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Antecedents and Outcomes of Stigmatization in the workplace

Done by:

Anastasiia Golubkova
2nd year MiM student

Instructor:

Marina Olegovna Latukha,
Professor, PhD
Department of Organizational Behavior
and Personnel Management

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ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ О САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНОМ ХАРАКТЕРЕ ВЫПОЛНЕНИЯ ВЫПУСКНОЙ КВАЛИФИКАЦИОННОЙ РАБОТЫ

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Content

Abstract

Master Student's Name	Anastasiia Golubkova
Academic Advisor's Name	Marina Olegovna Latukha
Master Thesis Title	Antecedents and Outcomes of Stigmatization in the workplace
Description of the goal, tasks and main results the research	Goal: to identify the antecedents of stigmatization and its outcomes in the working environment in the international companies. Tasks: to conduct a theoretical research based on the existing literature, identify of the main areas of study of stigmatization, its types and types of influence on the organizational culture of the enterprises, build theoretical frameworks behind stigmatization concept in the workplace, develop an interview guide, conduct an empirical research and analyze the in-depth interviews, formulate practical implications in a form of antibias practices affecting potentially biased HR processes: recruitment and promotion. Main results: antecedents and outcomes identified as topical for the international business environment (stigma spread process in international companies), HR practices and their terms for the anti-bias procedures and inclusiveness in the workplace.
Keywords	Stigmatization, stigma, diversity, inclusion, HR practices, recruitment, promotion

Аннотация

Автор	Голубкова Анастасия Евгеньевна
Научный руководитель	Латуха Марина Олеговна
Название ВКР	Antecedents and Outcomes of Stigmatization in the Workplace
Описание цели, задач и основных результатов исследования	Цель: выявить детерминанты стигматизации и ее эффекты в рабочей среде в международных компаниях. Задачи: провести теоретическое исследование на основе существующей литературы, определить основные направления изучения стигматизации, ее типы и виды влияния на организационную культуру предприятий, построить теоретические рамки концепции стигматизации на рабочем месте, разработать руководство по проведению интервью, провести эмпирическое исследование и проанализировать глубинные интервью, сформулировать практические последствия в виде антибиотических практик, влияющих на потенциально «предвзятые» HR-процессы: найм и продвижение.

	Основные результаты: выявлены детерминанты и результаты, актуальные для международной бизнес-среды (в процессе распространения стигмы в международных компаниях), HR-практики и их условия для «непредвзятых» процедур и инклюзивности на рабочем месте.
Ключевые слова	Стигматизация, стигма, разнообразие, инклюзия, HR-практики, рекрутмент, продвижение

Introduction

Although topical in social psychology, the issue of stigmatization has not been excessively viewed in an organizational context (Summers, et al., 2016). Pertinence of stigmatization intensifies when it comes to human resources (further – HR) processes in organization, especially involving people's assessment: recruitment and promotion (Hennekam & Herrbach, 2015; Oliveira & Cabral-Cardaso, 2018). While discrimination reveals the apparent divestment of rights which an individual possesses, stigmatization reflects a much deeper concept disclosing the unconscious bias which all of us as humans pertain throughout life (Berjot & Gillet, 2011). Put this way, stigmatization causes discrimination, but not many are aware of the "perils" of stigmatization for society and organizations especially. Being an unconscious mechanism, stigmatization can be discovered regarding multiple theories of social psychology, including those explaining behavior of individuals and various social groups.

Stigmatization has been understudied in terms of its occurrence in an organizational environment and the effects of its influence on the employees and organizational climate (Capell, et al., 2016; Carr, et al., 2003; Follmer, et al., 2019). Existing papers, as shown in the literature review, mostly cover upon the stigma of mental or physical illness, leaving behind many more important stigmatized characteristics. Moreover, if stigmatization is reviewed, the research is purely context-based which makes it ultimately difficult to scale the results of what has been identified as findings (Stangl, et al., 2016). The current theoretical research aims at finding a common ground among all the various forms of research on stigmatization and aggregating all the existing knowledge into one model, while current empirical research is dedicated to finding the practical evidence of how stigmatization is viewed and developed in modern international organizations and what are the overseen outcomes of it in terms of employee well-being and performance. The research gap mainly centers around a scattered number of research and lack of system in the existing literature.

Why is stigmatization **topical** for businesses? The way employees are treated directly affects their well-being and mental state (Grawitch, et al., 2006), as well as their job satisfaction (Liu, et al., 2013; Madera, et al., 2012) and commitment (Garg & Rastogi, 2009) which in its turn leads to a hostile environment in terms of communications, demotivation and even to a low performance (Javed, et al., 2014; Robescu & Iancu, 2016). It has been observed that, although the topic of diversity and inclusion in organization becomes more and more widespread (Foma, 2014; Patrick & Kumar, 2012), the rate of diversity in the workplace itself stays at a relatively low rate (Hudrev, 2021). At the same time diverse working environments mean many benefits for the companies, including: greater firm values (Dezsö & Ross, 2012), better financial performance in

general, (Richard, 2003) developed organizational culture (Bakhri, et al., 2018; Dezsö & Ross, 2012), and enhancement of creativity and innovativeness in decision-making (Antonio, et al., 2004; Philips, et al., 2006). A major McKinsey study (Hunt, et al., 2015) found that a "diverse" team (in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, work experience, and other criteria) can bring a company positive financial results 35% more likely than a more "homogenous" team. Consequently, it is important for organizations that are evolving in line with the trend to understand the "nature" of stigma and the consequences it can lead to.

In international companies the topic of diversity and stigmatization is specifically up to date due to an inevitable mix of cultures and various characteristics of employees all over the globe. Research on stigmatization is mainly context-based (Lyons, 2016; Summers, et al., 2016; Stamarski, 2015), that is why the scope for the research has been identified as of international companies operating on various markets. To make it applicable for various markets, the current thesis in its empirical research compares the opinions of HR leaders from international companies in Russia and abroad in terms of stigma evolution and its outcomes in the workplace. As international companies in the thesis the following criteria have been reviewed due to the limitations of the geopolitical situation: an international company has been considered as being headquartered in any country, with the mandatory requirement of having operations (selling their services or products) in at least three regions of presence with local teams.

The **goal** of this thesis is to identify the antecedents of stigmatization and its outcomes in the working environment in the international companies.

Subject of the current thesis is the phenomenon of stigmatization in the workplace, while for the **object** of this thesis stand employees of the international organizations.

Objectives of the current research include:

1)   Theoretical: a review of the available literature on the topic of stigma in organizational psychology and management, a review of the literature on of organizational psychology on the topic of discrimination and anti-discriminatory practices on human resource management; identification of the main areas of study of stigmatization, its types and types of influence on the organizational culture of the enterprises;

2)   Empirical: formulating main research questions, developing an interview guide, respondent profiling and selection of companies to participation in the study, conducting in-depth interviews;

3)   Analytical: processing and analyzing the results of the survey, discussing them in terms of available research, development of practical conclusions and recommendations for

international companies on prevention of stigmatization of employees and improving the effectiveness of personnel management practices, ensuring their relevance for a given context.

As the main **method** of the thesis the in-depth interviews have been chosen. The choice of in-depth interviews as a qualitative method can be explained by the fact that research in this field is rather exploratory, without strong theoretical models behind, and needs to be firstly investigated qualitatively. In total **20 in-depth interviews** have been conducted as a part of this research, each of them with an HR Director / Head of HR department / HR Business Partner of medium and large international companies.

Key **research questions** which have been under close view while compiling both theoretical and empirical parts of the work are:

RQ1: Which antecedents (organizational and non-organizational) influence the emergence of employees' stigmatization?

RQ2: What organizational outcomes employee stigmatization lead to?

RQ3: What HRM practices may shape stigmatization outcomes?

The theoretical part of the thesis begins with description of stigmatization phenomenon and how it appears in the workplace, taking into account the types of stigmatizing characteristics an individual might possess. Then, following this generic topic, we get deeper into antecedents of stigmatization, disclosing which organizational characteristics might affect the emergence of stigmatized thinking in the workplace. Third part of the theoretical work presents discussion on the outcomes of stigmatization, revealing the zones (on individual and organizational levels) which possibly could be affected by stigma. The empirical part is comprised of methodology description, statement of the in-depth interviews' results with citations, conclusions based on the interviews, and perspectives for the future research. The practical implications make up the last chapter and include anti-bias HR and communicational practices, which are topical for business practitioners facing biased relationships towards their company's candidates and/or employees. Empirical part of this work significantly adds to the findings discovered during the analysis of existing theoretical concepts, disclosing the areas of problems and solutions, specifically topical for international businesses nowadays.

Chapter 1. Theoretical background on stigmatization in the workplace.

1.1. Stigmatization phenomenon and its occurrence in the workplace

Stigmatization as a phenomenon has been deeply researched by Erving Goffman (2009), who first introduced and developed this concept in a sociological context. Goffman defined stigma as "an attribute which is deeply discrediting". It can be said that under stigmatization a person is "discredited" or thought of as less capable of performing well due to a specific characteristic he or she owns, being less professional or less committed (Goffman, 2003).

A traditional definition of stigmatization, applied to its occurrence in an organizational behavior research, is the following: stigmatized individuals (in an organizational context, employees) have (or are perceived to have) characteristics that reflect identities that are undervalued in a particular social context (Crocker, et al., 1998). An important feature of this definition is that stigmatized employees do not necessarily possess these characteristics – more often they are "prescribed" a set of qualities depending on their stigmatization object. This phenomenon is called "attribution". Someone who assigns a stigma to a particular person's characteristic is referred to in the English-language literature as a "perceiver", and the person being stigmatized is described as the "target," or object of the stigma (Corrigan & Watson, 2007). The attribution itself is not the reason which causes the stigma: it is the relationships between those who consider themselves as "normals" and stigmatized individuals which matters (Eliott, et al., 1981). Attribution theory works as a supporting tool here, disclosing the entity of prejudice. The "opposite" phenomenon is justification – and it is applied to stigma as well – when in specific contexts the stigmatized identity can be justified and the prejudice at that point stops its power (Hegarty & Golden, 2008).

Historically the "stigma" was used for marking a person of a specific social strata which was undervalued or considered dangerous: slaves, prostitutes, imprisoned (Berjot & Gillet, 2011; Goffman, 2003). This perception has changed over times, and the term "stigma" has become more general, allowing any minority to be "stigmatized" as having specific characteristics, applicable to all of the parts of this minority.

To explain stigmatization, Erving Goffman (2003) also used the term "deviance", since stigma identifies in a society is a form of deviation (Eliott, et al., 1981). A stigmatized individual is the one whose behavior or appearance is considered as "deviating" from the majority from a specific social group in a society. By Goffman this deviance is divided into six types: (1) Self-presentation deviance (an individual is makes an untypical or unaccepted self-presentation in society); (2) Lack-of-control deviance presented by inability to control the emotions and their expression in specific situations connected to stigmatized characteristics; (3) Social roles deviance,

disclosing the difference in understanding of how specific social roles should behave in various situations and how stigmatized individuals might decline from traditional understanding of these roles; (4) Social deviance, represented by systematic and evident disruption of the social order; (5) Identity values deviation, when a stigmatized individual is declining from his/her values or is perceived as possessing values different from the ones accepted in a group; and (6) Excitement search deviation when emotional spectrum of an individual is significantly higher than those of an accepted majority (Goffman, 2003).

Another concept which is highly connected to stigmatization is an identity threat. Identity is an environment of an individual's understanding of self, collection of his/her roles and experiences (Burke & Stets, 2022). Identity can be bogged down into three main parts: social (complex of opinions and beliefs about the person inside a social group), role (attributes of a person in specific life contexts), and personal (beliefs and opinions about self and how the "self" is differentiated from other people) identity (Craig, et al., 2019). Identities tend to change throughout time and can be dynamic, since they are dependent on opinions and experiences (Stets & Burke, 2014). Identity threat is a complex term which can be defined as any action / set of actions aimed at ruining or putting under question the existing identities of an individual (Petriglieri, 2011). A necessary part of an identity threat is a loss of self-esteem and blurring the boundaries of one's own identity.

What is the difference between stigmatization, discrimination, and stereotyping? It can be argued that the process of discrimination itself is rooted deeply into stigmatization, being firstly an unconscious bias inside individuals. Stereotyping is one of stigmatization's results, or the process of how this stigmatization is expressed and labeled in the society (Boyce, 2007). Discrimination, in its turn, refers to the direct denial of rights of individual members of a certain minority, and can be considered as one of the most important and obvious consequences of stigmatization (Berjot & Gillet, 2011). In its turn, stigmatization refers to the virtue of "prescribed" characteristics and people's bias on a ground level, and, thus, stereotyping and discrimination are the results of the stigmatization which seem to be more understandable and might be tracked more easily. Another crucial word in stigmatization studies is "labelling", which is a key term in studies of stigmatization. Label reflects a stereotype which has not yet been negatively assessed: rather a remark on an individual / situation / context which can be further developed as a stereotype (Pescosolido & Martin, 2015). Labels can be presented as a measure of social control based on a scale of pre-determined views and opinions.

Why stigmatization is topical in the organizational context nowadays? International companies with years become truly diverse due to globalization and global mobility and extended

reasons for the labor mobility like geopolitical situation in various markets, easiness of moving and the era of digital work, ICT development (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2015; Vargas Llave, et al., 2020), but still lack the essence of inclusiveness. Currently only 34% of corporations worldwide possess resources and implement initiatives to foster internal diversity (Reiners, 2021), and 76% of companies lack any mentioning concerning their diversity and inclusion vision (Conroy, 2022). Although the matter of diversity is popular, women in the workplace globally still make only 84 cents per dollar made by a male worker (Business News Daily, 2023). By 2044 the minorities (racial, national, gender) are expected to reach the majority status (Colby & Ortman, 2015). This means that people in contemporary working environment are surrounded by cultural, national, gender, age, and other differences, which create the diverse and inclusive atmosphere. Why is that important? Diverse companies tend to have a 2.5% higher free cash flow in comparison to a non-diverse environment (Reiners, 2021). Companies with diversified staff also tend to exceed the average financial indicators 19% more (Reiners, 2021). Moreover, the organizations themselves understand, how crucial is diversity for their productivity: 3 out of 4 companies worldwide consider Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion as their priority (Chaker, 2021).

Diversity cannot be observed apart from stigmatization, since diversity includes various minorities in the spectrum of the organizational environment (Roberson, 2019). It is finalized that stigmatization stands behind discrimination, which must be dealt with to manage organizations productively and efficiently – and although discrimination is being controlled legally in many labor cases, it is still presented and affecting the environment (Jones, et al., 2017; King & Cortina, 2010). Stigma can become a real stressor when it comes to the job performance (Major & O'Brien, 2005), leading to harmful consequences, discussed in the third part of his work. The research below is concerned with understanding stigmatization, its roots, and its impact on the environment in companies.

Where does stigmatization come from? Different individuals use stigmatization as a matter of "simplicity" in evaluation and perception of environment, and biologically stigmatization has been a powerful evolutionary mechanism which has protected people from dangers of the external surroundings (Kurzban & Leary, 2021). However, nowadays this approach can lead to negative consequences, especially given the diversity and dynamics of our everyday world. As has been explained, its phenomenon is all about negative attributions towards characteristics which could be obtained by any employee (Glozier, 1998). The sources of these attributions could be solely internal, based on the employees' perceptions, as well as they can be imposed externally by the cultural features of the company. The second group of stigmatization determinants, which is not

obvious and might play a moderating role in development of the stigma, is discussed in the second part of the thesis.

Impact of stigma depends on several features of the stigma: **visibility, pervasiveness, clarity, centrality, relevance, salience, responsibility for acquisition, and removability** (Elliott, et al., 1981). Each of these characteristics discloses how an individual works with his/her stigmatized feature and how it is evolving in his image/status in a society, for example: is a stigmatized feature visible to other people? If yes, it can be disclosed from the beginning of communications and "knowledge" about it can be accessed by any person (Elliott, et al., 1981). It was found out that identity threat has been highly activated when it comes to a visible stigma (Major, et al., 2012). This means that the visible stigma, due to being more obvious, is involuntary disclosed to everyone leading to immediate unconscious attribution (examples could be a tattoo, a birthmark, or a visible overweight state), which makes it difficult for an individual to conceal it and leaves no options apart from interacting with society in a "compensating" way (Berkley, et al., 2017). Invisible stigmas are more difficult to disclose, and that makes individuals with such stigma face a severe challenge: to disclose the characteristic under stigma or to conceal it consciously (Goffman, 2009)?

Invisible stigmas are called "concealable" since it is possible to hide them by managing one's behavior. Apart from this classification "dynamic" stigmas also exist, revealing the entity of stigmas evolving with time and overcoming the process of transformation from visible to concealable stigmas (Berkley, et al., 2017). A vivid example of such stigma is pregnancy, also this could become some mental illnesses. Dynamic stigmas also become a threat to one's identity management strategies and can result in various behavior patterns (Jones et al., 2016), and identity threat in this case can lead to stress for many stigmatized individuals.

Speaking about pervasiveness of stigma, we disclose the possibility of stigma to be stereotyped not only in specific contexts (as is usually the case with stigmatizing characteristics in general) (Elliott, 1981), but in every occasion. A pervasive stigma examples are mental illness and obesity, usually attributed negatively in most contexts. At the same time, pervasive stigmas are quite harmful in terms of employees' mental and even physical health (Hunger, et al., 2015).

Moving on to the clarity of stigma, the definition of it is quite similar to pervasiveness, however, here we can note that clarity concerns the spread of stigma among individuals (how the particular stigmatizing element is viewed among the group of individuals), while pervasiveness is more about the contexts in which stigma is accepted (Elliott, 1981). Mental health stigma is highly

clear, while stigma of past experience, gender, age, physical characteristics' stigmas are unclear in a way that they could be interpreted in a very different approach by various people.

Next parameter of stigma is centrality, reflecting the degree of attributed characteristics being seen as matching the self-identity of a stigmatized individual. Thus, a "centralized" stigma will always prove the fact that a person is stigmatized "correctly", finding the evidence in his / her behavior. This type of stigma is very disruptive to one's identity, and often the stigmas concerning physical characteristics and morality fall into the "centrality" group (Elliott, 1981). "Uncentralized" stigma is rather general and can be avoided by one's behavior considered as counter-stigmatizing as well as by positive outpacing performance (Quinn, et a., 2014). It has been spotted than, given a low internalized stigma, the centrality of stigma is increased with the level of its "outness" (disclosure), and, on the opposite – with a higher internalization of stigma (meaning lower self-stigmatization attitude) the level of outness and disclosure was lower no matter which level of centrality has been shown (Overstreet, et al., 2017).

Relevance of stigma discloses the issue of interaction between an "intaker" and a giver of stigmatized attributes. Put this way, a relevant stigma is the one which finds physical evidence of it in the given context (during the interaction between a stigmatizing element and a stigmatized one). Usually physical stigmas are rather irrelevant, and generally a giver tends to choose in each specific case whether the stigma is relevant or not for this or that person (Elliott, 1981). Mental illness and sexual orientation stigmas are found to be more relevant in specific contexts than other stigmatized characteristics (Frost, 2013; Link & Phelan, 2013).

Moving on to salience of a stigma, it is considered as the most overreaching one (Elliott, 1981). Salience reflects the frequency of thinking of a stigma itself and comparing it to one's identity, which is a purely internal process which a stigmatized individual overgoes. The more serious an identity salience is, the more distress a stigmatized individual experiences on the base of stigmatization (Quinn, et al., 2014). An interesting point is that salience is defined by the other characteristics of stigma. Salient stigmas which stand out based on research are sexual orientation, weight and obesity, race and nationality, gender and sex (Elliott, 1981; Fleming, et al., 2012; Nolan & Eshleman, 2016; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013).

Last parameters of stigmatized identities are removability and responsibility for acquisition (in various sources also called controllability). These indicators are rather clear: whether stigma can be removed (for example, by approval of the opposite situation) and whether the individual accounts for the evolution of a stigmatized characteristic (Summers, et al., 2016). The removable

stigmas might be: sexual orientation, various hobbies, religion, and past experience (partially through being misinterpreted). Stigmas which have responsibility for acquisition are: tattoos and various physical appearance attributes, hobbies, partially religion and pessimistic behavior, as well as negative experience. Those individuals who are thought of as not being accountable for their stigmas, are more likely to be justified by society (Weiner, et al, 1988).

The development of stigma is affected by the ability of a stigmatized identity to disclose its characteristics (Pescosolido & Martin, 2015). Basically, a disclosure means sharing a status of having a stigmatized characteristic (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979), which becomes especially topical when we deal with a concealable stigma. A workplace which is supportive, openness for the feedback and expectations management is what contributes to a healthy stigma disclosure (Stergiou-Kita, et al., 2016). On the opposite, lack of feedback and repetitive cases of its ignoring, fear of discrimination and high hierarchy level do contradict with an open disclosure of stigmatized characteristics of an employee (Stergiou-Kita, et al., 2016). Also, disclosure can be affected by the prior knowledge of the stigma target as well as the past experience of the stigma imposers, which makes a disclosure highly context-dependent process (Sabat, et al., 2017).

Stigmatization develops based on different target characteristics, which usually include the following: race, nation, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, speech deviations, physical characteristics, depression and pessimistic attitudes, duration of stay in the company, participation in extracurriculars, religion, pregnancy, addiction, occupation, social status / caste, negative experiences in the past. In order to study stigmatization in the workplace in its broadest sense, it is necessary to understand representatives of which minorities (based on which characteristics) might be stigmatized. The aggregated types of stigmatization with descriptions are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Typology of stigma (developed by the author)

Types of stigma	Description	Visibility	Main sources
Race	Employees of a race that has been historically discriminated in society carry this "stigma" into the workplace at several points: as part of the recruiting process, in the workplace, and during career advancement. During these stages of working life, people of "non-white" race may be perceived as "spoiled identities": less productive, and less capable workers.	Visible	Deitch, et al., 2003 Emerson & Murphy, 2014 Hebbl, et al., 2020 Liu, et al., 2012 Plaut, et al., 2014

Ethnos / nation	So-called "ethno-cultural" stigma, which can be attributed to employees who present a certain culture or nation. This stigma can be attributed both due to finding "internal" cultural differences and "external" distinctive signs (specific clothing, appearance), and it is determined by the historically negative context in relation to this ethnicity in the company's environment. Ethnicity determines an employee's attitude toward a certain minority or majority, which, in turn, influences the subordination or dominance in job interactions.	Visible / concealable	Doldor & Atewologun, 2020 Giel, et al., 2012 Köllen, 2014 Plaut, et al., 2014
Gender and sex	Gender discrimination is one of the most important causes of the lack of gender diversity in companies, also leading to the exclusion and alienation of female employees who are members of a gender minority in the company. Gender minority employees are the most "vulnerable" in such practices as selection, training and development, remuneration and promotion. Both agrocentrism and radical feminism can cause conflict in the workplace. Also, in this type of stigmatization we can talk about non-conformity with one's gender role, such as the masculinity of female employees in some positions and the resulting stigmatization.	Visible / concealable	Aziz, 2014 Byrd, 2016 Dozier, 2017 Keplinger & Smith, 2022 Risberg & Gottlieb, 2019 Ryan, et al., 2020 Stamarski, Son Hing, 2015 Stone & Hernandez, 2013 van Amsterdam & van Eck, 2019
Sexual orientation	The attitude towards one or another orientation for many people automatically places the person in the category of "not like the rest", often in a negative way. That is why we can talk about the negative stigma towards employees with non-traditional sexual orientation and the impact on their career life of stigmatization by colleagues and managers. Employees with non-traditional sexual orientation are considered to carry the following attributes: denial of traditional, proper values of family and marriage, lack of self-control and discipline.	Concealable	Lynch & Rodell, 2018 Lyons, et al., 2020 McFadden & Crowly-Henry, 2018 McNulty, et al., 2018 Moeller & Maley, 2018
Age	So-called "ageism" is the tendency to discriminate against individuals based on their age characteristics. In this case we are talking about the stigmatization of children, adolescents, and young	Visible	Desmette, & Gaillard, 2008 Grima, 2011

	people, as well as older generations. In the workplace, traditionally we are talking about stigmatization in two age directions: distinctively young employees (under 25 years) and employees of retirement age (60 years and older). The latter are discriminated against in certain industries (and in specific positions) due to the assignment of a lower occupational status (low occupational status).		Hennekam & Herrbrach, 2015 Oliveira & Cabral-Cardoso, 2018
Speech deviations (accent)	A stigma that, presumably, may not be as relevant in Russia as it is in Europe or the United States – depending on an accent, one can often determine where a person comes from and, accordingly, categorize them as coming from an urban or suburban environment. According to this stratification, employees may conclude that specialists with a "rural" or foreign (in any case "non-native") accent are less intelligent and will be less productive in further advancement in the company. This stigma type is topical in specific regions, such as UK, USA, Spain and others.	Visible	Russo, et al., 2017 Wated & Sanchez, 2006
Physical characteristics: height, weight, birthmarks, tattoos, attractiveness	Numerous studies have shown how obese employees are often discriminated against and stigmatized. Typically, obese workers are stigmatized as lazy and unproductive. Less popular research in height and birthmarks, however, several studies show that the presence of birthmarks on the face often affects the recruitment processes of employees, and even in those positions where there is no direct contact with customers (where the criterion of the appearance of the employee is not so important). Perceived attractiveness also proved to be a criterion by which employees can "attach" certain characteristics, so, in the retail industry, more attractive female employees were perceived as less competent and less likely to be subject to vertical and horizontal moves.	Visible	Giel, et al., 2012 Johnson & Schminke, 2020 Liu, et al., 2012 Pitre, 2019 Olesen, et al., 2020 Puhl & Brownell, 2012 Siegel & Sawyer, 2019 van Amsterdam & van Eck, 2019
Tendency towards pessimistic behavior and depression	Some studies have viewed employees' propensity for depression as interfering with psychological productivity; nevertheless, employees with lesser	Concealable	Glozier, 1998 Selezneva & Baltho, 2019

	stages of depression are able to work both individually and as part of a team. Despite this, employees prone to depression and other mild psychiatric disorders are stigmatized in the workplace. Pessimism and loneliness in the workplace can also stigmatize employees, especially in a company with a strong corporate culture and support for open communication.		Wright & Silard, 2020
Duration of stay in the company	Stigmatization of new employees as "not theirs" and not involved in the organization is an understandable phenomenon, which, if limited in time, may not pose a threat to the work and relationships of the new employee. But beyond this, there is also the stigmatization of the "oldest" employees in companies – as those who have been in the same place for many years and have exhausted their abilities, are more unproductive.	Visible	Baur, et al., 2018 Boyce, et al., 2007
Participation in a significant number of extracurricular activities	Employees who actively participate in volunteer activities or activities related to their hobbies (music, art, sports) are sometimes perceived as more of a "distraction" from their work activities, especially when these activities (such as volunteering) take place as part of corporate events and are initiated by the organization itself.	Concealable	Rodell & Lynch, 2016
Religion	Religious employees are often both discriminated and stigmatized. In today's more atheist professional and academic environment, people with religious beliefs are usually represent a minority, which puts them before the choice of conformist or nonconformist behavior. Often religious employees are not accepted if they outwardly identify themselves as belonging to a particular religion (e.g., wearing traditional Muslim clothing). Employees who adhere to a religion can be considered: secretive, less educated, less sincere.	Concealable	Aziz, 2014 Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016 Reeves, et al., 2013
Pregnancy	Many studies have shown that pregnant employees are often not perceived "positively" by clients and colleagues. Pregnant employees may be seen as "denying" one aspect of life: either work (i.e.,	Dynamic	Dent, 2021 Major, 2004 Skorinko, et al., 2020

	working with less commitment and involvement) or family (being at work instead of preparing for childbirth).		
Addiction (smoking, alcohol, drugs)	Several studies have shown that smoking has a negative impact on the perception of an employee in an organization if the company is a promoter of a "healthy lifestyle" ideology. Smoking employees may be perceived as irresponsible because they cannot take "control" of one of their negative health habits. Similarly, employees who are addicted to alcohol and drugs – or have previously been addicted to alcohol or drugs – may be perceived as irresponsible.	Concealable	McCready, et al., 2019 Roulin & Bhatnagar, 2018 Summers, et al., 2016
Occupation	In foreign studies, this stigma is known as "occupational stigma," and can be briefly described as stigmatization of certain groups of professions. For example, employees of cleaning services, employees providing cosmetic care procedures are often stigmatized; in intellectually demanding industries, stigmatization can cause problems with remuneration and promotion of employees in "accompanying" departments. It is also worth noting that here we can also consider stigmatization by hierarchy – to the "higher" and "lower" levels of employees. Stigmatization by profession also depends on whether the stigma is "internal", e.g., existing between employees of the same company, or "external" – for example, imposed on employees of a certain profession by clients (often occurs with specialists who directly interact with clients, front-office workers).	Concealable	Chow & Calvard, 2020 Mantzorou, et al., 2020 Mathison, 2020 Mikolon, et al., 2018 Zhao & Zhu, 2020
Social status / caste	As in society in general, employees who, for whatever reason, belong to a "lower" social class (the reason may be the appearance, behavior, and communications of the employee at work) are considered less productive or less ambitious, and interested primarily in monetary rewards, when in fact their motivation and actual social class may differ from that "prescribed.	Concealable	Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2019 Sinha & Kumar, 2018

"Negative" experiences in the past: education, work in a certain company/industry, abortion, divorce, partner violence (IPV)	This stigma can partly be seen as a group stigma, as it indicates an employee's past affiliation with a particular group. It usually refers to a past place of employment or a past industry, for example, an employee who comes after working in the alcohol sales industry may be stigmatized by his or her new colleagues. Also, in this segment can be considered past negative experiences of quitting a successful company or leaving a successful project, as well as a long period of unemployment prior to current employment. This can also include non-professional experiences such as past abortions, divorces (especially for female employees), experiences with bullying, or psychiatric or substance abuse treatment.	Concealable	Anazodo, et al., 2019 Hipes, 2019 Karren & Sherman, 2012 Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008 Miller, 2010 Overstreet, et al., 2017 Simmons, et al., 2015

In the current study the stigmatization by health issues: physical or mental, has not been deeply addressed since this is a separate direction of studies, including its own treatment plans and usually going much deeper into physical or psychological state of an individual (Stergiou-Kita, et al., 2016). However, that is important to mention that the stigmatization by mental illness, including depression, autistic disorder, and various intellectual disabilities (Corrigan, et al., 2012; Elraz, 2018; Glozier, 1998; Hipes, et al., 2016), might also attribute characteristics like poor work performance, lowered motivation, weaker capability of putting efforts into work (Brouwers, 2020). Stigmatization based on mental and physical health has its own consequences like unemployment, lowering the quality of life and gaining additional problems with mental / physical health due to stigmatizing behavior (Brouwers, 2020), however, they are not viewed in the current research due to the necessity to view these specific stigma determinants and outcomes through the prism of individual's health conditions.

A curious phenomenon is represented by a "multi-stigma" (intersectionality), representing a situation where some stigmatized characteristics are combined in one individual (Oexle & Corrigan, 2018; Stangl, et al., 2019). This way "doubled" stigmatized characteristics might evolve together, like, for example, flexible working hours for women are often stigmatized as "unproductive" and "reduced involvement" due to high involvement into development of the family and children care (Stone & Hernandez, 2013).

In an organizational context we view stigmatization as being imposed on employees (either as individuals or a specific group, e.g., department) in the company. It is as well important to

highlight the fact that stigmatization is traditionally viewed on four basic levels: individual, occupational, organizational, and industry stigma (Zhang, et al., 2020). These levels are directly connected to the object being stigmatized: the person and its possession to a specific minority, the occupation (professional role) being acquired by an individual, some organizational characteristics / beliefs / culture aspects, and the peculiarities of the industry being under the view. In this specific research, the first part and classification of stigmas primarily focuses on the individual level, while the second considers the organizational level of stigma – why can it be formed or disseminated, and the third part focuses on the individual level (coping strategies) and organizational level (effects on companies and organizational practices to deal with stigmatization).

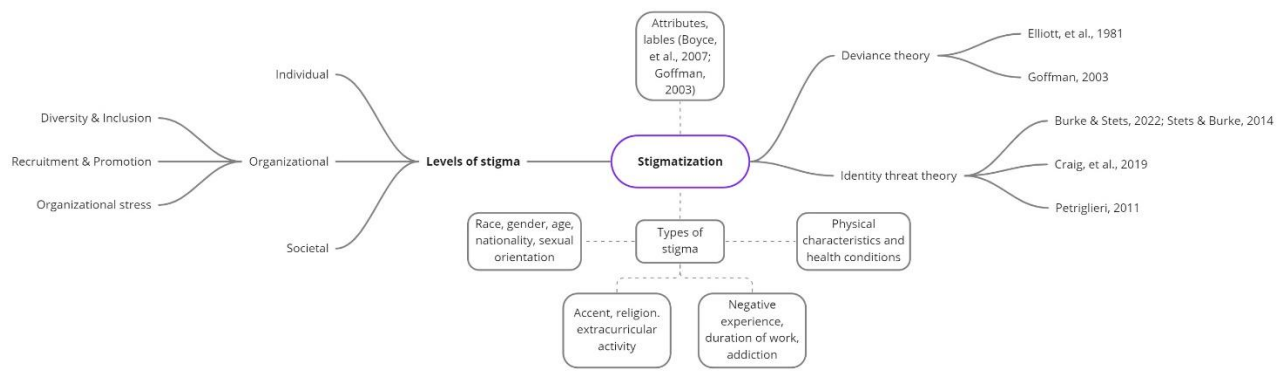In order to structure the existing research on stigma the following visualization can be used:

Figure 1. Simplified theoretical background on stigmatization (developed by the author)

The variety of stigmas that arise in organizational contexts is due to the many characteristics of employees in today's diverse work environment. It is now necessary to determine what influences the occurrence of stigma and whether any organizational factors might potentially moderate the prevalence of stigma in an organization.

1.2.   Antecedents of stigmatization in the workplace

Possession of stigmatizing factors is not enough to develop stigma in the workplace environment (Boyce, et al., 2007). In this development some external factors (organizational) and internal (personal, individual) play a significant role and contribute to the stigma evolution.

Antecedents of stigmatization can be grouped into 4 clusters: internal (perception of disclosure results and psychological factors) and external (socially constructed attributes and surrounding factors) (Croteau, 2008). Antecedents of stigmatization can be viewed as "obvious" (existing or perceived), and "supportive" ones. The internal cluster considers individual level and how a stigmatized "target" deals with the feeling of a "spoiled identity": discloses it or not, what feelings does he/she have and how he/she proceeds with the job being stigmatized. The way a person potentially stigmatized behaves matters: whether he or she hides his identity or stigmatized

characteristic or shows it openly, whether he or she joins a negatively stigmatized group of workers or not, and whether he or she resists if being directly reached by discriminating behavior (Van Laar, 2019).

As for the employee being stigmatized, primary antecedents of his/her feeling pressured or stressed (these particular impacts of stigma are reviewed in the next part of this chapter) due to stigma include: formal and interpersonal discrimination, concealment, social isolation, stigma consciousness and accepted "normality" (like, being male, or being heterosexual) in the surrounding environment (Sabat, et al., 2014). The way people feel stigma and the degree of the stigma's consequences will also depend on the "stigma consciousness" or understanding that existing bias are directed to them personally rather than attributed to all people with such a stigma (Boyce, et al., 2007). Also, people who tend to have a strong identification with the stigmatized group would be more capable of "falling" into feeling stigmatized knowing their connection with the minority (Stone & Hernandez, 2013). We can also mention that expected risks and results of disclosure can be moderating when making a decision over one's behavior (Croteau, 2008). Usually, a person decides on a disclosure based on comparison between positive and negative outcomes of a disclosure and the strengths of the risks weighing on both sides.

Moving on to external antecedents, the first group is considered as "socially constructed characteristics" (Croteau, 2008), including, for example, controllability of a stigma (can a person control his/her stigma – and, if yes, he/she is less likely to be justified or excused for a stigmatizing characteristic) (Boyce, et al., 2007; Crocker et al., 1998), as well as perception of threat which overgoes from a stigmatized individual (Boyce, et al., 2007; Stangor & Crandall, 2000).

The second one covers upon environmental factors (Croteau, 2008), which we will focus on due to the organizational context. This leads us to the concept that organizations may differ in stigmatization depending on various characteristics (Boyce, et al., 2007; Van Laar, 2019). This opinion is closely studied in the empirical part of this work; however, some evidence can be found among the existing literature.

Some organizational characteristics may become "efficient" or "inefficient" moderators and further even direct antecedents of the stigmatization in the working environment. In this way, **identity safety and ingroup support** (Van Laar, et al., 2019) is what may increase the inclusive climate in the organization, and, thus, reduce stigmatizing behaviors. Presence of non-stigmatized individuals and their prevalence in the workplace, devaluation of specific characteristics are the issues which can trigger stigmatization among the colleagues. Group identification and inter-colleagues' communications can become a substantial key point when it comes to stigmatization

in the workplace since mainly stigmatizing attitudes are transported via communications (Van Laar, 2019).

The **presence of employees' majority**, accepted as being "normal" (due to any characteristic, be that age, gender, race, sexual orientation), affects the way stigma is perceived, as well as the **supportive diversity and inclusion** (further – D&I) **practices and protective legislation** (Boyce, et al., 2007; Follmer, et al., 2019; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Van Laar, et al., 2019). Put this way, companies which had majority of heterosexual workers and experienced lack in supportive practices and legislation against discrimination reported complaints on sexual orientation minorities' rights' violation more often. Among this, organizational practices have been perceived as the most powerful in terms of changing the employees' attitudes and behaviors (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001).

Another organizational factor might be **tolerance and reward** system (as well as justification of it), misuse of legitimate authority (again connected to legislation issues), and **informal groups in organizations** (Hutchinson, et al., 2008). **Workplace incivility** is considered an important issue in developing stigma: and it is considered as an independent factor directly influencing the development of stigma, unexpectedly finding its roots in stigma consciousness (Wells, et al., 2020).

In general, **organizational climate** seems to affect the way stigmatized identities are treated: both by "intakers" and "givers" of stigma (Carr, et al., 2003; Chrobot-Mason, 2001; Follmer, et al., 2019; Hakkarainen, et al., 2017; Trau, 2014). As claimed, **psychosocial support**, provided in organizations either formally or informally, created a positive trend towards job satisfaction and identification with an occupation (Cannon & Edmondson, 2001; Trau, 2014). "Nondiscriminatory" working climate led towards development of individual network and higher rate of disclosure, and, on the opposite, an environment letting discrimination to develop lead to social isolation and concealment. So-called "supportive environment" can sound obvious; however, this especially, together with organizational practices and diversity climate (how diverse is the surrounding team of people) play a significant role when it comes to disclosure and identity management of a stigmatized individual (Follmer, et al., 2019). Moreover, supportive environment raises trust, which gives employees a better feeling of security (Capell, et al., 2016).

No less important is the "status composition", a rather classical approach towards viewing the **hierarchy** inside an organization (Boyce, et al., 2007). The hierarchy level might be connected to a culture dominating in the current environment (Deifenbach & Sillince, 2011). As well as hierarchy, the level of responsibility employees impose on a stigmatized individual will depend

on the **tendency towards either collectivistic or individualistic work** (Hegarty & Golden, 2008). This way, individualistic countries are more into blaming single employees for their problems and characteristics (even after attributing them from a point of view of affiliation with some minority), which might lead to a stronger stigmatization and subsequent discrimination (Crandall, et al., 2001).

How well the ideas and values are communicated and spread among employees might also affect the evolution of the stigma (Cannon & Edmondson, 2001; Kulik, et al., 2008). To illustrate, in the stigma of failure (or so-called negative past experience) the preventive measures of stigmatization might become: **coaching, stating the direction, and support** (Cannon & Edmondson, 2001). Having already discussed the support part, we turn to the **value part**, where employees should exist in an open-information environment, where all the company's mission, vision, and goals are clear and in line with the onboarded employees. Being efficient, both coaching and clear view of the job might lessen the possibility of stigmatization development.

Demographic differences can potentially become the "external" antecedent of stigmatization (and this can be viewed in the companies as well). It is curious that there are specific groups of individuals who tend to stigmatize people more than others: considering mental health stigma, men are more likely to be the perceivers with biased relationship, and at the same time perceivers are more likely to be uneducated (Corrigan & Watson, 2007). Put this way, characteristics of perceivers might also have an impact on how the stigmatization might evolve.

Aggregating the antecedents into one scheme we can get the following results on what develops stigmatization in the workplace:
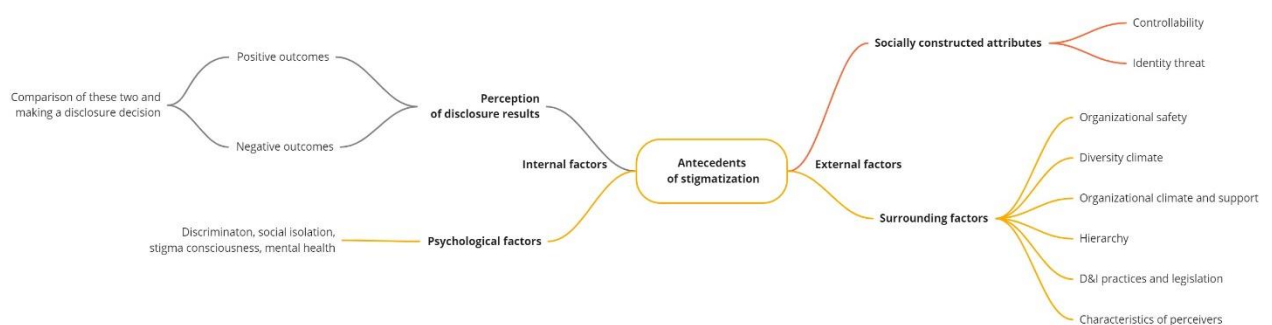

Figure 2. Antecedents of stigmatization in the workplace: internal and external factors (developed by the author)

In addition to the causes of stigma related to the organizational context, it is crucial at the current point to consider how stigma affects stigmatized employees and on various company processes, including HR practices.

1.3. Outcomes of stigmatization in the workplace

In this sub-chapter we would like to focus on how stigmatization affects the working environment. The impact of different types of stigma on organizational processes and HRM practices has been under close view in the recent decade (Baur, et al., 2018; Dozier, 2017; Johnson & Schminke, 2020; Liu, et al., 2013; Lynch & Rodell, 2018; Lyons, et al., 2017; Russo, et al., 2017; Stuart, H., 2004; Summers, et al., 2016). So-called "perils of stigma" can become dangerous in terms of effects on organizational interaction, corporate culture, and employee well-being (Aziz, 2014; Summers, 2016).

Stigmatization and its outcomes can be vividly observed on the example of recruiting and promotion processes since specifically during them the employees are being evaluated under specific criteria and unconscious bias can play a role in making a final decision. In this particular part we should talk about the theory of social stigma identity, which is transferred into stigma identity theory. A person with a low social identity can often be a carrier of stigma, and the carrier of stigma, in its turn, can be assigned attributes that are not his or her own (Summers, et al., 2016). It is these attributes that can influence-and not always "toward" candidate – in making decision whether to grant a job or promotion.

The threats of stigmatization can be quite devastating in terms of the culture and performance in the company. The hardest effect can occur due to a **stereotype threat effect** (Huguet & Regnier, 2007), which discovers the situation when a stereotyped individual becomes prone to believe that the characteristics, he or she is attributed to are his or her own, even though this was not the case in his or her previous life (Spencer, et al., 2016). The effect of a stereotype threat on performance bases on three main (independent but still interconnected) pillars: a response on psychological stress, constant performance monitoring, and tendency to hide and escape from negative feelings arising in the workplace (Schmader & Forbes, 2008). Another approach to classification of a stereotype threat effect is through viewing the underperformance due to three reasons: pressure and willingness to succeed, loss of self-integrity, and approving the existing stereotype (Spenser, et al., 2016). Many studies concerning a stereotype threat effect have been developed on the example of females studying in the STEM sphere – while tracking their performance a stereotype threat effect has been identified and classified as for the above presented model (Ganley, et al., 2013; Good, et al., 2008; Keller, et al., 2003). Both **performance** (important on the organizational level perspective) and a **personal well-being** (on an individual level: decrease in mental health and personal comfort, higher blood pressure, lack of self-control, aggression, unhealthy eating behaviors) (Cohen, 2004; Guendelman, 2011; Inzlicht & Kang, 2010) can be affected by a stereotype threat, and this is especially topical in a working environment,

where employees from specific minorities can easily become the "victims" of negative attributions (Schmader & Forbes, 2008; Spenser, et al., 2016; Walton & Cohen 2003). The opposite effect has been observed in an environment, where the stereotype threat effect has been decreased: the "non-majority group" has significantly overperformed in comparison to a majority previously succeeding, which has been called a "latent ability" effect (Walton & Spencer, 2009).

Occupational stress (also called "minority stress") (Köllen, 2014) for an individual is rather an obvious outcome of stigmatization. Direct causes of this stress could be: **identity threat**, (Goffman, 2009; Jones et al., 2016) **lack of social contact and interaction** (Newheiser & Baretto, 2014), **devaluation** (Link, et al., 2014), and other important factors which could result in a stressful condition of an employee. Stress might also come from **bullying** which can be used by individuals in order to show their undervalued position (Hutchinson, et al., 2008). Stress which employees might get due to work environment leads to an overall **negative perception of the organizational working climate** and to "opposition" between the corporate culture and individuals' values. By adopting specific coping strategies as a response to stress (many of them are listed below), one can feel an "acculturative" stress (Berry, 2006), which arises when an individual tries to adapt towards the majority features for being accepted rather than by personal will at the same time with attempting to preserve self-identity.

Job satisfaction can also become endangered due to stigmatization of employees (Madera & Hebl, 2012). Respect and approval are what matters the most for stigmatized employees and directly affects the job satisfaction of stigmatized individuals (Henry, 2011). Surprisingly, even salary and additional compensation have been proven to be of less significance than the respect from the colleagues and supervisors (Henry, 2011) if the stigmatized employees are put into research. Life satisfaction can be touched upon when it comes to job satisfaction, since these characteristics are interrelated (Lent, et al., 2011; Rode, 2004), and life satisfaction can be triggered by personal incivility towards employees, social isolation, and pressure towards decisions which an individual is unwilling to take, like, for example, retirement (Hershey & Henkens, 2014). It is interesting that the work-life balance, leading to both job and life satisfaction (Haar, et al., 2014), can also be triggered by stigmatization and even abused as a stigmatizing object in specific contexts (Vandello, et al., 2013).

Job insecurity perception can become an outcome of stigmatization. It has been spotted, that, given multiple stigmas (or intersectionality), employees might perceive even stronger insecurity and lack confidence of their future prospects in career and life in general (Lavaysse, et al., 2018).

Stigmatization in the job place often questions the "fit" between an individual's capabilities and his or her professional role. That's where a **professional identity** might be harmed by stigmatizing attitudes of people willing to stereotype a worker from a specific minority (Slay & Smith, 2010). In forming a professional identity, there can be a few stages formulated, for example: experience of being an "outsider", experience of transforming or being transformed, questioning occupational traditions and stereotypes, and questioning stigma or identity (Slay & Smith, 2010). In each of these stages one's professional identity may be tortured by stigmatization, which can lead to a longer and more scrutinized path towards employee's feeling of identification with his or her occupation and career.

Another important thing to observe is the behavior of employees on the workplace. As already said, being mentally discomforted, the stigmatized employees might not be willing to work as productive as before. How comes that performance of stigmatized individuals lowers? One of the reasons it could be connected to are various forms of inappropriate behavior, such as **absenteeism, presenteeism and opportunistic behavior** (Berry, et al., 2021; Cunningham, 2010; Docksey, et al., 2022; Fox, et al., 2016). It has been formulated that absenteeism is not related to the people as perceivers (imposing stigma) but is related to the stigma targets and anticipated stigma positively (Docksey, et a., 2022). People who are stigmatized are specifically vulnerable to these types of behavior, being isolated from the majority, decreasing their performance results, and this state in a long-term can lead to the exit from the company (Berry, et al., 2021; Docksey, et a., 2022; Fox, et al., 2016). Due to the same reasons, pregnant women have been facing presenteeism and increased stigma, leading to the results of their promotion and recruiting (Cunningham, 2010).

Put this together, **job turnover** can be affected by stigmatization, since it might as well depend on the level of job satisfaction, discrimination, involvement, and identity of the employees (Javed, et al., 2014; Liu, et al., 2012; Madera & Hebl, 2012).

Apart from that, **recruiting process** might also be affected, especially when the stigma of a person is visible (Madera & Hebl, 2012). Individuals with a harmful or negative experience are also stigmatized harshly during hiring, even for the positions which deserve no qualifications (Harding, et al., 2018). While hired, stigmatized individuals might face hardships with the contract terms, as well as problems with the future promotion or the level of compensation and benefits (ibid.).
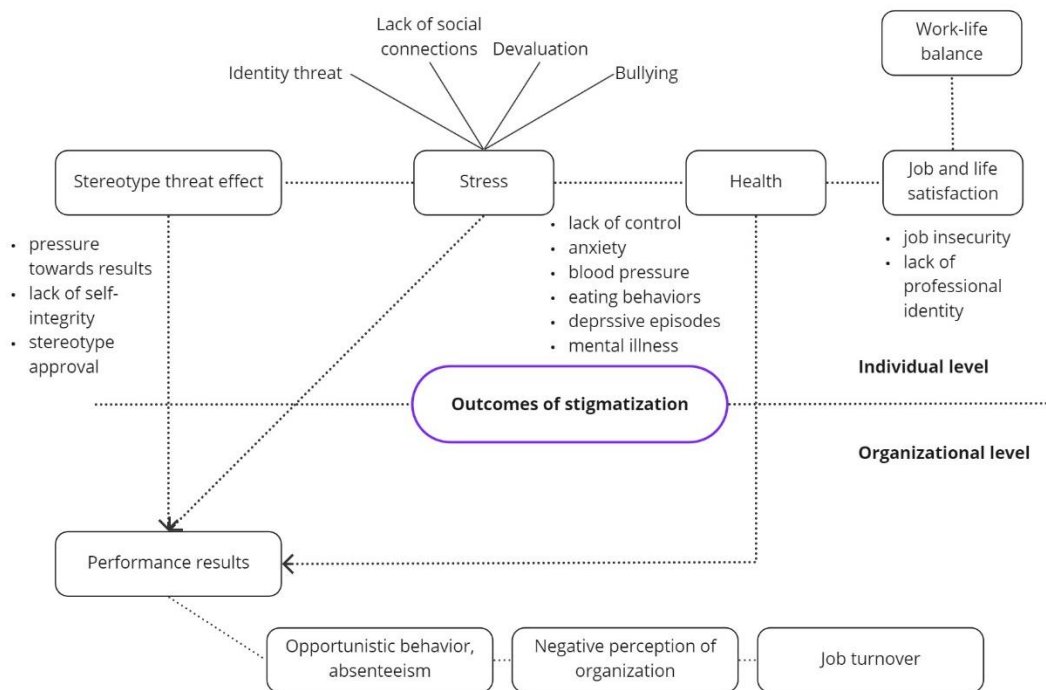
Figure 3. Consequences of stigmatization in the workplace: individual and organizational levels (developed by the author)

It is important to mention that people who fall under stigmatization ("targets" of stigma) cannot be observed as passive "intakers" of stereotypes and expectations imposed on them – on the opposite, they represent an active stratum of people who want to be as engaged and as identified with surroundings as are all the other people they come along with (Van Laar, et al., 2019). In this case the main problem of disproportion between the "desired" state of things and "real" attitudes can cause problems in realization of some individuals in their workplace. The question arising is the following: how individuals react to stigmatization in the workplace? On an individual level, to face stigmatization, individuals use so-called **"coping strategies"** (Köllen, 2014; LeBel, 2008). These strategies are performed by employees on the individual level and can only be initiated by an internal decision made by a personality. Some coping strategies seem to be efficient in terms of dealing with self-identity and its perception among colleagues, while some can be quite harmful for the individual's emotional state and image, leading to depressive episodes and poorer emotional spectrum (Heffer & Willoughby, 2017).

Coping strategies might include:

- **Impression management** (Berkley, et al., 2018; Clair, et al., 2005; Stole & Colella, 1996), based on either **concealing** the stigma by: fabrication (working on the false image opposing the nature of one's stigma) concealment (intentional withholding of any information on the stigma disclosure) or discretion (or simply avoidance of the "painful" topic, and doing this efficiently); or **relieving** the stigma through three main actions: signaling (showing little signs of a stigmatized

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characteristic in one's life but not disclosing it openly), differentiating (standing out from the group of majority when this is applicable and thus claiming the possession of stigmatized characteristics and teaching the environment on some of its peculiarities) or normalizing (acting normally as if the stigmatized entity is being normal, becoming a part of the working group through disclosure). Normalizing can be described as laying claim to be part of "normal" (Ryan, et al., 2011) by avoidance of hiding the stigmatized characteristics and engaging into all needed for job communications and activities. A vivid example is a study of Muslim women in the workplace by Ryan (2011), disclosing how the female employees have been "immersing" themselves in the team and organizational culture. It is important to mention that impression management techniques work only when invisible stigmas are concerned;

- **Disclosure** is a vital point to be discussed. It can be observed as a part of impression management; however, we separate it since this is a wholly another topic which has been overstudies by social psychologists. Disclosure is topical when it comes to invisible stigmas and can become a coping strategy both positively and negatively affecting stigmatization process depending on the context (Köllen, 2014). The willingness to disclose for an employee in the company will depend on stigma characteristics, internal factors like self-identification and verification, environmental factors like presence of likely-stigmatized people, support from colleagues or the company institution, and expected consequences of disclosure (Ragins, 2008);

- **Counter-stereotypic behavior, or accepting the majority features,** and turning to their adoption (if possible). Put this way, religious people, feeling stigmatized, might turn away from their faith (Köllen, 2014), and female workers, stigmatized for feminine behavior, might switch to a more accepted one – masculine (Holmes & Schnurr, 2005). Another vivid example is a "tough" behavior from employees with a non-traditional sexual orientation (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009), to comply to the opinion of "traditional" men being masculine, and homosexual – rather feminine. This can be applied to a concealable stigma; however, when we speak of a stigma which is visible, like nationality, the process of adoption can also take place: an employee can choose to overtake the appearance features or values of a non-stigmatized group and go through "acculturation", adapting some features of an accepted majority (Ward, et al., 2010);

- **Connecting to and building bonds with majority** presented in the company can be a widespread coping strategy, and a vivid example is seen when the age stigma is considered (Köllen, 2014): employees who are perceived as "older" try to "break" this stigma by often communications with younger specialists, engaging themselves in a non-stigmatized environment;

- **Avoidance of contacts with "majority" or "non-stigmatized" individuals** can take place in cases when the stigmatized groups are "close-knit" and can isolate themselves limiting contacts with external environment (Lim & Putnam, 2010). Building communities in new

environment is typical for expats in new cultures, which can be exactly transferred to a workplace behavior where people of same nationalities feel themselves more comfortable when grouped inside their minority (Köllen, 2014). **Grouping** is perceived as a commonly acknowledged way to build a self-image and deal with a minority stress (Wimmer, 2008);

- **Asserting moral integrity** (Ryan, et al., 2011), meaning self-acceptance and raising internal feeling of being in line with a stigmatized identity's states, values and features.

Apart from individual level, work on stigma prevention can be done at several levels: at the state level and at the organizational level. Many researchers emphasize the importance of state-level support for employees who have a disability or any physical or mental illness (Angermeyer & Matschinger, 2005). In this research we do not focus on this category of support (provided by state) because there are separate measures for state-driven practices and this direction should be studied separately. Below we examine the organizational level and the relationship of different HRM practices with stigmatization of employees.

On organizational level some anti-stigma practices might be initiated by the organization. This can include **organizational practices and anti-discrimination legislation** being already discussed earlier as having the impact on stigmatization development (Boyce, et al., 2007; Follmer, et al., 2019; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). It is important to keep in mind that the main aim of these practices is empowerment of people, which can help with avoiding incivility behavior in the teams (Wells, et al., 2020).

Creating a supportive environment and **providing equal opportunities** is the key to stigmatization management in the workplace (Köllen, 2014). In order to do this for each and every employee in the company, making the environment inclusive, it is vital to include as many characteristics which are stigmatized as possible, and not only focus on one entity (like, a few nationalities), but rather broadening the spectrum of tackled stigmatized characteristics as broad as possible (as many nationalities covered as possible). It is also important to contribute to creating an "**identity-safe environment**" (Spenser, et al., 2016), ensuring that every employee is aware of reaching a specific performance checkpoint or getting the desired position, which can be achieved by interpersonal interactions: promoting role models for those under stigmatization, stimulating additional communications with the "majority" members among a stigmatized group (Davies, et al., 2005; Spenser, et al., 2016).

An example of a "reaction" to stigmatization as an HR practice is the creation of **employee networks** (McFadden, 2018). This practice, compared to others, is quite inclusive, limiting the perceivers of this practice, which can lead to unexpected results in terms of maintaining a working

climate. Nevertheless, these networks can be created either internally or externally by job seekers - in the former case they help LGBT employees feel "their own" in the organization and increase their identification with the company, which will also increase their engagement (McFadden, 2018). Coaching and mentoring prove to be efficient if we speak about raising the job satisfaction and self-actualization of employees in the company (Cannon & Edmondson, 2001; Ladegård, 2011).

Another example of the organizational practice could be a **special training system** for stigmatized employees (e.g. for older employees, taking into the account their own methods and features of presenting information), as well as providing them with **special types of communication** (e.g., expressions of respect and giving specific signs of attention). At the same time, the first type of practice is "confirmatory" in terms of stigmatization and, according to the authors, can reinforce it (since the introduction of a separate "track" of training for "non-standard" employees can be considered an "exclusive" measure by other employees), while the second, being an example of also "exclusive" practice, may be perceived more positively in terms of preventing stigmatization in the team (Oliveira & Cabral, 2017).

Various **coping interventions**, targeting enhancement of employes' mental health, do not directly deal with stigmatization, but are able to mitigate its effects on individuals' well-being. These interventions might include seminars and sessions dealing with anxiety, mindfulness courses, self-affirmations, having been proven as enhancing the performance of stereotyped individuals (Logel, et al., 2009; Martens, et al., 2006; Weger, et al., 2012).

To overcome such a powerful unconscious bond as a stereotype threat, the "**reconstrual**" of any estimation can be applied (Spenser, et al., 2016). This can be adopted in practices connected to promotion: when people do not realize they are being assessed (and this can be achieved only by changing the descriptive part of an assessment), they show higher results than when being under pressure. Another tip based on the research concerns not naming the group differences if any are presented in the results of performance – thus allowing candidates or employees to decide by themselves whether it is in their power to succeed (Good, et al., 2008).

The important point is to determine what the company can do to ensure that employees avoid stigmatizing their co-workers, subordinates, and supervisors due to some of the factors listed earlier. To do this, many companies have **Diversity & Inclusion departments** (Leone, 2020), but as a practice the creation of separate workplaces for this function is rarely implemented in developing markets. That is why it is worth considering the impact of stigmatization on HR

practices and processes in communication with employees, recruitment, assessment, remuneration, personnel development and training.
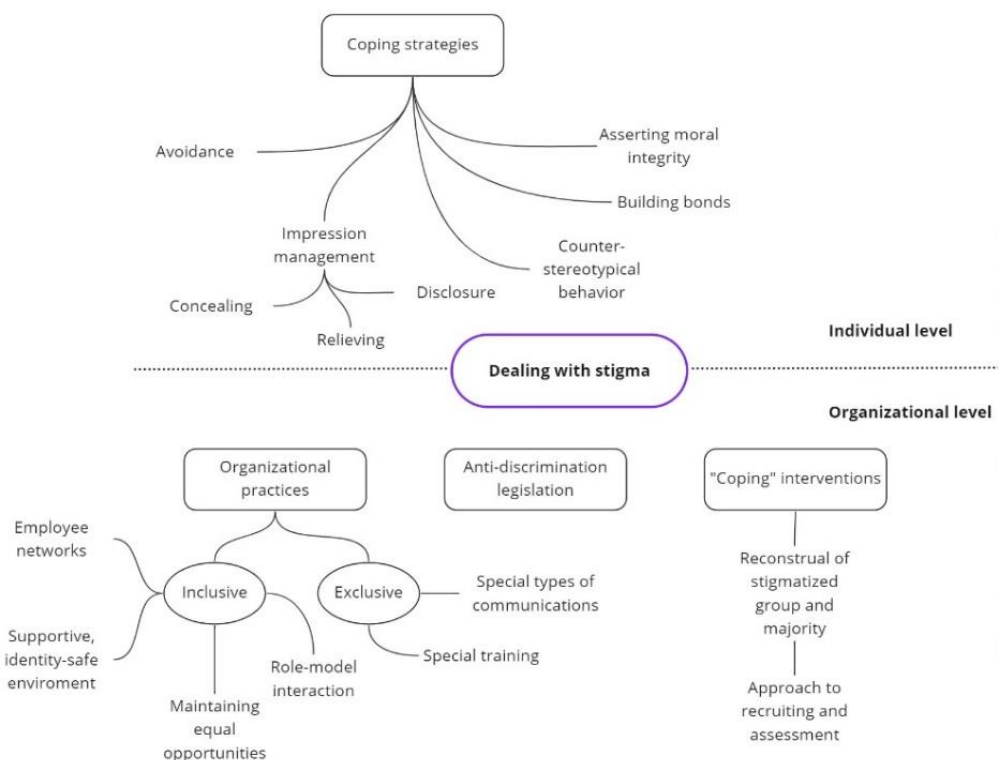

Figure 4. Strategies to deal with stigmatization in organizations (developed by the author)

Being a curious topic to discuss, stigmatization has been viewed quite fragmentally and not systematically, and current research tries to improve this situation. In the next chapter we discover how stigmatization is viewed among practitioners, which impact it seems to have and through which practices the stigmatization issue can be resolved. HRM practices can be the very tool by which stigma in the team or the organization as a whole can be reduced. Fully to recognize, accept and avoid our "unconscious biases" in our activities is impossible, but it is possible to take enough steps to ensure that employees to understand that each of them has some "stereotypes" that affect perceptions of their colleagues, subordinates, supervisors, and candidates. Chapter 2 of the thesis considers in more detail about the possible HR practices which are preventive, and which are currently being implemented in the companies on the Russian and international market.

What can be deduced from the theoretical chapter of this study is that workplace stigma is a multilevel and complex concept that needs to be considered in contextual analysis (Lyons, et al., 2017; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Summers, et al., 2016). In order to understand how stigma evolves and what consequences its occurrence may have in international companies, it is necessary to consider the various factors of stigma occurrence and effects for international organizations, as

well as to consider possible HR practices that can "prevent" or "slow down" the process of stigmatization. That is why the following were chosen as our key research questions:

RQ1: Which antecedents (organizational and non-organizational) influence the emergence of employees' stigmatization?

RQ2: What organizational outcomes employee stigmatization lead to?

RQ3: What HRM practices may shape stigmatization outcomes?

Chapter 2. Empirical research: current state and perception of stigma among international companies.

The aspects of stigma that are under research in the thesis, specifically, the antecedents and outcomes of stigma can directly intersect with HRM practices and various processes, going on in the company. In order to investigate how, from the point of view of HR professionals and D&I experts, stigma arises, and to understand how it affects organizational processes, a series of 20 in-depth anonymous interviews were conducted with representatives of top management in the field of HRM in international organizations.

During the interviews' compilation we posed the research questions mentioned above (in the context of organizations' activities in the global market).

2.1. Methodology description

The methodology chosen for this research is a qualitative analysis, allowing to understand the logics behind thinking of HR employees and lead managers, who are often involved in the processes of evaluation of the employees and candidates. The method used in the thesis is qualitative since on this stage the research is exploratory and aims at discovering the topic deeply and overseeing its spread among the Heads of HR departments of international and Russian companies. Especially during the semi structured interviews, we had the opportunity to spot experts' general attitude towards the raised problem and ask navigating questions, which led them to sharing real cases from recruitment or promotion practices in their companies.

The in-depth interview conduction process included the following six main stages:

1. Research on the international companies based on the indicated criteria;

2. Search for the HR experts from these companies (HR directors, Heads of HR department, HR Business Partners) and inviting them for participation;

3. Developing the questionnaire for the respondents;

4. Conducting the in-depth interviews with taking direct notes;

5. Analysis of the performed interviews with the help of citations;

6. Making conclusions and practical recommendations based on the feedback given by interviewees.

For the stage of research, we have been investigating the companies which are accessible in the current state of political and economic situation and perform their activities internationally (in and out of Russia). Prior to organizing the process of in-depth interviews, we have researched the international companies, operating in three and more different regions. It was important to include in our research companies which work in various regions not to be biased in terms of

cultural aspect, and due to the current geopolitical situation, the majority of the representatives were working in big multinational corporations, but in the regions of Russia and CIS. We have also ensured that the companies of our choice present various industries and are of different "age" and corporate culture types. We also had to check that among our target companies there will be representatives of organizations with strongly developed D&I practices, as well as enterprises not yet implementing any of these procedures. These filters have shown multiple results, and that is why we have come to a direct search for our interviewees.

Interviewees chosen must have been experts in the given field when we speak about in-depth interviews, and these experts should be considered as being as diverse as possible to avoid the bias (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Steinberg, 2014). As for the eight-window model by Steinberg (2014), the main issue for choosing experts as interviewees is: "Who can answer a key research question?" Reviewing our research questions, tackling the topics of stigma antecedents and outcomes in the workplace, it has been decided that the experts in this case should be aware of the corporate culture and the climate in organizations, as well as deal with recruiting and performance evaluation in teams. The only positions which scope included all these activities are HR Directors and HR Business Partners (as well as Heads od HR department), that is why we have chosen them as interviewees for conducting qualitative research. Choosing interviewees, we have been interested in gaining as broad and diverse sample as possible, that is why we reviewed companies with at least 300 employees and from various industries to ensure there is no industry/size bias.

Table 2. Interviewees for research on stigmatization (developed by the author)

No. of respondent	Respondent's position	No. of employees in region of work (app.)	Region of Respondent's responsibility	Country of headquarter	Industry of work
1	Senior HR Business Partner	3000	Global office	USA	IT, transportation
2	Employer Brand Manager	19000	Russia & CIS	USA	FMCG
3	HR Director	300	Russia & CIS	Russia	Consulting
4	HR Business Partner	400	Russia & CIS	Russia	IT
5	HR & Recruitment Lead	320	USA, Latin America, Southeast Asia	South Korea / USA	Crypto, Fintech
6	HR Business Partner	3000	Russia & CIS	UK	FMCG

7	HR Business Partner	2000	Russia & CIS, Asia & Africa	Russia	IT
8	HR Business Partner	3400	Russia & CIS	Russia	Audit
9	HR Director	2500	Russia & CIS	USA	IT, Data storages
10	HR Director	3200	Russia & CIS	USA	Tobacco production
11	HR Head	320	Russia & CIS	Russia	PR, advertising, marketing
12	Head Manager of HR Projects	8 330	Russia & CIS	Russia	IT, software development
13	Senior People Partner	2 300	Europe & UK	UK	Financial services
14	Head of Training & Development Strategies	15 000	Russia & CIS	Russia	Oil production and processing
15	Head of Management Training	8 000	Russia & CIS	UK	FMCG
16	Head of Talent & Development	8 000	Russia & CIS	Russia	Media, telecommunications
17	HR Business Partner	3 500	Russia & CIS	USA	Pharmaceutical production
18	HR Director	300	Russia & CIS	UK	Banking and financial services
19	HR Country Manager Russia	380	Russia & CIS	France	Geophysical research
20	HR Business Partner	851	Russia, Middle East	India	Pharmaceutical production

Although many Respondents listed operate in Russia and CIS, which is a current limitation of the research due to the geopolitical situation, all of the companies were checked on having international operations in three and more regions. Since we would like to understand deeply the context of the international environment, we ensured that the companies of our interviewees are operating in at least few countries. This approach implies that the company can be headquartered basically anywhere but should perform internationally: deliver services or sell products on at least three different markets and manage the international teams located in these markets. Thus, these companies had the separate local teams (apart from the head office) in at least three regions of presence.

Details on the interviews' questions are presented in the next part of this chapter below. After formulating questions, we have come to the interviews' conduction. All the interviews have been performed online using Zoom-conferences and have been directly cited during the interview process. After receiving feedback from 20 respondents, the next stage was to deliver the insights gained during the interviews in a form of citations. The cases from professional experiences, proposed by interviews, have been cited and presented below in the interviews' results.

The stages of conducting qualitative research by in-depth interviewing were borrowed from Elo's five-phase system (Elo, et al., 2014). This research design allows for the assurance of reliable data to lead to the conclusions of the thesis through the collection and analysis of various data from credible sources, as well as through the selection of relevant interview questions and respondents.

It was proposed to analyze the responses received from the respondents by means of content analysis and highlighting "common" and "standing out" response patterns among different answers. The analysis conducted has been a classic syntaxis analysis, reviewing patterns and ensuring accuracy, reliability, and valisity. This led to conclusions that could be generalized due to repetitive response patterns (Tsang, 2014). Consequently, if a certain opinion or behavioral strategy was identified in more than one case study, the universality of the phenomenon is reinforced (Petty et al., 2012).

After the analysis of citations and insights by interviewees, some conclusions have been formulated as a discussion part of the analysis. Based on these conclusions, practical solutions for avoiding stigma in organizations, have been proposed in the corresponding part of the thesis.

2.2. In-depth interview questions

The full version of an interview guide is enclosed in Appendix 1 of this thesis. For creation of the interview guide the existing scales on stigmatization have been reviewed (Haghighat, 2005; King, et al., 2007), the main questions being formulated as referred to the research questions identified in the current work and touching upon how stigmatization develops in organizations and to what results it can lead.

The interviewees have been inquired concerning multiple questions based on the following topics:

Table 3. Questions for the interview description (developed by the author)

Theme of research	Questions' examples	Implications behind questions

Stigmatization and how it is viewed in the organizational environment nowadays	What is stigmatization? Why is it topical nowadays?	To understand the awareness of HR heads on the topic of stigmatization, understanding the underlying reasons of discrimination. To spot the relevance of the problem to the current trends and goals of international organizations' development.
Professional and personal experience of dealing with stigmatization	Have you experienced stigmatizing behaviors in your job? When, where, and how? Which HR processes included these behaviors? What have you seen based on your personal experience?	To acknowledge the most topical characteristics of stigmatization in the international environment. To observe the examples of stigmatization and understand in which circumstances they arise.
Antecedents of stigma evolution in the organizational context	What characteristics of organization can possibly influence the spread of stigma? Which examples come to your mind?	To find out what is considered important by experts in terms of stigmatization development. To understand which organizational factors are connected to stigmatization.
Outcomes of stigmatization in the enterprises as per individual and organizational levels	How do stigmatized identities feel when being treated under stigmatization? Which coping strategies have you seen by a stigmatized identity? What examples from your professional expertise come to your mind?	To identify what are the threats of stigmatization for the organizations, and how damaging these threats could be to individuals and organizations.
HR and communicational practices which could deal with stigmatization in the workplace.	To your opinion, who is responsible for stigmatization in the company? How an organization can control and manage stigmatized behaviors? Which practices have you implemented and were they effective? How costly was that?	To know which practices are already implemented by the organizations in this sphere, and what are the first results of the implementation. To learn which practices are not yet being implemented but desired.

2.3. Analysis of the interviews

The syntaxis analysis of the interviews has been done with the help of transcriptions made during the interviews. After transcriptions have been studied, the information gathered has been conceptualized and segmented on the blocks specifically tackling research questions of the current thesis work, and then the segments or patterns have been identified, based on their importance highlighted by the experts. (Boyce & Neale, 2006) All of the patterns are described below according to the research questions being under view, and, in the end of this part, the figure with aggregated results is also presented. The patterns, identified during the interviews' analysis, have been verified by practitioners and represent the current state of how the stigmatization is perceived and dealt with in the working environment.

During interviews it was spotted that only a few knew exactly what stigmatization is: for many, the effects of it are acknowledged widely; however, unconscious reasons and implications of discrimination have not been under view. In general, it can be spotted that international companies in Russia are **no less aware** of the stigmatization process. International companies in Russia, compared to the past, accept the necessity of Diversity & Inclusion practices, and their implementation, but tend to act less likely if compared to international companies based in Europe and USA. If practices are implemented, they are rather chaotic; however, for many international companies the KPIs connected to D&I exist and can affect both recruiting and promotion results. This can be traced in the words of some respondents, as Respondent #1 has stated, "*We are a global company, but the D&I practices are not implemented. We only have an some ESG KPIs related to our ongoing IPO..*", consequently, D&I is considered as an instrument for achieving some external goals rather than as a tool for internal development of organizational culture. At the same time, some experts have a profound understanding of D&I, clearly stating the place of these practices and their implementation in business structure and understanding of its efficiency (Respondents #2, 6, 9, 13, 15, 18). For Respondents #3, 8, 13, 15, 19 D&I is only associated with mental illnesses and hiring disabled co-workers, which is quite a narrow, but overall accepted perception of this matter in Russian and post-soviet environment. Respondent #2 highlights the fact that all the D&I practices, even those presented, are introduced in a highly chaotic manner without a common system.

Among **widely used D&I practices** the interviewees have mentioned: support for women with kids (Respondents #2, 6), mental and physical disabilities agenda and practices, including hiring and adaptation (Respondents #2, 8). These practices were named as widely used, and the rest, mentioned as individual practices used only by specific companies, are included in the description of anti-bias practices, listed in the end of this part of the work.

At the same time, for some international companies, once again driven by the global policies, there are **internal KPIs** which drive diversity and inclusion. This could be individual HR Business Partners' KPIs as well as whole HR / Recruitment departments goals in terms of diverse team building (Respondent #2). Apart from recruitment team, Respondent #2 highlighted the importance of "Culture and engagement" team which accounts for organizational culture and sustaining the relationships among various teams. Mainly the practices are adopted from the global office but, to be efficient, they have to be transformed as being useful and relevant in the regional context.

RQ1: Which antecedents (organizational and non-organizational) influence the emergence of employees' stigmatization?

Stigmatization **depends mostly on the organizational culture**, corporate values and communicational style accepted in the company (Respondents #1, 2, 5, 7, 16). So-called "culture fit" has been identified as being of the most importance in terms of hiring and promoting employees (Respondents #6, 8, 12, 15). Open trustful communications directed as top-bottom do provoke a corresponding behavior in a bottom-up direction. As pointed out by Respondent #2: "*Employees coming into the company should match the values and organizational culture. If a candidate ends up at a company where he or she is 'out of place,' he or she will be stigmatized in any way that is deemed as "standing out." If it turns out to be a "match", it will become completely irrelevant what stigmas the employee has because he fits the organization.*" Another important determinant mentioned was a top management behavior and "role modelling" – "*the culture of underdogs, imposed by managers, actually leads to discrimination, and even given a 1000 of initiatives won't help you unless top managers themselves prove them*" (Respondent #1). "*Being driven by values: innovations, continuous development.. we make different people work together efficiently, no matter what their age is..*" (Respondent #3), depicting identification with the team's or company's values as a vital point to prevent stigmatizing behaviors. "*The most crucial values are those.. which are not only written in the Code of Ethics, but those promoted by top management and included in the attestation*", claimed by Respondent #3 and reflecting the fact that employees are motivated directly by seeing obvious benefits they can get from any type of assessment or evaluation.

Diving deeper in the types of organizational culture, as stated by Respondents #7, organizations with high hierarchy level are more prone to the stigmatizing behaviors, since in such companies communication style and agenda depend fully on how the top management handles this; thus, the stigmatization spread will build around the managers' bias. On the opposite, companies with a lower hierarchy level tend to be more open to receiving and processing feedback, and, consequently, might be more cautious on the state of the employees and their internal communications (Respondent #7).

Adding to this statement, Respondent #5 states: "*Culture is managed from above.. If the employee is not complying to one of the existing values, he or she will just not be a fit for this company and will sooner or later understand it.*", which can make an argument but is still not enough for the prevention of stigma in the organizational environment as it is (depicting the fact that the respondent does not view a stigma problem as something which should be actively monitored and controlled by the company). Not only formulating, but **clearly stating the organizational values** for external and internal users is crucial (Respondent #4). This would

eliminate the unnecessary efforts and make it easier to "weed out" unnecessary in terms of culture candidates.

Among the things that can "prevent" stigma in a particular unit or group of employees, Respondent #15 highlighted not only the presence of "conformity," but also the overall level of culture, education, and morale on the team. If these three indicators remain low, sooner or later one of the employees will be stigmatized, according to Respondent #15. However, the concept of stigma has to do with subconscious stereotypes and decision-making based on subjective motives, so one should not attribute the process of stigmatization to an employee's low morale or low employee culture. Respondent #20 has the following opinion on this topic: "*..the main rule in the company: everyone is equal, before the law, everyone has the same benefits,*" and in such an inclusive environment "*there is no room for stigmatization*".

In addition to organizational culture and organizational values, which are identified as the most important factors of stigmatization, the level of hierarchy and the "height" of the organizational structure can be fundamental to the development of stigma and its impact on HR practices. Respondent #11 repeatedly mentioned more often that they had encountered stigmatization in their experience in companies with a "higher" level of hierarchy and a more "rigid" structure, because, often, the subjective perceptions of workers by the managers of such organizations can become a rule or tradition for subordinates related to hiring and promoting employees.

Alongside with organizational culture, a **leadership style** is what could affect the way stigmatization is spread (Respondent #9). "*When you initially come to a highly bureaucratic company as I did.. you do not think you will be severely affected by the above-standing culture.. but as you move on you start to "catch" this behavior and already use your connections with lead managers to promote your decision*". In terms of open leadership and giving feedback, many companies **tend to be opened towards any employees' requests** be that any specific help connected to a stigmatized characteristic; nevertheless, this intention only works in relation to those employees who have been considered as "top-tier" and are truly contributing to the company's activities.

Apart from culture and organizational climate, the issue of general diversity in current teams of the company can truly affect the **perception of minorities' representatives** in the company. "If the team is comprised of slightly same-aged employees with similar background in education and experience, that would be difficult for them due to **inertia** to accept principally different people.. That would demand time and training." (Respondent #8)

Some determinants of stigma seem to be tackling **certain types of stigmatization**. Experts from international companies (Respondents #3, 5, 8) have named such stigma characteristics as region of origin (inside Russia) and place of study as markers of "good candidates" namely in the industries of FMCG and consulting. IT industry seems to be "attributed closer to the American market, which strives for inclusion and diversity, as well as individual approach towards each employee, and is closely related to feminism culture" (Respondent #4). Respondent #5 presents an opposite opinion, stating that "*..I feel like in IT the prerequisites for companies are stricter and more distinctive, and sometimes they demand only male employees. I've heard a few times as an internal request the phrase of: "we want only male employees" in terms of recruiting for the developers' team*", proving the fact that some bias still exist for the IT sphere, depicting male candidates as more suitable for this industry. Ageism is very high in IT, states Respondent #6, also depicting some drawback in diversity of IT companies. "*Many candidates.. have come from the specific competitor of our company, and proved themselves as being not professional enough.. Thus, the managing team decided not to hire candidates from this company anymore. Was this a right decision – we don't know – but we are doubtful if the resources are worth using in case of this problem..*" (Respondent #1) which discloses the position of many HR experts, seeing the problem but not addressing it practically – and not seeing if this is efficient. "*Employees from the regional offices compared to central offices can also be stigmatized, which is not that obvious.. since regional colleagues can be attributed to as being not intellectually proficient and less motivated.*" (Respondent #2) – and in many companies the salaries will differ according to the region of work. Of course, the salaries include the market served by the company in this or that region, as well as the level of GDP per capita and the buying power of consumers; however, some positions might not differ based on this criterion (e.g. consultants, developers, analysts, et cetera) and for these cases the varying level of salary depicts stigmatized attitudes towards "regional" employees (as per Respondent #2 experiences, especially affected can be annual and quarter bonuses depending on the territory of the employment).

Respondent #8, having a 15+ years' experience in HR, highlighted the following pattern: "*If previously top management has specifically emphasized the necessity of aligning candidates to the expected characteristics like age, gender, and especially family status (I remember times when young married women were very unlikely to be hired).. Contemporary managers, presenting younger generation, view this as something extremely outdated and all these aspects are currently not under scope of view*". A vivid example of unstigmatized behavior was also given by Respondent #8 on example of her company: "*A woman has been hired.. right near the date of her child to be born. I was wondering, why is she undergoing an induction process, while being*

pregnant and leaving soon.. But after connecting with her direct manager, I found out that she was hunted from a very well-known company and is a highly-qualified specialist in her field." Thus, current family duties and having a small kid have not resisted the company from hiring such a specialist, which gives us an idea of well-developed recruiting procedures and conscious managers.

At the same time, in fintech we see a following trend: "*If we see a person from the university A [a top-ranked university for technical specialties] we would definitely consider him or her because this university has a high recruitment reputation on the market. At the same time, ex-employees from [top-ranked IT company] of the region are highly welcome but are also pressurized as beginners in the team due to high expectations from their work.*" (Respondent #5)

For the age stigmatization, the untypical one tackles upon junior positions: "*for intern.. and junior positions we only view those who are under 25.. those who are older will not be considered due to the fact that they are more difficult to train for those characteristics which the company demands. Even a talented, but still aged consultant, would need a sophisticated training to understand our methodology of work*" (Respondent #3).

Mental illness' stigmatization, although not vividly discussed in the theoretical chapter of the thesis, has been distinctively mentioned by the interviewees. "*Once.. an employee with a manic-depressive disorder has been "pushed away" by the team. Although his quit was his own decision, the resolution could be completely different if the attitude of the colleagues would be more tolerable*" – that is how the interviewee stated the problem, revealing the fact **that coworkers' behaviors and team dynamics** are crucial in terms of one's feelings and, correspondingly, exit decisions. Disabled employees are hired by many companies nowadays since this is demanded by legislation; however, as Respondent #3 claims, "*disabled.. can only be currently hired for the project work, since for the full-time job the policy of work will only encroach on the rights of such workers*", disclosing the problem of exclusive practices, usually performed in order to drive inclusion. For the adaptation of disabled workers Respondent #3 names buddy program and mentoring as the most useful.

As Respondent #11 noted: "*In Russia, stigma based on appearance is relevant.. despite the development of turquoise organizations and the principles of inclusion, there are so many city-forming, 'powerful' enterprises in which appearance is the most important, and a candidate with tattoos, unusual hair color, in any way standing out from the crowd.. will be immediately rejected.*" Respondent #20 pointed to the particular relevance of obesity stigma: at Respondent's company, employees with non-standard weight appearance category are assigned the attributes of

"unproductive, lacking proactivity," which, in the Respondent's experience, led not only to the exclusion of employees from many social interactions among peers, but also resulted in layoffs and complaints to top management. Employees with distinctive external features, such as tattoos or hair of unusual color, were stigmatized at Respondent's #20 company as "uncontrollable and prone to opportunistic behavior."

Specifically touching the issue of gender stigmatization, it has been discussed that mainly gender stigma is associated with masculine or feminine roles implied under each job position, which creates biases among recruiters and co-workers (Respondent #1). Thus, Respondent #15 noted stigmatization of "atypical" employee behavior, e.g., female employees' masculinity. Respondent #2 has raised a topic of a stigmatization rarely discussed – when stigmatized employees are males performing the traditionally "feminine" role, as the Respondent #2 himself does. "*I sometimes heard that only female employees can be structured and accurate.. and at the same time perform very well in communications. I can assume that even some rejections I have received can be assigned to a certain degree of a stigma, especially it can be acknowledged after receiving a rejection on a screening stage.*" Indeed, receiving negative feedback on a screening stage can signal some stigmatizing attitudes – since recruiters choose not to proceed with any further communications due to some information found in the CV. Respondent #18 understands that women are stigmatized as unproductive due to stereotypes, but according to the interviewee, the greatest "danger" (especially for internal promotion – author's note) is stigmatization based on marital status. In the respondent's company the presence of many children (3 and more) means that the employee prioritizes them and is not productive, that is why such employees prefer not to be promoted to higher positions. There is also the "typical" Russian stigmatization of young female specialists who have recently married, since they are expected to "go on maternity leave" soon and managers give preference to other specialists when promoting them.

Another curious type of stigmatization concerned employees from international companies, being stigmatized as inflexible and tied to their previous organizational culture, however, as Respondent #2 confirms, flexibility is a very individual character trait. "Even if such a candidate has been hired despite the stigmatization, his/her further performance in the team might have been affected by the way he/she has been initially presented to the team." (Respondent #2)

Experts name a new arising issue with **stigmatization of employees based on nationality** taking into the account a current geopolitical situation in Europe and CIS, as well as employees' political views (Respondents #4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16). Respondent #13 reinforced its importance by the fact that in Russia employers are "wary" of foreign specialists and are not inclined to hire them. Respondent #13 emphasized this since in Russia employers are generally "suspicious" of

foreign specialists and are not inclined to employ or promote them in the future also because of potential difficulties with legislation. Respondent #16, in her turn, met in her company representatives of different nationalities as "low-skilled" personnel, similar attributes are also assigned to employees who have moved to large cities from smaller towns and regions within the country. The issue of stigmatization of employees from other countries and cultures is particularly relevant for international companies where employees have to communicate with a large number of colleagues from foreign departments. Thus, Respondent #17 explains, "..*Cultural stigmas, especially in international teams, have always existed. For example, one feels a separate attitude towards employees from Eastern countries, and however tolerant and open they might be, we often subconsciously stigmatize them as "cunning" and wanting only one-sided benefits*."

Another type of stigma not mentioned in previous studies is the military service experience, which might be topical in specific regions. Both previously mentioned stigmas might be specifically important for people working in governmental services (Respondent #7). Curious and unexpected stigmatizing behavior has been related to the Zodiac sign attachment which some recruiters and team leads might impose during recruitment process (Respondents #6, 7). Also, the stigma which has not been observed previously is dedicated to people who take credits, as being less trustworthy, as well as those, who pay childcare alimony (Respondent #6). Generally speaking, all the concealable types of stigma, being this a religion, political views, or any ideologies, should not affect any working relationships, since they touch upon personal identities of employees, which should not be concealed, but also should not be emphasized during working processes (Respondent #8).

The negative result of hiring a person based on superstitions like assigning a Zodiac sign has been proven by a simple example: "*I have hired an employee who was born at the same day as I, initially predisposed to him/her as a likewise person. We ended up in relationships far beyond from what has been expected: he/she was a person of totally different mood and character traits, so we have to terminate our collaboration. From that time, I have been trying to be more objective in my judgements.*" (Respondent #6).

Among the **most widespread stigmatized** characteristics topical for the international companies our Respondents have mentioned age (Respondents #2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19), universities where candidates come from (#3, 5, 9, 12), nationality, any type, given the current geopolitical conflict (#4, 10, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20), family/career orientation (work-life balance and family status) (#4, 6, 20), physical appearance (#11, 13, 14, 15, 18), and gender (#3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20), at the same time, Respondent #2 claiming that "*due to a*

solid inheritance from Soviet Union (commented by author: as SU has been the leader in many diversity working policies, including first longer paid maternity leaves in the world) gender stigmatization stays aside".

Although being thought of as "biased" in terms of employees' gender proportion, companies from **STEM sphere are more attentive** towards hard skills and relevant specific experience rather than to any personal (internal or external) characteristics of candidates and employees. As stated by Respondent #8, "*as soon as the person can be assigned specifically to the required level of targeted skills, his/her age, gender, race and various beliefs lose any sense*" speaking about technical consultant profile. As Respondent #4 stated, "*IT industry is the closest to American mindset, which is driven by feminism, and bases on acceptance and value of each individual identity*". Respondent #5 highlights the necessity of making any assessment as objective as possible in STEM; however, this is not always enough when it comes to unconscious bias. Same dynamics have been spotted in **consulting sphere** (Respondent #2), where the process of hiring is made as objective as possible, and hard skills play higher role than any past experiences (universities are not considered as the main point for decision; however, some practical evidence in consulting proves to be different). Not only the hiring can be affected, but also promotion of employees due to assessments is being rather skilled-oriented, diminishing the effects of any possible stigmatized evaluations. Another curious thing on consulting mentioned covered the gender diversity: as stated by experts, gender stigmatization is not topical since every gender is considered as "normal" for the industry. Real estate sphere has proven to be rather stigmatized, having a focus on young employees, local nationalities and sometimes – those employees who come from companies-competitors, since it becomes too long and complicated to train or retrain them (based on experience of Respondent #4).

RQ2: What organizational outcomes employee stigmatization lead to?

Stigmatization has **its most negative effect during recruitment** since it involves a brief contact with the person with no possibility to continue the interaction in case the interview (testing, assessment...) is over, thus, the major work is to be done with recruiters in terms of fighting with bias, as claimed by Respondents #1, 2, 5, 6. Another stigmatizing pattern is presented when hiring people with the help of the so-called professional orientation tests, including drawing and creative tests. Respondent #4 has proven to be stigmatized after accomplishing the art test and identified as a potentially aggressive employee, which is "definitely not the aim of the proposed assessment style." A crucial point in the entering communications between candidates and the company is the presentation of the company given by the recruiters – being honest and stating the organizational values would aid in understanding of what the company's expectations are, leading the candidate

to think of whether he or she can become a fit (Respondent #4). Negative experience of recruitment has been also connected to stigmatization on whether a person has overgone a military service and to which Zodiac sign a candidate relates, being purely individual stigmatizing behaviors of a specific recruitment team lead (Respondent #6).

Respondent #1, who has extensive experience in recruiting at various companies, noted that stigmatization is especially characteristic of domestic companies in the process of creating a "brief" or "profile" of a candidate. This is due to the fact that the "final customer" (the person in the company who makes the request to select of a certain employee to his or her team) is trying to choose the most suitable employee for himself / herself, and often comes up with his or her subjective ideas based on the experience. For example, in Respondent's #1 organization, the candidate profile usually contains information about the customer's age and gender of the future employee; nevertheless, the company tries to perceive these characteristics as "desirable" rather than "required," and hire regardless of these criteria.

From a candidate's point of view, stigmatizing attitude, or unjustified behavior during the hiring process may lead to a consequent conclusion: "This team/this company seems to be toxic, so it is not a complete fir for me" and will not consider the company as a target employer for further career development (Respondent #6).

At the further stages, during assessment and promotion, employees can be stigmatized due to the known characteristics about them, as: "*Sometimes we face an attitude like this person is making mistakes since he or she has small kids, that is why he or she is less responsible in the workplace.*" (Respondent #6) Same respondent has highlighted that especially family status might be stigmatizing: for women that would be a presence or an absence of family and kids, and for men – a presence or absence of long-term relationships and attitude towards personal life.

Apart from absenteeism and opportunistic behavior which could be spotted among stigmatized employees, **"silent quitting"** might also be an issue even more dangerous in terms of detecting and overcoming it, as has been explained by Respondent #2. It affects not only the activity of a single employee, willing to quit the job as soon as possible during this stage, but also the performance of the whole team. Apart from that, stigmatized attitudes demotivate employees a lot (Respondent #2): they might lose their career ambitions and aspirations easily under the influence of stigmatizing behaviors. "*On example of my relative, searching for a position as an aged professional, I clearly saw how she lost the hope in finding any suitable respectable job, but life has proven to be different*"; (Respondent #2) and despite the happy ending of this example, an

aged candidate had to go through many stages before actually getting a job not because of the lack of experience, but because of her age.

As for the personal reactions towards stigmatization, one can potentially "**lose the personal identity**" and even self-confidence (Respondent #1, 6) in different life circumstances, including various types of jobs. The obvious individual outcome of stigmatization is **stress** and feeling of not being accepted by others (Respondents #4, 10, 11, 12, 15). Respondent #2 also mentioned the "**feeling of injustice**" which is truly affected when it comes to targeting a specific minority. Being imposed by those negative effects, an employee might not only appear in an emotionally unhealthy climate (feeling abandonment and hatred) but can also have some unexpected results such as mental instabilities and breakdowns (Respondent #4). Among personal reactions, some of the Respondents (#2, 4, 11, 12, 15) have mentioned the fact that stigmatizing attitudes could become "**drivers of development**" for those who would like to stand for their identities and prove that they are no worse than those who are considered as "majority". Stigmatization can "boost" once development and productivity as being a reason of "leaving one's comfort zone, which leads to focusing on the job tasks, overperforming and not abiding with the masses" (Respondent #4). The opposite outcome has also been proven to be possible: "a stigmatized working identity seems to be **less efficient**, experiences **lack of motivation**, feels uncomfortable and unwanted in the company." (Respondent #5) These factors altogether lead to the low satisfaction from job results and job process in general. **Fear of standing out and lack of psychological safety and creativity** are also presented as results of stigmatization, leading to lower possibility of new ideas generation (Respondents #9, 11, 12). Altogether these factors, apart from the perception of stigma as a driver of development, lead directly to organizational stress and, in some severe cases, depression (Respondent #6). On organization level that leads to: "**high employee turnover, outflow, conflicts, and even strikes**" (Respondent #7). Not only employees under stigmatization feel bad: teams in general feel the hostile climate, which leads to stressful and anxious feeling of being afraid to be the next stigma target (Respondent #8).

An important consequence of stigmatization at the individual level, not highlighted in the theoretical study, can be opportunistic behavior of the stigmatized individual. Respondent #17 has encountered this in his experience multiple times, e.g.: "...*an employee made a 'fake' hotline call complaining about a coworker who allegedly violated company rules when conducting negotiations. But in the process of the investigation, it turned out that nothing of the sort had happened – and the employee had to be dismissed from her position.*" In the Respondent's opinion, the reason of the employee's opportunistic behavior was that her team once had once assigned her the attribute of "dishonest" and "uninvolved" employee because of her age and past work

experience, and the stigma "forced" the employee into such actions to express self-protection. Respondent #18 observed in his experience complaints about employees for discrimination: "complaints went all the way up to top management or internal labor inspection". Both respondents noted that by these actions, employees showed their "closedness" and "immaturity", while a more correct action would have been to engage in open communication with line managers or employees, from whose side the stigmatized person felt pressure.

In terms of practices supporting stigmatized individuals, the **inclusive processes**, open to the whole organization, seem to be the most efficient. Put this way, "It allows employees to better connect and not feel that someone is superior to another. Feeling that you have equal opportunities, and you are unique to the company at the same time is what drives comfort. Someone is more about leadership, and someone is more executive business – we accept everything." (Respondent #3) This approach is rather unique and reflects the understanding of inclusion in its widest sense. Working exclusively, like opening specific number of working positions for minorities only, creating narrow practices for specific groups of people, might harm the organizational climate (Respondent #10); however, present efficiency when it comes to formal requirement, such as filling the targeted percentage of female and disabled employees in the company, as done in Respondent's #10 company.

It is important to note the **different attitudes of Respondents toward "controllable" and "uncontrollable" stigmas**. As discussed within attribution theory in a theoretical part of this research, Respondents #11, 14 tend to consciously help promote an individual who possesses an involuntary stigma (e.g., possesses a birth mark or is race), but negatively perceive an individual with controlled stigma (e.g., employees with tattoos or co-workers with a tendency to smoking). Respondent #11, for example, accepting employees over 45 into the company and feeling that colleagues treat the new employee differently than others, feels that he or she should do everything possible to help him or her settle in and avoid the negative effects of stigmatization.

Respondent's #15 words also support the findings of attribution theory: "..*in our company.. we openly make jokes about colleagues who are considered part of the LGBT community, and also, for example, with feminist female employees*." The respondent also notes that this has no effect on employee development or promotion – usually this kind of stigmatization rather puts pressure on the employee in terms of social distance between him and the rest of his coworkers, and can also lead to job abandonment work, decreased productivity, and termination (this was the case in the experience of Respondent #15). Respondent #15 noted that the most frequently stigmatized in the company specifically those for whom "a separate type of process and practice"

is offered, e.g., employees with disabilities who are selected, supervised, and trained by line managers in a separate manner. This drives us back to the point that the most efficient practices are inclusive, rather than exclusive.

RQ3: What HRM practices may shape stigmatization outcomes?

Among **practical solutions to avoiding the stigma** in the workplace often mentioned informal methods like active **inclusive communications**, specifically from lead and top managers of the companies (role modelling and opinion leadership) – from Respondents #2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and in this structure top managers act like an example to be followed, while lead managers and department heads are rather the ideology bearers. Connection with top managers can be maintained with the help of the so-called "townhalls" or open talks with Chief Executives, where they can share personal stories and listen to the employees during the question-and-answer session (Respondent #6). Another type of such meetings provided can include share of the opinions and experiences of top managers from different regions, tackling the issues of honest recruitment and promotion based on personal experience: "*It is crucial that such practices are organized as informal and imposed "not from above".. We had such an experience with three regional directors disclosing their stories of hiring top professionals – that was truly motivating and "cozy" at the same time, and they implicitly covered the issue of stigmatization during the presentations*".

Respondent #6 highlights the fact that the role not only of top managers is important, but also the role of informal leaders ("those who are listened to") is crucially important. "*The opinion leader (usually – one of the top managers) gives a direction of how the communications will be built: if he/she criticizes women, this will be followed or opposed. A vivid example is a manufacturing site managed by two different employees: this will be a completely new factory depending on the current manager.*" (Respondent #6) Following this idea, an opinion leader among the top managers (ideally – a CEO, because this is his/her primary function) (Respondent #6) is mainly driven by his/her emotional intelligence and ability to create unbiased, justified judgements over his/her employees and any personalities in the working environment. Soft skills are extremely important and needed to be developed across all the company's teams and activities.

Employees most responsible for the stigmatizing behaviors are top managers and team leads (Respondents #2, 3, 6, 7), while HR department acts rather as a communication "horn" transferring what has been decided by the leaders of the company (Respondents #2, 3, 6, 7, 10). "If the top manager creates or promotes biased opinions.. HR-specialists will be useless: they will represent this pitiful group of people which understands everything but is unable to make a change." (Respondent #6) Another actor in the process of facing stigmatization is the Diversity

and Inclusion department, which can aid HR department with the practices discussed below (Respondent #7).

At the same time, formal methods like **educational courses** (taken from the head office as a part of obligatory education) seem to be redundant when it comes to bias prevention: as Respondent #7 has told, "*During COVID era we have seen many burnout employees, and seeing this, introduced a range of practices – trainings and courses on self-care and soft skills – and none of them have proven to be efficient and highly visited by our workers*". In this case the problem of informal trainings has been approached as "wrong mentality" of regional workers; nevertheless, proper research should be conducted in order to understand what the exact reason of such a result was. However, respondents #1, 3, 5, 9 name trainings on inclusivity efficient and truly meaningful when it comes to stigma prevention, with Respondent #9 being the creator and implementor of such educational courses in her company herself. In case the trainings do not work, Respondent #3 assumes that "working with beliefs" should be done, with clear values and benefits stated prior to the start of education. Respondent #1 claimed: "*Workshops, held in by the head managers from global office making their personal examples and behavioral patterns, is what really matters*". Thus, practical evidence and interaction during such educational pieces can become efficient since it will allow the recipients of the course to make an emotional connection with the material presented. Another point made has been considered with the fact that building this "emotional connection" leading to understanding can only be done through relevant practical examples, which are specifically topical in a given region or culture (Respondent #5). Especially topical this type of education can be for the recruiters: as was stated by Respondent #6, "*One should understand and acknowledge his/her bias and not let them take over facts. I am prone to sympathize to working female candidates of my age – but I know this, and I never judge candidates finally based on these characteristics.*" Also Respondent #6 drives a message that the best trainings are those which only imply the sense of harmful effect of stigmatization, not being straightforwardly dedicated to this topic: "*Best trainings are implicitly connected to stigmatization.. for example, a basic recruitment training might consider various examples of a stigmatized hiring procedure.*"

No less necessary is the training for employees which, already in advance, might not be ready to work with traditionally stigmatized minorities, as, for example, disabled people: Respondent #8 has herself undergone this need while training all employees prior to a disabled worker entering the working environment. "*These trainings are.. specifically important for senior managers, since they are the role models and spokespeople in organization.. Every inaccurate word of theirs can have serious consequences.*"

As a formalized method of stigma prevention, it is considered as efficient to build **compliance centers or "hot lines"** of employee support (Respondents #2, 6, 7, 10), with multiple successful cases of its exploitation; however, it is crucial that employees can use these tools also given a high level of trust towards line and top managers. Employees who are being caught under stigmatized behaviors can negotiate with their team lead (Respondents #6, 7), or can be even fired from the company (Respondents #2, 7) due to the violation of internal rules and company's values (a vivid example is a case of James Damore and Google). In managing stigma, it is crucial to pay attention to the business goals and objectives, as well as company's mission, linking these statements directly with all HR policies (which is, basically, the task of an HR Business Partner) (Respondent #4). Hot lines with representatives of the company, operating there as a part of an ethics commission (formally or informally stated), also ensure the business integrity and act as "observers" of the internal climate and dynamics in various teams (Respondent #6). In line with compliance centers a psychological help (so called ESL) has been mentioned during interviews (Respondent #6); however, Respondent #7 claimed "*it was absolutely inefficient and, in our case, closed", while for Respondent's #5 company the program was much appreciated by coworkers, and, by multiple evidence, "helped to deal with burnouts*". Tackling the presence of an ethical committee, Respondent #8 claims that one is an inevitable part of any company, proving to be international: "*An ethical committee.. should be comprised of the top managers and Board members.. ensuring the values of the company are being transparent and all operations are in line with the ethical standards inside the company. Any employee should be able to address the committee with any request related to an ethical issue*". An example considering this problem was the following: one of the lead managers has been treating a female employee in a wrong way with a stigmatizing behavior, and this employee has to complain to the Committee. After the investigation, the lead manager has been taken away the promotion opportunity and has undergone a series of discussions with ethical department colleagues, and afterwards has to present the public apology. This case discloses the necessity of having an ethical committee and how well it can deal with conflict situations: the employee has not been simply punished or fired but had to understand the existing problem and work on it together with the assigned specialists.

Promotion of **open communications** on all the levels is crucial, and here the trustful relationships between the teams and their line managers play the most significant role (Respondent #5), including collection of the feedback from employees: both formally (via tests, questionnaires and assessments) and informally. Possibility of giving open feedback and receiving an answer is what gives employees the feeling of safety and creates healthy communicational climate around them (Respondent #7).

Another interesting solution concerned various **leadership programs'** which can drive inclusiveness and equal approach among diverse candidates: there was a case when the company of Respondent #1 organized a leadership program with specific directions for women, different ethnicities, and LGBT+ track as well. At the same time, the "objectivized" assessment making it as "biasless" as possible is the key to success (Respondent #5), with hard skills being primarily assessed under specific scales and criteria.

Mentorship and adaptation also seem to play a significant role in the "treatment" of stigmatized behavior, since for many employees they represent support (Respondents #5, 8). A vivid example has been told by Respondent #5 during an interview: "*Once an employee has reached me [as a mentor].. and told that there are some negative attributes towards him in the team.. After a while we have talked it through with all the employees and found out that this was just a behavioral misunderstanding between two colleagues, and the situation was over*", disclosing the case when an experienced and value-driven coworker can aid in solving internal communications' issues which might arise as perceived or real stigmatization. Mentorship can be internal and external: "*For example, when working with disabled people, we have been offered help from a non-commercial organization "Perspektivy", and they briefed all the lead managers hiring disabled employees, as well as their future mentors.*" (Respondent #8) The most important part of mentorship is the open feedback with an employee gives directly to a mentor; thus, all the needed requirements or changes can be discussed. Buddy programs, standing aside from the mentorship, represent a more informal interaction with the hired person from a specific minority, and can be considered more inclusive than formal mentorship (Respondent #3).

Respondent #4 highlights that **coping strategies** are highly individual depending on the employees' character traits and dynamics of the team; however, the way stigmatized identities behave can genuinely affect the way they will be treated (Respondent #2, 4). What an employee chooses as a coping strategy can heavily depend on his/her childhood and behavior presented by closest people in the environment. "*Enforcing the stigma.. and claiming self's importance only makes stigma more vivid and may cause irritation.. rather than acknowledging it, talking about it and showing one's positive example.*" (Respondent #2). Concealment is a highly individual decision, but for some experts is not considered as an efficient strategy since may cause suspicions and "negative anchors" among colleagues (Respondent #2). During disclosure, Respondent #7 claims, an employee should be as emotionless as possible, and state his/her message clearly with objective proofs on the described situations, which demands emotional stability from the targeted employee. Respondent #5 claims, though, that if a person can manage the internal pressure, it might be a reasonable decision to keep some personal beliefs or characteristics inside. The

perception of a stigmatized characteristic disclosure "mainly depends on the lead managers, and how they will react will be transferred to the team: support will be spread and opposition will also be dissimilated" (Respondent #7).

An interesting "effect" of stigmatization can be the employee's stigmatized characteristics for personal gain. Respondent #10, repeatedly encountering the need to hire employees with disabilities and physical disabilities, has on several occasions observed "**mimicry-like behavior**" when an employee made a mistake and looked for an excuse for it. Respondent #5 described mimicry behavior as the thoughts of a stigmatized employee: "*Why should I do this if I'm going to be interrupt me, won't listen, if I'm not the most productive and engaged worker?*" This kind of behavior, according to Respondents #5, 10, led to even more stigmatizing and worsened the relationship between supervisors and subordinates.

Coping strategies usually take part when it comes to repetitive stigmatizing behaviors, unlike recruitment process, where a candidate meets the company representative only a few times, thus, the stigmatizing attitude has a stronger effect on an individual being stigmatized already in the workplace (Respondent #6). The topic of **self-stigmatization**, being raised by Respondent #8, is rather curious: "*our employee.. being physically disabled.. has always been saying "I cannot do as much as you, because I am less capable and quite aged already""*, herself forming a stigmatized behavior. When dealing with employees who have been living under such stigmatization, it can become a first priority thing to show the equal attention and equal requirements to all the employees, creating an inclusive, rather than exclusive environment. "*Usually people who come from minorities.. do not want specific additional attention – on the opposite, they strive to be a part of the team alongside all other colleagues.*" (Respondent #8) In this way mentorship programs, described above, can become a great matter of help.

Both possible situations, viewed by experts: active confrontation which might be potentially destructive for the team and individual dynamics, and passive acceptation of the stigmatizing behaviors from one's coworkers (Respondent #6); thus, there should be a route for a stigmatized individual in the company which an employee can use, knowing that this will lead to comfortable communications and a beneficent resolution for both the company and the candidate.

Based on what has been analyzed in the interviews, it is important to formulate conclusions, raising the discussion on the form of stigmatization in organizations, and provide practical contribution through suggestion of specific practices which can be implemented in order to overcome stigmatizing behaviors in the workplace.

2.4. In-depth interviews results

Aggregating all the collected information together, we can see the following scheme of stigma evolution in the views of HR experts from international companies. Following the scheme below, conclusions explicitly explained the stigma perception in the international companies.
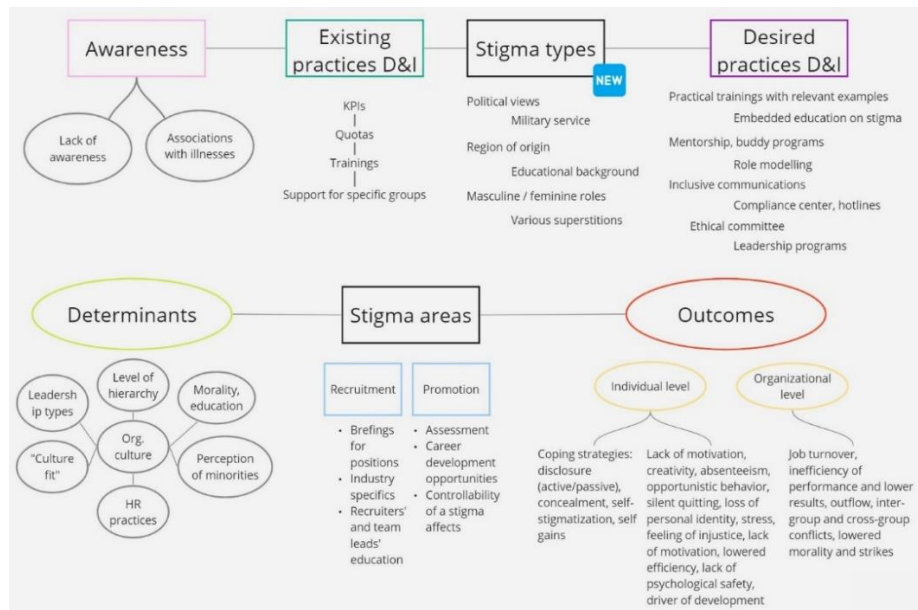

Figure 5. Stigmatization challenges topical in business: insights from international companies (developed by the author)

The findings, gained after analysis of the interviews, have been separated on the most important factors, mentioned by the experts. These findings reflect the approaches proved topical by the practitioners currently active in the international business environment, adding upon the previous findings researched via theoretical papers' analysis. The full list with some diagrams can be seen as follows:

- **Awareness on stigmatization** is still quite low: many experts state that they have acknowledged the problem of stigmatization but never addressed it directly in the workplace properly. If such issues were tackled, they were mainly adopted from the headquarter with little or no adaptation, which means that the employees might be unaware of stigmatization if have not faced it personally, and, as well, might consider the adapted practices from headquarter redundant or irrelevant. At the same time, **stigmatization issue** in general through HR practices connected to people assessment is **considered topical** by experts, naming multiple experiences of stigma in working environment. Comparison of stigma perceptions among experts from international companies operating in Russia and abroad is inappropriate due to the limitations of the given sample; however, we can clearly spot the raising attention of Russian & CIS regions towards national stigmatization, and the cross-border problem for the companies from abroad in the same matter (RQ1-3);

- Some industries, such as **STEM and IT** companies' representatives, as well as **consulting and audit**, are attributed to stigmatizing behaviors during recruitment and promotion; however, as it turns on in practice, the process of hiring in such industries is much more inclusive due to the fact that it is based on objective technical criteria rather than subjective personal impressions (RQ1);

- **Main antecedents of stigmatization in the international environment**. Among the determinants mentioned were the: organizational culture and values, as well as the culture fit with these values, quality of their communications and relevance to the current external environment, level of hierarchy, leadership style performed by top management, level of morality and culture among the employees in a team, perceptions of various minorities inside the organization, industry, or culture, and the last but not least, is the level of HR practices development and how well they are structured and delivered across the whole HR department (affecting all the HR activities' blocks). Turning to organizational cultures, given any of available classifications (Sonnenfield's types have been mentioned during the interviews), the ones with high level of hierarchy and strong criteria of a "culture fit" are prone to be open towards stigmatizing behaviors, while people-oriented cultures in which driving new ideas creativity, and equal opportunities for development are central values are more inclusive. Leadership styles closer to transactional are connected to exclusive environments and, thus, ability for a stigma to develop, while transformational and empathic leadership are associated with less stigmatizing behaviors (RQ1);

- **The relationships between determinants and occurrence of various types of stigmatization** are rather complicated to track and will be indicated as an area for the future research; however, it has been spotted that incontrollable stigmas, such as age, gender, birthmarks, race and nationality, are being stigmatized primarily during the recruitment process, since this is the basic candidate's characteristics an interviewer faces firstly during the acquaintance period; while stigmas, perceived as controllable: various appearance add-ons (hair color, tattoos), religious and political views, other beliefs and opinions, are more stigmatized already among employees working in the organizations, because they can only be spotted at that point. However, incontrollable stigmas also affect internal employees, and antecedents as organizational culture, values, role models' behaviors, and others, are equally important for both types of stigma. It is claimed that, under the proper communication of values of diversity and inclusion, well-established training on all the levels of education, including adaptation, and personal example of top management, the level of stigmatization will be reduced to minimum, and any stigmatizing behaviors, which can occur, will not be spread. This relationship approves the attribution and issue of the "controllable" stigma bias by practitioners (RQ1);

- Since stigmatization has been considered as topical, the following **outcomes of stigmatization in the workplace** have been spotted by experts when it comes to stigmatization in the organizational environment, on the individual level: negative behaviors' stimuli such as: absenteeism, opportunistic behavior, silent quitting, loss of personal identity, stress, feeling of injustice, lack of motivation, lowered efficiency, lack of psychological safety, lack of creativity, and, in the end of the day, a positive stimuli – stigmatization as a "driver of development", meaning that it can act as a starting point for the one's development and additional motivation to perform in the professional sphere. As for the organizational outcomes, given all the above-mentioned individual impacts, the mentioned are job turnover, inefficiency of performance and lower results, outflow, inter-group and cross-group conflicts, lowered morality and strikes (RQ2);

- An aggregated scheme of a **"stigma spread", a process of stigma development**, in the international companies (RQ1-2)**:**
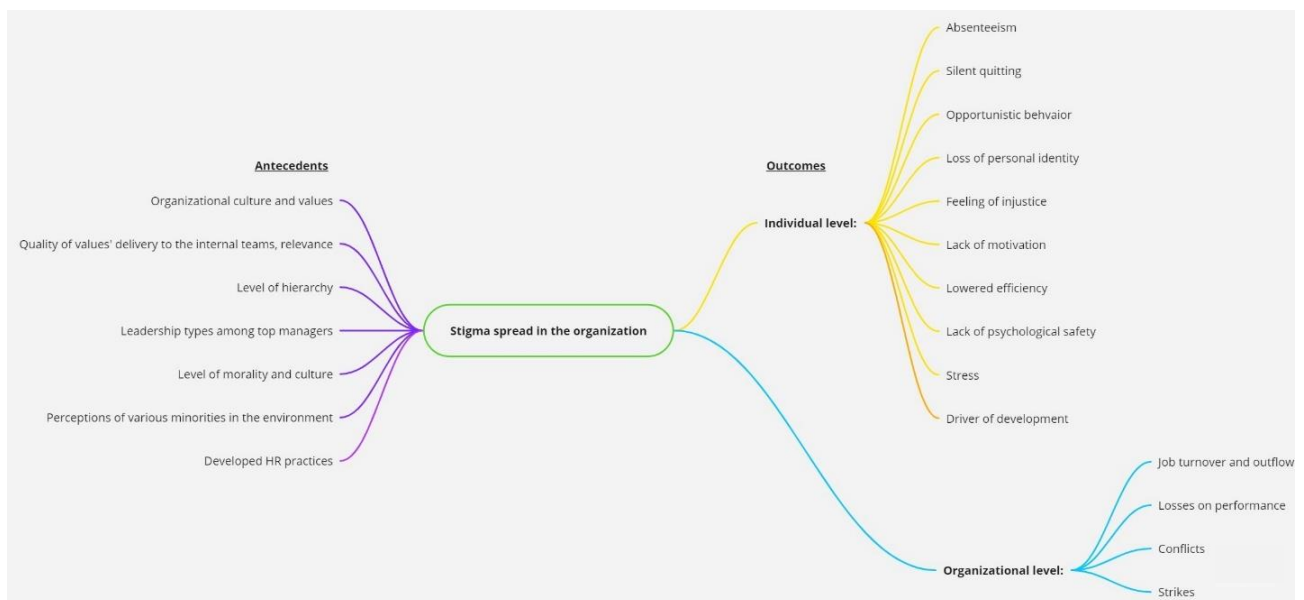
Figure 6. Insights on antecedents and outcomes of stigmatization (developed by the author)

- **Stigmatized characteristics which have not been yet discussed** in the previous research, such as: political views and opinion on geopolitical situation; nationality (newly arising issue); having served in a military (applicable mainly for region of Russia and CIS); having a work experience abroad; superstitions as a Zodiac sign alignment; possession of credits or mortgages; not only gender stigma, but rather feminine/masculine role stigma, disclosing that some positions are stigmatized as being applicable for a feminine role (like, reported, HR manager position) or a masculine role (as stated, a role in the Board of Directors) (RQ1-3);

- **Most negative effects of stigmatization are during recruitment process,** on all the stages of recruitment, starting from formulating the candidate briefs which are based on skills, not on appearances or personal characteristics, though not forgetting the personal traits and

motivation, which is specifically interesting for the culture fit question. After the brief it should be ensured that interviews are held by skilled and trained recruiters and lead managers, understanding the topic of bias and acknowledging their own prerequisite opinions on various groups of people (RQ2);

- **Inclusiveness or exclusiveness of D&I practices** has been debatable among the presented opinions, nevertheless, based on the research, the inclusive practices, open to everyone, such as trainings, townhalls, compliance centers, etc., are proven to be better perceived among employees and understood by various groups of workers: both those, presenting an "accepted" majority, and those representatives of minorities, who can be potentially stigmatized (RQ3);

- **Coping strategies which are used by stigmatized employees in the workplace are:** active disclosure, which is still considered negatively by employees from international companies; passive disclosure (or "non-concealment"), being the most "neutral" as thus the safest strategy for the employee; concealment, as researched, potentially leading to suspicions from the colleagues and lead managers, including a mimicry-like behavior, reflecting the behavior pattern of aligning to the majority's characteristics, sacrificing personal identity for the qualities of an "accepted" social group; self-stigmatization, revealing a phenomenon, when employees agree with a stigmatized attributes and approve of them by their own example (RQ3);

- **Effects the stigmatization might have on HR practice and their exhibition in the organizations:** highly biased recruitment, leading to:

a) a narrowed candidates' funnels and loss of potentially relevant successful employees;

b) stigmatized hiring process of briefing, CV screening, and interviewing;

c) stigmatized results of hiring: some candidates, even being hired to the company, might possess a stigmatized attitude for a significant period of time;

d) this altogether leading to a lowering HR brand of the company, which could be the result of a spotted stigmatized attitudes towards candidates and employees, knowledge of which is usually spread among coworkers by the word of mouth (RQ2-3).

- Apart from effects on recruiting, the **effect on promotion and assessment** is: biased and spoiled assessment process, based on subjective views and opinions. As a result of a stigmatized assessment process, we can see a non-diverse environment in the company and in the top management composition, leading to a lack of diversity and innovativeness in decision-making. It is necessary to mention that all these effects are only topical if the formal structures inside the organization allow these issues to intervene into the existing practiced. As has been identified during the research, well-formulated and objective processes of hiring and promotion should not leave any space for stigmatized attitudes (RQ2);

• The next part of this research presents some practical solutions, proven to be efficient during the research process. Tackling the stigmatizing issue depending on the source of stigma, the following question can be addressed: **where specifically does stigma come from?** The questions to this answer might be diverse: it can be routed in one's personal belief and opinions (as we discuss in when we apply for the topic of role modelling and informal leadership, then internal employees' (in-teams) communications, or even externally from society (based on the current geopolitical agenda, for example), thus, covering all the levels. Only knowing the direct source of stigmatization, it can be defined which practices can be the most efficient in terms of avoiding bias and maintaining diversity in the team; however, it is very complicated to spot these spots where stigma initially comes from, and usually companies do not have enough resources. A finding which has been proven by previous works also resembles a necessity to <u>adapt all the practices to the market of execution</u>, otherwise they become irrelevant and lack efficiency when being implemented. Following the logic of our respondents, most of the practices proposed below are inclusive, rather than exclusive, since these ones are considered as the most efficient. Still, in the next part of this research, we propose a model of practices, which can attribute to the preliminarily defined source of stigma (RQ3).

Knowledge contribution which is implied by the current work includes the systematization of the various types of stigmas, as well as the existing antecedents and outcomes of it (based on the literature review and in-depth interviews). Another type of theoretical contribution might be disclosure of the stigmatization in the setting of international companies, which could be done only after examination of the interviews' results.

Research question #3 has been discussed in the part below as a part of practical recommendations, disclosing the managerial implications in a form of HR practices for further implementation in the workplace.

2.5. Further research

In the further research, conducting an empirical study to explore dependence of the factors of occurrence and effects of stigmatization on various types of stigma is necessary, as well identification of a quantitative expression of the impact of stigmatization on group and individual results of employees. Through understanding the scope of industries and organizations, where stigmatization becomes typical, researchers can propose more customized, and, consequently, more efficient recommendations for businesses based on the results of stigma identification. Moreover, that would be valuable to acknowledge which antecedents lead to which outcomes –

when considering the stigmatization in the workplace – and for this aim the quantitative scales are to be identified further.

The time might also be devoted to studying each type of stigmatization separately, as well as to compare the level of stigmatization in the companies across various industries, countries, regions, and cultures.

The possible research questions for the future research could be following:

• What are the most developed stigmatizing factors for various specific industries?

• What metrics should be used to measure the actual level of stigmatization in companies?

• Which framework can be used in order to understand the interrelationships between antecedents and outcomes of stigmas in the workplace?

• Which antecedents might lead to which outcomes and is there a correlation between the reason of stigma development and its effects?

State-driven decisions dealing with stigmatization and discrimination are considered as important and efficient by both researchers and practitioners; thus, it will be important to study these governmental initiatives and their perceptions among stigmatized individuals and organizations in general.

It can also be mentioned that for the future discussion that might be interesting to make an overview on stigma prevention in different industries with regard to stigma characteristics, topical for various industries and cultures at the same time.

The practical recommendations proposed below can also be assessed depending on their efficiency in various markets and business environments, based on qualitative research through interviews and observations with HR experts of international companies, as well as on quantitative methods through questionnaires and regression analysis showing the relation between antecedents of stigma, its effects and the practices being implemented with anti-stigma purposes.

Chapter 3. Practical recommendations based on interviews' analysis.

Practical implications which can be proposed by this thesis are the recommendations on the "antistigma" or so-called "antibias" practices from the HR and communications departments' perspective. Chapter 3 is represented as the wholesome response towards a research question 3, tackling upon HR practices and solutions for the areas of employees' assessment which could be potentially stigmatized. Preventive techniques can, again, include some HR and communication strategies, as well as policies of diversity and inclusion management. The practices formulated have been grouped according to the linkages between core values, processes, and results proposed by Mann, et al., 2012, reflecting the movement from the basic values and concepts, then processes and people (how these values are introduced in practice), and finally to the results and performance within the company. It is important to mention that the practices in this part were only collected during communications with HR experts and are consequently verified by business environment as being either currently exhibited or demanded by professionals.

Apart from what has been gained through the interviews' analysis, the benchmarks for building of these practices among international companies have been found and included in the table below.

Table 4. Areas to deal with while solving the issue of stigmatization (developed by the author)

Area of practice / Type of practice	Practice	Benchmarks for these practices (companies already implementing – open sources)	App. costs and resources
Building a connection with values (Diversity & Inclusion) / inclusive	Formulation of the company's Ethics Code, including current Diversity & Inclusion values and policies on non-biased hiring and promotion. If applicable, creating a specific chapter on the currently biased group of candidates not presented in the company structure.	Google[1], Sodexo, Johnson & Johnson, Mastercard, Accenture, Kaiser Permanente, EY, Cisco, Marriott International, Novartis[2]	-
Inclusive	Forming the Ethical Committee, working alongside the principles of the Code, and	Coca-Cola[3], Deloitte[4], Inditex[5]	$10-30K when it comes to

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[1] Building a sense of belonging in Google and beyond: https://about.google/belonging/

[2] Companies around the world embracing diversity in a BIG way: https://www.socialtalent.com/blog/diversity-and-inclusion/9-companies-around-the-world-that-are-embracing-diversity

[3] Coca-Cola Ethics Code: https://www.coca-colacompany.com/policies-and-practices/code-of-business-conduct

[4] Social and Ethics Committee of Management – Deloitte: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/za/Documents/governance-risk-compliance/ZA_SocialAndEthicsCommitteeAndTheManagementOfEthicsPerformance_04042014.pdf

[5] Ethical Commitment by Inditex: https://www.inditex.com/itxcomweb/en/group/our-ethical-commitment

	ensuring they are being met in the business environment.		external consulting
Human Resources Management: Recruitment and Hiring / inclusive	Forming a candidate profile counting for information on the age, gender, tastes of candidates and other characteristics as wishful, not obligatory (properly communicating these requirements to lead managers). Further a candidate profile made by request is reflected in an "inclusive" job posting, avoiding job descriptions limiting the criteria of age, gender, nationality, country of origin (for non-governmental international organizations), as well as not limiting to specific places of education or places of job (if relevant).	McKinsey[6], HubSpot[7], Canva[8]	-
Inclusive	Inviting at least two recruiting specialists to the interviews to ensure diverse opinions on the candidates and lessen the possibility of a biased decision.	Yakov & Partners, Unilever (based on personal experience)	-
Inclusive	Formulating objective criteria for CV screening and interviews, avoiding bias opinions.	Yakov & Partners, Google, Kaspersky[9]	-
Inclusive	Developing a feedback system with HR leads to track the recruiters' decision-making process, including this into recruiters' assessment.	Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Mars, Cargill, Screwfix, Netflix, Google[10]	$10-30K if external consultants are needed
Human Resources Management: Training and Development / inclusive	Adaptation training (on-boarding), including main principles on D & I in the company, in explicit way (a list of values with certain examples) and implicit way (onboarding through the processes of	Slack, Tumblr, Reclaim[11], VNG AG[12]	$10-30K

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[6] Not inclusive? You are losing 39% of your job applicants: https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/sustainable-inclusive-growth/chart-of-the-day/not-inclusive-youre-losing-39-percent-of-job-applicants

[7] HubSpot job website: https://www.hubspot.com/careers/jobs/3432620?hubs_signup-cta=careers-apply

[8] Canva job website: https://www.canva.com/careers/jobs/new-zealand-talent-acquisition-partner-design-and-creative-remote-nz/

[9] HRLider – Work in Kaspersky: https://hrlider.ru/posts/kaspersky-lab/

[10] Companies acing feedback in the workplace: https://culture.io/resources/companies-that-understand-importance-of-feedback-in-the-workplace/

[11] 10 best user experience onboarding programs: https://www.appcues.com/blog/the-10-best-user-onboarding-experiences

[12] Employee onboarding trends: https://www.zavvy.io/blog/employee-onboarding-trends

	recruitment with the accent on non-biased interviewing).		
Exclusive	Trainings and workshops for lead managers / senior managers of the team on the topics of internal and external communications, giving and receiving feedback, assessment and promotion, team building, and others related should include examples of non-biased treatment of people from various minorities, relevant in each business and cultural context. These trainings are not to be held by HR specialists – either top managers or informal leaders of the team or external trainers to reduce the formality of the education process. Also in demand are the trainings and workshops for lead / senior managers on how to create briefs for the candidates, transferring them to HR department, including the information on non-bias briefing and doublechecking the necessity of gender, age, nationality, and personal traits requirements.	Arctic Shores, Avast[13]	$30-150K depending on the trainings' provider
Exclusive	Trainings and workshops for recruiters: going through all the stages' trainings from a CV screening to interviews and assessment centers (whatever applicable) with implicit examples of biased recruitment as negative practices, tackling relevant for the company types of stigmatization.	Starbucks[14], Sesame Place[15], Unilever (based on personal experience)	$30-150K depending on the trainings' provider. Example of a course by Diversity Resources[16].

[13] Diversity and Inclusion remains a top challenge for companies in 2021, despite 81% conducting unconscious bias training – Inclusive companies: https://www.inclusivecompanies.co.uk/diversity-and-inclusion-remains-a-top-challenge-for-companies-in-2021-despite-81-conducting-unconscious-bias-training/#:~:text=These%20findings%20are%20surprising%2C%20considering,fair%2C%20consistent%20and%20effective%20processes.
[14] Starbucks Anti-Bias Training: will it last? https://www.gallup.com/workplace/235139/starbucks-anti-bias-training-last.aspx
[15] Sesame Place to implement anti-bias training for employees – Axios: https://www.axios.com/2022/08/10/sesame-place-bias-training-employees
[16] Unconscious Bias Online Training Program – Diversity resources: https://www.diversityresources.com/managing-unconscious-bias-training/

Inclusive	Additional voluntary educational track for employees willing to dive deeper in the topic and gain some practical knowledge on anti-bias practices, open to the whole company but not obligatory.	Hilton[17], Braintree, Enova, Sprout Social, CA Technologies, Criteria Corp.[18]	One course: $2-6K
Inclusive	Collect feedback and include qualitative KPIs for lead managers in tracking diversity of their teams and promotion processes.	Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Mars, Cargill, Screwfix, Netflix, Google[19]	$10-30K if external consultants are needed
Inclusive	Attracting non-commercial organizations such as "Perspektivy" for an additional mentorship for people who worked with stigmatized individuals, to create support and guide among various situations which might not be evident in terms of a correct solution for a stigmatized employee and a business.	Unilever (based on personal experience), 3M and Disability Awareness Network, Accenture, Google and its Disability Alliance, Salesforce and Valuable 500[20]	-
Internal communications among employees / inclusive	Inclusion of D & I statement to the website and officially communicated values for internal users (Internal Memo, Ethics Code).	HubSpot, Nike, Spotify, Target, Boots, T-Mobile, Adobe, Workday[21]	-
Inclusive	Promotion of diversity in the company during townhalls and public meetings with top management.	Unilever, Yakov & Partners, Penn Community Bank[22]	-
Exclusive	Formulating a list of potentially stigmatized characteristics of employees in the company, which could potentially (or could have already previously) affected the relationships or performance of the team. This group might be targeted with mentorship programs disclosed below.	-	-

[17] Diversity & Inclusion at Hilton: https://www.hilton.com/en/corporate/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/20190225_External-Diversity-Brochure.pdf

[18] Why These 5 Companies Offer Unconscious Bias Training – Bullitin: https://employers.builtin.com/why-five-companies-offer-unconscious-bias-training/

[19] Companies acing feedback in the workplace: https://culture.io/resources/companies-that-understand-importance-of-feedback-in-the-workplace/

[20] Companies With Initiatives for Professionals With Disabilities – FlexJobs: https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/companies-with-initiatives-professionals-with-disabilities/

[21] Inspiring diversity and inclusion statements – Academy to Innovate HR: https://www.aihr.com/blog/dei-statement-examples/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWe're%20committed%20to%20helping,(that's%20you)%20first.%E2%80%9D

[22] The Importance Of Diversity And Inclusion For Today's Companies – Forbes: https://www.forbes.com/sites/williampbarrett/2023/05/12/best-places-to-retire-in-2023-pittsburgh-and-other-affordable-hot-spots/?

Inclusive	Organization of informal meetings, where regional or lead function managers share their experience with hiring individuals in the company, discovering examples of biased choices and non-bias choices with corresponding circumstances.	Unilever (based on personal experience), Kaiser Permanente, Lenovo[23]	-
Inclusive	Mentorship and buddy programs open for every employee across the company, promoted as a matter of help for employees who might have lost their career track or currently experiencing concerns considering their development in the team. Although initially inclusive, this program can be promoted exclusively within the groups of employees distinguished as under the risk of stigmatization: those experiencing mental / physical disabilities, female workers as minorities in specific industries, et cetera. So-called employee centers can become a point for questions for many employees, willing to give their feedback and, as well, receive it.	Mastercard[24], King Games, New York Life, Mailshake[25]	$10-30K
Inclusive	Role modelling by informal leaders and top managers: promoting diversity via personal example in leading team meetings/calls, emphasizing the value of D & I and presence of different employees in the corporate environment.	PwC[26]	-
Inclusive	Organization of compliance center for offline- and online-requests' collection, as well as managing hot lines (via phone calls) for all the ethical issues and complaints potentially arising. Not only	X5 Retail Group[27], KPMG[28], Deloitte[29]	$5-9K. Example: compliance

[23] Diverse inclusive companies – Business News Daily: https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/15970-diverse-inclusive-companies.html

[24] Ibid.

[25] Start a diversity and inclusion mentorship program: https://www.togetherplatform.com/blog/diversity-mentoring-programs

[26] What is the importance of role model in business – Involve people: https://www.involvepeople.org/what-is-the-importance-of-role-models-within-business-2/

[27] Ethics hotline – X5 Retail group: https://www.x5.ru/en/about/ethics-hotline/

[28] Ethics and compliance hotline – KPMG: https://kpmg.com/us/en/home/about/ethics-and-compliance-hotline.html

[29] Setting up a corporate ethics and compliance hotline the right way – Deloitte: https://www2.deloitte.com/kz/en/pages/finance/articles/setting-up-corporate-ethics-and-compliance-hotline.html

			center by Ethico[30]
Communications with external stakeholders (HR Branding) / inclusive	Inclusion of D & I statement to the website and officially communicated values for external users.	Procter & Gamble[31], Unilever[32], Nike[33], McKinsey[34], X5 Retail Group[35] and many other	-
Exclusive	Leadership programs for specific minorities: for women in tech, disabled, aged employees and many more groups to cover. Although exclusive, aims at making the workspace more equal and providing to various external groups equal opportunities for employment.	Google, Warner Brothers[36], Mars[37], KFC[38], Microsoft[39]	-
Inclusive	Participation in industry-specific events on D & I, organized in the region of execution, can aid in raising the awareness of the existing minorities' stigmatization and drawing the attention towards the company as being ready to share its profits on this type of activities.	Mars, Sky, NHS, Primark, Pfizer, RSPCA, Direct Line Group[40], Cheniere Energy, KPMG, Philips, Seadrill, Chevron, Hess[41]	$2-10K (participation costs)

[30] Ethico – hotline and compliance center provider: https://ethico.com/hotline-case-management/

[31] Equality & Inclusion – Procter & Gamble: https://us.pg.com/equality-and-inclusion/

[32] Equity, Diversity and inclusion – Unilever: https://www.unilever.com/planet-and-society/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/

[33] Diversity, Equity & Inclusion – Nike: https://about.nike.com/en/impact/focus-areas/diversity-equity-inclusion

[34] Diversity & Inclusion – McKinsey & Company: https://www.mckinsey.com/about-us/diversity/overview

[35] Sustainability – X5 Retail Group: https://www.x5.ru/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/x5_sustainability_report_2020_eng.pdf

[36] Gender equality initiatives – Buro: https://www.buro247.ru/fashion/buronewera/26-oct-2018-gender-equality-initiatives-in-russia.html

[37] Women of Mars Program – Forbes: https://www.forbes.ru/forbes-woman-photogallery/393287-25-luchshih-kompaniy-dlya-zhenskoy-karery-reyting-forbes-woman?photo=7

[38] KFC Women Leadership Club: https://vk.com/womanwm?w=wall-171828934_86

[39] Microsoft Make What's Next Program: https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/philanthropies/make-whats-next

[40] Diversity and inclusion Conference September 2023: https://thediversityconferences.com/

[41] Diversity & inclusion in oil & gas: https://energyconferencenetwork.swoogo.com/diversityandinclusion

Apart from that, there can be formulated an optimal behavior of a stigmatized individual in the company, facing the perils of stigmatization on his/her personality. This will include the following advice on the stigmatized employee's behavior:

- Disclosure or concealment, as a main decision based on coping strategies, is considered as an important step for a stigmatized individual in the workplace: concealment might be acknowledged as a rational decision when it comes to personal, controllable stigmas; at the same time, disclosure can be perceived negatively in the case of same type stigmas, and quite logical and more tolerable when it comes to incontrollable stigmas;

- Various coping mechanisms, presented in current research, are highly individual and should be as well applied only based on the thorough analysis of the situation. It is not advised to stick to the coping strategy for once and always follow it: it is vital to understand that each and every situation might demand an individual choice, and the question "to conceal or not to conceal" stays topical depending on the sequence of questions, visualized below.

To graph the path of a perceived stigmatized identity in the workplace, we propose the following scheme*:
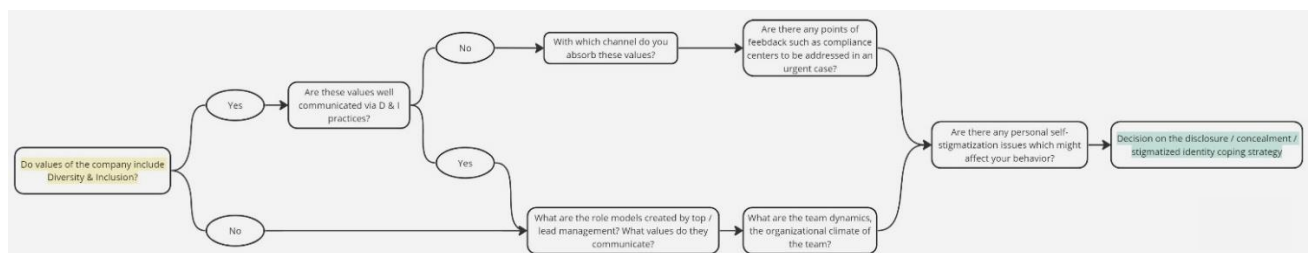
Figure 7. Process of decision making for a stigmatized identity: conceal or disclose? (developed by the author)

All in all, reviewing the practical recommendations listed above, it could be argued that business practitioners may use any of these depending on the availability of resources. It is also vital to spot the size of the business and relate it to the corresponding factors, applicable to the number of employees, as well as to the culture of the country, current geopolitical situation and other important factors in the external surroundings of the business.

Conclusion

As a result of the study, the author has identified and described the following: the concept of stigmatization of employees in organization, various types of stigma (based on the characteristics of stigmatized employees), antecedents of stigma in the workplace, and the outcomes of its spread at the individual and organizational levels. Apart from this, the author has proposed specific practical implications in a form of practices (divided by the spheres of their implementation in the HR department). Not only theoretically the existing papers have been deeply researched on the topic of stigma evolution in the organizational context, but also the ideas already provided by researchers have been verified during the in-depth interviews, disclosing some perspectives of how stigma is perceived and developed currently in the acting international business climate. The empirical part of a research allowed to see the perils of stigmatization through the lens of international business environment and spot the up-to-date stigma-related problems and solutions provided currently on the market or being potentially desired for implementation for transparency and diversity matters.

The current thesis proposes methods of dealing with stigmatization based on the multiple research and real-time evidence from international practitioners. The practical recommendations provided can be used as a tool-guide for companies willing to prevent stigmatizing behaviors during various assessment processes in their company: recruitment and career development especially, thus, the materials presented can be use in order to build a cohesive diversity and inclusion approach towards HR practices in organizations.

The purpose of this study: to identify the antecedents of stigmatization and its outcomes in the working environment in the international companies – has been achieved through theoretical analysis of sources and classification of information received in the models presented in the thesis, as well as through qualitative empirical research (conducting and analyzing 20 in-depth interviews with current HRM experts from international companies), following with the proposed activities on how to reduce the level of stigmatization.

The methodology chosen allowed us to investigate the following key research questions that are particularly relevant in the context of HR and communication policies and practices in the international companies:

RQ1: Which antecedents (organizational and non-organizational) influence the emergence of employees stigmatization?

RQ2: What organizational outcomes employee stigmatization lead to?

RQ3: What HRM practices may shape stigmatization outcomes?

In terms of theoretical contribution, this thesis logically complements the work of Summers et al. (2016) on identifying different types of stigma and factors in their occurrence, as well as the work of Devers et al. (2008), Johnston (2005), Lynch and others (2016), Major and others (2002), Stewart (2004) describing the role of stigma in the organizational context and its implications on various levels.

As a result of the empirical research conducted, the answers to the main research questions have been identified, proving the existing ones found in the literature and adding the new ones, topical in the business environment. Despite its proven influence on a wide range of organizational processes and organizational behavior, the problem of stigmatization arising among various organizational processes, noted by experts in the field of HRM, stays understudied in business. The full range of findings, which also includes an analysis of the specifics of international business, is presented in the current research. In addition, the conclusions of the thesis touched upon the following areas:

- Types of stigmatization relevant stigmatization new international business environment;
- Antecedents of in the organizational context;
- Outcomes of stigmatization;
- Areas of the business, "sensitive" towards stigmatization spread: recruitment, promotion, and meaningfulness of the stigma concealability / visibility;
- Coping strategies of the specialists in the workplace;
- Existing and desired practices for stigma prevention.

The practical contribution of this work is represented by recommendations, which include HR-practices for implementation in international companies. Based on the in-depth interviews and experts' knowledge, the areas of the practices identified were the following: Building a connection with values (Diversity & Inclusion), Human Resources Management: Recruitment and Hiring, Human Resources Management: Training and Development, Internal communications among employees, Communications with external stakeholders (HR Branding). Apart from the practices' list, with the help of open sources analysis, the author has identified the "role models" for the mentioned practices among the international companies and assesses the approximate costs (if applicable) for the practices. Representatives of the businesses – top managers, line managers, and HR specialists – may use these practices in order to ensure the unbiased processes of recruitment and promotion, and, consequently, raise the rate of diversity & inclusion inside the organization, with all the further advantages of the D & I in the company. Ensuring the unbiased practices of recruitment and promotion, organizations make sure that the range of their opportunities in terms

of human capital are being worked out at their fullest, and the workforce is comprised fairly based on the criteria, beneficial for the business goals and stakeholders.

Resources

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Good afternoon!

Thank you for agreeing to have a short interview. It will take no more than 40 minutes.

My name is Anastasia Golubkova, and I am a 2nd year student of the Master program of GSOM SPbU with a profile in Human Resource Management. As part of big research project, I am writing a thesis on the topic "Antecedents and Outcomes of Stigmatization in the workplace".

As part of our interview, I will ask you a few questions in general about your company, then we will touch on the topics of staff stigmatization and you can comment on some points based on your work experience (in your company, as well as in general in international companies), and at the end of the conversation, it may happen why this or that stigma about the employee arises, and how it happens before his eyes.

In the text of my work, all companies will be encrypted as "Company A" – the results of our interview will be presented anonymous.

General questions

- May I firstly clarify if your current position is _____ in company _____?

Let's start with some questions on the company and its organization culture.

- How many employees work in your company?
- How can you characterize the existing corporate culture in the company? (any characteristics of how employees interact and how they approach their job duties count)
- Are there any practices related to the Diversity & Inclusion?

Stigmatization and attitudes

- How do you understand the concept "stigmatization"?

If necessary: I will explain the concept. Stigmatized individuals (in an organizational context, employees) have (or are perceived to have) characteristics that reflect a social identity that is underestimated in a particular social context" (Crocker, et al., 1998). An important feature of this definition may be that stigmatized employees do not necessarily actually have these characteristics - most often they are "prescribed" a set of qualities depending on their belonging to a special group due to the fact that they believe that all members of the selected set are endowed with these properties (so-called "attribution"). I'll give you an example.

- Have you encountered situations in which, in your opinion, employees of companies you know were stigmatized on any basis?

For example, stigmatization might target the following specific characteristics: ...

- What types of stigmatization, in your opinion, are the most common in your region / specialty / industry? *Why? In your opinion, are the types of emerging stigmatization different in the specific regional division of your company and in the head office?*

- How do you think, what people feel when being stigmatized? What would you feel?

- How do you think stigma affects the behavior of company employees?

- If a stigmatization process occurs and is regularly noticed, who should be held responsible?

For example: company management, HR department or Diversity & Inclusion department or other structure

How, then, can stigmatization be reduced? If not, do you consider it necessary to intervene in the processes of working relationships between employees and help in their stabilization in case of finding injustice towards any group (discrimination, stigmatization)?

Questions on the determinants of stigmatization

- In your opinion, what influences the emergence of stigma in organizations - what provokes stigma apart from the obvious factors? *There are internal - qualities and characteristics of employees, external - attitudes and opinions of others. Here we would like to discuss the external ones which could act like moderators.*

- Can the behavior of an employee in the organization (recipient / perceiver of stigma), from your point of view, could prevent the emergence of a negative attitude towards him from colleagues? *If so, what exactly should this behavior be like?*

Questions on the effects of stigmatization

- From your point of view, does (and if so, how) affects several organizational characteristics, which I will name below: - employee presenteeism (a situation in which an employee spends more time at the workplace, while his efficiency remains the same or decreases) - identification of employees with the organization (sense of belonging to the company, its identity and participation in it) - opportunistic behavior (following one's interests, including deceit, including but hardly limited to such obvious forms of deception as lying, theft, fraud) - employee engagement - ostracism (exclusion of an employee from the main social processes within the organization, including from part of the work activity, "hermitage") – thriving of the employee, his/her development in the company.

Questions tackling personal and organization perception of stigmatization (scales)

- How do you think are employees in your company understanding their colleagues with a *stigmatized characteristic*?

- Does some behavior of one people towards a specific group of employees upsets you? Makes you feel uncomfortable?

- Have you personally felt stigmatization, unconscious bias in you towards other candidates / employees, while recruiting / promoting someone to the team?

- Have you been personally stigmatized / biased? What do you feel about this topic personally?

- How would you say, would some people be happy to spend time with *a stigmatized characteristic (highlighted by interviewee during the last questions)* person during a break or lunch? What would they say if they were distributed to a common group with this person?

- Can most people in organization think that a *stigmatized characteristic* person developed this attitude / characteristic to avoid the difficult problems of everyday life?

- Would some people think this employee is a bad person due to the *stigmatized characteristic?*

Questions on the practices dealing with stigmatization:

- When it comes to dealing with stigmatization, which practices are used in your company (have been used by your previous employer)?

- How much do these practices cost (in your area of responsibility)?

Thank you so much for your answers!