JOB SATISFACTION OF SRI LANKAN AND INDIAN SKILLED MIGRANTS IN THE AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores whether Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants are satisfied with their jobs in Australia at ‘overall’ and ‘facet’ levels. The study also examines predictors of their job satisfaction. 306 Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants live in Australia participated in a cross-sectional survey. Results indicated that participants were moderately satisfied with their jobs and were more satisfied with ‘supervision’, ‘communication’, ‘co-workers’, and ‘nature of work’ compared to ‘promotions’, ‘operating conditions’, ‘fringe benefits’, ‘pay’ and ‘rewards’. Contrary to past research findings, ‘age’, ‘gender’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘level of education’, ‘years since migration’ and ‘English language skills’ did not influence skilled migrants’ job satisfaction, however ‘perceived level of inclusiveness’ was significantly related to job satisfaction. Organisations need to emphasise more on ‘promotions’, ‘fringe benefits’, ‘pay’ and ‘rewards’ facets to increase the overall job satisfaction of skilled migrants and need to continue to focus on developing and implementing policies that support inclusive behaviours towards skilled migrants. The results of this paper is the outcome of a pioneering study that explored job satisfaction of Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants in Australian workplace.

JEL Classifications: M0

Keywords: Australia, diversity factors, job satisfaction, skilled migrants, Sri Lanka, India

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Employee job satisfaction is a heavily researched area within management and organisational psychology (Judge and Bone, 2010; Spector et al., 2002; Chan and Qiu, 2011, 2013; Fahr, 2011). This interest in examining job satisfaction has not been limited to academic researchers; contemporary managers in many organisations use job satisfaction surveys as a powerful tool to manage, motivate, train and retain their diverse employees. Skilled migration is a popular means of sourcing employees in developed nations including Australia; nevertheless, the available literature on job satisfaction of skilled migrants is relatively limited. India and Sri Lanka are the first and fourth most important source of skilled migrants in Australia; despite this, less is known about their job satisfaction after migrating (Annual Report, Department of Migration and Boarder Protection, 2012-2013).

Job satisfaction is one of the indicators of how successfully skilled migrants integrate into productive employment in a host country (Drever and Hoffmeister, 2008; Helliwell and Huang, 2010; Ahmed et al., 2013). Ahmed et al (2013) have suggested that studying migrants’ job satisfaction is important for three reasons. First, skilled migrants deserve to be treated with fairness and respect; job satisfaction is a reflection of how fairly they are being treated in the workplace. Second, job satisfaction is a reflection of employees’ emotional well-being and psychological health. Finally, it helps to identify potential ‘trouble spots’ within an organisation and so can be utilised to make important decisions in relation to skilled migrants and their contribution to the host society.

One of the main purposes of the Australian skilled migration program is to benefit from the skills and knowledge of skilled migrants in order to achieve improved socio-economic outcomes (Hawthorne, 2002; Wulff and Dharmalingam, 2008). Assessment of skilled migrants’ job satisfaction may assist in evaluating whether the expectations of the skilled migration program have been met. On the other hand organisational diversity studies (Sanchez and Brock, 1996; Mor Barak, 2000; Enchautegui-de-Jesus et al., 2006; Syed and Kramar, 2010) have shown that ethnic minorities are the fastest growing feature in organisations in multicultural societies. Therefore, studies of this nature are very timely in present day Australian society, which comprise of an ethnically heterogeneous workforce (Dagher and D’Netto, 1997; Syed and Kramar, 2010). Thus, this research addresses two main research questions in relation to Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants in the Australian workplace. They are,

1. Are Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants satisfied with their jobs in the Australian workplace?
2. What are the factors that influence their job satisfaction in Australia?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a multidimensional concept (Judge and Bone, 2010; Roelen et al., 2008). It is measured as overall job satisfaction as well as satisfaction levels of different facets of a job such as ‘pay’, ‘benefits’, ‘opportunities for promotion’, ‘supervision’ and ‘working conditions’ (Edwards et al., 2008; Skalli, Theodossiou and Vasileiou, 2008). Overall job satisfaction refers to how people feel about their job in general
(Edwards et al., 2008). On the other hand, facet satisfaction refers to ‘affective reaction to particular dimensions of the job such as ‘pay’, ‘supervision’ and ‘opportunities for promotion’ (Lawler, 1973, p. 64).

Researchers (Edwards et al., 2008; Johnson and Holdaway, 1994; Weiss, 2002) opine that it is important to recognise and differentiate overall job satisfaction from facet-level job satisfaction. The current research measures overall as well as facet-level job satisfaction since measuring job satisfaction at both levels is vital and more meaningful for decision-makers such as supervisors, who manage skilled migrant employees in Australian workplace.

**Migrants’ Job Satisfaction**

Working in an unfamiliar environment could directly impact an individual’s job satisfaction (Giusta and Kambhampati, 2006). Even though job opportunities are one of the primary motives for skilled migrants’ decision to migrate, little research has been conducted to explore whether skilled migrants are satisfied with their jobs in the new destination (Ahmed et al., 2013; Ea et al., 2008; Itzhaki et al., 2013). Some of the available studies (Moyes et al., 2006; Sabharwal, 2011; Sanchez and Brock, 1996) have been based on ethnic minorities in the USA and reveal they are less satisfied with certain dimensions of their jobs, such as income, training opportunities, opportunities for career advancement and relationships, thus showing a low level of overall job satisfaction. Furthermore, Siow and Ng (2013) found that in their large study sample, migrant nurses are less satisfied with their jobs in the USA. In contrast, Malinen and Johnston (2011) stated that skilled migrants to New Zealand from various countries including the UK, USA, Australia, Philippines and India are satisfied with their jobs in New Zealand. In addition, Ahmed et al. (2013) also revealed that migrants (hidden population such as diabetic patients and musicians) from various countries to the UK are satisfied with their jobs. Due to these mixed findings about levels of job satisfaction and the limited literature available on Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants’ job satisfaction, the present study focuses on exploring job satisfaction in the participants.

**Dimensions of Diversity And Job Satisfaction of Migrants**

Migrants’ job satisfaction may be influenced by many dimensions of diversity. The most common way of defining the dimensions of diversity is in relation to primary dimensions (age, gender, physical abilities, ethnicity) and secondary dimensions (educational background, skills and abilities, income, parental status, marital status, work experience and the like) (Syed and Kramar, 2010). In particular, previous research has focused on a range of variables including ‘ethnicity’ (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Chiswick and Miller, 2008; Sabharwal, 2011), ‘age’ (Johnson and Holdaway, 1994; Au et al., 1998; Aguilera and Massey, 2003), ‘host country language proficiency’ (Aycan and Berry 1999; Nakhaie, 2007; Behtoui and Neergaard, 2009) and ‘level of education’ (Au et al., 1998; Li, 2000, 2001; Nakhaie, 2007; Asakura, 2008; Barrett and Duffy, 2008; Syed and Kramar, 2010). However there is a gap in the literature that focuses on the relationship between these factors and job satisfaction of skilled migrants in the Australian workplace. In this study, the primary dimensions of diversity considered are ‘age’, ‘gender’ and ‘ethnicity’; the two secondary dimensions included are ‘level of education’ and ‘English language skills’.
In addition to diversity factors, the association between ‘years since migration’ and job satisfaction and between ‘perceived inclusiveness’ and job satisfaction were also considered in the present study.

**Age**

Au et al. (1998) showed that employees’ age is one of the most important factors that can influence job satisfaction (see also Johnson and Holdaway, 1994; Sanchez and Brock, 1996; Ting, 1997). Natarajan and Nagar (2011) revealed that employees who have been inducted into organisations at younger ages show higher levels of commitment and also exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction. Consistent with these studies, Moyes et al. (2006) suggested that younger Hispanic accounting professionals are more satisfied in their jobs in comparison to older employees because they feel more welcome and a greater sense of belonging in the host workplace than the older generation. Furthermore, younger migrants are inclined to associate with co-workers in different ethnic groups (Chiswick and Miller, 2001; Martinovic et al., 2009) and thus enjoy the association of a range of cultural groups, which is likely to increase their job satisfaction.

**Gender**

Findings related to the relationship between gender and job satisfaction are mixed. For instance, Gilman, Peake and Parr (2012) found no significant difference between men and women among their participants’ ‘overall’ or ‘facet’-level job satisfaction. This contrasts with Yu, Shen and Lewark’s study (2012) which found that females are more satisfied with their jobs than male employees in overall job satisfaction and ‘supervisor’ facet among a Chinese manufacturing employee sample. On the other hand, Temesgen and Hailemariam (2012) found that among an Australian PhD graduate sample, men are more satisfied about their jobs than women, especially in terms of working hours, workload and career advancement opportunities. Likewise, Au et al. (1998) found that Chinese migrant men are more satisfied with their jobs than women. Due to the contradictory nature of these findings, the generalisability of gender influence on job satisfaction is unclear.

**Ethnicity**

Past studies have identified ethnicity as a variable that influences job satisfaction (Fahr 2011; Greenhaus et al., 1990). For example, African American managers in the USA experience less discretion and influence over ‘organisational decision making’ as a result of their out-group membership (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Greenhaus et al. (1990) further found that African American certified public accountants reported greater job dissatisfaction in relation to their ‘need for autonomy’ than white certified public accountants. Another study on job satisfaction among foreign-born scientists and engineers in American universities revealed that Asian faculty members were the least satisfied among several other ethnic groups (Sabharwal, 2011). Even though ethnicity seems to be an influencing factor in job satisfaction, a study based on Australian census data conducted by Parr and Guo (2005) suggested a trend of upward mobility in the occupational structure of Asian-Australian migrants in recent years, leading to higher job satisfaction.

**Level of Education**

The likelihood of being placed in higher status jobs increases with the level of education (Nakhaie, 2007; Asukura, 2008; Barrett and Duffy, 2008; Martinovic et al., 2009). In multinational societies, skilled migrants
with higher formal qualifications are more likely to fare well in the recruitment and selection process than applicants with lower education (Nakhaie, 2007; Behtoui and Neergaard, 2009). Further to that related studies have revealed that there is a strong positive association between the level of education of migrants and their career-related earnings (Nakhaie 2007; Chiswick and Miller, 2008; Hall, Greenman and George, 2010). As a result, migrant employees with higher education also earn higher income and therefore tend to be more satisfied with their jobs (Li, 2000; Nakhaie, 2007). The educational level of migrants also seems to have an impact on organisational discrimination in multicultural societies (Asakura et al., 2008; Syed and Kramar 2010). Asakura et al. (2008) suggested that the higher the education, the lower the organisational discrimination; as a result, higher job satisfaction can be expected among more educated migrants.

Host Country Language Skills
A number of studies have revealed that host country language is a major barrier for migrants to find appropriate employment in the new destination (Aycan and Berry, 1999; Remennick 2004). Migrant recruitment-related studies (Behtoui and Neergaard, 2009) have shown that applicants with better host language skills have a greater propensity to secure jobs at their appropriate skill and experience level, in comparison with applicants with poor language skills. Also, it has been shown that skilled migrants with better host language skills often obtain jobs in reputable organisations, a factor which may be associated with greater job satisfaction (Asukura, 2008). A strong link has also been established between host country language proficiency and occupational achievement (Remennick, 2004; Nakhaie, 2007). Minority employees with poor language skills often face complications with career advancement, negotiating pay rises and even selection into training and development programs in their workplaces lowering their job satisfaction (Nakhaie, 2007; Syed and Kramar, 2010).

Years since Migration
Skilled migrants experience difficulties entering the job market at the initial stage of migration (George and Chaze, 2009; Sabharwal, 2011). Non-recognition of overseas qualifications, language barriers and lack of host country work experience are some of the difficulties encountered (Lu et al., 2012; Sabharwal, 2011). A bulk of literature (Nakhaie, 2007; Barrett and Duffy, 2008; Li, 2000; Chiswick and Miller, 1995) reveals that migrant employees’ income attainment is considerably lower when compared to mainstream employees and they experience negative job satisfaction in the initial years of employment. Chiswick, Lee and Miller (2003) found that the ‘time spent in the host country’ has a greater impact on migrants’ occupational attainment. However, with increased length of stay in the host society levels of job satisfaction increase as migrants acquire host country qualifications, more work experience, and are able to overcome structural barriers and adjust well to the requirements of the workplace. (Sabharwal, 2011; Chiswick, Lee and Miller, 2003) In addition, scholars (Chiswick and miller, 2008; Sabharwal, 2011) have found that with increased length of stay, migrant employees’ wages average those of native employees, and that this can have a positive influence on job satisfaction.

Perceived Inclusiveness
Studies on perception of discrimination towards migrant employees argue that this is a common characteristic in any migrant-receiving society (Behtoui, 2006; Behtoui and Neergaard, 2009; Malinen and Johnston, 2011).
Behtoui and Neergaard (2009) suggested that, according to their large survey, both migrants and native employees accept the fact that migrants are discriminated against. Moreover, the notion that blacks and minority migrant employees are discriminated against in American society is widely discussed within American academic literature (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Mor Barak and Levin (2002) indicated that minority employees have negative organisational experiences. Many studies have suggested that, when compared to majority members, minority members are treated less favourably because they are ‘sub group members’ than because of their level of performance (Syed and Kramar, 2010; Greenhaus et al., 1990). It is evident that these kinds of unfavourable experiences lower migrants’ job satisfaction (Malinen and Johnston, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants living permanently in Australia. The 2012-2013 Annual Report of the Department of Migration and Citizenship Australia reports that India and Sri Lanka were the first (24,810 skilled migrants) and fourth (3,230 skilled migrants) source countries for skilled migrants coming to Australia. Therefore it can be argued that skilled Sri Lankan and Indian migrants constitute a significant portion of the minority groups in present-day Australian society.

A cross-sectional survey design was employed in the present study. Data were collected via online and hard copy surveys. The survey included basic demographic questions, Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS; Spector, 1997) and a three item scale to measure ‘perceived inclusiveness’ among these migrants. Sample statistics such as means and standard deviation and multiple regression were used in the data analysis.

The JSS (1997) is a 36-item, nine-facet scale which is widely used to assess employee attitudes about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. The nine facets measured in the scale are: (a) pay, (b) promotion, (c) supervision, (d) fringe benefits, (e) contingent rewards (performance based rewards), (f) operating procedure (required rules and procedures), (g) co-workers, (h) nature of work and (i) communication. The total job satisfaction level is assessed using all the 36 items in the scale. Scores ranging from 36 to 108 reflect dissatisfaction, 144 to 216 reflect satisfaction, and 108 to 144 reflect ambivalence (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied). For the four-item subscales, scores from 4 to 12 indicate ‘dissatisfied’, 16 to 24 indicate ‘satisfied’, and 12 to 16 indicate ‘ambivalent’. According to Spector (1997), the Job Satisfaction Survey has adequate reliability for internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .91). Similarly, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for reliability in relation to global job satisfaction in this study was $\alpha = .92$.

In order to measure the ‘perceived inclusiveness’ of the current sample group, three items that were developed for this study were used. Those items were: (a) “I feel isolated at work”, (b) “I feel included in social functions at work”, and (c) “I feel I am recognised as a valued member of the team”. Each item is scored using a summated rating scale with six choices per item in a Likert scale ranging from 1 (‘low’-‘disagree very much’) to 6 (high-agree very much). The scores range from 3 to 18. Scores of 3 to 9 reflect ‘dissatisfaction’, 12 to 18 reflect ‘satisfaction’ and 9 to 12 reflects ‘ambivalence’ in their ‘perceived inclusiveness’. The internal
consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) for this scale was = .58. Hence, related analyses will be interpreted with a caution.

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>69.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present marital status</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>26.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married with Children</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year since arrival</td>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>32.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 – 10 years</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>41.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 – 15 years</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 – 20 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for migration</td>
<td>Lack of security in COB</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor quality of life in COB</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher studies</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better job opportunities</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better quality of life</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>51.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better future for children</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career change</td>
<td>Negative shift</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive shift</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>72.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not changed</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In total, 306 cases were included in the analysis, with an overall response rate of approximately 21% (i.e. 306 of 1,460). Demographic data for the sample are presented in Table 1. It is noteworthy to mention that there were some salient changes in participants’ careers before and after migration (see Table 2). The
managerial category dropped from 22% to 11%, whereas there were slight increases in other categories after migrating. In addition, 53% of the total sample changed their careers after migrating and 73% reported positive career changes.

### TABLE 2. PRE-MIGRATION AND CURRENT EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Pre-migration status</th>
<th>Current status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Trade</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and Admin</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 306

### RESULTS

#### Job Satisfaction Survey

Means and Standard Deviations for overall job satisfaction and facets are presented in Table 3.

The mean of the overall job satisfaction score in the present study was 145.52, SD +/- 26.66, which is close to borderline in the satisfaction range. Accordingly, these results suggest that Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants in Australia are moderately satisfied with their jobs. The ‘satisfaction’ level ranged from 118.86–172.18. Of the total sample of 306 participants, 209 fell within the ‘satisfied’ range, representing 68% of the overall sample. The mean scores for the nine facets range from 14.03 to 18.41 (see Table 3). Accordingly, the results for ‘promotions’, ‘operating conditions’, ‘fringe benefits’, ‘pay’ and ‘rewards’ were ‘ambivalent’ with regard to satisfaction, whereas means for ‘communication’, ‘co-workers’, ‘nature of work’ and ‘supervision’ were within the ‘satisfied’ range.

### TABLE 3. MEAN SCORES FOR JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>18.41</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of work</td>
<td>17.76</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>17.53</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>16.86</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>15.99</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>15.48</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fringe benefits</td>
<td>15.16</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Operating conditions 14.32 3.3
Promotion 14.03 4.34
Total Job Satisfaction 145.53 26.67
N=306

‘Ethnicity’ is reported to be a variable that is influential in determining job satisfaction. Thus, an independent sample t-test was conducted to see whether there was any difference in overall life satisfaction between Sri Lankan and Indian groups. Even though the Sri Lankan sample reported slightly higher scores for total job satisfaction, the results indicated no significant difference between the Sri Lankan participants (M=147.03, SD=26.61) and Indian participants (M=142.14, SD=26.62); t (304) = -1.48, p=.139 (two-tailed).

In addition, the results for gender-based independent sample t-tests on job satisfaction revealed that women are more satisfied with their jobs than men. However the difference was not statistically significant (women: M=148.97, SD=26.44; men: M=143.47, SD=26.66; t (303) = 1.76, p = .079).

‘Age’, ‘level of education’, ‘English language skills’, ‘years since migration’, and ‘perceived inclusiveness’, were entered in a regression equation predicting job satisfaction. The overall model demonstrated a significant relationship between the predictors and job satisfaction, $R^2=.61$, $F (5, 300) = 35.75$, $p < .000$. However, except ‘perceived inclusiveness’ none of the other factors have significantly contributed to their job satisfaction (see Table 4).

TABLE 4. MULTIPLE REGRESSION RESULTS FOR IVS AND JOB SATISFACTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>$r^2$</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>1.523</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language skills</td>
<td>4.968</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years since migration</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived inclusiveness</td>
<td>5.443</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$N=306$, $R^2=.61$, $R^2 = .37$, Adjusted $R^2 = .36$

The mean score of ‘perceived inclusiveness’ scale in the present study was $M=13.44$ ($SD=3.02$). This indicates that these skilled migrants are satisfied with their ‘level of inclusiveness’ in Australia (mean score between 8-12 reflects ‘satisfaction’ range). Three items in the ‘perceived inclusiveness’ scale suggest high mean scores. ‘I feel I am recognised as a valued member of the team’ has received highest mean score $M=4.64$, ($SD=1.23$), ‘I feel isolated at work’, $M=4.50$ ($SD=1.48$) was the second and ‘I feel included in social functions at work’ $M=4.30$ ($SD=1.38$) is the lowest mean score.

DISCUSSION

The objectives of this study were to explore job satisfaction among skilled migrants in Australia and to identify factors related to their job satisfaction. The total job satisfaction of the sample was within the lower bounds of the satisfied range on average, thus one might argue that these migrants are moderately satisfied with their jobs.
in Australia. It is likely that most skilled migrants migrate to a new country expecting better career opportunities and job satisfaction (Siow and Ng, 2013). Failing to achieve these aims can result in frustration with the migration decision. However, as the results suggest, job satisfaction levels of the present study participants are not cause for concern.

In this study, none of the scores for any job satisfaction facet reflected dissatisfaction. However, the scores for the subscales of ‘pay’, ‘promotion’, ‘fringe benefits’, ‘contingent rewards’ and ‘operating procedures’ indicated ambivalence regarding satisfaction. These results also correspond to previous research findings that suggest migrants are less satisfied with their earnings in the host country (Aguilera and Massey, 2003; Drever and Hoffmeister, 2008; Syed and Kramar, 2010; Al Ariss et al., 2011; Itzhaki et al., 2012). Furthermore, the results of this study are consistent with previous findings which suggest that ‘career advancement opportunities’ for ethnic migrants are comparatively lower than those of mainstream employees (Sanchez and Brock, 1996; Moyes et al., 2006).

At facet level, the ‘supervision’, ‘co-workers’, ‘nature of work’ and ‘communication’ subscales fell within the satisfied range. The ‘supervision’ facet reflected the highest mean score, followed by ‘co-worker support’. It also seems that these migrants enjoy the work that they do based on the high scores for the ‘nature of work’ facet (e.g., ‘My job is enjoyable’; ‘I like doing the things I do at work’; ‘I sometimes feel my job is meaningless’); this suggests that either these migrants have found jobs in their chosen profession or are occupied in other work from which they derive satisfaction. Thus, it may be that the majority are continuing to work broadly in the occupations or fields in which they were employed in Sri Lanka and India, for example, doctors are dealing with health issues, computer professionals are working in IT-related jobs and engineers are working in related fields.

Table 1 shows that, when comparing pre-migration and current occupational categories, a fall from 22% to 11% in the managerial category. Fewer opportunities for career advancement and less recognition of overseas seniority may be possible reasons for this downward movement. A substantial percentage of migrants (19%) are engaged in clerical and administrative jobs. Some findings suggest that higher educated migrant workers are engaged in low-skilled labour (Randeree, 2008; Ahmed et al., 2013). However, the results of the present study do not support that notion. One-third of the participants have been through negative career changes in Australia. These results suggest there is a need for more career guidance and mentoring services in host societies so that these migrants can effectively manage their careers after migration. These kinds of programs can ensure migrants’ skills are not underutilised.

As discussed, some researchers suggest that migrants’ job satisfaction is related to ‘age’, ‘English language skills’, ‘level of education’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘years since migration’ and ‘perceived inclusiveness’. Ahmed et al. (2013) found in their United Kingdom study of migrants (mainly from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) that ‘age’, ‘gender’, ‘income’ and ‘level of education’ were not significant factors in job satisfaction. Similarly, the results of the present study do not show significant relationships between job satisfaction and ‘age’, ‘gender’, ‘education’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘English language skills’ and ‘years since migration’. A possible explanation may be
that, as the sample comprises skilled migrant groups, there may be little variation in their ‘level of qualifications’ and ‘English language skills’. Therefore, it can be argued that in such circumstances, education and language skills do not act as significant predictors of skilled migrants’ job satisfaction.

Furthermore, whereas previous research findings suggest that ‘ethnicity’ may influence job satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Sabharwal, 2011), the difference in job satisfaction among Sri Lankan and Indian groups was not statistically different. This may be because, amongst the factors that influence job satisfaction in a Western country like Australia, including ‘host language skills’ and ‘perceived inclusiveness/discrimination’, ‘ethnic identity’ may not be vastly different between these two groups. Sri Lankans and Indians share many commonalities, such as a non-English speaking background, maintaining close ties with their country of origin, a strong sense of belonging to their country of birth, positive attitudes towards ethno-cultural relationships, high regard for religious beliefs and traditional customs, maintaining multigenerational households and having similar sporting interests, such as supporting cricket (Hofstede, 2001). These commonalities may lead to common experiences in the workplace and could explain their similar level of job satisfaction in a Western society.

The emerging finding is that ‘perceived inclusiveness’ is related to job satisfaction of the present skilled migrant sample. From the skilled migrants’ perspective, they possess the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to perform their job roles in the host country (Cobb-Clark, 2000). Thus, as past research (Behtoui, 2008; Greenhaus et al., 1990; Sabharwal, 2011) suggests, a feeling of social exclusion from an organisation and a feeling of being discriminated against can lower migrants’ work-related performance and job satisfaction. Therefore, as Fossland (2013) and Georgellis and Lange (2007) explained, providing a safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory work environment is important for skilled migrants to achieve higher job satisfaction.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The present study was limited to Sri Lankan and Indian groups of skilled migrants in Australia. Hence, the roles of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘host country’ differences are unclear in terms of generalising the findings in relation to job satisfaction of other ethnic migrants from other areas and in different host societies. In particular, not all migrant groups in all host societies experience the same level of social acceptance or discrimination; therefore, in future studies, skilled migrants of different ethnicities, both in Australia and other migrant receiving societies, such as the UK, USA and Canada, should be targeted; on this basis, the impact of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘host country differences’ could possibly be compared. In addition, as job satisfaction is a multidimensional concept, it will also be important to examine the impact of psychological variables such as personality traits and individual differences in future studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The significant growth in skilled migration from various countries to Australia presents challenges for contemporary managers and human resource managers. Therefore, identifying factors that influences migrant employees’ job satisfaction is an important topic for research. This study contributes to the limited knowledge base on skilled migrants’ job satisfaction in Western societies. In particular, to our knowledge, there are no
earlier studies that have exclusively explored job satisfaction of Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants in Australia, despite the significant growth in skilled migration from these countries to Australia in recent years.

The findings suggest that Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants in Australia are moderately satisfied with their jobs. As job satisfaction is a multidimensional concept, managers need to be careful to maintain satisfaction in all the dimensions rather than allowing high satisfaction with one facet to offset high dissatisfaction with other facets. When analysing the facet-level satisfaction of these skilled migrants, managers need to focus more on facets such as ‘pay’, ‘promotion’, ‘fringe benefits’ and ‘contingent rewards’, as skilled migrants have expressed ‘ambivalence’ in relation to satisfaction regarding these facets. These aspects are likely to affect other employment outcomes such as turnover and organisational commitment (Babin and Boles, 1999). Thus, managers and supervisors need to provide continued support to their employees to understand and evaluate how they can improve their skilled migrants’ job satisfaction.

Although the results suggest that participants are relatively happy with ‘supervision’, ‘co-workers’, ‘the nature of their work’ and ‘communication aspects’, there is still room for managers to work on these facets with findings reflecting only moderate satisfaction in these domains. Organisations need to focus on building sound psychological contracts with migrant employees; maintaining good relationships and continuing to provide effective support and supervision that are important in achieving higher levels of job satisfaction.

From the societal and organisational perspectives, it is vital to have mechanisms in place in Australia to ensure that skilled migrants are utilised appropriately, such as migrant career guidance programs and mentoring programs, especially when migrants are considering changing their careers on migration. The main role of these kinds of programs should be to educate migrants by showing them alternative career avenues, including the pros and cons of change, and to lead them towards the most appropriate up skilling programs. ‘Perceived inclusiveness’ is a factor that contributed significantly to skilled migrants’ job satisfaction in the present study. Results have also suggested that these migrants have a high level of ‘perceived inclusiveness’. This may reflect the successful implementation of diversity programs in Australian organisations. Therefore, managers need to continue to focus on developing and implementing policies that support inclusive behaviours towards skilled migrants. From the individual perspective, it seems that skilled migrants in Australia are relatively satisfied with their jobs.

REFERENCES


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