

Evaluation of recent recruitments at IMBIM from the perspective of equal opportunities

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Summary

The Equal Opportunities Group at IMBIM has conducted an analysis of the process of recruitments to new positions during the period 2019 - mid-2021. During this period, seven recruitments were conducted. We have scrutinized the recruitment process for these positions in order to determine if there is any evidence for discrimination in any of the recruitments, or if any of the recruitment practices could potentially entail a risk for discrimination. Our findings are presented in this document.

Background

The Discrimination act recognizes seven grounds for discrimination:

- sex
- sexual orientation
- transgender identity or expression
- ethnicity
- religion or other beliefs
- disability
- age

The Equal Opportunities Group at IMBIM has a responsibility to identify areas where there may be a risk of discrimination at the department and identify ways in which these risks can be reduced or eliminated. New recruitments are one area in which discrimination can potentially occur. We therefore undertook a project to evaluate recent recruitments to IMBIM in order to identify if there are any instances of discrimination, or if any of the recruitment practices entail risks for discrimination.

Methodology

We obtained all of the documents related to the seven recruitments that had occurred within the period 2019 - mid-2021. These are all publicly available. We then collated data on the applicants and the recruitment process in order to reveal any statistical biases in recruitment that might reflect discrimination. In addition, we evaluated each individual case for any practices during the candidate-selection process that appear discriminatory or could potentially lead to discrimination.

It is not possible or appropriate to gather data on all of the possible grounds for discrimination, but we have attempted to obtain as much information as feasible to evaluate potential biases in recruitment. The distribution of the following factors were analyzed among applicants: gender, age, nationality, and location of previous institution/education (country) comparing all applicants with the one finally selected. The

gender distribution of the selection committee was also taken into account. We also analyzed the way in which each position was advertised. We took into account the This included analyzing the text of each advertisement for the number of "must have" and "nice to have" criteria, and for the number of masculine-coded and feminine-coded words using the gender decoder (<http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/about>). Some research suggests that female applicants may be disadvantaged by the use of "nice to have" criteria in advertisements, or by biased use of masculine-coded words (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011)

Results & Discussion

Below is a summary of the recruitments analyzed by the group. The proportion of male:female applicants varied between positions. 2/7 positions had a female-bias in applicants whereas the others were strongly male-biased. 2/7 positions were filled by women. There is no indication of a sex-bias in the selection process.

Job title	No. applicants	% female	gender, age of selected	days to apply	notes
1) Researcher	7	57	M, 47	26	
2) Course admin	48	75	F, 29	27	
3) Univ. lecturer	8	25	M, 44	unknown	reassignment
4) NBIS manager	4	25	M, 48	14	
5) Univ. lecturer	10	30	M, 39	33	
6) Univ. adjunct	not available	-	F, 39	14	reassignment
7) Univ. lecturer (20%)	3	0	M, 41	26	

There were no indications of recruitment bias related to age. Data on nationality and international education of applicants was not always available. In general, applicants with many nationalities were represented, but with a strong bias towards Sweden. Two of the seven positions were filled by applicants that are not Swedish nationals. We did not find any obvious indication of a bias in recruitment according to nationality.

We did not have any information regarding the extent to which each position was publicly advertised. In two cases, the amount of time given to apply (14 days) could be considered short. Transparency and fairness in recruitment is promoted by advertising widely with adequate time to apply.

We reviewed the recruitment process for each of the positions, including how the evaluation of the application was conducted by the committee, whether the advice of external reviewers was sought and/or followed, and how candidates were selected for interview and evaluated. For most of the cases, the recruitment process proceeded as expected. In one recruitment of a university lecturer, the search process was cancelled and the position filled by reassigning a current IMBIM employee due to redundancy. In a second recruitment of a university lecturer (20%), the position was filled by a current IMBIM employee without recourse to external review and then subsequently increased to a 100% position. In both of these cases, the suggestions of external reviewers did not play a decisive

role in the recruitment. There is risk for discrimination in such cases and the department must weigh the importance of job security of current employees against transparency and impartiality in recruitment. The recruitment of a University adjunct was not publicly announced and filled by reassignment of a current IMBIM employee.

Our analysis of gender coding in language of the advertisements identified three texts with a masculine bias, two texts with a feminine bias, and one with no bias. More information about this measure can be found in Gaucher et al., 2011. Advertisements had 5-15 "must have" criteria and 0-8 "nice to have" criteria.

Two additional factors have been suggested to create bias in candidate applications. It may be worth considering these when drafting future job applications in order to expand the applicant pool:

1) Use of superlatives: There has been research indicating that different genders are more comfortable with promoting accomplishments (Smith & Huntoon, 2013) and that words such as "expert" or "superior" may discourage female applicants from applying.

2) Compulsory and optional skills: Some research indicates that women are less likely than men to apply for a position if they don't meet all of the section criteria, including the "nice-to-have" elements, as summarised in the Harvard Business Review (Mohr, 2014). Focus on requirements that are "must-have", and minimising the "nice-to-haves" would encourage more female applicants.

In conclusion, the equal opportunities committee recommends that positions are advertised as widely as possible with adequate time to apply. We also recommend that employers consider gender coding in their advertisements.

References

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