
Employees' attitudes towards diversity and diversity management

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Abstract

The aim of the theoretical part of this article will be to describe diversity, its management, and different approaches to its implementation. I will also address the main areas related to diversity. This section will be based on the literature review and comparisons made among the authors.

The practical part will deal with the application of diversity in four Information Technology (IT) companies. The aim of this section will be to find out the attitude of employees of chosen IT companies towards diversity. This objective will be achieved by means of a quantitative research investigation which will verify three established hypotheses. The first of these hypotheses sounds as follows: Employees identify themselves with their company's approach to diversity. The second hypothesis is: The environment in smaller companies is more diverse than in large and medium-sized ones, and the third hypothesis reads: Graduates are perceived to be more contributing people than those who are 50+ years old.

Key words: Management, employee, ethnic diversity, age, gender, diversity.

Introduction

The term diversity refers to variety or multiplicity based on some classification criteria. It represents all the significant differences that distinguish particular individuals from others. This includes a wide range of visible and hidden qualities. Diversity is typically defined as the diversity of values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, religions, ethnic heritage, sexual orientation, skills, knowledge, life experiences, and lifestyles of the individuals who make up a particular group of people. The primary task of diversity is to recognise, name, and respect differences. The difference of individualities is understood as their connecting element (Maříková et al., 2015, p. 20).

Diversity in an organisation may be viewed from three perspectives. These are the descriptive level of diversity which refers to the uniqueness or heterogeneity of individuals, or to the differences and similarities among them. Diversity is also understood from a moral perspective which refers to the satisfaction of the needs of all individuals and their ability to contribute to the organisation and participate in the achievement of its objectives. In functional terms, diversity refers to diversity management (Horváthová et al., 2016, p. 176).

According to Mařík et al. (2015, p. 20), diversity management means a process of putting diversity into practice within an organisation. It is a management process that is value-oriented for the future and is active, conscious, strategic, and communicative. It aims to accept and use differences and similarities as potential for the development of the organisation.

Horváth et al. (2016, pp. 174-175) distinguish diversity into primary and secondary dimensions. According to them, the primary dimensions include characteristics which every person has and are easily observable. They also play a major role in employment. These include age, race,

ethnicity, gender, as well as mental and physical abilities. Secondary dimensions then play an important role in shaping person's values, expectations, and experience. They are variable in practice. These include work experience, communication style, family status, economic status, mother tongue, religion, learning and thinking styles, geographic affiliation, parental status, and possible use or non-use of tobacco products.

Diversity within organisations

Paukner (2012, p. 229) mentions the emergence of multicultural workplaces and work teams in connection with the globalisation of labour market and the advent of new communication technologies. Some, especially multinational companies, are aware of the inevitability of diversity because of societal changes, whilst at the same time, being aware of the new opportunities which diversity opens up for them. In some EU member states, diversity is becoming part of a company's strategy, as it needs to maximise the potential of its employees to succeed in a highly competitive global marketplace.

However, adopting diversity management is a long-term process. There is no method of implementing it that is simple or universal. Especially, top management support for this approach is a necessary step in making a decision to introduce and implement it in an organisation (Depoo et al., 2020, p. 35).

According to a long-term experience, creating an environment of diversity in companies has a positive impact on employee's satisfaction and work morale. It also reduces their absence from work and the likelihood of communication misunderstandings. Another benefit of a diverse environment is increased creativity, innovation, and team performance in problem solving. At the same time, the workforce represents a strategic advantage for marketing which targets diverse customers' groups. The application of diversity management also demonstrates the social responsibility of company, which has a good effect on its reputation and helps in attracting employees of good quality (Pauknerová, 2012, p. 229).

Frank (2011, p. 129) argues that the usefulness of diversity may be seen in attributes relevant to the job role or task, as well as in diversity in terms of age, gender, nationality, social status, or personality. Its effects on team performance are complex, with task-related diversity and relationship-oriented diversity having different effects. These depend, among other things, on the team's tasks. Creativity and innovation require a diversity of knowledge, professional orientation, or industry backgrounds. For this reason, the collaboration of people with these diverse settings provides useful insights and creates the potential for combining ideas from different fields.

Horváth et al. (2016, pp. 180-181) describe eight steps of applying diversity management in an organisation. She also points out that, in practice, this process depends on the factors affecting a particular organisation. The first step is a decision to adopt diversity management by the organisation's leadership. This is followed by the definition of competencies, where all horizontal and functional areas are included, the coordination of activities, the creation of incentive systems, and the embedding of diversity management in performance appraisal and management training. The next step is to analyse the organisation which focuses not only on its strengths and weaknesses and problem analysis, but also on organisational capabilities, customer analysis, as well as employee and manager's analysis. The fourth step includes defining diversity and diversity management at the organisational level, developing an overall understanding of diversity management, and linking it to the overall organisational strategy. This is followed by the development and setting of controllable objectives, i.e. the design of an overall strategy for the implementation of the organisation's diversity management based on analysis and alignment with its objectives and considering the broad functional spectrum of the organisation. The sixth step is to ensure that the necessary actions are taken to achieve the objectives, followed by a communication step inside and outside the organisation. This step includes communication with employees, customers, press, suppliers,

investors, and cooperating partners. The final step is the evaluation of results, which aims to assess the achievement of objectives through surveys, questionnaires or interviews, as well as the adjustment of goals and measures.

Horváth et al. (2016, p. 184) state that a diversity audit is used to map the approach to diversity across the organisation. It allows to discover the hidden prejudices of employees, to analyse the nature of the organisation's culture and Human Resources (HR) policy, and to understand the needs of employees. Through its implementation, the organisation can assess whether it is ready for change and to introduce diversity management. It answers important questions about turnover, training, compensation, evaluations, and career development opportunities. It also focuses on soft and non-measurable indicators. Its main aim is to motivate and illustrate new potential solutions. It is intended to reveal patterns and common trends in responses that may present deeper connections to the culture of the organisation. The analysis results in a final audit report that outlines areas where corrective actions are worth implementing, as well as positive findings which are beneficial for the organisation for further development.

In the case of a diversity audit, the organisation itself decides whether to set up an internal team or to entrust its management to an external team specialising in this type of HR audit. The audit team should be made up of people who are sufficiently empathetic, have analytical skills and awareness of gender, diversity, and equal opportunities issues. At the same time, he or she should have adequate time capacity to devote to tasks. Data obtained from the organisation's documents, questionnaire survey, and individual and group interviews with employees are subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis by the audit team. A key prerequisite for audit quality is maintaining strict confidentiality regarding the outputs from the individual methods used (Horváthová et al., 2016, p. 184).

Ethnic diversity

According to Paukner (2012, pp. 236-237), it is necessary to accept and respect cultural differences in current corporate practice. Especially in the multicultural work teams of multinational companies. The issue of cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity is also linked to the issue of migration and immigration. Labour migration, hitherto considered temporary within the EU member states, is gradually becoming permanent. The Czech Republic, which has long functioned more as a transit country for many foreigners, has become a country of final destination. Foreigners try to find a long-term home here, and thus a place of long-term economic activity. Their share of the total population continues to grow. A long-standing culturally and ethnically homogeneous country is thus becoming a multicultural society. Horváth et al. (2016, p. 176) also add that ethnic diversity is often discussed in relation to the Roma ethnicity.

Age diversity

Age diversity is a very important issue in the light of further developments in the labour market. The demographic development of the Czech Republic shows that there are more and more elderly people while the overall population increases, and this trend will continue to accelerate. The same is true in the old EU member states. People who are 50+ years old often belong to groups supported in the labour market. Employers are aware that high quality teams with low turnover will give them a competitive advantage, and diversity management focused on age diversity could be one of the tools to achieve this goal. At the same time, it may also become a tool for many organisations to motivate and stabilise employees (Horváthová et al., 2016, p. 176).

Paukner (2012, p. 235) states that age management is related to the systematisation of work with elder employees. Horváth et al. (2016, p. 188) define age management as "the management of human resources with regard to the age, abilities and potential of employees." According to Paukner (2012, p. 235), it contains measures aimed at removing age barriers and promoting age diversity. The reasons for its application include (Pauknerová, 2012, p. 235):

- retention of skilled employees;
- stabilising the organisation's skill base;
- positive effect of age heterogeneity;
- respect for state policy and compliance with anti-discrimination measures;
- aging population.

Horváth et al. (2016, p. 188) refer to the main principle of age management as ensuring that every employee has the opportunity to reach their potential and is not disadvantaged because of their age. Although the term is often associated with elder employees, its measures are aimed at all groups of employees. This includes graduates entering their first job, as well as parents of young children, which also helps balancing work and personal life. Specific forms of treatment should be applied to all age groups of employees, not just to elder ones. The goal of the organisation should therefore be to leverage the strengths of the workforce, regardless of their age.

Gender diversity

Another group considered to be disadvantaged in the labour market is women. This disadvantage is mainly due to the traditional division between female and male roles, according to which the woman should be more focused on caring for families, while the man should be more focused on their careers. The term gender is used to describe male and female roles. It expresses the fact that the characteristics and behaviours associated with the image of women and men are shaped by society and culture. The concept of gender shows that the definition of roles, behaviour, and norms related to the two sexes tends to differ depending on society, time period, or different social groups. This distinguishes it from sex, which is a universal category which does not change according to time and place (Pauknerová, 2012, p. 232).

Paukner (2012, p. 233) further states that gender mainstreaming serves as a tool to level out inequalities in opportunities for women and men on a national scale. This refers to a process in which all conceptual, decision-making, and evaluation processes managed by the state are subject to an equal opportunities' perspective at all stages of preparation and implementation. This levelling of inequalities is addressed by a set of different measures at the legislative level. This area is officially referred to as equal opportunities for men and women, which refers to the absence of barriers preventing citizens from taking part in economy, politics and society because of their gender.

Diversity of people with disabilities

The inclusion of disabled individuals in the workplace is psychologically beneficial not only for the disabled themselves, but also for the healthy population. The mark of a developed society is that it is able to involve all its members in social and working processes. Tolerance is thus indicated as well as appropriate social and psychological sensitivity. People should have the right to work like healthy people, even with an altered working capacity. People with disabilities may face many insecurities arising from their illness and society's attitude towards them. These may be sensory or physical defects, their appearance, their mental state, or ongoing illnesses. Society tends to treat the disabled as a diagnosis or disability rather than as a unique individual (Pauknerová, 2012, pp. 233-234).

Material and methods

The aim of the research part of this article was to find out the attitude of the employees of chosen IT companies towards diversity by means of a quantitative survey research. To achieve the objective stated above, three hypotheses were used:

- Hypothesis 1: Employees identify themselves with their company's approach to diversity.
- Hypothesis 2: The environment in smaller companies is more diverse than in large and medium-sized companies.

- Hypothesis 3: Graduates are perceived to be more contributing people than those who are 50+ years old.

According to Kozel (2006, p. 120), quantitative survey research is concerned with obtaining data on the frequency of occurrence of something that is currently happening or has already happened. Its purpose is to obtain measurable numerical data. In order to meet the conditions of data collection and obtain statistically reliable results, it is common to work with large sets of respondents in a formal interviewing process.

Approximately 200 employees from four IT companies were contacted to confirm or refute the hypotheses set for the purpose of achieving the survey objective. These employees were contacted by means of a questionnaire which was sent to them by email after consultation with their directors. Data collection was being collected throughout the month of October 2022.

The survey is based on a questionnaire that is freely available to respondents. It may be in either printed or electronic form. The person who comes into contact with the questionnaire decides whether he or she will fill it out, thus becoming a respondent. In connection with the survey, the term self-selection of respondents is used, as they are not selected and approached by the researcher, but decide themselves whether to take part in the survey. The responses obtained come from a sample of the population that the researcher is unable to significantly influence (Tahal, 2017, p. 48). Kozel (2006, p. 159) further adds that it is the self-selection of respondents that threatens the survey with unrepresentative results.

The questionnaire is presented in Annex 1: Questionnaire for respondents. The questionnaire was evaluated using frequency analysis. According to Kozel (2006, p. 96), frequency refers to the number of occurrences of each response option. The absolute frequency refers to the sum of the individual response options, while the relative frequency expresses the ratio of the absolute frequency to the size of the population. Relative frequencies are therefore usually expressed as percentages and are usually more telling when the data are analysed in depth.

Survey research file

For the sake of clarity, the individual companies are marked with letters A, B, C, and D. These are companies which operate in the IT sector and are involved in designing websites, applications and software, as well as in digitizing processes and simplifying them. Three of the companies are based in Prague, one of them in Brno. Their origins date from 1990 to 2013.

Table 1: Companies

Company	Headquarters	Origins	Number of employees
Company A	Prague	2009	25
Company B	Prague	1990	1000
Company C	Brno	1995	150
Company D	Prague	2013	50

Source: Own elaboration

Table 2: Proportion of respondents

Company	Number of employees invited for the survey	Employees who took part in the survey	Share in the survey research file
Company A	22	20	9.80%
Company B	150	94	46.07%
Company C	120	72	35%
Company D	43	18	8.82%
Total	335	204	---

Source: Own elaboration

Table 2 shows that although the survey was sent to a total of 335 employees, only 204 of them chose to become respondents to the survey. The proportion of companies is highly varied. Company A represents a rounded 10% of respondents; Company B 46% of respondents; Company C a total of 35% of respondents; and Company D 9% of the total number of respondents.

Table 3: Proportion of men and women

Company	Number of men responded	Number of women responded	Proportion of women in the research population
Company A	18	2	10.00%
Company B	82	12	12.76%
Company C	55	17	23.6%
Company D	13	5	27.77%
Total	168	36	17.64%

Source: Own elaboration

Female respondents are most represented in Company C, i.e. almost 28%. On the contrary, the smallest number of women is in Company A, i.e. only 10% of the total number of respondents from this company. A total of 36 women participated in the survey, representing just under 18% of respondents.

Table 4: Age representation

	Younger than 30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61-70 years	71 years and more
Company A	6	12	2	0	0	0
Company B	16	43	19	14	2	0
Company C	22	24	19	6	0	1
Company D	6	8	3	1	0	0
Total	50	87	43	21	2	1
Total proportion	24.50	42.64	21.07	10.29	0.98	0.49

Source: Own elaboration

Table 4 shows that the most represented group of respondents is the 31-40 age group which includes more than 42% of respondents. It is followed by the younger than 30 years group with less than 25% and the 41-50 years group with more than 21%. Approximately 10% of respondents are 51 to 60 years old. The groups aged 61 to 70 and 71 and more are the least represented, i.e. 1% or half a percent, respectively.

Question 4 focused on whether the respondents belonged to one of these groups. The results of the answers are given in the table presented below.

Table 5: Group affiliation

	Different nationality or ethnicity	Graduates	Women with children under 15 years	People with disabilities

Company A	1	2	1	0
Company B	10	7	6	4
Company C	17	13	10	5
Company D	3	4	3	2
Total	31	26	20	11
Total proportion	15.19	12.74	9.80	5.39

Source: Own elaboration

Out of a total of 204 respondents, 31, i.e. more than 15%, indicated that they were of a different nationality or ethnicity. Almost 13% indicated that they are graduates up to two years from school leaving, and just under 10% are women with children under 15 years old. People with disabilities are the least represented in companies, i.e. under 6%.

Results and Discussion

Questions 5, 7, 9 and 11 dealt with diversity in companies. Question 5 asked whether the companies where respondents work practice employee diversity. The answers to this question are summarised in the following table.

Table 6: Applying diversity in companies

	Definitely yes	Yes, in large part	Rather not	Definitely not	I do not know
Company A	2	6	12	0	0
Company B	18	67	4	0	5
Company C	55	13	1	0	3
Company D	5	12	1	0	0
Total	80	98	18	0	8
Proportion in %	39.21	48.03	8.82	0	3.92

Source: Own elaboration

The table shows that the largest number of respondents indicated the “Yes in large part” option, with more than 48%. The second most common answer was “Definitely yes” with just under 40%. The “Rather not” option was marked by just under 9% of respondents and the “I do not know” option by just under 4%. The answer “Definitely not” was not indicated by any of the employees.

In question 7, the respondents were asked whether they thought the company applied diversity sufficiently. The answers to this question are given in Table 7.

Table 7: Application of diversity according to respondents

	Definitely yes	Yes, in large part	Rather not	Definitely not	I do not know
Company A	1	12	5	0	2

Company B	50	25	12	0	7
Company C	48	13	9	0	2
Company D	4	9	3	2	0
Total	103	59	29	2	11
Proportion in %	50.49	28.92	14.21	0.98	5.39

Source: Own elaboration

The following question focused on whether respondents were aware of the extent of representation of groups of employees who may be discriminated against in the labour market.

Table 8: Representation of employees' groups

	Yes	No
Other nationality or ethnicity	195	9
Graduates (up to 2 years from graduation)	200	4
People over 50 years old	122	82
Women with children under 15 years old	200	4
People with disabilities	183	21

Source: Own elaboration

This table confirmed the findings presented in Table 5: Group affiliation. However, it has also shown that, especially in larger companies, employees do not know each other well enough to know their colleagues in order to be able to classify them as members of those groups.

Question 11 asked whether respondents were aware of the gender balance in the companies in which they work.

Table 9: Proportion of men and women according to respondents

Significantly more men	More men	Approximately the same	More women	Significantly more women
110	88	6	0	0

Source: Own elaboration

The results confirmed that there are more men in IT companies and that the respondents are aware of this. Furthermore, these results confirmed the representativeness of the research sample. The less than 3% of respondents who answered that the ratio of women to men in the company is approximately the same may be influenced by the type of work team they are in within the company.

Questions 6, 8 and 10 were about employees' subjective attitudes towards diversity.

Question 6 asked whether respondents were personally in favour of introducing employee diversity in companies.

Table 10: Implementing diversity

	Definitely yes	Yes, in large part	Rather not	Definitely not	I do not know
Company A	13	5	2	0	0
Company B	62	29	3	0	0
Company C	47	23	0	0	2
Company D	5	12	1	0	0
Total	127	69	6	0	2
Proportion in %	62.25	33.82	2.94	0	0.98

Source: Own elaboration

The highest number of votes, i.e. over 62% of respondents, indicated a clearly positive attitude towards the introduction of diversity in companies. Next, almost 34% were rather in favour of its introduction, and only less than 3% were against its introduction. One percent of the respondents were unsure and marked the “*I do not know*” option.

Question 8 asked the respondents whether they thought employee diversity was beneficial.

Table 11: Benefits of diversity

	Definitely yes	Yes, in large part	Rather not	Definitely not	I do not know
Company A	10	8	2	0	0
Company B	51	32	7	0	4
Company C	42	23	7	0	0
Company D	6	12	0	0	0
Total	109	75	16	0	4
Proportion in %	53.43	36.76	7.84	0	1.96

Source: Own elaboration

A total of 53% of respondents believe that employee diversity is definitely beneficial. A further 37% believe that diversity is rather beneficial, and just under 8% think it is rather not beneficial. Less than 2% of respondents were unsure and indicated the “*I do not know*” option.

Question 10 asked the respondents to answer which groups of employees they think can be beneficial in companies.

Table 12: Contribution of employee groups

	Definitely yes	Yes, in large part	Rather not	Definitely not	I do not know
Other nationality or ethnicity	182	22	0	0	0

Graduates (up to 2 years from graduation)	50	143	11	0	0
People over 50 years old	139	52	13	0	0
Women with children under 15 years old	181	20	3	0	0
People with disabilities	62	98	27	2	15

Source: Own elaboration

The “*Definitely yes*” option was marked by the highest number of respondents in the groups “*Other nationality or ethnicity*” and “*Women with children under 15 years*”, as well as “*People over 50 years old*”. The “*Yes in most part*” option was clearly the most frequent answer among graduates and quite often chosen by the disabled. Those with disabilities were identified as the least helpful with 27 “*Rather not*” and 2 “*Definitely not*” responses. Similarly, many respondents were unsure about this group and therefore marked the “*I do not know*” option with 15 votes.

Analysis of survey research results

Hypothesis 1 was, “Employees identify themselves with their company’s approach to diversity”. In Table 6, where the respondents were asked whether their companies practice diversity, the percentages of each response were obtained. These are recorded in the table and compared with the answers obtained and recorded in Table 10 while it was being investigated whether the respondents were personally in favour of introducing employee diversity in companies.

Table 13: Identification with the company

	Applying diversity	Attitude	Introducing diversity	Attitude	Difference	Difference in attitudes
Definitely	39	87	62	96	23	9
Yes in large part	48		34		14	
Rather not	9	9	3	3	6	6
Definitely not	0		0		0	
I do not know	4		1		3	

Source: Own elaboration

The table provides information on whether companies practice diversity management and whether the respondents themselves are in favour of implementing diversity management. For clarity, the responses are further divided into attitudes. Responses of “*Definitely yes*” and “*Yes in large part*” are marked as positive attitudes. The answers “*Rather not*” and “*Definitely not*” are then negative attitudes. A total of 87% of companies have a positive attitude towards diversity. About 9% of companies have negative opinions. Employees were assessed in the same way and it was found that 96% of employees had a positive attitude towards diversity, while only 3% had a negative attitude.

The results therefore show that the employees are 9% more likely to embrace diversity than companies currently do. On the contrary, in 6% of the cases, the companies support it more than the employees, or the respondents, would like to. However, these are only differences within respondent units, and therefore hypothesis 1 can be considered to be confirmed, i.e. that the employees identify themselves with their company's approach to diversity.

Hypothesis 2 stated that "The environment in smaller companies is more diverse than in large and medium-sized ones". The tables used to determine the answer to this hypothesis were Table 1: Companies where a total number of employees was obtained, Table 2: Percentage of respondents which showed how many employees of a given company took part in the survey, and Table 5: Group affiliation, which showed how many respondents of a given company were one of the vulnerable groups.

Table 14: Vulnerable groups

Company	Employees	Respondents	Nationality	Graduates	Women with children	People with disabilities
Company A	25	20	1	2	1	0
Company B	1000	94	10	7	6	4
Company C	150	72	17	13	10	5
Company D	50	18	3	4	3	2

Source: Own elaboration

Based on Table 14, another one has been developed that shows the total proportion of vulnerable groups in the total number of employees.

Table 15: Proportion of vulnerable employees

Company	Employees	Respondents	Vulnerable groups	Proportion of vulnerable groups
Company A	25	20	4	25%
Company B	1000	94	27	28.7%
Company C	150	72	45	62.5%
Company D	50	18	12	66.7%

Source: Own elaboration

The table shows that Company A and Company B employ the lowest percentage of vulnerable employees. These companies are considered small and large in terms of total number of employees. On the contrary, the highest proportion of employees who are vulnerable to discrimination is found in companies C and D, which can be considered medium-sized ones. Hypothesis 3 is therefore refuted. The most diverse environment is not in small but in medium-sized companies.

Hypothesis 3 was "Graduates are perceived to be more contributing people than those who are 50+ years old". The answer to this hypothesis can be read from Table 12: Contribution of employee groups. For clarity, the "Definitely yes" and "Yes in large part" responses are summarised

here as “Positive attitude”; while the “Rather not” and “Definitely not” responses are summarised as “Negative attitude”.

Table 16: Attitudes towards employment

	Positive attitude	Negative attitude	Difference
Other nationality or ethnicity	204	0	204
Graduates (up to 2 years from graduation)	193	11	182
People over 50 years old	191	13	178
Women with children under 15 years old	201	3	198
People with disabilities	160	29	131

Source: Own elaboration

In the table, the number of negative attitudes is subtracted from the number of positive attitudes and the difference column is therefore the number of employees in the research population who are in favour of employing that group of employees. The “Other nationality or ethnicity” employee group had the most positive ratings. In contrast, the “People with disabilities” group had the least positive ratings. In the “Graduates” and “People over 50 years old” groups, the benefit ratings were almost the same. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is refuted. According to the respondents, the contribution of graduates and people 50+ years old is almost the same.

Conclusions

The aim of the article was to “find out which attitudes do the employees of chosen IT companies have towards diversity”. This objective was fulfilled. It was found that the majority of respondents are in favour of the introduction of diversity and thus identify themselves with companies’ attitudes towards its implementation. This was confirmed by the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis was then refuted as those medium-sized companies whose employees participated in the research survey employed a higher proportion of people from vulnerable groups than the small and large companies which were approached for the survey. In the last part, the hypothesis that graduates should be considered more beneficial to companies than employees aged 50+ was not confirmed.

At the same time, the survey showed that the employees of IT companies have an awareness of employee diversity management and that in most cases they are in favour of its implementation. However, the approach to the employment of different vulnerable groups is often varied and ambiguous.

The creation of the article deepened my theoretical knowledge of diversity management and its application. The survey then helped me to translate the theoretical knowledge into practice and to explore the whole issue in more depth.

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