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Acculturation, Social Dominance, and Systemic Discrimination at each degree of employment: Exploring their roles at different steps towards decent work for skilled Indian migrants in New Zealand

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Abstract

Access to decent work is a major obstacle for skilled Indian migrants e.g., to New Zealand, but little is known about the key steps through unemployment, under-employment, and full employment. Unlike previous research which has conglomerated all steps into one, this thesis explores the roles of acculturation, social dominance, and systemic discrimination in skilled Indian migrants' career trajectory at each step of employment separately, and then combined them into an overall but graded model.

Taking an exploratory approach, an online questionnaire based on Flanagan's (1954) Critical Incident Technique focused on positive and negative critical incidents of job-hunting at each step of employment (unemployment, entry-level, intermediate-level, and full employment). Forty-four skilled Indian migrants completed the survey by providing direct experience of the positive and negative critical incidents encountered throughout their job-hunting journey. Eight content analyses were conducted for positive and negative critical incidents in the four stages of employment.

The themes of networking, work experience, and skills and qualifications were crucial at all four steps of employment as depicted in Figure 1. However, as skilled Indian migrants stepped closer to full employment, the themes of work experience and skills and qualifications emerged more frequently in successful job hunting, rather than being a consistent barrier from progressing towards full employment in a skilled Indian migrant's job-hunting journey. This is perhaps to be expected since the work experience and skills and qualifications would be increasingly relevant, as skilled Indian migrants got closer to full employment.

Networking was a consistent theme across all stages of employment. This thesis identified whom the respondents networked with which informed which acculturation style was used by

skilled Indian migrants. When skilled Indian migrants networked with Indian community members, they adopted the separation acculturation style. When the respondents networked at an organisational level with recruitment agencies and ex-employers, they adopted the integration acculturation style.

Systemic discrimination theory was not well supported, as the themes of work experience and skills and qualifications which were predicted to be systemic barriers, were found to be more relevant to human capital theory in conjunction with social dominance theory.

Discussion recommends that future studies compare the responses between both skilled Indian migrants and New Zealand employers. Finally, the findings of the present research have the potential to be a blueprint for newcomer skilled Indian migrants to form strategic pathways to attain full employment in New Zealand. The results of this study can be tailored to the particular stage of employment a newcomer skilled Indian migrant is currently in, and it can inform them of which job-seeking behaviours best worked at the same stage of employment for other skilled Indian migrants in New Zealand.

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