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The Gendered Nature of Social Recruiting in Network Marketing and Direct Selling Industry

Nowadays companies recruit or plan to recruit using social media. In my study I participate in the discussions on gender and power and changed ways of working by focusing on the gendered nature of social recruiting in network marketing and direct selling industry. Only a few studies examine the new direct selling environment brought on by the technologies. This research theme is relevant in a wider societal context due to the recent turmoil in working life. The coronavirus pandemic has fueled the rapid growth of the industry and even discussed as a strong 'momentum' for it. It is explained by the fact that direct sellers (mostly women) can do work remotely and choose the working hours themselves. There has been a major shift in terms of recruiting processes, which now can also take place online and which is the key to success in the industry. Social recruiting is outside of what is understood traditionally as recruiting as it has a focus on 'passive' candidates who have digital profiles on social media.

In my PhD research, I am planning to explore how the social recruiter does recruiting and what is the role of gender in this process. This research will combine data from the qualitative semi-structured interviews with direct sellers from four EMEA region countries (Finland, Russia, United Kingdom, South Africa) and their posts and stories on social media. The affect theory offers an alternative way to understand the social recruiting as I assume that the gendered relationships between social recruiters and passive candidates are highly affective. In this presentation, I will demonstrate this with the help of examples from social media and my own experience in direct selling and network marketing.