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# Human Resource Determinants of Career Satisfaction among Migrant Workers

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**Abstract**—In the post-globalisation era, mobility of labour has seen a manifold increase. The increase in the opportunities for mobility of labour is also a factor that fosters migration. Migration happens across the entire cross-section of the population for various push and pull reasons. Migration among individuals of working age is predominantly for economic reasons where better compensation is construed a precursor for better quality of life or standard of living. It is a possibility that these individuals have different perceptions and experiences of career satisfaction. This conceptual paper presents the human resource factors that facilitate and impede career satisfaction of migrant workers.

**Keywords**—Career Satisfaction, migrant workers, migrant labour, human resource determinants, facilitators, impediments.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the post-globalisation era, mobility of labour has seen a manifold increase. The increase in the opportunities for mobility of labour is also a factor that fosters human migration. The International Organization for Migration defines the term migrant “as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is (<https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/migration/index.html>). According to the Global Migration Data Portal, in 2019, total number of international migrants at mid-year was 271.6 million and the share of female migrants in the international migrant stock at mid-year was 47.9%. Further, 74% of the migrants were of the working age (i.e., aged between 20 and 64 years). Approximately 31% of the international migrants worldwide reside in Asia, 30% in Europe, 26% in the Americas, 10% in Africa and 3% in Oceania. Migration happens across the entire cross-section of the population for various push and pull reasons. These factors may be broadly classified as safety factors, economic factors, environmental factors and social factors (Justice for Immigrants, 2017). The types of human migration include (a) internal migration: moving within a state, country, or continent, (b) external migration: moving to a different state, country, or continent, (c) emigration: leaving one country to move to another, (d)

immigration: moving into a new country, (e) return migration: moving back to where you came from and (f) seasonal migration: moving with each season or in response to labor or climate conditions (National Geographic Resource Library (2019).

Migrant workers constitute a significant proportion of the migrant population. Migrant worker can be closely defined as a person who enters country as a foreign workforce at the invitation of the government or employer; it can also be a person who enters country separately to find work abroad ([www.demografie.info](http://www.demografie.info)). A “migrant worker” is defined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments as a person who migrates from one country to another (or who has migrated from one country to another) with a view to being employed other than on his own account, and includes any person regularly admitted as a migrant for employment (“ILC87 - Report III (1B) Migrant Workers).

According to the International Labour Organization (2017), of the 164 million migrant workers worldwide, approximately 111.2 million (67.9 per cent) live in high-income countries, 30.5 million (18.6 per cent) in upper middle-income countries, 16.6 million (10.1 per cent) in lower middle-income countries and 5.6 million (3.4 per cent) in low-income countries. Migrant workers constitute 18.5 per cent of the workforce of high-income countries, but only 1.4 to 2.2 per cent in lower-income countries. From 2013 to 2017, the concentration of migrant workers in high-income countries fell from 74.7 to 67.9 per cent, while their share in upper middle-income countries increased. This could be attributed to the economic development of the latter. Nearly 61 per cent of migrant workers are found in three subregions; 23.0 per cent in North America, 23.9 per cent in Northern, Southern and Western Europe and 13.9 per cent in the Arab countries. Other regions that host large numbers of migrant workers – above 5 per cent – include Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific, and Central and Western Asia. In contrast, Northern Africa hosts less than 1 per cent of migrant workers.

Labour migration can be divided into several types. According to Baštýř and col. (2005), it includes, (a) Incentive migration, (b) Demand migration, (c) Residential migration and (d) Commuting migration. Incentive migration is the response to the invitation of the destination country. The destination country usually requires specialists from the specific professions and, because of its economic strength and maturity, can afford to pay them. The impetus for such migrants includes wages, career opportunities and higher living standards. Demand migration emerges from the motivation of the migrant to move to another country by making his services available at a competitive price. It is

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prevalent in the case of unskilled (but cheap) labour force, which logically changes conditions on the labour market (employment or wages). Residential migration is a long-term stay of a migrant in the target country that often results in permanent relocation. Commuting (oscillating) migration refers to a pattern where the migrant goes to work either in the form of every day commuting or staying abroad for a short time period (usually for a week, less commonly month) and then coming home (generally for a weekend).

### *Problem Statement and Scope of the Paper*

While the term 'career' refers to a sequence of separate but related positions or work roles encountered by a person over the course of his or her life (Greenhaus et al. 2000), the term 'career satisfaction' focuses on the overall affective orientation of the individual toward his or her career or work role (Gattiker and Larwood 1988). Career satisfaction is a subjective measure that captures employees' perceptions of their satisfaction with their overall career goals, goals for income, goals for advancement and goals for the development of new skills (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley, 1990). Greenhaus et al. (1990) defined career satisfaction as the satisfaction an individual derives from the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of his/her career. These aspects include pay, developmental and advancement opportunities (Greenhaus et al., 1990). This conceptual paper presents the factors that facilitate and impede career satisfaction among migrant workers.

### *Rationale for the Paper*

It is important to study about career satisfaction owing to its positive outcomes such as lower turnover intentions (Igbaria 1991), development of motivated and committed workers (Gattiker and Larwood 1988; Igbaria 1991; Judge et al. 1995), higher life satisfaction and enhanced mental health (Hall 2002), organizational commitment (Carson et al. 1996), support for organizational change (Gaertner 1989), and even the success of an organization (Judge et al. 1999).

For some individuals, paid work can provide people with a sense of meaning of purpose, satisfaction, dignity, and even allows one to express a heart-felt commitment, while others just seek to make money or make a living to support their family (Reich, 2001). Although work may offer a psychological or tangible satisfaction to some, Gambles et al. (2006) notes that others are physically drained from working longer hours because they "feel obliged or compelled to give more energy, emotional labor, or 'more of themselves' to their paid work activities" (p. 51). Work in the different migrant industries also entails similar implications. Further, migrant workers relocate either with or without their families. Living in unfamiliar surroundings and trying to establish oneself in a new environ itself results in stress that may impact life, job or career satisfaction as family, native and friends are found to be intrinsic factors determining life satisfaction and mental health. Hence it is very important to understand the factors which contribute to career satisfaction among migrant workers. Hence it is important to study career satisfaction of migrant labour. In this context, this paper gains relevance.

### *Human Resource Determinants of Career Satisfaction among Migrant Workers*

Career is a lifelong sequence of role-related experiences of individuals (Hall, 2002) and career satisfaction is an emotional response to a career situation. Migration among individuals of working age is predominantly for economic reasons where better compensation is construed a precursor for better quality of life or standard of living. However, the working and living conditions of migrant workers depends to a large extent on the labour policies of the destination country, maturity of the labour market, labour market dynamics, industry in which employed, profile of the employer, skill sets of the individuals, middlemen influence and so on. For instance, individuals who migrate on incentive migration are more likely to be better off compared to those who migrate on demand migration. Similarly, individuals who are highly skilled have an advantage over their unskilled counterparts. Differences on account of gender, life stages, career stages and so on are also plausible. In such circumstances, it is a possibility that these individuals have different perceptions and experiences of career satisfaction.

The human resource determinants of career satisfaction among migrant workers are elaborated below.

- a) Labour policies of the destination country: If the labour policies of the destination country are pro-employers or pro-native employees, it is a possibility that the interests of the migrant workers may take a back seat. This could impede career satisfaction of the migrant workers in the long run.
- b) Maturity of the labour market: If the labour market is mature having standardised procedures, statutes and protocols governing the employer-employee relationship, it is bound to facilitate career satisfaction of the migrant workers.
- c) Labour market dynamics: If the forces of demand and supply for labour are very volatile or unpredictable, the career satisfaction of migrant workers will be equally unstable.
- d) Industry in which employed: If the migrant workers are employed in niche or hi-tech industries, then they are likely to experience better career satisfaction.
- e) Profile of the employer: Profile of the employer may be manifest in terms of their ability to pay, willingness to extend welfare amenities and so on. Thus profile of the employer will affect career satisfaction.
- f) Skill sets of the individuals: Individuals who are highly skilled have an advantage over their unskilled counterparts.
- g) Middlemen influence: Most often labour migration is facilitated by middlemen (agents / consultants). Despite the extent of security and scrutiny prevalent, quite often unwary individuals are tricked and roped into the labour trade where there is forced labour in dismal conditions to pay off debts or otherwise. In such situations, career satisfaction remains a distant dream.
- h) Nature of migration: Individuals who migrate on incentive migration are more likely to be better off compared to those who migrate on demand migration.



- i) Others: Differences on account of gender, life stages, career stages and so on are also plausible. In such circumstances, it is a possibility that these individuals have different perceptions and experiences of career satisfaction.

## II. DISCUSSION

Studies on job satisfaction of migrant workers are more reported compared to studies on career satisfaction of migrant workers. Wang and Jing (2017) have categorized the determinants of job satisfaction of immigrant workers into work- and non-work-related groups. Work-specific determinants include workplace environments, job characteristics, and work-specific personal factors (e.g., competency-related factors, psychological states, and work-specific demographics). Non-work-specific determinants include general demographics, culture-related factors (e.g., language, cultural traits, and acculturation), and community-related factors. In this paper, the human resource determinants of career satisfaction of migrant workers have been presented and discussed.

## III. CONCLUSION

Migration of workers within a country or across countries has come to stay. It is important to understand and study career satisfaction among the migrant workers, to compare and contrast the same with native workforce and also understand the dynamics owing to displacement of labour. This has manifold human resource and societal implications and hence needs to be thoroughly studied.

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