

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**Careers in cross-cultural context: a study of Sri Lankan
immigrants in New Zealand**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Management
at Massey University, Albany,
New Zealand.**

Nithiyaluxmy Tharmaseelan

2005

Abstract

This study considered migrants' career outcomes as the result of their adjustments in terms of culture and career adaptation along with other positive attributes they brought on their arrival as well as developing in their new country. It considered that career is the property of individuals and managing it successfully is the responsibility of individuals themselves. Prior research into migrants' issues and careers was used as the basis of this study and a model for analysis was developed using such issues. The resultant model included the wider life of migrants.

A questionnaire including reliable measures of key variables was developed based on the literature. Two hundred and twenty-one Sri Lankan migrants completed the pilot tested survey. The results were analysed using factor analysis, tests of association and multiple regression analysis at the first stage to formulate a less complex model. Structural equation modelling was then used to confirm the relationships assumed between different variables. Although some of the relationships and/or variables assumed initially were removed from the model, the final model explained strong links between the variables that remained.

Qualification gained before migration and career self-efficacy were found to be the most significant variables in explaining job satisfaction before migration. Usefulness of prior knowledge, skills and habits, efforts made towards career, education in New Zealand, information seeking, length of time in New Zealand and overseas experience had the greatest influence on current job level. Current job level, length of time in New Zealand and overseas experience were found to be the most significant variables explaining subjective career success after migration. Adapting to New Zealand culture was found to be significant in explaining only the career satisfaction after migration. It was also found that migrants' career outcomes (success and satisfaction) after migration were significant variables in explaining overall career satisfaction of this migrant group: however, with the exception of job satisfaction, career outcomes before migration did not play a significant role in determining overall career satisfaction.

The implications of the present study were considered, from both migrants' perspective and that of New Zealand as the host society. A number of possible practical strategies relevant to migrants, community organisations and policy makers and authorities were suggested. Several potential avenues for future researches were identified and discussed. Thus, it is expected that this study will contribute to better career outcomes of migrants in New Zealand.

Acknowledgements

I have been very grateful for the encouragement and support of many individuals before and during the course of my study and enabled me to first attempt, and then complete, this study. However, there are a few in particular to whom I should like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation.

Professor Kerr Inkson, my chief supervisor for this research study has been a wonderful role model, guide, mentor and teacher. I feel privileged to have had him as my supervisor for this study. His commitment, support and inspiration made me strong and enabled me to work through the stresses of balancing multiple roles. I am so grateful for his invaluable support and guidance in spite of his own busy schedule.

I owe a deep sense of gratitude to my co- supervisor Dr.Carole Page who has been a marvellous teacher, guide and friend. She committed herself to the task of encouraging me when in difficult circumstances and gave steady guidance to me throughout the duration of this project. I offer nothing but my deepest thanks to her invaluable support.

Associate Professor Denny Meyer has been there for me whenever I needed help with my data analysis and especially when using new software. I owe her my warmest appreciation and deepest thanks.

My beloved husband, Seelan, has both encouraged (often sacrificing his own wishes) and supported and has been a mentor at all times. When I became frustrated, tired or discouraged, at times, he lifted me up, celebrated my achievements and took care of all other commitments. I am so thankful to him, for his love and support - I could certainly not have done it without him as my lifelong partner.

My dear Dr.Nithi, who had been my teacher during my bachelor degree programme, showed me the starting place when I was a newcomer to this country and has been an invaluable mentor. I will never forget his support and encouragement. My deepest thanks to him.

And last, but not least, I wish to acknowledge all the institutions and individuals who helped me with the data collection, the backbone of this study. I am so thankful to all for their constant support in this process. It should be noted that this research was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (approval number MUHEC 03/024).

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my little darling daughters Sweta, Suruthi, Surabhi and Swathi who lifted me up by their smiles, touches, talks and kisses throughout the process of my study. It is their birth and love that made me feel proud and spurred me on to work harder. All my achievements are dedicated to them.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	xi
Chapter 1 Introduction and Research Background	1
Introduction	1
Background	1
The Problem Situation and Purpose of the Study	2
Immigrants in New Zealand	2
Sri Lankan Migrants: The target group of this study	4
Originality of the Research	5
Importance of the Research	6
Scope and limitations of the study	7
An outline of the remainder of the thesis	8
Chapter 2 Literature Review	9
Introduction	9
Differing cultural dimensions	9
Migration and culture	15
Acculturation	20
Career Management	30
Definitions of Career	31
Changing Types of Career Management	34
Migration and Careers	39
Immigration and Careers in New Zealand	41
Predictors of Career Success and Satisfaction of Migrants: A cross-cultural point of view	46
Career success and career satisfaction	46
Factors influencing career success and career satisfaction of migrants	49
Acculturation strategies	49

Motivation to migrate	50
Mode of adjustment to career	52
Social support	57
Language ability	57
Career strategies	58
Age	61
Education	62
Educational experience in the host country	62
Overseas experience	62
Self-efficacy	62
Gender	63
Job satisfaction	63
Conclusion	65
Chapter 3 A model for immigrants' Career integration	67
Introduction	67
Rationale and theoretical framework	68
Predictors of career outcomes before migration	70
Career outcomes after migration	72
An integrated model for migrants' career outcomes	76
Conclusion	76
Chapter 4 Methodology	78
Introduction	78
Model Overview	78
Research Questions	79
Operational Definitions	79
Independent variables	79
Intervening and mediator variables	89
Dependent variable	94
Operational Hypotheses	95
Sample and Procedure	103
Pilot testing and reliability analysis	103

Sample	105
Questionnaires	106
Data Analysis	107
Editing	107
Coding and entry	107
Analysis	107
Summary	108
Chapter 5 Data Analysis	109
Introduction	109
Sample Profile	110
Sample composition	110
Situation before migration	112
Background variables: Migration and thereafter	116
Reliability analysis	122
Factor Analysis	123
Cluster Analysis	129
Tests of Association	136
Multiple Regression Analysis	158
Predictors of overall career satisfaction	161
Predictors of employment status at present	164
Predictors of job satisfaction before migration	168
Predictors of subjective career success after migration	170
Predictors of career satisfaction after migration	173
Structural Equation Modelling	177
Unidimensionality of constructs	184
Confirmatory factor analysis	186
Estimation of the hypothesised model	197
Model 1 - the hypothesised model	200
Model 2 – removing non significant paths	203
Model 3 – removing non significant covariances	204
Model 4 – removing variables with no paths	205

Content Analysis	209
Summary	218
Chapter 6 Findings, Discussion, Summary and Recommendations	219
Introduction	219
Review of previous chapters	219
Migrants' career management as their own responsibility	220
Answers to the research questions	223
Implications	224
Future Research	225
Recommendations	227
Conclusions	233
References	235
Appendix 1 Questionnaire	253
Appendix 2 Code book of content analysis	268
Appendix 3 Raw data (in floppy)	271

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Composition of New Zealand Population	2
Table 1.2	Population composition – Auckland Region	3
Table 1.3	Sri Lankan Population in New Zealand – Geographical distribution	4
Table 1.4	Sri Lankan Population in New Zealand – Age distribution	5
Table 2.1	Hofstede’s Rankings on cultural dimensions	14
Table 4.1	Reliability scores on pilot testing	104
Table 5.1	Relationship between population and sample frequencies	111
Table 5.2	Gender distribution of the sample	112
Table 5.3	Qualifications at the time of migration	113
Table 5.4	Employment status before migration	114
Table 5.5	Salary from the last job before migration	114
Table 5.6	Overseas experience at the time of migration	115
Table 5.7	Present employment statuses	119
Table 5.8	Occupational status before and after migration	120
Table 5.9	Statistics on unemployment period (unemployed respondents).	121
Table 5.10	Scale Reliability	122
Table 5.11	Five - factor solution loadings for the principal components analysis of ‘motivation to migrate’	124
Table 5.12	Six - factor solution loadings for the principal components analysis of ‘career strategies’	127
Table 5.13	Cluster centres on Social support: mean scores for different forms of support	130
Table 5.14	Acculturation cluster centres: mean scores for different forms of acculturation	132
Table 5.15	Mean scores by cluster centres of mode of adjustment to career	134
Table 5.16	Correlation between different motivations to migrate and Objective success after migration variables	137
Table 5.17	Correlation between different motivations to migrate and career satisfaction after migration and subjective career success after migration	138
Table 5.18	Correlation between social support variables and objective career success after migration variables	140
Table 5.19	Correlation between social support variables and different career outcomes after migration	140
Table 5.20	Correlation between mode of adjustment to career variables and objective career success after migration variables	141
Table 5.21	Correlation between mode of adjustment career variables and different career outcomes after migration	141
Table 5.22	Correlation between acculturation variables and objective career success after migration variables	142
Table 5.23	Correlation between acculturation variables and different career outcomes after migration	143
Table 5.24	Correlation between language ability variables and objective career success after migration variables	143
Table 5.25	Correlation between language ability variables and different career outcomes after migration	144
Table 5.26	Correlation between different career strategies and objective career success after migration variables	145
Table 5.27	Correlation between different career strategies and different career outcomes after migration	146
Table 5.28	Correlation between overseas experience and objective career success after migration variables	147
Table 5.29	Correlation between overseas experience and different career outcomes after migration	147
Table 5.30	Correlation between NZ qualification and different career outcomes after migration	148

Table 5.31	Correlation between length of time in New Zealand and objective career success after migration variables	148
Table 5.32	Correlation between length of time in New Zealand and different career outcomes after migration	148
Table 5.33	Correlation between age and related career outcomes	149
Table 5.34	Kruskal – Wallis Test Statistics for gender and related variables	149
Table 5.35	Differing present salary between genders	150
Table 5.36	Correlation between career self-efficacy and related career outcomes	150
Table 5.37	Pearson correlation for career self-efficacy and related career outcomes	151
Table 5.38	Correlation between qualification gained before migration and related career outcomes	151
Table 5.39	Correlation between length of service and related career outcomes	152
Table 5.40	Correlation between objective success variables, employment status before migration and overall career satisfaction	153
Table 5.41	Correlation between subjective success before and after migration, job satisfaction before migration, career satisfaction after migration and overall career satisfaction	153
Table 5.42	Summary results of hypotheses testing	155
Table 5.43	Predictors of overall career satisfaction – model summary	162
Table 5.44	Predictors of overall career satisfaction – coefficients	163
Table 5.45	Excluded variables for overall career satisfaction	164
Table 5.46	Predictors of employment status at present – model summary	165
Table 5.47	Coefficients for predictors of employment status at present	166
Table 5.48	Model for predictors of employment status at present – excluded variables	168
Table 5.49	Model summary – predictors of job satisfaction before migration	169
Table 5.50	Coefficients for predictors of job satisfaction before migration	170
Table 5.51	Excluded variables from the model – job satisfaction before migration	170
Table 5.52	Predictors of subjective career success after migration – model summary	171
Table 5.53	Coefficients for predictors of subjective career success after migration	172
Table 5.54	Excluded variables from the model – subjective career success before migration	173
Table 5.55	Predictors of career satisfaction after migration – model summary	175
Table 5.56	Coefficients for predictors of career satisfaction after migration	175
Table 5.57	Excluded variables from the model – career satisfaction after migration	176
Table 5.58	Five-factor solution loadings (standardised regression weights) for confirmatory factor analysis of motivation to migrate	189
Table 5.59	Construct reliabilities and Variance extracted on factors	191
Table 5.60	Factor standardised regression weights and significance on the concept of Motivation to migrate	191
Table 5.61	Six-factor solution loadings for the confirmatory factor analysis of career strategies	194
Table 5.61a	Standardised regression weights for simulated model	196
Table 5.62	Variables in the model with their scale reliability	199
Table 5.63	Regression coefficient – model 1	200
Table 5.64	Covariances – model 1	201
Table 5.65	Standardised regression coefficients and <i>t</i> -values – model 4	206
Table 5.66	Correlations and <i>t</i> -values – model 4	207
Table 5.67	Goodness of fit measures – comparison of models	208
Table 5.68	Comments about country: nature & environment	214
Table 5.69	Comments about NZ people	214
Table 5.70	Comments about personal life	215
Table 5.71	Comments about life of family	215
Table 5.72	Comments about employers	216
Table 5.73	Comments about employment	217
Table 5.74	Comments about Income	217
Table 5.75	Support and adjustment	218

List of Figures

Figure 2.1	The acculturation curve	24
Figure 2.2	Acculturation Strategies	27
Figure 2.3	Global Strategic Options	28
Figure 2.4	Acculturation strategies & phases – an integrated model	29
Figure 2.5	Schematic summary showing relationships of determinants in the theory of work role transitions	54
Figure 2.6	Modes of adjustment to career	56
Figure 3.1	A model of career outcomes before migration	71
Figure 3.2	Model of determinants of career outcomes after migration	74
Figure 3.3	Model of predictors of overall career satisfaction of migrants	75
Figure 3.4	An integrated model of determinants of migrants' career outcomes	77
Figure 4.1	Dimensions of social support	81
Figure 5.1	Gender proportion of the sample	110
Figure 5.2	Subject of the qualification at the time of migration	113
Figure 5.3	Employment Situation before migration	116
Figure 5.4	Residence category of Sri Lankan Immigrants	117
Figure 5.5	Respondents' length of time in New Zealand.	117
Figure 5.6	Qualification obtained in New Zealand	118
Figure 5.7	Current employment situation	118
Figure 5.8	Cluster centres for social support received	131
Figure 5.9	Acculturation clusters	133
Figure 5.10	Clusters of mode of adjustment to career	135
Figure 5.11	Normal Probability Plot for regression standardised residuals – career satisfaction	164
Figure 5.12	Normal Probability Plot for regression standardised residuals – employment status at present	169
Figure 5.13	Normal Probability Plot of regression standardised residuals – job satisfaction before migration	171
Figure 5.14	Normal probability plot of regression standardised residuals – Subjective career success after migration	174
Figure 5.15	Normal probability plot of regression standardised residuals – career satisfaction after migration	177
Figure 5.16	Second order factor model for the concept of Motivation to migrate	188
Figure 5.17	Second order Factor Analysis Model for Career Strategies	193
Figure 5.17(a)	A simulated model to test discriminant validity	195
Figure 5.18	Model 1 – Hypothesised model	198
Figure 5.19	Model 4 – model after removing variables with no paths	205