

**Attracting Top Talent with the Use of Employer Branding: Do Diversity  
Statements in Job Vacancies Make a Difference?**

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### **Abstract**

In order to attract the top talent that will help the company fulfil its business objectives, hiring managers worldwide engage in employer branding. In highly globalised countries such as the Netherlands, it is common practice to mention Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) statements both on career pages and in job vacancies themselves. The current study is designed to test how these statements affect applicants' P-O fit and subsequent job application behaviour and how this differs for minority (non-Dutch) and majority (Dutch) participants. The results of the study indicate that the relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and subsequent job application behaviour is fully mediated by P-O fit and that the direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables is not moderated by participants' nationality minority status. With these findings, the study contributes to previous research by confirming that P-O fit does lead to application behaviour and that the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies may not be as fruitful as previously believed, at least for younger generations in the highly internationalised context of the Netherlands. These findings can contribute to both research and practice by directing efforts further away from D&I statements themselves but rather towards P-O fit and its antecedents.

*Keywords:* Diversity & Inclusion, Employer Branding, Recruitment, P-O Fit, Gen-Z, Millennials

## Introduction

A survey conducted by Deloitte (2020) found that recruitment has become one of the fundamental challenges modern organisations face, leading them toward an endless search for ways to attract, engage and retain talent crucial to their operations (Thunnissen & Buttiens, 2017). The "war for talent," a term defining the daily lives of recruiters today, is used to describe the consequences of extreme competition and labour market tightening in recent years (Sharma & Tanwar, 2021). To succeed in the highly competitive environment, companies apply marketing, HR, and communication tactics to define their employer brand (Jonsen et al., 2019; Kele & Cassell, 2022). While the employer brand consists of many different concepts (Jonsen et al., 2019; Kryger Aggerholm et al., 2011; Tkalac Verčič & Sinčić Ćorić, 2018), diversity & inclusion communications will be the focus of this thesis. Companies in a country such as the Netherlands, with a highly international and diverse workforce (Nuffic, 2018), can significantly profit from branding themselves as inclusive. This will increase their candidate pool and elevate their chances of finding the perfect fit for their open roles. Therefore, the aspect of employer branding explored in the current study is diversity and inclusion (D&I) communication on career pages, a common, if not necessary, practice among companies today (Jonsen et al., 2019).

Empirical research has named employer branding one of the best ways companies can improve organisational attractiveness and so appeal to job seekers (Jonsen et al., 2019; Sharma & Tanwar, 2021). With millennials and generation Z entering the workforce, companies must adjust their strategies to fit the new target group (Sharma & Tanwar, 2021). As these generations are brought up to be environmentally and socially conscious or "woke" (Cohen et al., 2017; Eastman & Iyer, 2021; Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015), companies can benefit greatly from branding themselves as such as well. For example, Catano & Morrow Hines (2016) found that companies advertising their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and psychologically healthy workplace significantly increased organisational attractiveness for millennial applicants, who seek out companies with values in harmony with their own. Additionally, Madera et al. (2018) found that investment in diversity management positively influences person-organisation (P-O) fit and organisational attraction. The results also

revealed that perceived similarities between the applicant and current employees increase the applicant's attraction toward the organisation (Madera et al., 2018). This is due to perceived value fit, personality, and interpersonal attitudes (Catano & Morrow Hines, 2016). By this logic, companies engaging in diversity signalling should be perceived as more attractive by minority candidates.

Nevertheless, most studies examining the effects of diversity & inclusion statements on job vacancies predominantly use organisational attraction, application intention, or offer acceptance intention as dependent variables (Carless, 2005). However, intentions are not the same as real job choices (Rynes et al., 2006). This is the research gap the current experiment is designed to fill. With job application behaviours as the outcome variable, this study investigates the effects of inclusion & diversity statements in job vacancies on applicants' P-O fit and subsequent job application behaviour. Moreover, in the highly international context of the Netherlands, it is interesting to explore how the relationship differs between international and Dutch participants. While a study by Ng & Burke (2005) confirmed that D&I statements have a stronger positive effect on nationality minority groups, in their case, non-Canadian, the relationship might be even stronger in the Netherlands due to the extra language barrier. The relationship is hypothesised to be moderated by participants' nationality minority status (Dutch or non-Dutch), a relevant minority dimension in the highly international Dutch job market.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Employer Branding**

Matching people to roles best fitting them is a central concern for all organisations, as attracting and hiring, and retaining top talent can be an effective route toward competitive advantage (Barney, 1986; Greening & Turban, 2000; Yu & Cable, 2010). However, when recruiting, companies must consider that job selection decisions are closely connected to the reputation of an organisation, which can, in turn, be influenced by the information offered about the corporation to potential employees (Tkalac Verčič & Sinčić Ćorić, 2018). While the information on company websites can indicate what working there might look like, job applicants still face uncertainty about their potential employer and work environment (Yu, 2014).

As proposed by singling theory, this uncertainty means that job seekers must make sense of their job search through socio-cognitive processes such as reflection, interpretation, and giving meaning to their experiences and interactions with the company (Connelly et al., 201; Spence, 1973). For example, applicants make inferences about employer characteristics based on their experience with recruiters, interviews, and communication. This was further proven in a study by Rynes et al. (2006), which revealed that experiences during recruitment aided applicants in forming expectations about organisational efficiency and workplace culture. To prevent applicants from making far-fetched inferences, companies can give applicants complete, correct, and positive information about their potential future workplace (Tkalac Verčič & Sinčić Ćorić, 2018). To do so, hiring managers can use reputation management, CSR, and employer branding.

Development of CSR strategies improves reputation among both internal and external stakeholders, which in turn helps attract talent, motivate and retain employees and build a positive corporate brand (Tkalac Verčič & Sinčić Ćorić, 2018). Research conducted by Turban and Greening (1997) demonstrated that engaging in CSR enhances reputation and attracts quality candidates. This effect can be multiplied with employer branding, which is defined as the "sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work" (Tavassoli, 2008). For the company, its brand and reputation consist of its human capital, strategic capabilities, and culture (Tkalac Verčič & Sinčić Ćorić, 2018). On the other hand, the applicant can use the employer's branding to make inferences about what it is like to work for the company, including psychological and economic benefits. Since the objectives of the job seeker and employer are often not aligned, companies, possessing an informational advantage, have a moral responsibility to project an authentic employee experience (Tkalac Verčič & Sinčić Ćorić, 2018).

When companies convey their brand accurately, job seekers may assess how well their values are reflected in the company, based upon which they can make an informed job pursuit decision (Kele & Cassell, 2022). As this is something companies are aware of and have been practicing, the current study aims to test how effective

these practices really are in provoking positive application behaviour among future and recent graduates in the Netherlands.

### **Diversity & Inclusion**

In today's globalised world, organisations recognise the importance of embracing workforce diversity in becoming an employer of choice (Jonsen et al., 2019; Kele & Cassell, 2022). While diversity describes the composition of a given group or workforce - often in observable differences such as ethnic background, age, or gender, inclusion refers to how individuals are included in group activities and decision-making processes (Roberson, 2019). Put simply, diversity is being invited to a party, and inclusion is getting asked to dance. Sharing diversity and inclusion efforts on career pages enables organisations to attract top talent, increase their talent pool, and ultimately profit from a diverse workforce (Ng & Burke, 2005).

Moreover, diversity and inclusion statements can establish the company as a "diversity driven employer" and a "great place to work," two desirable employer characteristics for job seekers (Edwards & Kelan, 2011). In addition, diversity has a visual appeal and commercial benefits due to the resources a diverse workforce can provide, such as language, diverse perspectives, cultural knowledge, and social networks (Kele & Cassell, 2022), especially valuable in today's globalised market. Nevertheless, the incorporation of diversity & inclusion in employer branding efforts might intensify scrutiny of the company's actual business practice if not aligned (Kele & Cassell, 2022).

Despite that, the benefits of inclusion & diversity signals in company branding, such as increased attraction, larger candidate pool, and workplace desirability, strongly outweigh the negatives, especially if the company's communications about D&I are aligned with its actions (Roberson, 2019). For example, Colquitt et al. (2001) found that companies that promote fairness and equal opportunity generally act on their values and tend to be egalitarian while giving all their employees opportunities for development and growth. And because millennials and Gen Z care about how they are treated at work and wish to work for a company that cares about their development & growth (Bejtkovský, 2018), it is in the company's own best interest to strive towards an bias-free, inclusive, and multicultural workplace.

While there is a magnitude of studies about D&I and its effect on current and future employees, little research has investigated the effects of including a D&I statement in job listings on actual application behaviour rather than pure intention or fit (Carless, 2005). Therefore, the effects of D&I communication on job application behaviour will be examined in the current study.

*Hypothesis 1: The relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and job pursuit behaviour is positive.*

### **Person-Organisation Fit theory**

Although several predictors of organisational attraction have been developed and tested, few have earned as much attention as person–organisation (P-O) fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). P-O fit theory proposes that characteristics of organisations and employee characteristics have the potential to intersect and that the level of overlap can positively affect job application intentions (Cable & Judge, 1996; Madera et al., 2018). Fit can either be supplementary, which occurs when a person has similar characteristics to other individuals or the company, or complementary, which arises when the individual and the situation meet each other's needs in a mutually beneficial relationship (Carless, 2005).

The importance of P-O fit to companies wanting to attract top talent is highlighted by the Chapman et al. (2005) meta-analysis, which found that P-O fit explains as much as 31% of the variance in organisational attraction. As a measure, P-O fit also sheds light on how job choices are made (Ng & Burke, 2005). In addition, P-O fit is often used to predict future behaviours and attitudes when the individual becomes an organisation employee. For example, studies showed that P-O fit is negatively related to intentions to quit while positively related to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviours (Verquer et al., 2003). Hence, it is interesting to include P-O fit in the model investigated in this study.

*Hypothesis 2: The relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements and job application behaviour is mediated by P-O fit.*

In this thesis, this direct relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements and job application behaviour is proposed to be moderated by the individual's nationality minority status. Minority candidates, just like non-minority candidates, look for value congruence and opportunities to grow in their job (Ng & Burke, 2005). They are thus as likely to pursue jobs at companies advertising growth opportunities (Ng & Burke, 2005). Therefore, companies' communication regarding their affiliation with minorities is more important for minorities than non-minorities, but hardly ever fends off non-minority candidates from the job as opportunities for growth are not necessarily a zero-sum game (Roberson, 2019).

This was confirmed in a study by Ng & Burke (2005), which showed that minority candidates saw diversity management practices as an essential factor when considering potential employers. In another part of their study, they also measured the importance of D&I practices for people who recently moved to Canada (the country where the study was conducted) and found that they rated companies with D&I favourably more than those without (Ng & Burke, 2005). These findings are especially interesting for this study as it looks explicitly at how ex-pats (in this study, the non-Dutch group) perceive the importance of D&I in a company.

*Hypothesis 3: The positive relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and job pursuit behaviour is moderated by applicants' nationality, such that the relationship is stronger for non-Dutch than Dutch participants.*

### **Current Study**

The current study contributes to existing research (Bopp et al., 2014; Catano & Morrow Hines, 2016; Greening & Turban, 2000; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Madera et al., 2018; Sharma & Tanwar, 2021) by directly examining whether the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies increases P-O fit and subsequent job pursuit behaviour. By testing job pursuit behaviours rather than solely attraction or application intention, this study fills a gap in the literature. Furthermore, the relationship is hypothesised to be moderated by participants' minority status in terms of nationality, such that the effect is

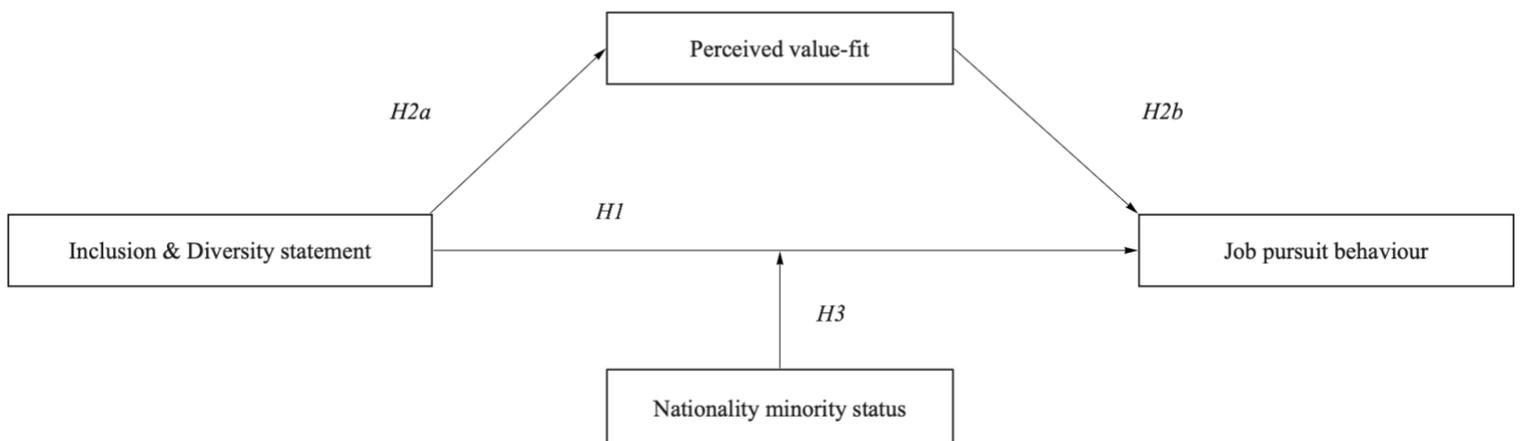
higher for minority (non-Dutch) members than majority (Dutch) members, see Figure 1 for a visual representation of the model. The results of the study will reveal whether including D&I statements in job listings impacts job application behaviours and will thus provide insights that companies can use when developing their employer brand. The hypotheses are as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* The relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and job pursuit behaviour is positive.

*Hypothesis 2:* The relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and job pursuit behaviour is mediated by perceived P-O fit.

*Hypothesis 3:* The relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and job pursuit behaviour is moderated by applicants' nationality, such that the relationship is stronger for non-Dutch than Dutch participants.

Figure 1



## Methods

A between-subject, 2 x 2 experiment was performed to answer the research question. The experiment took place online, via Qualtrics. Before distributing the experiment survey, the study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Review Board at Utrecht University.

## Design

In the study, two manipulations were used. First, the control group saw a job vacancy without a D&I statement and the condition group a vacancy with a D&I statement. The two possible participant minority statuses (0 = Dutch, 1 = non-Dutch) crossed these two manipulations, resulting in a 2 x 2 factorial study design.

Participant's assignment to the condition or control group is the independent variable (0 = Control, 1 = Condition), while their subsequent application behaviour (0 = not interested, 1 = Apply) is the dependent variable. The relationship between the two is hypothesised to be mediated by P-O fit, a relationship derived from previous studies (Kele & Cassell, 2022; Madera et al., 2018; Sharma & Tanwar, 2021). Furthermore, it is also hypothesised that the relationship between the independent variable and the outcome variable is moderated by the participants' nationality minority status, such that minority (non-Dutch) participants will have a stronger relationship between the IV and DV than the majority (Dutch) participants.

The model also includes two covariates - gender and current job search of participants. Firstly, gender will be controlled as previous research has already confirmed that the inclusion of diversity statements in job vacancies has a stronger effect on women's job application intentions than men's (Bopp et al., 2014). Therefore, to avoid gender clouding the data, it was included as a covariate. Second, even though participants are instructed to imagine that they are searching for a job similar to the one displayed in the experiment, current job search behaviours were controlled to account for the effects that may have on the model. To measure this, participants were asked to state whether they were currently searching for a job at the end of the survey.

## Respondents

An a-priori power analysis using GPower (Erdfelder et al., 1996) with power (1 -  $\beta$ ) set at 0.80 and  $\alpha = .05$  was performed to determine the appropriate sample size for the experiment. The results indicated that to detect a small effect ( $f = 0.21$ ), found in a study similar to this thesis' (Rau & Hyland, 2003), a total of 215 participants is needed.

To recruit participants, the researcher used self-selection sampling grounded in convenience and snowball sampling at Utrecht University and in their network of students and recent graduates in the Netherlands. In addition, participants were

recruited through the online system Survey Circle, operating on a quid-pro-quo basis. In total, 294 responses were collected, yet, 60 participants failed to complete the survey, and two requested their data to be withdrawn after the debriefing leaving 232 participants. In addition, five participants selected the option "Non-Binary / Prefer not to say" as their gender and were deleted from the data set. Thus, after data cleaning, a total of 227 participants remained.

The remaining 227 participants ( $M_{\text{age}}$  24 years; SD 3.2 years) were predominantly female ( $N = 152$ , 67%), while 75 participants (33%) were male. Most participants were non-Dutch ( $N = 119$ , 52%); however, with 108 (48%) Dutch participants, the difference was not severe and therefore not corrected for in any way.

## **Instruments**

### ***Inclusion of D&I Statement in Job Listing***

The job vacancy descriptions were developed based on a job vacancy found on LinkedIn, which included a D&I statement. The company's name was replaced by a fictitious name, generated by a random company name generator. The job description was condensed and adjusted to fit the scope of the study. For example, applicant requirements were relaxed to fit the sample and avoid participants deciding not to apply due to feelings of inadequacy. To create the manipulations, the D&I statement in the original vacancy was edited to cover nationality-based differences and a company culture of speaking English. As a result, the job vacancy displayed in the control group was virtually identical, only omitting the D&I statement and requirement to speak English.

### ***P-O Fit***

P-O fit was measured through the two-item seven-point Likert scale (1 = Completely disagree to 7 = Completely agree) developed by Cable & Judge (1996). Even though the 2-item measure by Cable and Judge has been proven reliable, it was supplemented by two other seven-point Likert scale items to ensure reliability and validity of the P-O fit measure, as was done in a recent study by Sharma and Tanwar (2021). This resulted in a 4-item scale ( $\alpha = .851$ ). The following items constituted the final scale: 1 = My skills and abilities are the same as the ones this organisation looks for while selecting an applicant.; 2 = I think my values are identical with those already

working in this organisation. 3 = I believe my style of working suits this organisation and vice versa. 4 = The image of this organisation goes well with my personality. To make the survey mobile-phone compatible and obtain more precise data from participants, the 7-point Likert scale was replaced by a slider from 0 to 1 (0 = Disagree, 1 = Agree). Participants could place the slider at any point in between the two options.

### ***Job Pursuit Behaviour***

The participant expressed job pursuit behaviour by either clicking on a programmed "Apply" button in the Qualtrics environment or a "Not interested" button.

### **Procedure**

Firstly, participants were given basic study information and asked to provide informed consent. Second, participants selected their nationality, based on which they were assigned to either a control group, where a job description without a D&I statement was shown, or the condition group, where the job description included a D&I statement. This resulted in 110 participants in the condition group and 117 in the control group.

Third, participants were asked to imagine themselves as job seekers and that they came across the following vacancy online. After being shown the vacancy, participants could either click "Apply" or "Not interested," thereby providing data on their job pursuit behaviour. After this, they were redirected to a questionnaire assessing their perceived person-organisation fit. Next, participants were debriefed that the job vacancy was fictional and that they did not apply.

After the debriefing, participants were allowed to withdraw their data from the study by selecting the option "I no longer wish to participate in the study." Lastly, they were asked about their gender, age, and whether they are currently searching for a job, after which they were thanked for their participation and given the researcher's contact details.

### **Analysis**

Several analyses were conducted to obtain the results of the study. First, a principal components analysis (PCA) was run on a four-question questionnaire measuring P-O fit. As all other measures were 1-item only, P-O fit was the only one that a PCA had to be conducted on. After that, the reliability of the P-O fit items was

assessed. Next, the main analysis was conducted using the SPSS extension Hayes Process Macro V4 Model 5. Lastly, to be able to run a regression analysis, several assumptions were checked.

## **Results**

### **Principal Component Analysis**

First, an assessment of the suitability of PCA was made for the 4 P-O fit items. An inspection of the correlation matrix showed that all variables except one had at least one correlation coefficient greater than 0.3. Despite the correlations for Q1 of the questionnaire being lower than 0.3, it was determined that the item should be kept in the analysis as removing 1 component out of 4 would change the outcome greatly for a slight increase in an already sufficient Cronbach's Alpha (from .789 to .829). The overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure for the 4 items was 0.70; with 75% of individual KMO measures greater than 0.6, classifications of 'mediocre' to 'middling' according to Kaiser (1974). Moreover, Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), implying that the data is factorizable. The PCA, with the Varimax rotation technique, revealed three components that had eigenvalues greater than one and explained 62% of the total variance. Visual inspection of the scree plot confirmed that all four components should be retained (Cattell, 1966). The final four-component measure explained 62% of the total variance.

### **Hypothesis testing**

First, the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables are summarised in Table 2. Upon inspection of the correlation matrix, a significant weak correlation was found between the IV, inclusion of D&I statement in job listing and the mediator, P-O fit ( $r(221) = .15, p = .027$ ). Moreover, P-O Fit was also found to be moderately correlated to the OV, Job Application behaviour ( $r(221) = .59, p < .01$ ). These results combined indicate that hypothesis 2, that the relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job listings and job application behaviour is mediated by P-O fit, is likely to be confirmed. Nevertheless, the moderator, nationality minority status, was not correlated to any of the other variables, suggesting that the moderation will not be significant in the main analysis either. The first control variable, current job

search, had a weak but significant correlation with P-O fit ( $r(221) = .14, p = .038$ ), while the second control variable, gender, had a weak yet significant correlation with job application behaviour ( $r(221) = .16, p = .019$ ). These correlations confirm that including gender and current job search was sensible as it prevents them from clouding the data.

Table 2

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. D&I statement in the job listing <sup>a</sup>	0.48	0.50	—					
2. P-O Fit <sup>b</sup>	0.64	0.17	.15*	—				
3. Nationality minority status <sup>a</sup>	0.52	0.50	-.01	-.01	—			
4. Job application behaviour <sup>a</sup>	0.71	0.45	.05	.59**	.12	—		
5. Current Job Search <sup>a</sup>	.38	0.49	.02	.14*	.06	.08	—	
6. Gender <sup>a</sup>	0.67	0.47	-.05	.05	-.01	.16*	-.02	—

<sup>a</sup> D&I statement in job listing (0 = no, 1 = yes)

<sup>b</sup> P-O Fit was measured on a slider scale from 0 (Disagree) to 1 (Agree) and participants could select any value in between.

<sup>c</sup> Nationality minority status (0 = Dutch, 1 = non-Dutch)

<sup>d</sup> Job application behaviour (0 = Not interested, 1 = Apply)

<sup>e</sup> Current job search (0 = no, 1 = yes)

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$

Second, a logistic regression was run using the Model 5 Hayes Process Macro V4 extension of SPSS. There were 4 significant correlations between the variables in

the model - namely between the inclusion of a D&I statement in the job listing and P-O fit, between P-O fit and job application behaviour, between P-O fit and current job search, and gender and job application behaviour. These results are further explored through a regression, the results of which are summarised in Table 3.

Overall, with a McFadden pseudo  $R^2$  value of .344, the model achieved “perfect fit” (Hensher et al., 1979), meaning that the regression model explained the data very well. Despite that, Hypothesis 1, that the direct relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and job pursuit behaviour is positive, was not confirmed as the relationship was not statistically significant ( $\beta = -.17$ , CI (-1.27, .92),  $p = .76$ ).

On the contrary, hypothesis 2, that the relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and job pursuit behaviour is mediated by P-O fit was confirmed, with P-O fit fully mediating the relationship between the independent and dependent variables ( $b = .59$ , CI (.08, 1.25)). Firstly, the relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in the job listing and PO-fit was small yet significant ( $\beta = .05$ , CI (.01, .10),  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that seeing a job listing with a D&I statement, compared to one without increases participants’ P-O fit by 5%. Second, the relationship between P-O fit and job application behaviour was also significant ( $\beta = 11.65$ , CI (8.27, 15.02),  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that P-O fit predicts job application behaviour such that the odds of applying for the job increase 11-fold when P-O fit maximised and equal to 100.

Hypothesis 3, that the positive relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job listings positively affects job pursuit behaviour ( $\beta = -.17$ , CI (-1.27, .92),  $p = .76$ ) and that this relationship is moderated by participants’ nationality such that it is stronger for non-Dutch participants than Dutch participants was also not confirmed ( $\beta = -.05$ , CI (-1.57, 1.47),  $p = .95$ ).

Lastly, in order to limit the influence of variables outside of the model, two control variables were included in the analysis - gender and current job search. Current job search was not proven to significantly affect job application behaviour ( $\beta = -.22$ , CI (-1.03, .58),  $p = .56$ ). Gender, on the other hand, was found to have a statistically significant effect on the outcome variable ( $\beta = .87$ , CI (.09, 1.65),  $p < 0.05$ ). Because the  $\beta$  is lower than 1, these results can be interpreted as: the job application event is less likely to occur for men than women, consistent with expectations (Bopp et al., 2014).

Table 3

## a) Outcome Variable: Job application behaviour

Variable	b	SE b	z	p
Constant	-7.05 [-9.33, -4.77]	1.16	-6.06	$p < .001$
Treatment Group (IV)	-.17 [-1.27, .92]	.56	-.31	.76
P-O fit	11.65 [8.27, 15.02]	1.72	6.76	$p < .001$
Nationality	1.05 [-.002, 2.11]	.54	1.96	$p < .05$
Treatment Group x Nationality	-.05 [-1.57, 1.47]	.78	-.06	.95
Current job search	-.22 [-1.03, .58]	.41	-.55	.56
Gender	.87 [.09, 1.65]	.40	2.18	$p < .05$

## b) Mediation results (OV - P-O fit)

Variable	b	SE b	t	p
Constant	.58 [.53, .63]	.03	23.75	$p < .001$
Treatment Group (IV)	.05 [.01, .10]	.02	2.25	$p < .05$

## c) Indirect effect of Treatment Group (IV) on Job Application Behaviour (DV)

Variable	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
P-O Fit	.59	.30	.08	1.25

<sup>a</sup> D&I statement in job listing (0 = no, 1 = yes)

<sup>b</sup> P-O Fit was measured on a slider scale from 0 (Disagree) to 1 (Agree) and participants could select any value in between.

<sup>c</sup> Nationality minority status (0 = Dutch, 1 = non-Dutch)

<sup>d</sup> Job application behaviour (0 = Not interested, 1 = Apply)

<sup>e</sup> Current job search (0 = no, 1 = yes)

*Note.* SE, LLCI and ULCI in c) are based on Bootstrapping = 5000

Third, to be able to run a regression through Process Hayes Macro v.4 model 5, the data had to be tested for assumptions of a logistic regression (Laerd Statistics, 2017). The first assumption, that the outcome variable is dichotomous, was met, as the outcome variable in this study was job pursuit behaviour (0 = not interested, 1 = apply). The second assumption that there are one or more independent variables was also met. The third assumption that there must be independence of observations, was also met, and so was the fourth assumption, that the categories of the dichotomous dependent variable and nominal independent variable are mutually exclusive and exhaustive. The fifth assumption that there should be a minimum of 15 cases per independent variable was also met as the number of cases per IV exceeds 60. The sixth assumption that the data must not show multicollinearity (Laerd Statistics, 2017), was tested with the Chi-square test due to the binary nature of all independent variables (Rockwell, 1975). The results were insignificant therefore confirming the lack of multicollinearity in the data (Laerd Statistics, 2017). The seventh assumption that there should not be any significant outliers, was tested with a visual inspection of a boxplot. No outliers were detected. For the eighth assumption, the data had to be checked for normality. First, A numeric normality check was run for the continuous variable P-O fit. With skewness

values below 3 and kurtosis values below 4, it was concluded that the data for P-O fit is normally distributed (Mardia, 1974). Because the Shapiro-Wilk test is sensitive to sample size and the likelihood of obtaining a p-value larger than 0,05 is low for sample sizes larger than 40 (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012), another numerical check was performed to check the categorical variables' normal distribution. The numerical check showed that the data is normally distributed as skewness values did not exceed 3 and kurtosis values did not exceed 4 (Mardia, 1974). Hence, all the assumptions of a logistic regression were met (Laerd Statistics, 2017).

### **Discussion**

The objective of this study was to test the effect of D&I statements in job vacancies on job application behaviour, the role P-O fit in the equation, and how the relationship differs for non-minorities, in this case, Dutch nationals and minorities – non-Dutch nationals. The first hypothesis that the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies positively affects job application behaviour was not confirmed, nor was the moderating effect of nationality minority status (Hypothesis 3). On the contrary, Hypothesis 2, that the relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job listings and job application behaviour is mediated by perceived P-O fit, was statistically significant and confirmed. The results indicated that P-O fit increases if the job listing includes a D&I statement and that with a higher P-O fit, the odds of positive application behaviour increase. Moreover, consistent with theory (Bopp et al., 2014), females were more likely to apply in case of a D&I statement in the job listing than males. In this section, these findings will be discussed in detail, together with their practical & theoretical implications.

#### **Direct Effect Between I&D Statements in Job Vacancies and Job Application Behaviour**

There was no effect between the inclusion of and D&I statement in the job listing and subsequent job application behaviour. This could be due to several reasons. First, job application decisions occur after complex evaluations of the offer and could thus be affected by many different things. The D&I statement, while elaborate, could have been overshadowed by the other, possibly discouraging information in the job listing. For example, in a 2018 study about job preferences of Millennial applicants,

Bejtkovský (2018) discovered that space for personal development, job stability, salary, and good social relationships in the workplace are key factors for the generation. These are factors not specifically mentioned in the experiment and could lead to lower application rates. Correspondingly, the job vacancy could have been attractive regardless of the statement.

Second, Saini et al. (2015) found that employer familiarity increases applicants' attraction to the organisation. This familiarity can be developed subconsciously by seeing cues in the media such as the news, photos, or slogans. With the amount of time today's young generations spend on social media (Scott et al., 2017), it is possible that the lack of familiarity contributed to the absence of interest (Saini et al., 2015).

Third, the inclusion of a D&I statement in the job listing did not affect application behaviours, as D&I positive policies may be considered a must-have by the younger generations (Ngoc Thang et al., 2022) and therefore assumed to be present in all companies. Even if a D&I statement is not included in a job vacancy, it can be assumed that it is on the company's webpage. These generations grew up with mobile phones in hand (Ngoc Thang et al., 2022), while issues such as Greenwashing, #metoo, LGBTQI+ Rights, the Income Gap, and #BlackLivesMatter (History.com, 2021), to name a few, were major parts of social media discourse. They internalise the issues and consider making the world a better place as a personal responsibility (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). Participants may be aware that virtually every company in the West has a diversity policy and a strong incentive to advertise it (Jonsen et al., 2019) while also being critical of its impact. Therefore, D&I policy not being included explicitly might not have triggered warning signals, and the job listing could have been regarded as attractive regardless.

### **Mediating Effect of P-O Fit**

While the effect of the inclusion of D&I statements on P-O fit was small - the inclusion of a D&I statement only increased P-O fit by 5%, higher P-O fit was also proven to increase the odds of a positive application decision significantly.

With these results, this study fulfilled its aim of expanding on past research. While research has previously examined the effects of D&I signalling on organisational attraction, P-O fit, and job pursuit intentions (Bopp et al., 2014; Cable & Judge, 1996; Carless, 2005; Catano & Morrow Hines, 2016; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Madera et al.,

2018; Ng & Burke, 2005; Rau & Hyland, 2003), not much is known about how these constructs affect job application behaviour. While it was beyond the scope of the study to investigate all of the constructs, P-O fit was found to explain as much as 31% variance in organisational attraction (Chapman et al., 2005) and is also often used to predict job pursuit intention (Ng & Burke, 2005), which means that the results of this study can be extended to cover the entire research gap. Future research recommendations will be discussed later on in the text.

Furthermore, this study can have vast practical implications for hiring managers struggling to do their job in today's highly competitive environment (Deloitte, 2020; Kele & Cassell, 2022; Sharma & Tanwar, 2021; Thunnissen & Buttiens, 2017). While companies should continue to include their D&I policy in their employer branding efforts, hiring managers should focus their energy primarily on P-O fit when developing job descriptions for their vacancies. This study revealed the importance of perceived P-O fit for subsequent job application behaviours and if implemented correctly, could have important implications for hiring managers struggling to attract top talent. Even though it is expected that companies' employer branding reflects the reality of the employee experience and the aim of employer branding should be to achieve true P-O fit to benefit from outcomes such as organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours (Verquer et al., 2003), companies could look into ways in which they can attract most millennial and gen Z applicants by directly targeting the stereotypical characteristics of the generations (Bejtkovský, 2018; Cohen et al., 2017; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Ngoc Thang et al., 2022; Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). Additionally, companies can advertise hybrid working, flexible working hours and company culture in job vacancies as these will directly impact the applicants working experience if they do decide to start the job.

### **The Moderating Effects of Nationality Minority Status**

The third hypothesis that the relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and job application behaviour is stronger for minority (non-Dutch) than for non-minority (Dutch) participants was also rejected. A possible explanation for the lack of effect is that non-Dutch nationals are not a true minority in the Netherlands, especially if they have lived there for a few years. In addition, while non-

Dutch nationals may often feel excluded in social situations due to the language barrier (Hong et al., 2017), there are many multinational companies based in the Netherlands whose business language is English and who frequently recruit internationals. Furthermore, Dutch participants were also not expected to be discouraged by the D&I statement, as D&I policies are rarely regarded negatively by the majority group (Roberson, 2019), nor the requirement to speak English (van Meurs et al., 2007), as Dutch children learn to speak English from a young age and are often expected to complete their university studies fully in English as well (Nuffic, 2018; van Meurs et al., 2007).

### **Limitations & Future Research**

This study contributed to contemporary research by using job application behaviour rather than intention or attraction as an outcome variable and has thus provided insight into how the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and P-O fit affect application behaviour. The findings can have vast consequences for both practice and research. Nonetheless, the current study also has its limitations. Firstly, the job vacancy used in the experiment was fictitious, and participants reacted to it, aware that it was part of an experiment and therefore inconsequential to their lives. Second, the generalizability of the results is limited by the available sample. While the sample size was sufficient for this study, the study would benefit from a more diverse participant pool. Third, even though there was a balance in Dutch and non-Dutch participants, the study lacked diversity in ethnicity, SES, and study program. Besides, while nationality is a relevant diversity dimension in the highly international Dutch job market, it is important to include the perspectives of other minorities, such as ethnic or sexual. Due to the limited resources dedicated to this paper, it was beyond the scope of this study to recruit large enough numbers of such minorities, which is why these diversity dimensions could not be included in the model.

Another limitation of this study is that the participant pool mostly consisted of students and recent graduates. As evidenced by Peterson and Merunka (2014), the generalizability of research conducted on college student samples is often poor. Moreover, as stated by Ryan & Ployhart (2000), asking students about their perceptions does not equate to asking actual applicants about their opinions. While it was

impossible to take this into account in the current study due to limited time and resources, it could be useful to replicate this study with an employment-seeking, experienced sample.

As previously mentioned, exploring other company characteristics potentially increasing an applicant's P-O fit could be beneficial. While there was a small effect of the inclusion of the I&D statement in the job listing on P-O fit, there is still a lot to be explored. Even though there is a magnitude of research on employer characteristics important to millennials (Bejtkovský, 2018; Catano & Morrow Hines, 2016; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017), it would be beneficial to replicate these studies with a Gen Z sample. Lastly, a qualitative, exploratory study of the international student experience in the Netherlands would be beneficial in truly understanding the dynamics of the minority used in this paper. At the moment, information about the experiences of non-Dutch nationals is largely anecdotal and lacks scientific backing.

### **Conclusion**

With competition for talent on the rise, hiring managers must proactively explore ways in which they can convince applicants that their company is the one they should want to work for (Deloitte, 2020; Kele & Cassell, 2022; Sharma & Tanwar, 2021; Thunnissen & Buttiens, 2017). This can be communicated through employer branding (Kele & Cassell, 2022; Kryger Aggerholm et al., 2011; Saini et al., 2015; Sharma & Tanwar, 2021; Tavassoli, 2008). Due to high internationality in the Netherlands, companies are looking out for ways to make their organisation more minority friendly and diverse. By sharing their D&I policies in job vacancies, companies can brand themselves as such. From this, the following research question arises: Does the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies directly influence job application behaviours and what role do P-O fit and applicant nationality minority status play in the equation?

In order to test how effective the common practice truly is, this study explored the relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancies and subsequent job application behaviour in a 2x2 experiment. Furthermore, the mediating effect of P-O fit and moderating effect of nationality minority status (Dutch / non-Dutch) was tested in a sample of students or recent graduates in the Netherlands (N = 229). Firstly, the

results showed no significant direct effect between the inclusion of a D&I statement in job vacancy and subsequent application behaviour. Second, the moderating effect of participant nationality minority status was also not significant. Third, the relationship between the inclusion of D&I statements in job listings and subsequent job application behaviour was found to be fully mediated by P-O fit. Although the effect of the predictor on P-O fit was small, high P-O fit was found to significantly increase odds of positive job application behaviour.

These results have shed light onto how P-O fit affects actual application behaviour, a relationship that has not yet been widely researched. Moreover, the study can serve as evidence for hiring managers that P-O fit does matter and provoking it in applicants should be central to their efforts. While the inclusion of D&I statements in job vacancy did increase P-O fit, the effect was so small that hiring managers are recommended to re-evaluate this common practice and rather explore other ways in which they can trigger perceived P-O fit in job seekers, as this is a more effective route towards positive application decisions. Future research should aid companies in finding new ways to attract top talent by studying the antecedents of P-O fit further, especially in generation Z, who are just entering the workforce and might have different attitudes than the generations preceding them.

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