groups. Standard deviation indicates how much the responses differ from the average. It can be seen that respondents aged between 54-65 years have slightly higher deviation in their responses compared to the responses of the two other groups. In each group, the development and economic dimensions have had more deviation than social and interest dimensions.

Table 6. Dimension averages and standard deviations by age groups.

	DIMENSION AVERAGES			STANDARD DEVIATIONS		
	26-39 years	40-53 years	54-65 years	26-39 years	40-53 years	54-65 years
Social	4,37	4,31	4,19	0,77	0,71	0,79
Interest	3,82	4,00	3,94	0,79	0,81	0,96
Development	3,89	3,82	3,71	0,91	0,93	1,02
Economic	3,71	3,61	3,36	0,90	0,91	1,04
N	45	63	51	45	63	51

As it can be seen from Table 6 and Figure 8, the most valued among all groups are the social factors. With other factors, there are differences between the groups. For two of the age groups, 40-53 years and 54-65 years, interest factors are second, development factors third, and economic factors fourth most valued. The third age group, 26-39 years, differs from the two other groups. In that group, development factors are second, interest factors third, and economic factors fourth most valued. Yet, the difference between development and interest factors is very small in this group. Another difference between the age groups can be seen from the averages in each dimension. In economic, development and social factors, the importance of the factors decreases when the age of the respondents increases. On the contrary, for interest factors this does not apply. For 40-53-year-old respondents, the interest factors are more important than to the other two groups.

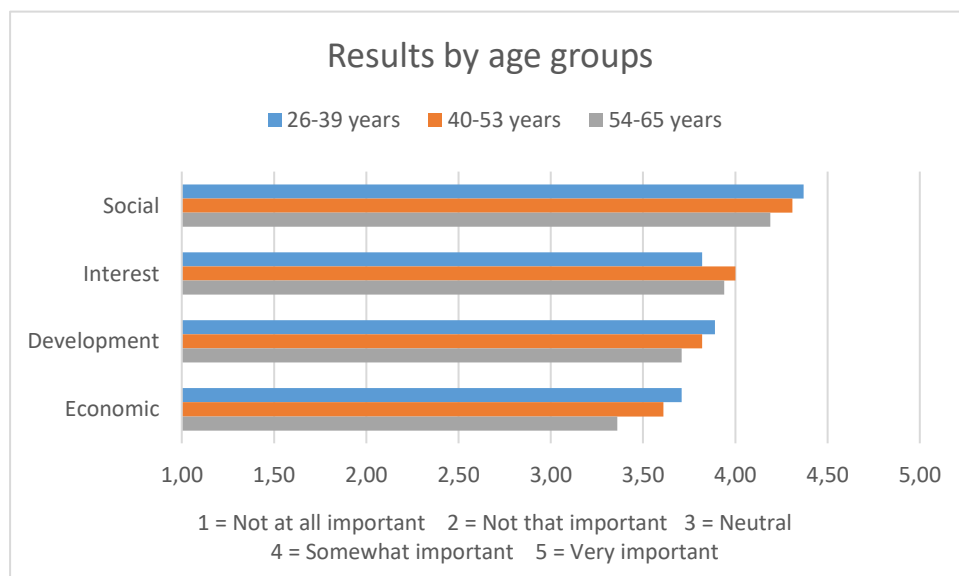


Figure 8. Results by age groups

A t-test was also done. The aim for doing the t-test was to see if (1) there are any statistically significant differences between the dimensions of employer attractiveness, and (2) if there are any statistically significant differences between the age groups. The results from the test for each age group are shown in Table 7. The results are statistically significant ($p = 0,000$) in each group. The dimensional mean for social factors is significantly higher than any other dimension in each age group. There are no statistically significant differences between the age groups. The confidence intervals for each dimension are shown in Table 7. With 95% confidence, it can be said that if responses would be collected from the whole population in these age groups, the dimensional means for the responses would be somewhere between the lower and upper confidence intervals.

Table 7. T-test results by age groups.

		One-Sample Test					
		Test Value = 0					
Age		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
26-39	EconomicAverage	45,901	44	,000	3,67302	3,5117	3,8343
	SocialAverage	48,771	44	,000	4,31429	4,1360	4,4926
	InterestAverage	50,239	44	,000	3,75926	3,6085	3,9101
	DevelopmentAverage	43,375	44	,000	3,78095	3,6053	3,9566
40-53	EconomicAverage	47,161	62	,000	3,57370	3,4222	3,7252
	SocialAverage	70,397	62	,000	4,25397	4,1332	4,3748
	InterestAverage	51,483	62	,000	3,94180	3,7887	4,0949
	DevelopmentAverage	46,463	62	,000	3,72562	3,5653	3,8859
54-65	EconomicAverage	32,443	50	,000	3,32773	3,1217	3,5338
	SocialAverage	53,708	50	,000	4,15686	4,0014	4,3123
	InterestAverage	35,154	50	,000	3,91176	3,6883	4,1353
	DevelopmentAverage	37,237	50	,000	3,64426	3,4477	3,8408

5.2.4 Results by the level of education

This section presents the results by the level of education. Table 8 shows both the averages and the standard deviations for each dimension by age groups. Standard deviation indicates how much the responses differ from the average. Respondents with a doctoral degree have higher deviation in their responses in economic and development dimensions compared to the two other degree groups. In social and interest dimensions, respondents with a master's degree have slightly higher deviation in their responses compared to the two other groups.

Table 8. Dimension averages and standard deviations by the level of education.

	DIMENSION AVERAGES			STANDARD DEVIATIONS		
	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree
Social	4,19	4,32	4,25	0,72	0,78	0,70
Interest	3,66	3,96	3,97	0,85	0,86	0,81
Development	3,59	3,84	3,82	0,96	0,95	0,99
Economic	3,71	3,57	3,38	0,81	0,96	1,06
N	19	114	26	19	114	26

From Table 8 and Figure 9, it can be seen that the social factors are most valued in each level of education. With other factors, there are differences between the groups. For Master's and Doctoral degree groups, interest factors are second, development factors third, and economic factors fourth most valued. For Bachelor's degree group, the economic factors are second, interest factors third, and development factors fourth most valued.

Another difference is in the averages in each dimension between the groups. The importance of development and interest factors increases when the level of education increases as well. However, for the economic factors the importance decreases when the level of education increases.

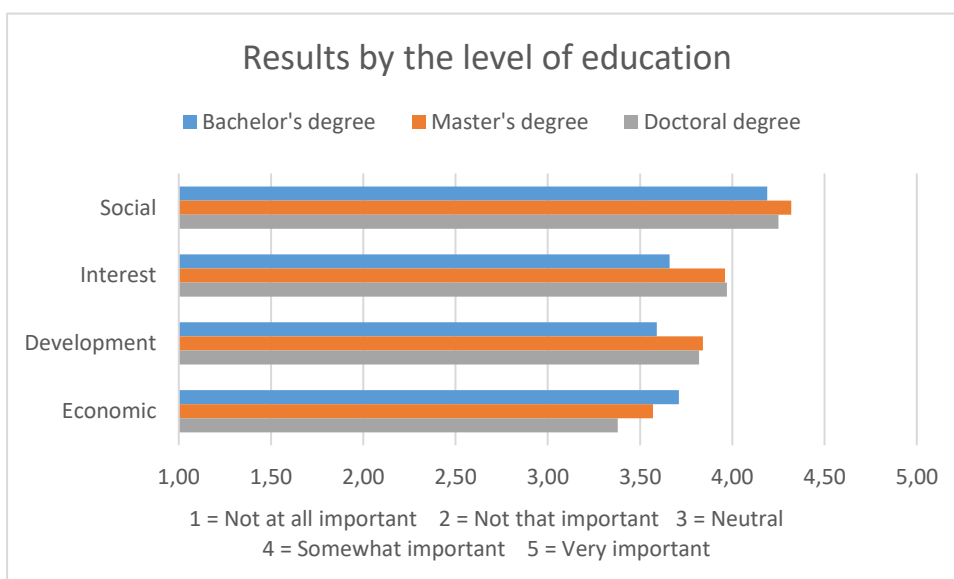


Figure 9. Results by the level of education

A t-test was also done. The aim for doing the t-test was to see if (1) there are any statistically significant differences between the dimensions of employer attractiveness, and (2) if there are any statistically significant differences between the levels of education. The results from the test for each level of education are shown in Table 9. The results are statistically significant ($p = 0,000$) in each level of education. The average for social dimension is significantly higher than any other dimension in each levels of education. There are no statistically significant differences between the levels of education. The confidence intervals for each dimension are also shown in Table 9. With 95% confidence, it can be said that if responses would be collected from the whole population in these education groups, the dimensional means for the responses would be somewhere between the lower and upper confidence intervals.

Table 9. T-test results by the level of education.

		One-Sample Test					
		Test Value = 0					
Education		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Bachelor	EconomicAverage	34,449	18	,000	3,66917	3,4454	3,8929
	SocialAverage	35,535	18	,000	4,13534	3,8908	4,3798
	InterestAverage	24,825	18	,000	3,57018	3,2680	3,8723
	DevelopmentAverage	22,866	18	,000	3,48120	3,1614	3,8011
Master	EconomicAverage	60,947	113	,000	3,53759	3,4226	3,6526
	SocialAverage	80,261	113	,000	4,26190	4,1567	4,3671
	InterestAverage	64,667	113	,000	3,92690	3,8066	4,0472
	DevelopmentAverage	60,101	113	,000	3,73810	3,6149	3,8613
Doctoral	EconomicAverage	20,985	25	,000	3,35165	3,0227	3,6806
	SocialAverage	51,186	25	,000	4,21978	4,0500	4,3896
	InterestAverage	31,724	25	,000	3,90385	3,6504	4,1573
	DevelopmentAverage	39,236	25	,000	3,78571	3,5870	3,9844

5.2.5 Results by the type of employees “teaching vs. administration”

This section presents results by the type of employees. Table 10 shows both the averages and the standard deviations for each dimension for these two groups. Standard deviation indicates how much the responses differ from the average. The most deviation in the responses have been with the development and economic dimensions in both employee groups. For social and interest dimensions, employees in administration have had higher deviation in their responses.

Table 10. Dimension averages and standard deviations by the type of employees.

	Average		Standard Deviation	
	Teaching	Administration	Teaching	Administration
Social	4,30	4,28	0,71	0,81
Interest	3,96	3,89	0,82	0,90
Development	3,82	3,79	0,97	0,95
Economic	3,54	3,58	0,97	0,95
N	87	72	87	72

As is can be seen from Table 10 and Figure 10, social factors are the most valued among both groups. Interest factors are second, development factors third, and economic factors fourth most valued. Also, employees in teaching have slightly higher averages in development, interest and social factors than administration employees. Yet, the difference is small.

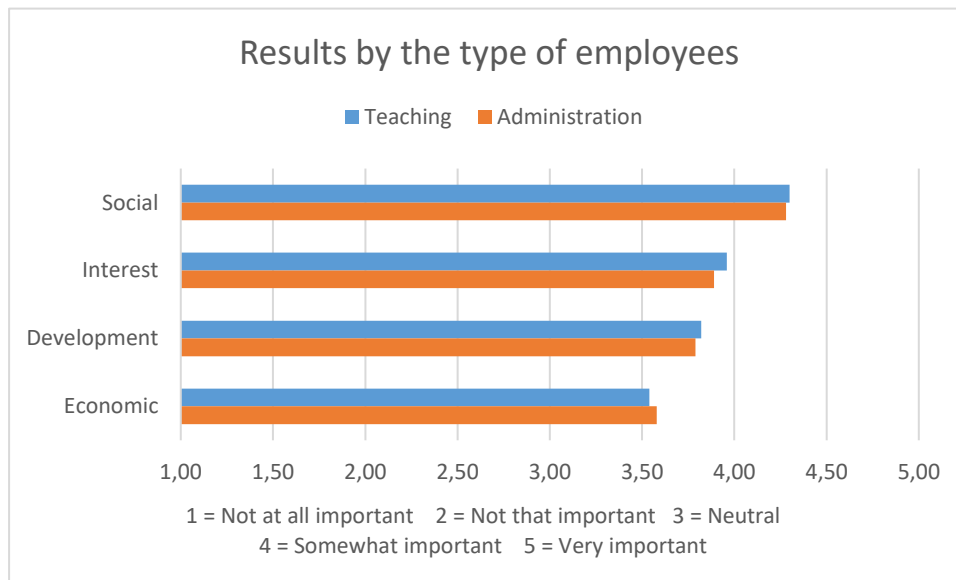


Figure 10. Results by the type of employees

A t-test was also done. The aim for doing the t-test was to see if (1) there are any statistically significant differences between the dimensions of employer attractiveness, and (2) if there are any statistically significant differences between the types of employees. The results from the test for both types of

employees are shown in Table 11. The results are statistically significant ($p = 0,000$) in both groups. The average for social dimension is significantly higher than any other dimension in both employee groups. There are no statistically significant differences between the employee groups. The confidence intervals for each dimension are also shown in Table 11. With 95% confidence, it can be said that if responses would be collected in these two groups from the whole population, the dimensional means for the responses would be somewhere between the lower and upper confidence intervals.

Table 11. T-test results by the type of employees.

		One-Sample Test					
		Test Value = 0					
Department		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Teaching	EconomicAverage	48,348	86	,000	3,50575	3,3616	3,6499
	SocialAverage	87,789	86	,000	4,25944	4,1630	4,3559
	InterestAverage	61,960	86	,000	3,91188	3,7864	4,0374
	DevelopmentAverage	54,106	86	,000	3,74548	3,6079	3,8831
Administration	EconomicAverage	50,018	71	,000	3,54365	3,4024	3,6849
	SocialAverage	57,012	71	,000	4,21627	4,0688	4,3637
	InterestAverage	45,479	71	,000	3,84259	3,6741	4,0111
	DevelopmentAverage	48,831	71	,000	3,67857	3,5284	3,8288

6. DISCUSSION

The main goal for this research was to determine the factors that employees of higher education institutes value when they are considering potential employers. The objective for this research was to understand what higher education institutes in Finland need to offer as an employer in order to (1) attract potential employees to apply for a job, and (2) how the institutes could keep the current employees committed to work within the organization. From the basis of the research problem and objective, the following research questions was formed:

What factors do employees of higher education institutes in Finland value when considering potential employers?

After this, relevant literature was reviewed, and a suitable research methodology and implementation strategy were considered. For the purpose of answering the research question, a quantitative study was conducted with a self-administrated online questionnaire in Webropol. After data collection, the data analysis was conducted and results were presented. This chapter includes a summary of the main findings, suggestions for the higher education institutes, assessment of the results with relevant literature, and limitations of the research are presented. Also, suggestions for future research are given.

6.1 Factors valued by high-quality workforce in Finnish higher education institutes

The most valued factor for high-quality employees in Finnish higher education institutes is “Meaningful and interesting work”. This study has found that generally the social factors are most valued. This means that when the high-quality workforce of Finnish higher education institutes is considering potential employers, they value a workplace that has a positive and happy working environment, people have good relationships with their colleagues, they are working among supportive and encouraging colleagues, people are accepted and they have fun at work. Also, it is important that the employees are valued and respected by the employer. After the social factors came interest factors, then the development factors, and the economic factors were least valued in

this research. The results between genders were very similar and there were no significant differences. Similar results were reached also between the types of employees. There were no significant differences between teaching and administration.

The results between age groups show few differences. In economic, development and social factors, the importance of the factors decreases when the age of the respondents' increases. This could result from the fact that when getting older, work itself can become less important in life. Another difference is in the interest factors. For respondents aged 40-53 years the interest factors are more important than for the other two groups. For them, this could result from the fact that there can be other duties (e.g. family) outside work too. In order to manage work and other duties, the work needs to be interesting.

When looking the results between the levels of education, for the economic factors the importance decreases when the level of education increases. Also, for the respondents with a bachelor's degree, the economic factors are second most valued. These results can result from the differences between the amount of salary earned in each level of education. With a bachelor's degree, the amount of salary is less than with a doctoral degree. Therefore, the respondents with a bachelor's degree might value the economic factors more.

6.2 Recommendations

In this section, recommendations for the Finnish higher education institutes and their human resources are provided. The information received from this research can be used to develop the Finnish higher education institutes towards more attractive employers in the eyes of high-quality workforce. When it comes to attracting and retaining high-quality employees into these institutes, the social dimension should be invested on. This means that, they should introduce themselves as a workplace that has a positive and happy working environment, employees are working among supportive and encouraging colleagues, and there are good relationships between

colleagues. Also, it is important that the employees are valued and respected by the employer, employees are accepted into the working community, and they have fun at work.

There are also individual factors that the institutes need to consider when they want to attract and retain high-quality employees. In Table 2, there are few important factors in development and interest dimensions that would be good to consider in addition to the social factors. As the results showed, “Meaningful and interesting work” was the most valued factor. This would be important to consider when the higher education institutes want to retain high-quality employees committed to work in the organization. If the work is not interesting, the employees will seek the work from somewhere else. The factor “Varying working assignments” was the most valued factor in the development dimension. If the higher education institutes offer varying working assignments for its employees, the work itself could become more interesting. This way these two factors together would help the institutes to retain its employees.

6.3 Assessment of the results in the light of literature

Similarly to the findings in the present study a prior study done by Alnıaçık et al. (2014) has discovered that the economic factors are less valued when attracting and retaining high-quality employees. Alnıaçık et.al. (2014, 338) in their research state, that in general when attracting and retaining employees, non-monetary factors were found to be more important when comparing to monetary factors. The results of this research are in line with this statement.

In the prior research, there were three dimensions for employer attractiveness; economic, functional and psychological dimensions. In contrast, in the present research there were four dimensions. For this reason, the present research has the opportunity to offer more detailed results in the dimensional level. In prior research, the results were presented with the individual factors, not by dimensions. This makes it difficult to compare the results with the present research. However, in the prior research two social factors and one economic factor were most valued. From Table 2, it can be seen that these results differ between the prior and present research.

6.4 Limitations of the research

This section presents the limitations of the research. One of the limitations related to data is the amount of data collected. As presented in data collection (see section 4.3), the total population of this research consisted of 31,343 people that are currently working in higher education with at least a bachelor's degree. The amount of responses collected was 159, which makes approximately 0,5% of the whole population. With a higher response rate, the results would be more credible and thus, more generalizable. One reason for the low response rate could be the fact that in the questionnaire, respondents' contact information was asked. Anonymity is important to some people, and therefore, some people possibly refused to participate.

Can we trust the results? Reliability and validity are issues that have to be determined right at the beginning of the research project. In scientific research, we always have to evaluate the reliability and validity of the work. (Kananen 2011b, 125.)

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the research strategy, data collection and analysis methods were carefully chosen and implemented. Due to the flexibility of surveys, a researcher can design it to suit his/her needs (Mujis 2004, 34). This way, the researcher can ensure that the data collected is relevant and answers the research question. To ensure that the results are trustworthy, a proper data analysis program was used.

The possibility that there can be employees from other countries working in higher education institutes in Finland was recognized. Therefore, the questionnaire was carried out in two languages, Finnish and English. A risk when collecting data with a questionnaire, is that the respondent misinterprets the questions (Wilson 2010, 149). The fact that every respondent has their own way of interpreting the questionnaire was acknowledged. Saunders et.al. (2009, 374), suggests that some reliability for a questionnaire can be obtained by comparing alternative forms, also known as check questions of the same question or groups of questions. Also, these questions show if the respondent has been consistent with the answers. To increase the level of validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was done prior administrating the

questionnaire. The pilot study was conducted to ensure that the questions are clearly defined and easily understood by the respondents. Also, the pilot study tested the functionality of the check questions. The test group consisted both Finnish and English speaking people so that both versions of the questionnaire were tested. By using an online questionnaire, the population was reached more easily.

According to Mujis (2004, 75), quantitative approach makes the results more generalizable. Since the research took place in Finland, the results cannot be generalized in any other country. Also, the research covered only the higher education institutes, and it is hard to tell if the results from this research can be generalized to the whole education industry in Finland. The research answers the intended question, and the demographic information makes the results more generalizable.

6.5 Recommendations for future research

It would be important to study employer attractiveness from several other viewpoints in addition to the focus of the present research. This section presents three recommendations for future research. The nature of employer attractiveness as a topic does not only limit to the education industry. As a first suggestion, this research could be conducted at any workplace regardless of the industry. Secondly, in the future it could be studied how the Finnish higher education institutes are paying attention to these factors valued by the high-quality employees in general. Respondents would evaluate how their employer is currently performing, and what factors of employer attractiveness are now present in the organizations. The results from this research and from the suggested research could be compared. As a result, the institutes would get information of their areas of development when it comes to attracting and retaining high-quality employees. As a third suggestion, since this research took place in Finland, it would be interesting to expand the research into higher education institutes in other countries. This would offer information about the possible cultural differences that would have an impact on the employer attractiveness in the industry. To sum up, many important questions and issues are yet to be resolved.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire content.



Employer attractiveness in higher education institutes

This questionnaire is a part of a research project that aims to gain understanding what attributes attract employees to work in higher education institutes in Finland. Your participation is very important for the research in order to gain as full understanding as possible of this specific topic.

The questionnaire should take about ten minutes to complete. Please answer all the questions presented. Your contact information is asked on the last page. Information and your answers received will be treated with confidence. They are only used for this specific research and aren't forwarded to anyone else.

Answers from this questionnaire will be used as the primary data for a thesis done by a student from a degree programme in international business from JAMK University of Applied Sciences. You will also have the possibility to receive the final results of the study to your email if you wish to.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

All questions are mandatory.

1. Gender *

- Male
- Female

2. Age*

3. What is your highest degree of education? *

- Bachelor's degree (polytechnic or university)
- Master's degree (polytechnic or university)
- Doctoral degree

4. Organization you are working at *

5. Department you are working at *

- Education
- Administration
- Marketing
- Human resources
- Finance and accounting
- Other, what?

The following section presents attributes that measure employer attractiveness. Attributes are related to economic, interest, social and developmental dimensions of employer attraction.

How important are the following to you when considering potential employers? (1 = Not at all important, 2 = Not that important, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat important, 5 = Very important)

Please answer all the questions.

6. Competitive salary.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Having fun at work.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. The opportunity to do varying work assignments.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Fringe benefits (= non-monetary benefits from the employer) for example the usage of a company car or lunch vouchers.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Doing meaningful and interesting work.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Employees are valued and respected by the employer.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Having a clear career path with promotional opportunities.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Receiving financial bonuses in exchange for high performance.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Working for an organization that is a desirable employer and has a good reputation.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Working among supportive and encouraging colleagues.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. The opportunity to work in an international work environment.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Job stability and security.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. The employer is innovative and offers something new to the way of working.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. The feeling of acceptance and belonging in the workplace.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Work-related training opportunities.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Employee benefits (= moderate in cost and the employee can decide whether to use the benefit or not) for example sports vouchers or transportation vouchers.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. The organization produces innovative services or products.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. Working in a positive and happy working environment.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. Gaining career-enhancing experiences for the future.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Paid vacation.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. Organization's future outlook is positive (e.g. financial strength or the organization is growing).

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. Having good relationships between colleagues.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. The opportunity to work abroad.

	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. Sharing feedback with managers and colleagues.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. A salary increase in return for good performance.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. Working for an organization that is admired by the public.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32. Relationships at the workplace.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Questions in this page are mandatory. Your contact information are used only in the purposes of this study, and they aren't forwarded to anyone else.

33. Contact information*

First name	<input type="text"/>
Last name	<input type="text"/>
Email address	<input type="text"/>

34. I would like to receive the final results of the study via email *

- Yes
 No