

EMPLOYABILITY CHALLENGES: SRI LANKAN MIGRANT KNOWLEDGE WORKERS IN FINANCE AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT IN NEW ZEALAND

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ABSTRACT

Employability challenges faced by workers are common in many labour markets and can occur for reasons such as language barriers, immigration regulations, and dis-equilibrium of supply and demand for jobs. This can be a significant challenge for migrant workers who have moved to a foreign country in search of jobs. This research seeks to identify the employability challenges faced by migrant knowledge workers including those who have the required prerequisites for relevant jobs in their respective fields but have difficulty securing jobs. The internal and external challenges faced by employees, the roadblocks set by employers, and other government regulations on migrant workers are key factors needing to be assessed. Also, how language, communication, and country-specific work experience affect employability, and how networking and some other key factors can help overcome the challenges also need to be considered. New Zealand is predominantly a migrant-dependent nation with almost 25% of the population being migrant workers (Stats NZ, 2018a). Around 2% of these are Sri Lankans, and many of them are knowledge workers possessing the required qualifications and experience for employment (Stats NZ, 2018b). Hence the main objectives of this research were to identify employability challenges faced by Sri Lankan migrant knowledge workers in the fields of finance and business management in New Zealand and determine how these employability challenges can be overcome.

Keywords: employability challenges, migrant knowledge workers, Sri Lankan migrants.

INTRODUCTION

Migration has occurred since the existence of mankind (Omisakin et al., 2015). It involves departing one place of living in which an individual's or group's 'felt identities' have been crafted and arriving at a new place where these 'felt identities' will be recrafted (Deaux, 2000). There are many reasons for migration. Individual perceptions of the socioeconomic and political environment, either of the origin or destination of migration, influence migration choices and preferences (Kanfer et al., 2001). During the last two decades, New Zealand (NZ) has attracted highly qualified migrants from all parts of the world as it sees immigration as an essential element in the country's economic development. Since 1990, NZ has promoted itself as a destination for students seeking international education (Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2015). It has also become a migrant hot spot due to its social, economic, and political stability (Selby & Winbush, 2015). Migrants comprise 25% of NZ's population and are of Pacific, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, and other ethnicities (Stats NZ, 2018a).

The migration of Sri Lankan (SL) knowledge workers is not a new phenomenon (Cassim, 2017). During the colonial period, the British Empire deployed highly skilled SLs such as engineers, surveyors, and doctors for executive-grade positions in other countries (Collyer et al., 2009). Over the years NZ has become a centre of attraction for SL migrants (Cassim, 2017). By December 2018, the number of SL migrants in NZ was

16,830, including 1,161 who arrived in 2016, 1,262 who arrived in 2017, and 1,330 who arrived in 2018 (Stats NZ, 2018b). Stats NZ reported that the majority came under the student visa category, but others migrated under other visa categories such as resident, work, and visitor visas.

In 1991, the NZ government introduced a point rating scheme to encourage skilled migrants from other countries, with emphasis on professional and trade qualifications, and business and work experience (Pernice et al., 2000). A skill-based classification was introduced by the NZ government as the Australian New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupation (ANZSCO) where jobs were classified based on skills defined by the body Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021). Prior to the establishment of ANZSCO, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) was established in 1989 to ensure that NZ qualifications were accepted as credible nationally and internationally (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2014). Accordingly, engineers, Information Technology (IT) specialists, high-end construction workers, project managers, health professionals, scientists, environmentalists, and builders were able to migrate to NZ as direct/conditional residents, subject to the ANZSCO standards, NZQA endorsement, and achievement of the rating system requirements (Stats NZ, 2018b). However, knowledge workers (KWs) in the business management and finance sectors were not able to follow the same path as ANZSCO did not include their qualifications on the list of direct/conditional skilled migrants. Therefore, this study argues that SL migrant knowledge workers (SLMKW) who were academically/professionally qualified with or without managerial work experience were restricted from migration to NZ as direct/conditional residents. However, they have the option of coming to NZ as tertiary students where they become eligible for a work visa upon successful completion of their education programmes, allowing further time in the country and opening pathways for resident visas (Malcolm Pacific Immigration, 2022). Accordingly, 15% of tertiary students' study comprises management and finance-related studies (Education Counts, 2019).

Migrants face challenges when seeking employment in their host countries irrespective of their educational and professional qualifications, work background, and experience (Udah et al., 2019). Lack of language proficiency (Batalova & Fix, 2010), cultural adaptability (Campion, 2018), lack of local work experience and qualifications, non-recognition of foreign qualifications (Khan-Gökkaya & Moesko, 2021), lack of credential recognition and short-term visas (Alho, 2020) are some of the challenges migrants face in searching for employment in their host countries. A large amount of literature is available on employability challenges faced by Indians (Kaur, 2019; Montayre et al., 2019), Africans (Bartley, 2010; Rosewarne & Shuker, 2010; Tuwe, 2018), Chinese (Gong et al., 2020; Ran & Liu, 2021; Wang & East, 2020;), Asians as a whole (Ho, 2003; Wong, 2015), Fiji Indians (Aporosa, 2012; Pio & Dana, 2014). However, only a minimal amount of literature on the challenges faced by SL migrants in NZ is available. Most of the SL migrant student population comes from a management and finance background with less representation in the creative arts, society and culture, food and hospitality, agriculture, and environment (Education Counts, 2021). There is a gap in the literature about the employability challenges faced by SLMKW in the fields of finance and management. This research sought to reduce the gap by identifying the employability challenges faced by SLMKW in the fields of finance and business management from the migrants' perspectives.

The insights from this research will be useful for SL deciding on NZ as a destination for their studies and work, and migrants in general by identifying effective ways of searching for employment and avoiding challenges. It will also be useful to NZ career support services aiming to improve their services and to policymakers when formulating migrant employment policies.

The aims of this research are:

To determine the employability challenges faced by SLMKW in NZ in the fields of finance and business management.

To achieve this aim, the following two research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the major employability challenges faced by SLMKW in the fields of finance and business management in NZ?
2. How can SLMKW in the fields of finance and business management overcome these challenges?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The International Labour Organisation and International Labour Office (ILO) (2007) defined a migrant as a person who travels from one country to the other and stays there over one year or more. According to researchers, emigration occurs due to demand-pull factors which attract migrants to the new destination, and supply-push factors which drive the decision to migrate from the country (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). Economic factors play a pivotal role in decisions to migrate, as in most cases people emigrate from impoverished to economically advanced countries (Rumbaut, 1994). However, the desire to emigrate is not based only on economic factors (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). Migration is a key component of globalisation that influences the world labour market (Zubiashvili, 2017). Accordingly, migrants are a significant human capital source which is essential to many countries (Schuetze & Antecol, 2006). Developed countries have long histories of migrants and they determine the direction and intensity of the world labour market, including labour requiring high qualifications and labour without this requirement (Zubiashvili, 2017). Migration of SLKW for foreign employment and education has become a key attribute of the socio-economic life of SL (Abrar et al., 2014).

Knowledge Workers

Drucker (2006) explained a KW as a person who possesses core competencies and intellectual capital gained by extensive learning achieved by significant financial and time resource expenditure. Knowledge workers use their knowledge to create value, and as a result, cultivate opportunities based on their findings and they grasp knowledge and apply it to solve problems (Pepitone, 2009). Knowledge workers are usually defined according to the industry in which they are engaged or by their occupations (Surawski, 2019). However, KWs are a subset of all employees, whose productivity is mainly based on knowledge (Wickramasinghe & Ginzberg, 2001). Knowledge is not only individual personal wisdom but is a valuable element of the intellectual assets of organisations (Gayawali et al., 1997). The specialty of KWs is that they bring knowledge into an organisation, accumulate more knowledge by engaging in workplace training, and expropriate what they have developed when they move out of the organisation (Bogdanowickz & Bailey, 2002).

From a human resource perspective, KWs are workers who are critical to the long-term success of an organisation (Despres & Hiltrop, 1995). They frequently change their jobs and are highly mobile (Yigitcanlar et al., 2007) and they are more responsive to being 'pulled' rather than being 'pushed' (Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004).

Employability Challenges

Economists predict that the global economy is increasingly dependent on internationally mobile professionals as the shortage of highly skilled labour increases in advanced economies as well as in emerging economies (Chernyak & Chernyak, 2019). NZ is also part of this exchange of knowledge as it encourages migrants to enter the country (New Zealand Immigration, n.d.). However, migrants are not always welcomed or accepted by the host country as there is a perception that migrants will take people's jobs (Omisakin, 2016). Such negative perceptions are unhelpful to migrants in their job searches (Devillanova & Frattini, 2011). The ILO (2007) revealed that more than one in every three qualified migrants is excluded from job selection in several western industrialised countries. In NZ migrants find it difficult to secure suitable employment or any employment (Omisakin, 2016). Thus, there is an influx of skilled migrants who can become underemployed and unemployed (Gentile, 2019).

As a result of globalisation, English became the official communication language of scientific and academic literature (Maydell & Diego-Mendoza, 2014). Additionally, English is the predominant and one of the official languages of NZ (Holmes, 1997). Employers expect job seekers to use language proficiency in everyday dealings (Bloemen, 2012). Migrants who are not native English speakers find this requirement a barrier (Creese, 2010) in securing employment as it becomes a challenge to communicate in a manner that is understood by the prospective employer as well as to understand their pronunciation (Xu, 2020). It was identified the lack of language proficiency in migrants as an employability challenge in other European countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) (Xu, 2020).

Studies identified several secondary labour market problems associated with the unemployment of professional migrants from developing and non-native English-speaking countries (Birrell & Healy, 2008). Even after validation and accreditation of qualifications and work experience, employers consider such qualifications less desirable than qualifications obtained from developed countries such as the UK (Syed, 2008). As a result, skilled migrants from developing countries face difficulties in securing professional positions (Birrell & Healy, 2008). Accordingly, lack of recognition of foreign experience, qualifications, and credentials and communication barriers are major challenges to migrants searching for employment (McKenna, 2012; Ozkan, 2018).

Another prominent challenge for migrants in securing employment is their visa duration (Berquist & Moore, 2019). Employers provide employment opportunities for people who can be with them for longer time (Hann, 2018). When a migrant holds a temporary visa, employers do not see the employment of a migrant as economical (Pernice et al., 2000). Further, based on government policy changes to the labour market, NZ employers prioritise New Zealanders for job openings (New Zealand Immigration, n.d.). The first preference is given to locals, and only if the employer is unable to find a suitable candidate locally, can a non-New Zealander be hired (NZI, 2021). Time taken to adapt to a new culture and the lack of specific job experience in NZ were further employability challenges (Ozkan, 2018). However, networking with people who could provide employment opportunities could facilitate employment opportunities (Kubo & Saka, 2002).

Literature regarding specifically SL migrants is not included in this review because it is limited and not available. This indicates a gap in the literature regarding SL migrants' employability challenges. This research therefore will endeavour to fill the gap in the literature by identifying the most salient employability challenges faced by SLMKW and identify ways to overcome such challenges. The outcome of this research will be useful for SL migrants and other migrants wishing to make NZ their new home, to employers and government when formulating policies, and to other parties involved in migration-related matters.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data collection was carried out by disseminating a web-based questionnaire using the Qualtrics platform. The questionnaire had four sections. The first obtained participants' demographic data. The second included educational and professional work experience and qualifications to ascertain whether the participant was a migrant knowledge worker. The third was on employability search options, and the fourth focused on collecting data relating to the research objectives of identifying employability challenges, by using identified variables to produce statistics on SLMKW' views using Likert scales. The questionnaire was designed using the key factors from existing literature, and data was collected and analysed using factor ratings, a method used in similar studies (Gribble et al., 2015; Nunkoosing, 2005). The identification and selection of participants was based on the researcher's judgement according to the purposive sampling technique (Sharma, 2017). This technique allows observation of specific cultural domains and access to

experts within the chosen field (Emmel, 2013). According to Gill and Bernard (2008), there is no identified limitation for purposive sampling until the required number of responses is gathered. The questionnaire was disseminated to all participants selected who belonged to one group, SLMKW currently living in NZ. Further, the snowball sampling method was used to reach out to the required number of participants, requesting participants of the purposive sample to recommend others (Emerson, 2015).

The participants were reached via various social media platforms such as Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and emails. The questionnaire was open for responses for four weeks, and 118 valid responses were gathered accordingly. The first, second, and third sections of the questionnaire were used to gain demographic data and to identify participants that met the SLMKW criteria. The fourth section consisted of three sets of Likert scale questions. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, and standard deviations to assess whether they were statistically significant.

Qualitative Data

Semi-structured individual interviews are a commonly used method for phenomenological studies with small samples (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Qualitative data collection was carried out using semi-structured interviews of approximately 25 minutes duration with 13 SLMKW from the main regions (Auckland, Waikato and Wellington) of NZ. The number of participants from each region was selected by deploying the convenience sampling method considering the SL population density of each region. In a situation where the researcher was unable to obtain contact details of the targeted participants' group due to the unavailability of reliable data, the purposive sampling method was deployed (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005). Accordingly, one-to-one interview discussions took place with the Auckland participants. The remaining participants were phone interviewed due to travelling challenges such as the distance from Auckland to those regions. Each participant was numbered as P1, P2, ..., and P13 for easy reference and to ensure anonymity. However, data collection did not commence until ethics approval (Reference AIC 83) was granted by Otago Polytechnic Auckland International Campus Ethics Committee.

Qualitative data was collected by using semi-structured interviews and analysed using the thematic analysis method widely used in qualitative data analytics (Braun & Clarke, 2012). According to Sharma (2018), most qualitative analysis involves themes in some way. Thus, thematic analysis is a tool that underpins different qualitative approaches. Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to discover similar words, from responses from the participants during the interviews, patterns, phrases, and themes through reading and understanding raw data; known as the inductive component (Thomas, 2006). An inductive approach to coding and theme development is common (Braun et al., 2015). Although the subjectivity of the researcher is integral to the process of analysis, and findings should be based on the objectives or research questions. The outcomes should emerge directly from the analysis of the raw data and not from a pre-defined model. Therefore, Braun and Clarke's (2012) six stages of the thematic analysis process were deployed to analyse data: 1). Familiarise self with data, 2) Generate codes, 3). Search for themes, 4). Review themes, 5). Define and name themes, 6). Produce report.

RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The total number of participants was 118 for the questionnaire and 13 for the semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the total number of participants was 138. Participants who participated in this research migrated to NZ through five different visa categories. The total number of participants are 114 (49 females and 65 males). Nearly half of the participants arrived in the students' visa category as shown in Figure 1. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 59 years and their gender data is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 1 – Participant SLMKWs as a Percentage of Visa Category

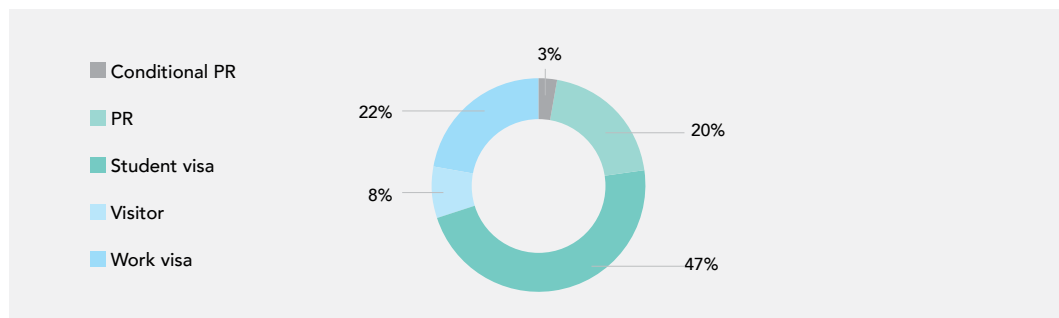
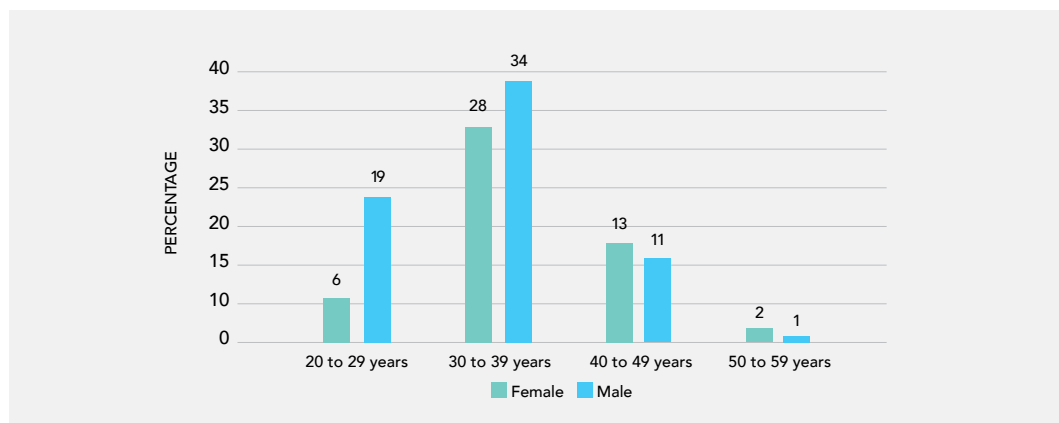


Figure 2 – Age Range and Gender Percentages of SLMKWs - Participants



Quantitative Data Analysis and Discussion

Three Likert scale questionnaires were used to identify employability challenges and how to overcome such challenges. The importance of soft skills was measured under the first construct, and other possible employability challenges were measured in the second construct. The third construct was on knowledge of areas that matter in overcoming employability challenges.

Importance of soft skills to secure employment

A rating scale (1 to 10 for each soft skill, (1 being the least and 10 being the most important) was developed to obtain responses and mean and standard deviation (SD) was used to analyse the collected data. For analysis purposes, the mean value was defined as least important, somewhat important, important, very important, and extremely important by assigning the mean value ranges as 1 to 2.9, 3.0 to 4.9, 5 to 6.9, 7 to 7.9 and 8 to 10 respectively.

The mean and SD of each soft skill is presented in Table 1. The first six soft skills show the highest mean values in descending order from 8.55 to 8.02, proving that these soft skills are extremely important to analyse the order of preference by participants. However, the SD value of time management and teamwork skills denotes 2.08 and 2.10 respectively, indicating that the responses had a comparatively higher variance. The mean value of presentation and decision-making skills denotes that those skills are considered as very important skills in the job search process, 7.70 and 7.59, respectively.

Table 1 – Mean and SD for the Importance of Soft Skills in the Process of Job Searching

SOFT SKILL	MEAN	SD
Communication	8.55	1.61
Interview facing	8.47	1.87
Teamwork	8.38	2.10
English language	8.33	1.78
Computer	8.06	1.79
Time management	8.02	2.08
Presentation	7.70	1.92
Decision-making	7.59	1.72

This research suggests that communication, interview facing, English language, and computer skills are extremely important in facing the employability challenges in NZ. Decision-making and presentation soft skills have been identified as very important factors. Similar studies demonstrated the importance of communication which is considered the primary soft skill in gaining employment (Mahmud et al., 2014). The percentage-wise participants' responses are presented in Figure 3. Except for decision-making and computer literacy, all soft skills have been identified as extremely important by most of the participants.

Figure 3 – Participants' Responses for Each Soft Skill as a Percentage (%)

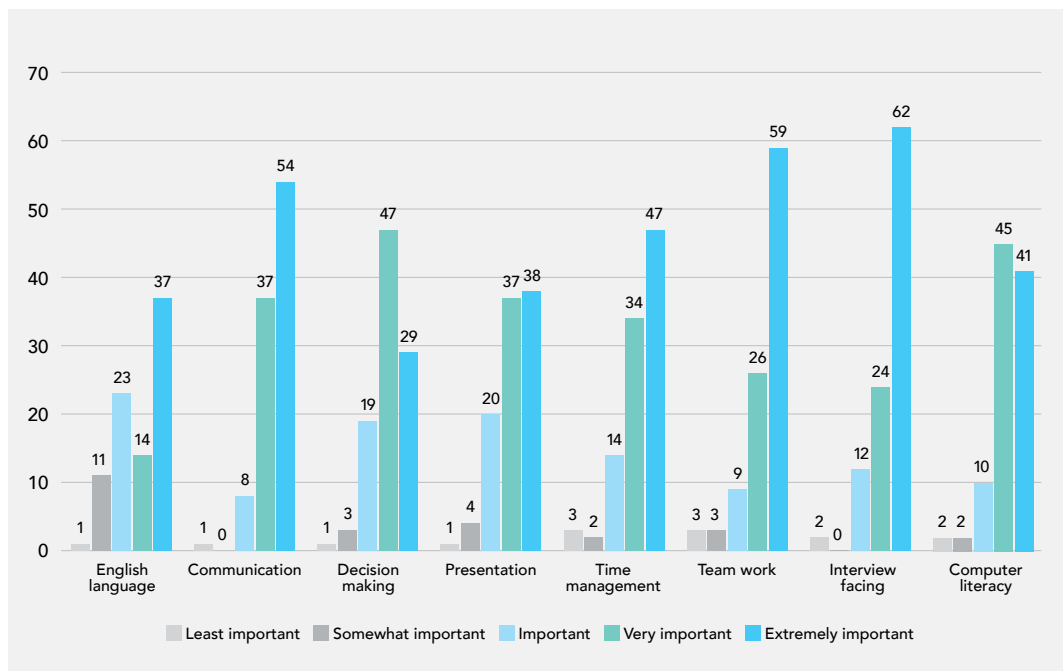


Table 2 – Mean and SD of the Participants’ Responses for Identified Possible Employability Challenges.

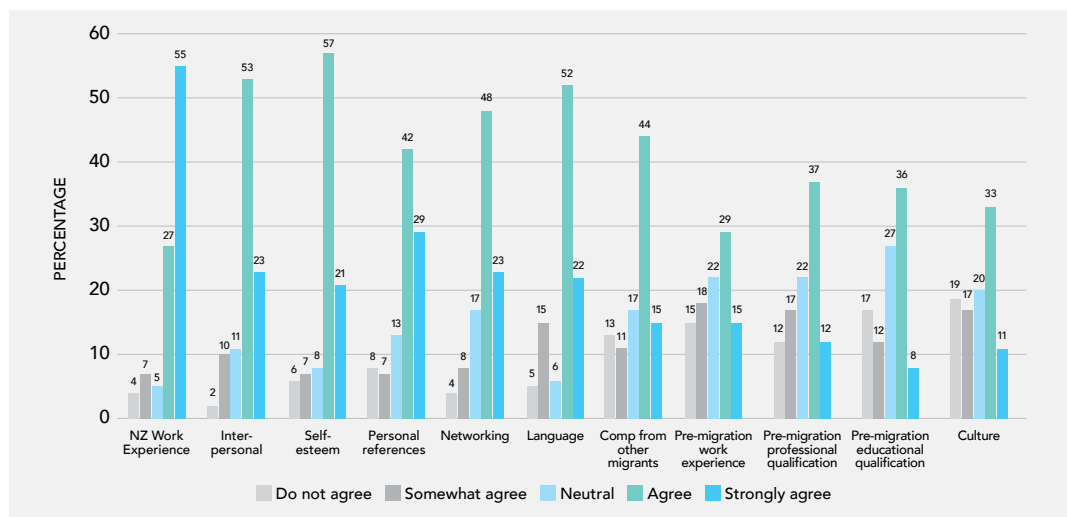
EMPLOYABILITY CHALLENGE	MEAN	SD
NZ work experience	4.24	1.10
Interpersonal skills	3.86	0.95
Lack of self-esteem	3.81	1.04
Lack of personal references	3.78	1.18
Lack of networking	3.78	1.02
Language skills	3.71	1.12
Competition from other migrants	3.37	1.24
Pre-migration professional qualifications	3.20	1.21
Pre-migration work experience	3.11	1.29
Pre-migration educational qualifications	3.06	1.22
Culture	3.00	1.30

Employability challenges

The mean and SD values were derived according to the participants’ responses to the attributes shown in Table 2.

For analysis purposes, the mean value was defined as 1; Do not agree, 1.01-2; Somewhat Agree, 2.01- 3; Neutral, 3.01 – 4; Agree 4.01 – 5; Strongly Agree. Not having NZ work experience was considered the major employability challenges because it recorded the highest mean (Mean = 4.24 and SD 1.10). Participants strongly agreed with this. All other ten attributes’ mean values ranged from 3 to 3.86, denoting participant agreement with those ten employability challenges. SD values ranged from 0.95 to 1.3. Therefore, there were no significant variances in the participants’ responses. Percentage-wise, responses for employment challenges are given in Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Participants’ Responses to Employment Challenges as a Percentage (%).



From the above graph, 55% of the participants identified lack of NZ work experience as a major employment challenge in their job searches. However, pre-migration professional and educational qualifications, and culture were not considered by most participants as employability challenges, (12% and 11% respectively). Nonetheless, more than 50% of the participants agreed with the other seven employment challenges.

How to overcome employability challenges – knowledge in what area matters

This research identified that knowledge in some areas is important in overcoming employability challenges. Accordingly, the mean and SD of those areas are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 – Mean and SD of the Participants’ Responses for ‘Knowledge in What Areas Matter to Overcome Employability Challenges’

EMPLOYABILITY CHALLENGE	MEAN	SD
An updated CV	4.44	0.70
English language proficiency	4.30	0.73
Visa category	4.29	0.75
Adaptability to the culture	4.02	0.91
Number of personal contacts for reference	4.01	0.95
Self-esteem	3.96	0.84
Knowledge about the job market	3.95	0.96
Employability search sites such as SEEK, INDEED	3.93	0.96
Networking	3.91	1.01
Number of potential employers known and references from them	3.90	0.93
A LinkedIn account to connect with people	3.72	1.10
Getting an additional professional qualification in NZ	3.60	1.11
Engagement with recruitment agents	3.49	0.98
Attending careers fairs	3.05	1.14

For analysis purposes, mean value was defined as 1; Not important, 1.01-2; Somewhat important, 2.01-3; Neutral, 3.01-4; Very important and 4.01-5 Extremely important. Accordingly, the first five employability challenges have been considered as extremely important as the mean value was on or above 4.01 (SD was between 0.7 to 0.95 showing a small variance). The remaining employability challenges have been considered as very important factors and showed a variance of 0.84 to 1.11. Percentagewise participants’ responses to knowledge in areas of importance to overcome employability challenges are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5 – Participants’ Responses as a Percentage for Knowledge in Areas of Importance to Overcome Employability Challenges.

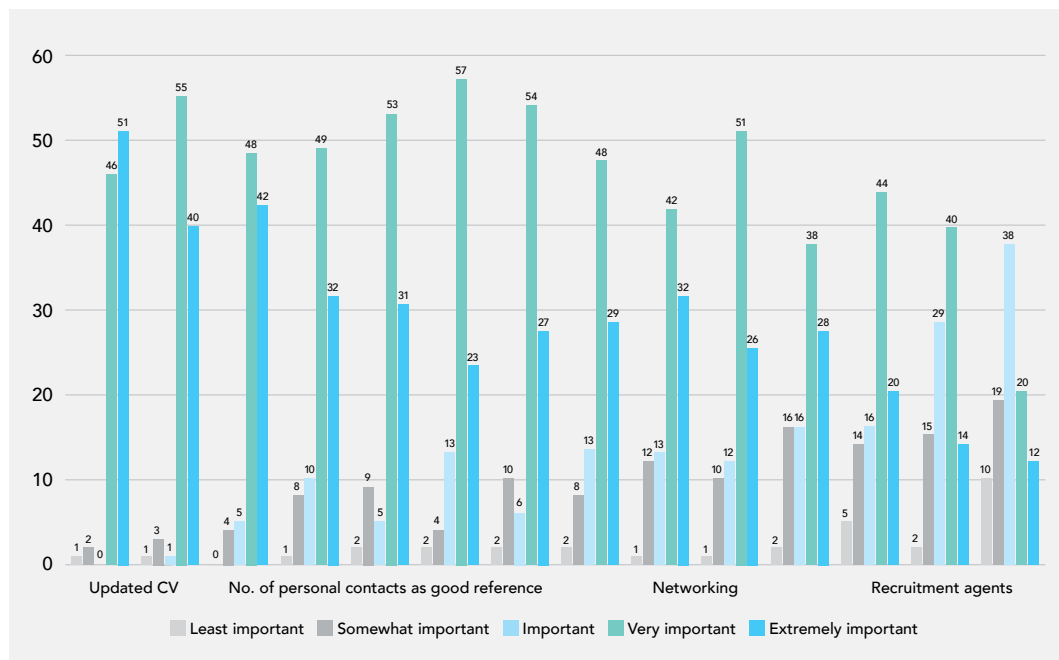


Figure 5 above shows that to overcome employability challenges, an updated CV is extremely important (51%). Except for the engagement with recruitment agents and attending career fairs, the eleven areas were considered as extremely and very important factors by more than 50% of the participants. The majority of the participants’ responses were neutral and considered attending career fairs as unimportant as those three categories’ response was 67%. However, previous studies demonstrated a direct link between career services, recruitment and related services and thereby networking (Ceperley, 2013).

Qualitative data analysis and discussion

Qualitative data was clustered under five themes (as shown in Table 4) following the thematic data analysis process.

Table 4 – Identified Themes According to Collected Information from Participants

EMPLOYABILITY CHALLENGE (THEME)	NO OF PARTICIPANTS
English proficiency and communication skills	12
Networking and NZ-based references	10
NZ-based experience	9
Recognition of foreign qualifications	7
Visa status	9

Theme one: English proficiency and communication skills

Twelve participants mentioned that lack of English language proficiency is a major employability challenge in job searching for most SLs. They all believed that being conversant in English leads to better opportunities. The corporate world considers that ability or inability to speak English is one of the major selection criteria (Stebbins & Shani, 1995). Advanced language skills are a key factor for migrants' ability to obtain the desired job (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012). Lacking this the research assumes that many job searchers find it difficult to answer to the point during an interview. Similar studies show that inability to refrain from jargon and slang, and accent are significant challenges among migrants' job seekers' inability to pass job interviews (Hebbani & Colic-Peisker, 2012). To improve communication skills a P5 stated, "It is important to be friendly with a few native speakers and other ethnicities and interact with them frequently rather than being with your own community". Accordingly, adjusting to the NZ accent appears to be a major challenge (Li, 2016) which underpins other employability challenges.

Theme two: Networking and NZ-based references

Networking helps job searchers to identify potential employers and their organisations (Hoye et al., 2009). When such people start noticing the right person, it opens the door for new avenues and opportunities such as job leads, reference letters, job search insights, advice, and so on (Maydell & Diego-Mendoza, 2014). Ten participants (76%) considered networking ability and NZ-based references to be major employability challenges in their job searches. Deliberately or unintentionally, migrants tend to associate only with co-nationals (Brown, 2009) thereby making their own community silos (Maudeni, 2001). Often minorities are stereotyped as outsiders who do not want to engage with the dominant majority (Lee & Rice, 2007). It was found that there are disadvantages to being with one's own community as this disconnects networking with the host country community (Joseph, 2016).

Similar studies demonstrated that migrants have the option of using social media platforms as a way of socialising and communicating with others (Smith, 2012; Venezia, 2012). Social media platforms have become an integral part of social life where most of the society is communicating on several platforms for different purposes (Winstone et al., 2021). For instance, LinkedIn is one such application that brings the corporate world to the fingertips. Having professional networks and references leads to employment opportunities (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012).

Theme Three: NZ-based experience

Nine participants (69%) mentioned that employers seek to employ people with NZ-based work experience. Migrants often do not have work experience in the host country until an employer offers them employment (Omisakin, 2016). According to the participants responses received, not having NZ-based experience is a major challenge for first-time job seekers in NZ. NZ-based work experience has not been defined by any employers even though they expect migrants to have it (Lewin et al., 2011). Therefore, no definition is available for migrants to comply with. This phenomenon demonstrates that a lack of NZ-based work experience leads to unemployment or underemployment in NZ (Maydell & Diego-Mendoza, 2014). However, engaging in lesser-skilled jobs such as part-time jobs, internships, or volunteering helps migrants to gain NZ job experience (Kumar, 2014). Having NZ-based work experience in any field makes you employable in NZ (Trlin, 2010).

Theme four: Recognition of foreign qualifications

Seven participants (54%) stated that their foreign qualifications were not considered in their job search process. P12 stated that "my NZQA accredited for my foreign qualifications were not recognised by any of the employers that interviewed me". P4 stated, "Having a higher educational qualification such as MBA becomes a negative factor when applying for jobs". P5 stated that "NZ employers are looking for people with NZ-based educational qualifications, not foreign qualifications".

Accordingly, employers' lack of appreciation of foreign qualifications is a key challenge for job seekers (Kostenko et al., 2012). Similar studies show that NZQA-accredited qualifications are not recognised by employers (Ressia et al., 2017) which results in brain waste where KWs perform jobs that do not reflect their skills (Pires, 2015). P6 said, "NZ employers do not recognise SL qualifications even though they are on a par with the NZQA system". Therefore, obtaining a NZ qualification in any discipline in management or accounting could add value to a migrant's job search.

Theme five: Visa status

Nine participants (69%) identified that visa status itself was a major challenge in job searching. Opportunities diminish when the visa is about to expire or will expire in a few months. Therefore, KWs accept unpaid internships or voluntary work where their skills are devalued (Howe et al., 2019). In NZ most of the job advertisements clearly mention that the applicant should be a NZ citizen or permanent resident (Omisakin, 2016). Employers adhere to government policies that clearly state that employers must offer employment to residents before they consider offshore skills (NZI, 2021). Accordingly, migrants face obstacles in their job search due to NZ immigration policies.

FINDINGS

The five themes based on the qualitative analysis are discussed in the following section.

Lack of English Language Proficiency and Communication Skills

Based on the analysis, a lack of English proficiency and communication skills is a major challenge to a successful job search. Similar studies demonstrated a high correlation between a lack of language proficiency and poor job outcomes (Aure, 2013; Butcher et al., 2015). Migrants struggle to secure employment due to their lack of language proficiency (Ho, 2015). The results of this research showed that better language skills create better opportunities for securing job in NZ. Similar studies conducted in Australia have shown that success in job searches is heavily reliant on migrants' capacity to represent their character, experience, and accomplishments by using the predominant language of the country (Gribble et al., 2015). However, there are instances where migrants with a good command of English were not considered for employment (Hariswamy, 2019). Apart from communication skills, it was found that possessing soft skills such as presentation interpersonal, decision-making skills and interview-answering skills was essential. Oral communication skills are considered pivotal in a new environment like in NZ. The ability to communicate and present well are two of the most effective career enhancers (Polack-wahl, 2000).

NZ-based Work Experience

Results analysis shows that lack of NZ-based work experience is a major challenge in a job search for SLMKW. Even when a migrant has a reasonable number of years of pre-migration work experience, NZ employers look for employees who have NZ-based experience (Trlin, 2010). This phenomenon is also evident in previous studies of the NZ context (Anderson et al., 2014). NZ employers expect work experience in NZ from new migrants, but this criterion was not properly communicated with potential employees or a written criteria in job ads (Lewin et al., 2011). However, the promising side is that employers are not specific about the area of work experience if it is local. Therefore, SLMKW can perform lower-skilled work and add that work experience to their resumé. Furthermore, NZ promotes voluntary work for the community and environmental projects, and some companies provide paid/unpaid internships (Kumar, 2014). Active participation in such programmes also enables migrants to add NZ-based work experience to their resumé.

Lack of Recognition of Foreign Qualifications

Many migrants believe that their acquired knowledge and their hard-earned educational qualifications will

be considered by employers. However, migrants are disappointed when they find that employers are keen on recruiting someone with local qualifications. NZ employers do not consider SL qualifications in finance and business management. Similar studies show that employers do not offer employment to migrants based on their home country qualifications (Pernice, 2000). Despite having significant work experience and higher educational qualifications, SLMKWs accept underemployment when they start their careers in NZ. On most occasions, they must compromise on wages as well as employment levels to remain in the workforce. Similar studies prove the same is true for other nations (Ressia et al., 2017; Yao et al., 2015).

Visa Status

Temporary work visas restrict migrants from exploring labour market opportunities in their fields of interest relative to their qualifications (Anderson et al., 2014). However, for residents and citizens, more job opportunities are available. In NZ, most job advertisements state that candidates must be NZ citizens or permanent residents. New Zealand Immigration expects employers to prioritise recruiting citizens (New Zealand Immigration, n.d). Additionally, employers are unwilling to hire employees on short-term work visas when the visa period is due and if the employer wishes to keep the employee further, employers must liaise with New Zealand Immigration on behalf of the employee over visa requirements (New Zealand Immigration, n.d.). Employers consider it as an additional task for their businesses. Similar studies show that based on their visa status, migrants are treated differently in their host countries (Jackson, 2007). A substantial amount of literature is available regarding migrant policies, and policy-driven factors. However, compared with UK and USA, Australia, Canada, and NZ's immigration policies are strict (Chiou, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusions

The first research question was: "What are the major employability challenges faced by SLMKWs in the fields of finance and business management in NZ?" Finding indicated that communicating in English is not easy for SLMKWs, this is supported by similar research demonstrated that migrants' adaptation to a host country's language was a major challenge for migrants seeking jobs (Li, 2016; Lin & Scherz, 2014). Lack of networking skills has been identified as another challenge as the NZ labour market relies on networking; knowing important people formally or informally provides an opportunity that could lead to access to a career path (Maydell & Diego-Mondoza, 2014). However, lack of a connection with New Zealanders, confinement to co-national community silos, and a fear of making mistakes when communicating in English are major challenges to developing networks. New migrants do not have work experience in their host country, yet NZ requires this from its migrants before offering employment (Joseph, 2016; Kaur, 2019). Lack of NZ-based work experience was identified as a key employment challenge for SLMKWs. Regardless of personal factors such as a migrant's education and soft skills, visa status often rules out potential job applicants (Anderson et al., 2014). Employers believe that employees will leave the job in a short time, resulting in an additional recruitment cost to the employer, as well as a disruption to the business. Moreover, employers do not want to incur extra effort with immigration-related documentation on behalf of temporary work visa holders (Hann, 2018). Therefore, employers prefer to recruit residents over short-term visa holders (Hann, 2018), visa status is therefore a major challenge faced by SLMKWs.

The second research question was: "How do SL migrant KWs in the fields of finance and business management overcome these challenges?" The literature indicates that the primary soft skills for gaining employment in NZ are English language proficiency and communication skills (Mahmud et al., 2014). NZ has facilitated toastmasters' clubs in 265 cities for anyone interested in joining, and social events are available for anyone wishing to make friends (Stuff, 2016). Migrants can use such events to enhance their language proficiency and communication skills and make friends with English speakers from NZ (Stuff, 2016). Furthermore, attending such events increases the number of potential contacts and thereby widens the migrants' networks (Stuff, 2016). Since NZ employers prefer to hire people with NZ-based work experience, good enough the experience required by most employed is not specific to particular sector.

Therefore, migrants can look for lower-skilled jobs from any sector to shore up their NZ job-based experience. Participating in paid or unpaid internships or voluntary work will help in the development of migrants' networks, increase contacts, and enable them to gain NZ-based work experience (Gribble et al., 2015). These factors will help to overcome the employability challenges faced by SLMKWs.

One of the most common obstacles for migrants found in this research is their visa status. Regardless of qualifications and soft skills, visa status is often used by employers to exclude applicants from job recruitment, this is supported by several studies that have indicated that temporary work permits restricted migrants from exploring labour market opportunities in their relevant fields (Anderson et al., 2014). This finding is similar to many studies that have shown that migrants receive different treatment in their host countries based on their visa status (Jackson, 2017; Van et al., 2009).

2. Recommendations

2.1 For SLMKWs

- Enhance communication skills by attending Toastmasters clubs.
- Do not remain in co-national community silos. Try to associate with a NZ family in a homestay to facilitate immersion in NZ culture and language.
- A well-written CV and cover letter are vital.
- Use the free careers services available such as 'work connect' which are established by the government to help migrants prepare for the NZ job market.
- Maintain an active and updated LinkedIn account to enhance the network of connections. Participating in discussions, sharing publications, and obtaining an endorsement.
- Register with recruiters. An active profile with NZ recruitment search sites such as Seek and Indeed is important, as such sites notify job seekers of vacancies.
- Be willing to accept a job requiring a lower level of skill. Additionally, active participation in voluntary work, paid or unpaid internships, or any other part-time job adds NZ-based work experience to their resumé.
- If possible, obtain NZ-based educational qualifications.

2.2 For the New Zealand Government

- Develop policies to improve the utilisation of migrant SLMKWs' foreign qualifications in NZ.
- Streamline the current visa process, thereby smoothing the hiring process.
- Reconsider policies regarding the recruitment of SLMKWs in the fields of finance and business management.
- Provide legal advice and establish support services for migrants as a service from the government.

2.3 For employers

- Streamline company policies enabling employment opportunities for short-term visa holders and applicants from other countries.
- Shortlist migrant candidates for interviews and consider the possibility of offering employment.
- Provide legal advice and establish support services for migrant workers by facilitating relevant documentation for immigration purposes.

2.4 Limitations of this research

The relatively limited sample size may be an issue. In this research, 13 participants' responses (semi-structured interviews) were collected only from the main regions of NZ. The lack of participation from the other regions was due to fewer SL migrants available within the population and difficulties in reaching

them as no contacts were available. Some questionnaire responses were not 100% completed, and the response rate was very low. The sample size was restricted due to time restrictions.

2.5 Suggestions for further research

Further study on employability challenges for the entire population of SL migrants in NZ is recommended. The outcome will reveal whether the employability challenges are the same for the entire population of SL migrants in NZ.

Future research could be considered on SL migrants' cultural adaptability in NZ and its impact on securing employment.

Further research could also be carried out regarding employers' perceptions on hiring SL migrants for NZ jobs. Findings from such research could enable SL migrants to understand what is required by them to secure employment in the NZ job market and reduce the impact of employability challenges.

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