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Determinants of Migrant Career Success: A Study of Recent Skilled Migrants in Australia

Diana Rajendran*, Eddy S. Ng**,*** , Greg Sears**** and Nailah Ayub****

ABSTRACT

Australia has been aggressively pursuing skilled migrants to sustain its population and foster economic growth. However, many skilled migrants experience a downward career move upon migration to Australia. Based on a survey of recent skilled migrants, this study investigates how individual (age, years of settlement, qualifications), national/societal (citizenship and settlement), and organization-level (climate of inclusion) factors influence their career success. Overall, we found that: (1) age at migration matters more than length of settlement in predicting skilled migrant career success; (2) citizenship uptake and living in a neighbourhood with a greater number of families from the same country of origin facilitate post-migration career success; and (3) perceptions of one's social/informal networks in the workplace – a dimension of perceived organizational climate of inclusion – also have a positive impact on migrant career outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

In order to meet a shortage of skills arising from an aging population and low birth rates, Australia has been aggressively pursuing migrants under its highly selective points system (Hawthorne, 2014; Economist, 2017). Many highly skilled and highly educated migrants – particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESBs) – face barriers to participating fully in the Australian economy. We know from past research that migrants experience discrimination due to a lack of recognition or discounting of foreign qualifications, very limited or no prior work experience in Australia, and poor English fluency (Sardana et al., 2016; Rajendran et al., 2017). This has led to persistent underemployment and a waste of human capital for many highly skilled and highly educated individuals (Reid, 2012; Tian et al., 2018).

However, some migrants do enjoy success in the Australian labour market (Hawthorne, 2005; see also Ho and Alcorso, 2004). These successes can be attributed to implementing the right public policies, such as English language testing, more rigorous screening, and a two-step migration process (retention of temporary workers and international students who have studied in Australia) (Miller, 1999; Hawthorne, 2005, 2015). Personal agency such as hard work, learning about the Australian culture, and fostering a positive attitude also contribute to the success of skilled migrants (Rajendran et al., 2017). Organizations and employers *may* also play a key role in fostering migrant career success; however, little is known about this since Australia – unlike the US or Canada – does not have a formal affirmative action policy for migrants or racial and ethnic minorities (Metz et al., 2016; Sardana et al., 2016).

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Syed (2008) suggests that addressing issues of employment for migrants requires an examination of factors at different levels of analysis, including micro- (individual), macro- (national/societal), and meso-level (organizational) factors. However, few studies have adopted this approach of examining the key drivers of migrant success across levels of analysis. We address this gap and add to the literature by considering how individual (age, years of settlement, qualifications), national/societal (citizenship and settlement), and organizational-level factors (climate of inclusion) influence the employment outcomes of highly skilled migrants to Australia. Adopting this multiple-level lens enables a more comprehensive assessment of the antecedents of migrant career success, which may inform the development of policies that better reflect the confluence of factors that contribute to employment outcomes of skilled migrants and facilitate their integration into the host society. For the purpose of this article, we define “skilled migrants” as individuals with high human capital (i.e., those who have obtained a university degree and have trained in an occupation or profession) (Nowicka, 2014; Guo and Al Ariss, 2015) with intentions to settle long-term or permanently in Australia (Boese and Macdonald, 2017). Our sample is restricted to migrants who are already permanent residents or naturalized citizens and exclude temporary migrants (e.g., those who entered Australia under the 457 visa) or refugees with high human capital, as these individuals may experience different career paths and outcomes (Goldring and Landolt, 2012; Boese et al., 2013; Velayutham, 2013).

BACKGROUND

Australia has used migration as a policy instrument for economic growth and to sustain its population (Hawthorne, 2014; Ng and Metz, 2015). Because Australia attracts a wide range of migrant applicants due to positive factors including its safety and security, abundance of economic opportunities, and good quality of life, it has been highly selective in deciding who is admitted into the country (Miller, 1999; Khoo et al., 2008; Castles, 2016). Until 1973, a White Australia Policy (see Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007) existed in which preferential treatment and selection were given to British and European migrants. This ended in the period between 1966 and 1973, when Australia progressively reformed its immigration policies and shifted its focus toward economic selection without consideration of national origin or ethnicity. In the mid 1990s, Australia also introduced a temporary skilled migration visa programme (Khoo et al., 2011). As a result, migrants from non-European countries or origins grew in large numbers. At the time when the White Australia Policy finally ended, the UK and Ireland were the single largest source of migrants (43%) to Australia, however, China and India (30%) have recently surpassed the UK and Ireland (8%) as the leading source countries (Department of Home Affairs, 2018). Indeed, in recent years, many highly skilled, highly educated individuals from various countries in Asia and Africa, including China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, South Africa, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka have arrived in Australia for better economic opportunities (7 of the top 10 countries are non-European, Department of Home Affairs, 2018).

Australia has adopted a points system, termed the Numerical Multifactor Assessment Scheme, for selecting prospective migrants, based on age, English ability, and work skills. In the early stages of its implementation (1980-1996), employment outcomes for skilled migrants from NESBs were poor (Hawthorne, 2005). The migration policies were reformed and sharpened over the years to include mandatory English skills, more rigorous qualifications screening, better foreign qualification recognition, provisions for employer sponsorship, and an assessment of labour market demand (Hawthorne, 2005, 2015). Although employment outcomes for skilled migrants from NESBs have improved (e.g. between 2009 and 2011, 81 per cent of skilled migrants obtained employment within 12 months, compared with 60 per cent in the 1990s), gaps remain even for occupations and

professions that are in high demand. Based on the most recent census data, only 57 per cent of doctors, 29 per cent of engineers, and 22 per cent of accountants were employed in their respective fields within 5 years of settlement in Australia (cf. Hawthorne, 2015).

Jupp (2002) and Castles (2004a, 2004b) have written extensively on why migration policies fail, and the rise of negative attitudes towards migrants, particularly migrants of non-British heritage. As a proponent of immigration, Jupp (2002) noted that “ignorance, prejudice and simple lies” (p. 209) diminished Australia’s immigration and multiculturalism success. Castles (2004) advocated for better migration management at the national, regional and global levels to ensure more equitable and efficient migration processes. In addition to migration policy effectiveness, factors such as discrimination on account of race and ethnicity also affect the career outcomes of skilled migrants from NESBs. Skilled migrants, including highly educated humanitarian refugees, may experience inter-personal racism in the Australian labour market (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007; Syed and Pio, 2010). Indeed, migrants from NESBs with “visible” markers (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion) may be particularly susceptible to discrimination, which can adversely affect their career outcomes (e.g., see Syed, 2008; Lan, 2011). As an example, migrants with foreign sounding names (i.e., non-Anglos) receive fewer call backs for job interviews (Booth et al., 2012). Issues related to discrimination in the workplace can be partly addressed through integration policies such as affirmative action and equal employment opportunities – an area that has developed a sizable research literature (see Kosny et al., 2017; Rajendran et al., 2017; Li, 2019). The current study builds on previous work exploring the influence of individual differences (e.g., race, gender) on migrant career success by investigating a broader subset of variables spanning micro-, meso-, and macro levels.

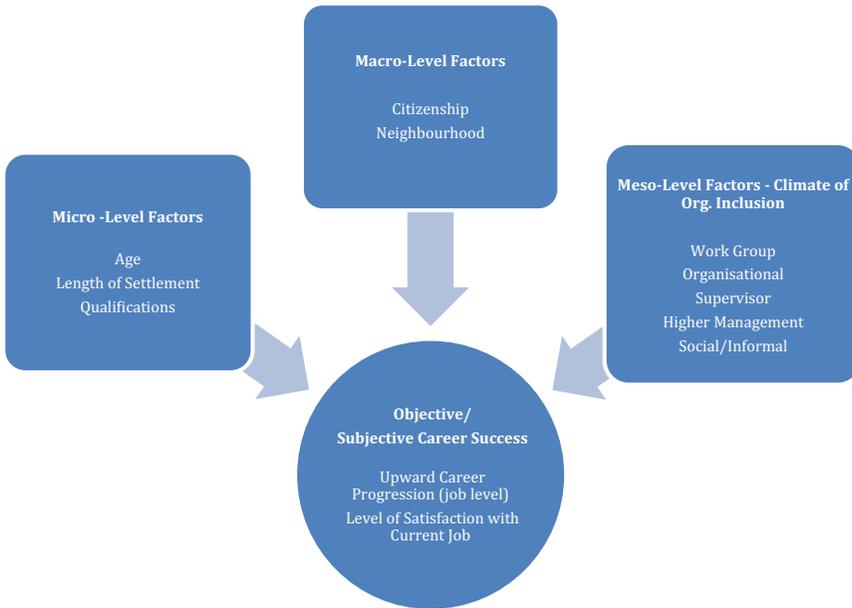
THE PRESENT STUDY

In this study, we heed Syed’s (2008, p. 31) call for a more multi-disciplinary, multivariate approach to examining factors that affect migrants’ careers. In this respect, we adopt a relational perspective (i.e., a holistic, interdisciplinary approach; see Yeganehlayegh, 1981) in which we propose that demographic and contextual factors at the micro-, meso-, and macro levels will influence the career success of skilled workers from NESBs. Specifically, we investigate how factors such as age, years of settlement, qualification (micro); citizenship and neighbourhood (macro); and a climate of inclusion (meso) influence the employment outcomes for skilled migrants. Figure 1 provides a graphical overview of the relational model proposed in our study.

Micro-level factors (Age, length of settlement, qualifications)

Migrants who arrive at their prime working age enjoy the best economic opportunities (Clark and Hunter, 1992; Fincher, 1997). As a result, Australia imposes an upper limit of 45 years of age in its migrant selection to maximize their labour market outcomes (Richardson et al., 2004). Migrants who arrive at a younger age tend to adjust more quickly and easily to the host country (Dustmann and Fabbri, 2003; Cheung et al., 2011) while those who arrive at an older age have slower adjustment and labour market progress (Schaafsma and Sweetman, 2001; Reitz, 2007). However, older *skilled* migrants have often accumulated greater human capital (e.g., advanced degrees and professional experience) which in turn improves their labour market success (Reitz, 2007). Indeed, there is very little evidence to suggest that younger skilled migrants fare better than their older counterparts overall (Hugo et al., 2006). For example, Canada is more generous in accepting older skilled migrants (up to 53 years of age under its points system) but has similar employment rates (65%) to Australia (66%), all else being equal (e.g., education, qualifications, birth country) (Hawthorne, 2008b).

FIGURE 1
RELATIONAL MODEL OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CAREER SUCCESS OF SKILLED MIGRANTS



One of the advantages of migrating at a younger age is that it gives migrants a longer period of time to socialize into the host country environment (Clark and Drinkwater, 2008; Wulff and Dharmalingam, 2008; Cheung et al., 2011; Guven and Islam, 2015). A longer period of exposure and interaction with host country nationals (e.g., Australians) is associated with greater identification with the host country and improvements in labour market performance (Inglis and Stromback, 1986; Coll and Magnuson, 1997; Brekke and Mastekaasa, 2008). Accordingly, Australia has implemented a two-step process to retain temporary workers and international students who arrive in Australia at a younger age (temporary migrants are often skilled workers under the 457 Visa scheme and students who arrive as “working holiday makers” or “WHMs”). Australia offers temporary workers pathways to permanent migration, since temporary workers have had longer exposure to the Australian labour market, which can enhance employment outcomes (Hugo, 2006; Robertson, 2014). A study-migration pathway has also been introduced to encourage international students who study in Australia to stay after the completion of their studies (Hawthorne, 2008a, 2010). In this respect, international students who arrive at a younger age are better informed about the local labour market, and thus, are better prepared for host country employment (Rajani et al., 2018).

Discounting of foreign qualifications and “professional protectionism” may also influence employment outcomes for migrants (Hawthorne, 2015). International students who have studied in Australia should, in theory, face no foreign qualification discounting. However, employment outcomes for international students under the study-migration pathway have been mixed. Indeed, in contrast to previous evidence that foreign credentials may compromise migrant employment outcomes (e.g., Sardana et al., 2016), there is some evidence to suggest that student-migrants with Australian qualifications do not outperform, and in fact, may underperform relative to skilled migrants with foreign credentials (Hawthorne, 2015). Indeed, international students who have

studied in Australia and have had a longer period of stay perform worse than recent arrivals even in high-demand fields (Hawthorne, 2010, 2014). Taken together, factors at the individual level, including migrant age, length of settlement (or time in the host country), and host country qualifications can play an integral role in contributing to the employment outcomes of skilled migrants. Based on the preceding micro-level factors, we advance the following hypotheses for investigation:

Hypothesis 1: Younger skilled migrants from NESB countries are more likely to report positive career outcomes than older migrants.

Hypothesis 2: Skilled migrants from NESB countries who have experienced longer periods of settlement in the host country are more likely to report positive career outcomes.

Hypothesis 3: Skilled migrants from NESB countries who have acquired host country qualifications (e.g., education) are more likely to report positive career outcomes.

Macro-level factors (Citizenship and neighbourhood)

A significant body of research in public policy and administration emphasizes the importance of citizenship in enhancing labour market outcomes and economic returns. In general, migrants who take up citizenship (i.e., naturalized citizens) have been shown to experience better employment outcomes, including a greater share of “high status” (managerial and professional) and more highly paid jobs than non-citizen migrants (Borjas, 1995; Bratsberg et al., 2002; DeVoretz and Pivnenko, 2005; Picot & Hou, 2011). The economic benefits of citizenship are particularly salient for migrants from non-Western countries (Corluy et al., 2011). Several factors affect citizenship uptake, including years of settlement, education attainment, income level, countries of origin, and migrant category (e.g., skilled, family reunification) (Jones-Correa, 2001a,b). With respect to findings relating to country of origin, migrants from neighbouring countries (e.g., New Zealanders in Australia or Canadians in the US) appear to be less likely to take up host country citizenship (Picot & Hou, 2003). Citizenship uptake can be an emotional affair, and prospective citizens make a social and psychological investment (i.e., long-term commitment) in the host country (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003). Although citizenship generally appears to foster improved labour market outcomes for migrants, some researchers in the US are sceptical about the citizenship-labour market benefit claim, finding poor adaptation, cultural integration, and employment outcomes among migrants despite being naturalized as citizens (Bevelander and Veenman, 2006; Euwals et al., 2010). At the moment, we know little about the effect of naturalized citizenship on labour market outcomes in Australia, particularly for skilled migrants.

An alternative perspective is to focus on the role of social networks in facilitating migrant adjustment and economic integration (Ager and Strang, 2008). In general, migrants from ethnic or racial minority backgrounds tend to gravitate towards ethnic enclaves and settle in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of migrants from similar backgrounds (MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964; Boyd, 1989; McDonald, 2004). Ethnic settlements can reduce communication costs (i.e., ease of communication when the host country language is different), provide social support, as well as informational networks critical for social interactions, consumption (of goods and services), and accessing employment opportunities (Chiswick and Miller, 2005; Ryan et al., 2008).

There is ample evidence to suggest that ethnic networks are beneficial in enhancing the employment outcomes and raising wages, particularly for lower skilled migrants (Edin et al., 2003; Damm, 2009). Ethnic enclaves also facilitate social interactions and can provide a buffer to migrants who are not fluent in English (Grimes, 1993). As a consequence, many migrants are able to create a business and livelihood (“ethnic entrepreneurship” or “co-ethnic employment”) for themselves and their families

within these enclaves in Australia (Evans, 1987, 1989; Le, 2000). Ethnic enclaves have also been documented to sustain and reinforce the cultural capital of certain ethnic groups (such as Chinese and Koreans) in the US, which contribute to their educational achievements (Zhou and Kim, 2006). However, the “immigrant concentration” hypothesis (see Barry and Miller, 2005) proposes that an insular lifestyle and a lack of interaction with host country nationals may cause migrants to lead “separate but parallel lives” and hinder the development of the exogenous ties necessary for social economic mobility in the host country (Ng and Bloemraad, 2015). Consistent with this premise, some economists report that migrants who adopt an “ethnic enclave” approach and work in a niche (i.e., ethnic) labour market encounter greater challenges in achieving socioeconomic mobility (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006). For example, Mexican migrants in the US are more likely to have higher paying jobs and work in non-agricultural sectors when they also have larger exogenous networks (Munshi, 2003). Given mixed evidence in prior work relating ethnic networks to migrant career outcomes, we surmise that Australia’s emphasis on selecting skilled migrants will probably contribute to mobility-enhancing social capital when migrants choose to settle in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of migrants from their countries of origin. Accordingly, we propose that:

Hypothesis 4: Skilled migrants from NESB countries who have acquired host country (Australian) citizenship are more likely to report positive career outcomes.

Hypothesis 5: Skilled migrants from NESB countries who live in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of migrants from the same countries of origin are more likely to report positive career outcomes.

Meso-Level Factor (Organizational Climate)

Organizations and employers can play a critical role in enhancing the employment outcomes of skilled migrants. At present, Australia does not have affirmative action or equal employment opportunity policies for ethnic and racial minorities. As a result, efforts to promote the careers of migrants, particularly those from NESBs, rests with employers (Kramar, 1998). Many employers implement diversity management practices and promote ethnic and racial minorities to enhance firm performance (i.e., the business case) (Chavan, 2005; Ng, 2008; Shen et al., 2009). Diversity management practices create a more inclusive climate, allowing ethnically diverse employees to perform their jobs more effectively and fulfill their career aspirations (Mor Barak, 2000; Stevens et al., 2008). An inclusive organizational climate also enhances employee job satisfaction, career advancement, and retention for ethnic and racial minorities (Price et al., 2005; Findler et al., 2007; McKay et al., 2007, 2008).

However, individuals with unique identities (e.g., ethnic and racial minorities) must perceive that they belong in order to feel included in the workplace (Shore et al., 2011). This entails being part of information networks (e.g., access to information), decision-making processes (e.g., access to influence) and involvement (e.g., participation). Each of these dimensions can be perceived at various levels of the organization, including workgroups, supervisors, higher management, and social/informal interactions (Mor Barak, 2016). Inclusive leaders encourage managers to implement diversity management practices which can, in turn, foster a climate of inclusion among individuals and workgroups (Acquavita et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2016; Randel et al., 2016). Employer efforts to promote inclusion are critical because they complement and reinforce efforts at the macro-level (e.g., national policies and programmes) and at the individual level (e.g., personal agency) that endeavour to improve job prospects and employment outcomes for migrants (see Mor Barak, 2000, for a discussion).

Berry’s (1997) seminal work on acculturation and adaptation lends support to our hypothesis on career outcomes. According to Berry, successful integration requires acceptance of the host country’s culture by the migrant, as well as acceptance of the migrant by host country nationals (i.e.,

pluralism/integration). Other forms of interaction, including assimilation (abandoning one's culture), marginalization (retention of one's culture but failure to adopt the host country culture) and separation (isolation from one's own and host country cultures) engender less positive career outcomes (Berry and Sabatier, 2010; Cohen, 2011). Drawing on this research and recent studies highlighting the importance of perceptions of acceptance in predicting migrant workers' job satisfaction (Lu et al., 2012) and career mobility (Maynard et al., 2010; Samnani et al., 2013), we posit that perceptions of inclusion in the workplace will be positively associated with migrant workers' reports of satisfaction and success in their careers. On this basis, we propose:

Hypothesis 6: Skilled migrants from NESB countries who report a greater sense of inclusion at work are more likely to report positive career outcomes.

Previous research has suggested that both objective (e.g., promotion rates, salary) and subjective (e.g., perceptions of satisfaction with one's job/career) measures should be used to assess career success (e.g., Heslin, 2005). We follow the lead of Junankar and Mahuteau (2005) as well as Mahuteau and Junankar (2008) and measure migrants' employment outcomes using both objective and subjective indicators of career success. Objective career success is measured by assessing whether respondents currently hold a job that is at a higher (or lower) job level than the last position they held prior to migration. Subjective career success is assessed by asking participants to report whether they are more (or less) satisfied with their current job relative to the job they held prior to migrating to Australia. These measures reflect changes in both objective and subjective career outcomes pre and post-migration to Australia.

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

An online survey was conducted to assess the predictors and indicators of migrant career success that form the basis for the study. Participants were recruited by contacting social network groups who represent migrant workers via LinkedIn as well as various organizations who work with migrant communities (e.g., Migrant Resource Centres, the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria). Individuals from these groups were asked to recommend recent (<5 years) skilled immigrants who might be willing to participate in the study. In total, we approached 506 skilled immigrants to participate in the survey. Two hundred and eight skilled migrants completed the survey. After removing cases with missing data, complete data for 131 respondents remained. Overall, respondents were very well-educated; 90 per cent hold a university degree: 29 per cent hold a bachelor's degree, and 61 per cent hold a postgraduate degree. There are more men (58%) than women, and the majority of respondents are married (59%). On average, participants were 30.6 years old when they migrated, and at the time of the survey, had spent 2.6 years in Australia. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents are from Asia (South, East, and Southeast), 8 per cent from the Middle East, 7 per cent from Europe (West and Central Europe), and 4 per cent from Africa.

Measures

Demographic variables

Participants were asked to report their gender (0 = female; 1 = male), age at time of migration, marital status at time of migration (0 = single, 1 = married, 2 = married with children), education

level (1 = secondary or equivalent, 2 = certificate, 3 = diploma, 4 = Bachelors degree or equivalent, to 5 = postgraduate level), and location where they obtained their highest degree or qualification (0 = in country of origin, 1 = in both country of origin and Australia, 2 = in Australia). Participants also reported their citizenship status (0 = dual citizenship, 1 = permanent resident, 2 = Australian citizenship), and the proportion of residents in their neighbourhood who are migrants from their own country of origin (0 = none to few families from country of origin, 1 = most families from country of origin).

Inclusion dimensions

The 15-item Mor Barak Inclusion- Exclusion (MBIE) scale (Mor Barak, 2016) was used to assess five dimensions of inclusion: work group, organisation, supervisor, higher management, and social/informal. Sample items include: “My supervisor often asks for my opinion before making important decisions” (supervisor), and “I am always informed about informal social activities and company social events” (social-informal). Respondents indicated their level of agreement with each item on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were all acceptable: overall inclusion ($\alpha = 0.88$), work group ($\alpha = 0.85$), organization ($\alpha = 0.85$), supervisor ($\alpha = 0.88$), higher management ($\alpha = 0.84$), and social/informal ($\alpha = 0.80$).

Subjective and objective employment outcomes: perceived job satisfaction shift (pre/post-migration) and job level change (pre/post-migration)

In order to assess migrants’ subjective career success, respondents were asked to report whether they had perceived a positive or negative shift in their career since migrating to Australia ($-1 =$ negative shift, $0 =$ no difference, $1 =$ positive shift). To assess objective career success, participants were asked to report their current job title and their job title before migrating to Australia. Each job was then classified into one of four possible “job level” categories: (0 = student/no job, 1 = administrative staff/front-line employee, 2 = professional/supervisor level, 3 = higher management). The objective measure of career success – job level change – was calculated by subtracting each participant’s current job level from their job level prior to migrating to Australia. Job satisfaction shift and job level change were found to be moderately correlated ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that they reflect distinct measures of career success.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 provides the means and standard deviations for all variables included in the study. Table 2 reports the bivariate correlations for each of the continuous variables. The mean score for participants’ job satisfaction shift was 0.23, indicating a generally positive change in satisfaction from one’s previous employment before migrating to Australia: 43.8 percent of respondents reported that they had experienced a positive shift, 35.9 percent reported no difference, and 20.3 percent reported a negative shift. The mean score for participants’ job level change was 0.04, indicating a slightly positive change in job level. In total, 23.9 percent of participants experienced a positive increase in job level (i.e., had increased 1 or 2 job levels), 52.7 percent experienced no change in their job level, and 23.4 percent a decrease in their job level (i.e., had decreased 1 or 2 job levels).

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ALL VARIABLES

Predictor Variable	Mean	SD
Job Satisfaction Shift	0.23	0.77
Job Level Change	0.04	0.94
Age at Migration	30.63	6.73
Years in Australia	2.60	1.30
Education Level	4.48	0.80
Perceived Inclusion Dimensions		
Work Group	4.03	1.28
Organization	3.08	1.32
Supervisor	3.68	1.40
Higher Management	3.17	1.41
Social-Informal	3.50	1.33
Gender ^a		
Male	0.58	
Female	0.42	
Highest Education Location ^a		
Country of Origin	0.44	
Both Country of Origin and Australia	0.10	
Australia	0.46	
Marital Status at Migration ^a		
Single	0.41	
Married	0.25	
Married with Children	0.34	
Citizenship Status ^a		
Dual Citizen	0.04	
Permanent Resident	0.38	
Australian Citizen	0.58	
Neighborhood ^a		
None to Few from Country of Origin	0.88	
Most from Country of Origin	0.12	

Note: ^aMean values for this variable indicate proportion of respondents in each category.

Ordinal logistic regressions

Since both of the focal dependent variables – job satisfaction shift and job level change – were measured using an ordinal rating scale, two separate ordinal logistic regressions were conducted in which each dependent variable was regressed on the hypothesized set of predictors. Results from these regressions are shown in Tables 3 and 4 respectively. For each predictor variable, the ordered-logit coefficient indicates that a one-unit change in the value of the predictor variable would be expected to result in a corresponding change in the dependent variable in the amount of the logit coefficient. A Wald statistic was computed to test the null hypothesis that the logit coefficient for a given variable is equal to zero (i.e., that it has no predictive power).

Predictors of job satisfaction shift (pre/post-migration)

As indicated in Table 3, two micro-level factors – age at migration and Australian qualifications – emerged as significant predictors of participants' perceptions of a shift in their job satisfaction. Participants who migrated at a younger age reported a more positive shift in their job satisfaction while participants who received their qualifications from outside Australia reported a more negative shift in job satisfaction, lending support to hypothesis 1. Length of settlement in Australia did not

TABLE 2
ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS BETWEEN VARIABLES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Job Satisfaction Shift	0.44***									
2. Job Level Change	-0.26***	-0.46***								
3. Age at Migration	0.10	0.09	0.04							
4. Years in Australia	0.01	0.07	-0.21**	-0.11						
5. Education Level	-0.01	-0.06	-0.01	0.03	0.08					
6. Gender	0.29***	0.04	-0.08	-0.13	0.01	-0.01				
7. Work Group Inclusion	0.31***	0.16*	-0.05	0.01	0.04	-0.12	0.67***			
8. Organization Inclusion	0.25***	0.06	-0.04	-0.08	0.06	-0.03	0.72***	0.68***		
9. Supervisor Inclusion	0.28***	0.12	-0.03	0.03	0.04	-0.09	0.61***	0.75***	0.70***	
10. Higher Mgmt Inclusion	0.41***	0.20**	-0.07	0.05	0.00	0.01	0.53***	0.53***	0.61***	0.58***
11. Social-Informal Inclusion										

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 3
ORDERED-LOGIT COEFFICIENTS FOR REGRESSION OF JOB
SATISFACTION SHIFT ON PREDICTOR VARIABLES

Predictor Variables	Coefficient	Wald
Years in Australia	0.09	0.30
Age at Migration	-0.08*	4.59
Gender		
Male	0.23	0.35
Marital Status at Migration		
Single	-0.46	0.74
Married	-0.06	0.01
Education Level	-0.44	2.80
Highest Education Location		
Country of Origin	-0.97*	4.20
Both Australia and Country of Origin	-0.56	0.62
Citizenship Status		
Dual Citizen	-0.75	0.42
Permanent Resident	-0.82*	3.84
Neighborhood		
None to Few from Country of Origin	-1.11 [†]	3.10
Work Group Inclusion	0.13	0.27
Organization Inclusion	0.45	2.90
Supervisor Inclusion	-0.26	1.23
Higher Management Inclusion	0.03	0.01
Social/Informal Inclusion	0.52**	7.56
Threshold Parameter Estimate		
Negative Job Satisfaction Shift	-4.92*	5.53
No Difference	-2.52	1.49
Log Likelihood	220.32***	
χ^2 Degrees of Freedom	16	
Pseudo R ² (Nagelkerke)	0.38	

Note: [†] $p = 0.078$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

predict changes in job satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 2 was not supported. Participants who acquired their qualifications from outside Australia were 62.1 per cent less likely to report a positive shift in job satisfaction than participants who received Australian qualifications, providing support for hypothesis 3. In terms of macro-level factors, as expected, results relating to citizenship status indicate that participants who are non-citizens (i.e., permanent resident status) reported a more negative shift in their job satisfaction than participants who have obtained Australian citizenship. Permanent residents were 56.0 per cent less likely to experience a positive shift in job satisfaction than were participants who became Australian citizens, providing support for hypothesis 4. Interestingly, we also found that participants who live in neighbourhoods with fewer families from their countries of origin tend to report a somewhat more negative shift in job satisfaction than those in neighbourhoods with more families from their country of origin. Although this finding is somewhat marginal ($p = 0.078$), this pattern suggests that having closer contact with individuals from one's country of origin may, in some cases, enhance (rather than hinder) one's job opportunities and/or social integration at work (hypothesis 5). Finally, in terms of meso-level factors, only one of the dimensions of perceived inclusion – social-informal inclusion – emerged as a significant predictor of perceived shift in job satisfaction. Participants who experienced greater social-informal inclusion reported a more positive shift in their job satisfaction, lending some support for hypothesis 6. Overall, the full model tested provided a good fit to the data ($-2 \log$ likelihood = 220.32, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 38 per cent of the variance in job satisfaction shift.

TABLE 4
ORDERED-LOGIT COEFFICIENTS FOR REGRESSION OF JOB LEVEL
CHANGE ON PREDICTOR VARIABLES

Predictor variables	Coefficient	Wald
Years in Australia	0.02	0.02
Age at Migration	-0.11**	8.68
Gender		
Male	-0.01	0.00
Marital Status at Migration		
Single	0.49	0.76
Married	-0.04	0.01
Education Level	-0.43	2.75
Highest Education Location		
Country of Origin	-1.50**	9.63
Both Australia and Country of Origin	-1.38	3.70
Citizenship Status		
Dual Citizen	1.27	1.11
Permanent Resident	-0.92*	4.78
Neighborhood		
None to Few from Country of Origin	-0.07	0.02
Work Group Inclusion	0.10	0.19
Organization Inclusion	0.37	2.14
Supervisor Inclusion	-0.14	0.38
Higher Management Inclusion	0.10	0.20
Social/Informal Inclusion	0.37*	4.29
Threshold Parameter Estimate		
Job Level Change = +2	-10.59***	21.05
Job Level Change = +1	-8.31***	13.75
Job Level Change = +0	-5.03*	5.46
Job Level Change = -1	-3.46	2.62
Log Likelihood	272.68***	
χ^2 Degrees of Freedom	16	
Pseudo R ² (Nagelkerke)	0.44	

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Predictors of Job Level Change (Pre/Post Migration)

Results relating to the regression for job level change were similar to job satisfaction shift (see Table 4). At the micro-level, both age at migration and Australian qualifications significantly predicted changes in job level. Consistent with hypothesis 1, participants who migrated at a younger age were more likely to report an increase in their job level than were those who migrated when they were older. Moreover, participants who acquired their qualifications from outside Australia were more likely to report a decrease in their job level than were those who had Australian qualifications, lending support for hypothesis 3. Indeed, participants who acquired their degrees outside Australia were 77.7 per cent less likely to report an increase in their job level than participants who completed their education in Australia. Contrary to hypothesis 2, however, length of settlement, again, did not predict job level changes. In terms of macro-level predictors, while neighbourhood was not associated with changes in job level (hypothesis 4), citizenship status was a significant predictor. Participants who are non-citizens were 61.2 per cent less likely to report a positive increment in their job level than participants who have obtained Australian citizenship, providing support for hypothesis 5. Finally, with respect to hypothesis 6, social-informal inclusion again emerged as a key meso-level factor: participants who perceived higher levels of social-

informal inclusion were more likely to report increases in their job level, while other dimensions of perceived inclusion do not appear to influence changes in job level. Our full model, including each of the hypothesized predictors, provided a good fit to the data ($-2 \log$ likelihood = 272.68, $p < 0.001$), explaining 44 per cent of the variance in job level changes.

DISCUSSION

Australia has been aggressively pursuing migrants for economic growth and to sustain its population. However, many migrants – even those who are highly skilled and highly educated – may experience a downward career move upon migration to Australia. Given the underutilization of human talent in the migrant workforce, economists have been investigating the factors that contribute to career success among migrant workers. One stream of research in this domain focuses on individual-level variables, such as demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender) and indicators of human capital (e.g., education, professional qualifications and training). Another stream of research explores macro-level factors, including factors related to one's settlement and social network, in predicting employment success. However, little effort has been made to adopt an integrative approach exploring potential predictors that span across levels. In this study, we collect data at the individual (micro), national/societal (macro), and organizational (meso) levels to conduct a more comprehensive assessment of the factors that contribute to career success among skilled migrants. We used both subjective (job satisfaction) and objective (job level) career success to measure pre/post migration outcomes. These career outcome measures are important to assess as they have also been shown to be related to successful settlement and adaptation, stronger intentions to remain in the host country, and improved overall well-being (Carr et al., 2005; Colic-Peisker, 2009; Lu et al., 2012).

Overall, our models explained significant variance in both subjective (38%) and objective (44%) career outcomes for skilled migrants. Specifically, we found that participants who migrated at a younger age, hold Australian qualifications, and take up Australian citizenship, are more likely to report a positive shift in job satisfaction (subjective) and an upward career move (objective) subsequent to migration. At present, Australia imposes an age limit (45 years old) in its selection of skilled migrants and has crafted a study-migration path to encourage international students to remain in Australia after completing their studies. However, years of settlement in Australia did not emerge as a significant predictor of career outcomes. It is likely that someone who migrated at an older age (consequently having poorer adjustment) will have a lower likelihood of enhancing their career outcomes post-migration even if they have a longer period of settlement (see Cheung et al., 2011). We also caution, however, that our sample consists of recent migrants, with a relatively short period of settlement.

Our results relating to the organization level demonstrate that social-informal inclusion promotes both migrant job satisfaction and their upward career movement. When migrants experience a greater sense of inclusion at work – through their interactions with their host country counterparts – they also report greater objective and subjective career outcomes. This view is supported by research on professional Chinese migrants who found social exchanges and support at work enhance their job satisfaction and integration into Australian society (Lu et al., 2011, 2012). Our finding is notable as it signals that organizations play an important role in facilitating migrant workplace integration and enhancing their career success beyond government policy initiatives and individual agency. Specifically, this result underscores the importance of the quality of interpersonal interactions with host country nationals (e.g., developing effective social exchanges) in facilitating positive migrant outcomes. Indeed, it is possible that social-informal inclusion emerged as a key predictor of migrant career outcomes beyond other dimensions of inclusion (e.g., workgroup,

organizational, supervisor, and higher management inclusion) because this form of inclusion may be viewed as more personally meaningful. Providing support that is more personal and individualized may convey a stronger message of inclusion than (formal) organizational and managerial pronouncements of inclusion that can be perceived as less genuine and convincing (Samuels, 2013; Ng and Sears, 2018).

We also found that migrants living in a neighbourhood with a greater proportion of families from the same country of origin were somewhat more likely to report a positive shift in job satisfaction. This finding is also striking because it runs counter to the “immigrant concentration” hypothesis which maintains that living in an ethnic enclave may limit interactions with host country nationals and hinder the development of exogenous ties necessary for career success. One reason that this finding may have surfaced in this study is that the “ethnic enclaves” that participants lived in also included other highly skilled immigrants, thereby enabling the development of social exchanges (i.e., deeper social ties and interactions) that can lead to a positive shift in job satisfaction. Furthermore, migrants who feel connected to their ethnic community (i.e., having to make less off-the-job sacrifices) tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction and embeddedness (Halvorsen et al., 2015). Thus, the relationship between one’s community and their job satisfaction can be explained by a sense of greater “social connectedness” with others (see Wulff and Dharmalingam, 2008; Lu et al., 2012), which can also foster a stronger sense of attachment and embeddedness in one’s organization. An alternative explanation is that social comparisons with existing (old stock) migrants – who have poorer socioeconomic outcomes – may lead more recent migrants (from our sample) to report a positive shift in job satisfaction. We find the latter explanation more plausible, given that the positive neighbourhood effect was not accompanied by an upward career move (the objective measure of career success). We also caution that neighbourhood effects may be limited for skilled migrants who are sponsored by employers (who do not need to search for a job). Although we found the neighbourhood effect to be somewhat modest, it is nonetheless noteworthy as it further indicates that social exchanges – both at work and in society – may play an integral role in facilitating career success. Taken together, these findings highlight the need to adopt a more integrative perspective in examining the determinants of migrant career success. While a number of studies have explored individual-level predictors (demographic characteristics, skills, education), and to some extent, societal-level predictors (e.g., neighbourhood effects) of migrant career success, additional work is needed investigating the role of organizational factors (e.g., organizational efforts to promote inclusion) and how they combine with individual and societal variables to influence the career success and well-being of skilled migrants.

Implications for policy and practice

Research tradition relating to migrant workers has emphasized the role of selection policies in ensuring that migrants have a relatively high degree of socioeconomic mobility and overall success in the host country (Hawthorne, 2005, 2014; Reitz, 2007). However, comparatively little attention has been paid to how best to assist skilled migrants in integrating into the workforce and supporting their career development. This is a particularly important issue since Australia currently lacks affirmative action policies aimed at assisting migrants from NESBs to fully participate in the labour market. In this respect, the extent to which organizations take the initiative in developing a climate of inclusion can play an integral role in facilitating migrants’ workforce adjustment and integration. A positive workplace climate encourages greater interaction between migrant workers and host country nationals which, in turn, can enable organizations to better utilize the skills and talents of workers and workers to achieve more successful career outcomes. Likewise, our results suggest that although migrants may in some cases settle in neighbourhoods with a higher concentration of individuals/families with similar backgrounds, the social support and interactions that emerge in these

contexts may be beneficial for migrants' socioeconomic mobility. Our results also suggest that host country citizenship uptake may be helpful in enhancing the career success of recent migrants. The benefits of citizenship for recent migrants are manifold, including lower unemployment rates, higher wages, and gaining a greater share of employment in professional/managerial occupations (Bloemraad and Sheares, 2017, also see earlier discussion). It is possible that citizenship uptake may convey a message to employers of a migrant's commitment to stay in the host country, thus increasing employers' willingness to hire and train naturalized migrants (c.f. Picot & Hou, 2011). In this respect, government efforts should be aimed at encouraging citizenship, and should also consider directing additional resources to ethnic neighbourhoods where investments in migrant settlement and integration may be particularly impactful.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study contributes to the literature on the determinants of the career outcomes of skilled migrants in many ways. First, our study allowed us to identify the factors at the individual, societal, and organizational levels that contribute to migrant career success. Few studies have adopted a multiple-level lens in assessing migrant career outcomes, despite calls to do so (e.g. Syed, 2008). Interestingly, the pattern of predictors that emerged showed a relatively high degree of consistency in predicting both subjective and objective measures of migrant workers' career success. Moreover, factors at each level of analysis (micro, meso, and macro) uniquely predicted variance in each career outcome. In total, our models explained a significant amount of variance (38 and 44% respectively) in both subjective and objective career success, reinforcing the value of examining antecedents of career success that span levels.

Second, our findings highlight the role of social exchanges – through both the workplace/organizations and in society (e.g., neighbourhoods) – in promoting the employment outcomes of skilled migrants. Although research has been critical of the “ethnic concentration” approach to migrant settlement and integration, we found tentative evidence that this approach may, indeed, in some cases, be associated with more positive career outcomes. Given Australia's highly selective migration process, we speculate that existing ethnic enclaves inhabited by established and successful migrants may enhance rather than hinder the career outcomes of skilled migrants. This view is also supported by the high educational (and occupational) attainment reported by Chinese and Korean Americans living within their own cultural enclaves (Zhou and Kim, 2006). We suggest that future studies should further explore the link between migration policies, the profile of ethnic enclaves, and migrant career outcomes in different countries.

Third, our addition of perceived climate of inclusion, an organizational-level variable, enhances our understanding of the interplay among micro (individual), meso (organizational), and macro (national/societal) factors that affect migrant outcomes. The significant positive effect of social-informal inclusion on both perceptual and objective measures of career success suggests that employers can improve migrant career outcomes, and indeed, steps may possibly be taken at different levels of analysis (e.g., both national and organizational policies) to enhance migrants' levels of integration and perceived inclusion. Given these findings, we encourage future studies to expand the scope of investigation to include organizational variables (not just focus on individual or societal “objective” measures) in order to deepen our understanding of how employers and organizations can assist in resolving skilled migrant employment challenges.

We note a few limitations to the present study to put our findings in context. First, the cross-sectional design limits our ability to infer causality in the relationships tested. Future longitudinal research is needed to establish the causal direction of these relationships. Likewise, because a quantitative methodology was used testing hypothesized bivariate relationships, we were not able to

probe different explanations in depth for some of our findings (e.g., the link between concentration of others from the same background in one's neighbourhood and migrant career outcomes). We encourage additional research to use mixed-method or qualitative designs to further elucidate the mechanisms linking our predictors to the indicators of career success. Third, our study focuses on workers who have demonstrated their intentions to settle long-term or permanently in Australia (permanent residents or citizens). Additional research is needed assessing the career trajectories and antecedents of success of migrants who enter Australia using different migration pathways. Finally, although we measure both subjective and objective indicators of career success, we followed an economic perspective in measuring migrant career outcomes (by comparing pre/post-migration job levels). Future studies can extend our understanding of the career success and well-being of recent migrants by exploring a broader range of work perceptions of migrants (e.g., work stress, burnout, meaning in work) as well as objective outcomes (e.g., job performance, income).

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