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Title

Illuminating 'dark sides', exploring hidden challenges faced by migrant workers, and organisations striving for high performance.

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Summary

'Managing migration is one of the most urgent and profound tests of international cooperation in our time' (United Nations, 20, Operational Excellence18, p. 2).

This paper addresses topics related to migration by exploring challenges at three levels. The required attention for migration issues may be known, some of the, perhaps hidden, challenges migrant workers are facing may be less obvious. In that same perspective, barriers which organisations face while striving for high performance will be addressed as well.

If organisations are perceived as having to resolve some of the issues of mass migration by absorbing migrant workers, problems organizations face have to be understood. This is the reason for this dual approach, by illuminating challenges of migrant workers as well as challenges for organizations.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore challenges at three levels. First, tensions faced by the migrant workers will be explored. Second, the contrasts home countries are confronted with due to migration of labor are discussed. Third, barriers organisations deal with while striving for high performance are described.

The increase in migration is considered a concern by the United Nations (2018). The world population grew with 23 percent since the year 2000, whereas the number of international migrants has grown in that same timeframe by 49 percent (United Nations, 2018, p.2).

This paper draws on the resource dependence theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003) and institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). The liminality model, Rites of Passage, (Van Gennep, 2016), is used as a lense, to explore challenges of migrant workers and their home communities, whereas in reference to the well-being of the migrant worker, the sustainable happiness theory (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade, 2005) will be utilised.

Organisations and their environment

An organisation needs resources, capital, raw materials, buildings, equipment and employees, in order to survive. Although some organisations may intend to be self-sufficient, ‘even seemingly self-contained organizations require some transaction with their environment for survival’ (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003, p. 2).

Ortlieb and Sieben (2008) utilise the resource dependency theory to research why organisations do, or do not employ people with a migration background. Ortlieb and Sieben (2008, p.70) argue that ‘employment decisions are based on the evaluation of critical resources and the quest to secure their accrual’. They base their findings on research including empirical data from 500 companies in Germany. Following their research, they defined six diversity strategies which they refer to as ‘anti-discrimination, adding value through migration background, adding value through mere labor, learning, exclusion and hazard’ (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2008, p. 75).

The strategy called ‘anti-discrimination’ refers to the fact that a company employs migrant workers, to ensure to comply with the law. ‘Adding value through migration background’ is a strategy for an organisation to benefit from migrant workers’ language and cultural skills.

‘Adding value through mere labor’ refers to labor costs which are perceived to be less when employing persons with a migrant background. The strategy named ‘learning’ relates to specific knowledge which the migrant worker will bring into the organisation. ‘Exclusion’ means that an organisation will not employ persons with a migrant background. Finally, ‘hazard’ indicates that the company has no preference, and if a migrant worker is employed, it is by coincidence.
The findings by Ortlieb and Sieben (2008), are in line with Richard’s view, who highlighted the importance of diversity by stating: ‘increasing cultural diversity as one of the most challenging human resources and organisational issues of our time’ (Richard, 2000, p. 164).

Bureaucracy in organisations

Different than the positivist view in natural science, in which the actual observation without further interpretation is the key pillar, Weber (1947) focusses on the rationale in order to understand and interpret occurrences. Weber lived in Germany, an empire ruled by Kaiser Wilhelm II, which is the context in which Weber composed his work, partly written during the First World War (1914-1918).
The principle of a rationale has been the basis for Weber’s (1922) view on how organisations, institutions, and firms should be organised. Following Weber (1947), there has to be a rational legal authority, which is the basis for any organisation to operate in an efficient way. There needs to be a differentiation of functions and roles. A hierarchy, clearly indicating the levels of authority, a division of labor (Weber, 1947, p.201) and a distinction between the levels of decision-making (Weber, 2012, p.58). Furthermore, there are procedures for control and supervision, rules related to the power of appointing personnel, promotions and dismissal (Weber, 1947). This systemised way of working is phrased by Weber as a bureaucracy, and is, according to Weber, the most efficient way of operating for an organisation (Weber, 1947).

Evolution of bureaucratic organisations

Weber does not limit the need for a bureaucratic organisation to firms only, but includes governmental structures, Universities, hospitals, but also the army (Weber, 2012). Building on the work done by Weber (1947), Merton (1940) underlines the merits of the bureaucratic organisation, amongst which he refers to the technical efficiency, precision, speed, expert control and continuity. Weber’s view of having a framework of rules, and authority levels in a bureaucratic structure, eliminates the personalised and non-rational considerations, a topic that is not only addressed by Merton (1940). Parsons (1956) expresses the same view, pointing out, that division of labour is an important element when organisations become larger, but also when the output of one organisation serves as the input for another. The fact that both Merton (1940) and Parsons (1956) build on the work done by Weber, may partly have been caused by the fact that both were main contributors to the translation of the original work by Weber (1922), from German into English language (Weber, 1947). Parsons acted as the editor 'the present editor undertook at the publisher's request, to revise and edit this draft' (Weber, 1947, preface). Presthus (1953, p. 49) perceives the bureaucratic organisation as an optimal framework, with its clear organised roles and structure, whilst Blau (1970) refers to Weber's division of labor and the hierarchal authority (Blau, 1970, p.203), as the important pillars in an organisation, a view also shared by Mintzberg (1981, 1984). Mintzberg reiterates the need for a structure, a clear division of labour, and rigid operating procedures and states that Weber has an important place in the literature (Mintzberg, 1984, p.207).

Indeed, over time Weber's views have kept their importance, although from the seventies onwards, scholars indicate the impact that institutional forces have an effect on organisations (Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1977). Meyer and Rowan (1977) emphasise Weber's view of organisations, with their technical orientation being efficient, operating with well controlled and coordinated activities. However, they point out that the status quo of the bureaucracy starts shifting, a change initiated by the pressure that organisations face from their environment. Having to implement rules and procedures leads to a deviation from their original tasks and activities. Although implementing these institutional rules supports organisations in their survival, these procedures often conflict with efficiency criteria (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). This alteration of the behavior due to the adaptation of institutional rules, is referred to by Meyer and Rowan (1977) as isomorphism, a topic which has further been developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983).

Isomorphism

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) distinguish between isomorphism caused by competition, and isomorphism due to institutional forces. DiMaggio and Powell (ibid.) argue that, whilst Weber had market competition as a driver for bureaucratisation, the changes in organisations are no longer driven by competition, but by the state and other external forces DiMaggio and Powell (ibid.).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) indicate three types of isomorphism: coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism. Coercive isomorphism can be caused by governmental rules and regulations to which an organisation has to comply. However, it can also be a result of formal, and informal pressure from other organisations which the organisation depends on. Mimetic isomorphism stems from the intention to reduce uncertainty. Deriving knowledge from other organisations and, as such, imitating their rules and procedures, 'organizations may model themselves on other organizations' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p.151). Normative isomorphism is the result of professionalisation, education and training of employees will alter their behaviour (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p.150).

Building on the work done by Weber (1947), DiMaggio and Powel (1983) address the topic of bureaucracy, which in their view has become an 'iron cage' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 147). They and argue that, compared to the times during which Weber composed his views, 'the causes of bureaucratization and rationalization have changed' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 147). The original causes for bureaucratisation, competition between companies in the marketplace, competition between states, and the rulers' need to control their staff and citizens, have lost their importance and have been replaced by 'highly structured organizational fields' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p.157).
Similar to DiMaggio and Powell (ibid.), Tolbert and Zucker (1983) conclude the same in their study of the Social reform Tolbert (1985), concludes the same in her study on institutional environments and resource dependence in institutions of higher education. Organisations, embedded in their network of activities are confronted with environmental, market and social influences, to which they need to respond. Zucker (1987) draws on the work done by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and argues that environmental pressures 'often have the effect of directing attention away from task performance' (Zucker, 1987, p. 443). The implications of environmental pressure indicate the paradox organisations are facing in their strive for high performance. With their initial focus on achieving their goals, the environmental pressure, alters the behaviour of the organisations and leads to not fulfilling their originals tasks (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell,1983; Zucker 1987).

Developments since the 1980s

Scott (1987), argues that following a period of fast developments, institutional theory meanwhile has reached 'adolescence' (Scott, 1987, p. 493). Scott (ibid.) refers to the fact that for the time being, various institutional theorists, including DiMaggio and Zucker, have reduced their efforts in expanding the scope and variety of institutional theory, and instead have taken a step back for reconsideration.

Despite the pause indicated by Scott (1987), research in institutional theory continued. Eisenhardt (1988) applied institutional and agency theory in studying retail sales compensation. Mizruchi and Fein (1999, p. 665) acknowledge the developments brought into institutional theory by Meyer and Rowan (1977) as well as DiMaggio and Powell (1983). However, they also reiterate the original work done by Weber (1947) who built the foundation for a bureaucratic organisation. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) studied the contribution of institutional theory in understanding organisational change, whereas Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings (2002) undertook a case study examining the role of professional associations related to accounting firms in Canada. Björkman, Fey and Park (2007) explored institutional theory related to human resource practices in 158 subsidiaries of multinational companies in Finland, Russia and the USA. Heugens and Lander (2009) carried out a meta-analysis including 144 studies, after which they concluded that isomorphism has a significant impact on organisations. Hessels and Terjesen (2010) combined resource dependence theory and institutional theory to explore the decision making process related to exporting products in a sample size of 871 small and medium sized companies.

Mandrinos and Mahdi (2016) studied the interplay between resource dependence theory and institutional theory. One of their outcomes of the research is the decoupling between the actual practice and the reported way of working. They confirm the decoupling researched by Bromley and Powell (2012), who argued that the earlier findings of isomorphism by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) have further developed into a more formal distinction between the real activities and the reported tasks carried out.

Drawing on the work by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), many authors have contributed in giving attention to isomorphism, invisible barriers which have an impact on the performance of organisations. If organisations are to play a role in creating a solution for mass migration, the existence of these barriers will have to be considered.

Migration

'Migration provides immense opportunity and benefits – for the migrants, host communities and communities of origin' (United Nations 2018). Despite this positive outlook, migrant workers face a paradox. Although they carry out jobs in the host countries and earn money for their families, other aspects of the live of the migrant worker are less positive. 'Migrants themselves remain among the most vulnerable members of society. They are often the first to lose their job in the event of an economic downturn, often working for less pay, longer hours and in worse conditions than national workers' (United Nations, 2016, p.2).

According to the International Labour Organization (2014) there are worldwide 232 million international migrants of which the number of migrant workers is estimated at 150 million. Most of the migrant workers (107 million) are engaged in services, working in retail chains, shops and call centres. 27 Million migrant workers operate in factories, and around 16 million migrants work in agriculture (International Labour Organization, 2014, p.v). Migrant workers leave their home country to earn (more) money, to gain experience, or they may perceive better job-opportunities (United Nations, 2016).

Drawing on van Gennep's Rites of Passage (Van Gennep, 2016), challenges faced by migrant workers will be explored. Van Gennep (ibid.) identified rituals relating to transitions taking place, which he phrased 'liminal rites'. These transitions can be geographical, moving from one country to another, time-bound, relating to weeks or months, or linked to certain moments or larger epochs, be it centuries or generations.

In order to move from one stage to another, Van Gennep (2016) distinguished three phases. The separation from the old situation, is the first phase, which he referred to as preliminal. The second phase is the period in between the old stage and the new stage, which he described as the liminal phase. The incorporation into the new stage is the final phase, which Van Gennep (ibid.) termed the postliminal stage.
These rites of passage have been observed by researchers studying the lives of migrant workers. Khan (2014) conducted ethnographic research from 2009 to 2012 with Afghan migrants working in Brighton. The separation from their families, and the need to survive far from home, reflected the preliminal and liminal phases identified by Van Gennep (2016). Their homecoming, even when only temporary, had elements of the postliminal reincorporation, as documented by Van Gennep (ibid.).

Khan (2014) describes the liminal stages experienced by the Afghan migrants working in the UK. She refers to their experiences as 'liminality in a dynamic of transformation, power, and freedom that, nevertheless, returns participants to the place they started from' (Khan, 2014, p.468). Khan's research concerns male Afghan refugees, who first fled from Afghanistan to

Pakistan and then moved to the UK. Monsutti (2007) derives similar observations from his field research on Afghan migrants working in Iran. He concluded ‘it may even be conceived as a necessary stage in their existence, a rite of passage to adulthood and then a step toward manhood’ (Monsutti, 2007, p.167). The dangers of the journey may be understood as a difficult separation from family and home. Their stay in Iran, during which they have to prove their capacity to face hardship and save money represents a period of liminality. ‘Their return to Afghanistan may be seen as an incorporation, as they often get married and thereby changing their social status’ (Monsutti, 2007, p.169).

The liminal stage serves to demonstrate that a person is strong enough to take care of himself. Monsutti (ibid.) also identifies individuals not “passing” the liminal stage. He describes one of the migrant workers, known to him for more than ten years, who apparently did not leave the liminal stage. ‘He has been unable to save enough money to stay on a more permanent basis in his country of origin and keeps going back and forth between Afghanistan and Iran’ (Monsutti, 2007, p.177). ‘He is considered by his fellows as an honest person and skillful worker, but also as somehow unsuccessful and unlucky’ (Monsutti, 2007, p.177). This indicates that simply going abroad is not enough to qualify for the postliminal phase.
Khan (2014) and Monsutti (2007) applied the Rites of Passage to the experience of migrant workers in their research: young men leave their families – the separation in the liminality model. They work and live abroad under difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions – the period of liminality – during which they have to make sure they have a job, they survive, and send money home. Finally, the reincorporation to a new social position with their home-coming – the postliminal stage.
Khondker (2018) underlines the importance of the family for the migrant worker: ‘their families and homes are foremost anchors in their narratives of belonging’ (Khondker, 2018, p.258). Khondker argues that, in the absence of their families, migrant workers intend to create a certain home feeling, by creating their own community. They get together and keep some of the same traditional habits whilst being abroad.

Contrasts faced by migrant workers

Although migrant workers leave their home country to earn money, research from Al-Maskari *et al.*, (2011) shows that many migrant workers are not able to save enough money to send home. Apart from the financial aspect, this also places a mental burden on the migrant worker. In her research, Khan (2014) addresses the same concern. Khan (ibid.) describes how the migrant worker seems to have no other choice than earning money and sending it home. In reply to Khan's question, 'Can you not stop sending for a while?', the migrant worker answered, 'my father, brothers, would shame me' (Khan, 2014, p.472). This mental pressure on the migrant worker becomes even more clear when one realizes, that for a return visit home, the migrant worker is supposed to bring presents and, whilst at home, he is expected to spend on family, relatives and friends. In terms of the liminality model, bringing gifts can be perceived as the postliminal phase. In this stage of reincorporation into the family and change of social status, the migrant worker is perceived as a wealthy person (Khan, 2014), experienced, seasoned and more prosperous than when he left. A paradox the migrant worker faces, is that whilst being abroad the migrant worker tightly controls his own spending but, but when returning home to his family, he is supposed to spend generously. The conclusion that this leads to stress for the migrant worker is referred to by various authors (Khan, 2014; Monsutti, 2007).

Tensions for communities and the home country

Van Gennep also noted that the community is affected when a member leaves the group: 'actions and reactions to be regulated and guarded so that society as whole will suffer no discomfort or injury' (Van Gennep, 2016, p.3). Similarly, Monsutti (2007) observes that, apart from the individual developing himself by going abroad, the family is also affected. For example due to the redivision of work between family members, and even between gender. With men leaving their community, in Afghanistan for example, the tasks they carried out are taken up by women or other members of the community (Monsutti, 2007). Studies carried out during the mid-eighties in India (Gulati, 1983) and more recently in Mexico (Robson and Wiest, 2014) reach the same conclusion. Tasks have to be carried out, and when the migrant worker leaves his family someone else has to take over the duties. On a broader scale, but consistent with the views of Van Gennep (2016), larger societies, or areas within countries are affected as members of the society leave the area to work abroad. Nesadurai (2013) studied the conflicts between Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia caused by labour migration. Chalamwong (2011) reported on the same topic referring to migrant workers in the border area of Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar.

For the home countries, remittances sent by migrant workers play an important role in the economy (United Nations, 2016; World Bank, 2018). This was the situation in the 1980s (Gulati, 1983) and it still prevails (Hasan, Chowdhury and Shakur, 2017). According to the World Bank (2018) the value of remittances is around 436US$ billion per year.
The International Migration Report from the United Nations (2016) underlines the significance of remittances by stating that the funds are 'to improve the livelihood of families and communities' (United Nations, 2016, p.2). Research confirms that remittances reduce poverty: Hassan, Chowdhury and Shakur (2017) refer to the interests of governments in receiving countries noting that 'although the process of migration and sending of remittances are private phenomena, they take place under the government's regulatory framework' (Hassan, Chowdhury and Shakur, 2017, p.189). That governments are very much aware of the importance of remittances for their respective countries, is also confirmed by Rodriguez (2011). 'The Middle East has long been a major destination for short-term migrant workers from the Philippines and this migration has been an important source of remittances for the Philippine government' (Rodriguez, 2011, p.48). On a global level Parthasarathi and Quataert (2011, p.4) note that 'Transnational labor migration is one of the most visible features of our globalizing world', requiring attention both for the countries from which the workers migrate and the countries receiving the migrant workers (Goby, 2015; Naidu, Nyarko and Wang, 2016).

Juxtaposing the positive impacts for the communities and home countries of the migrant workers by receiving the remittances, as well as illuminating challenges they face due to the departure of the migrant workers, the paradox that communities and home countries of the migrant workers face becomes clear. The financial benefits are contrasted by the fact that tasks are either not carried out, or need to be carried out by other members of the community, showing the dilemma which the countries and communities face.

Migration and well-being

Migration is one of the most significant stressful undertakings, as it involves dealing with language barriers, loss of social contacts, and risk of losing identity and culture (Adhikary, 2014; Bhugra and Becker, 2005; Chowdhury and Hamid, 2016). Harrison and Michailova (2012, p.630) describe migration as 'being "transplanted" to a new location'.

Earning money to support the family in the home country implies that the migrant worker shows pro-social behavior (Chancellor, *et al*., 2017, p.507) and manifests altruism, 'helping with the goal of benefitting the other person' (Mikulincer *et al*., 2005, p. 817). This positive attitude towards supporting his family contrasts with the difficulties the migrant faces in working abroad. In his research on the Afghan migrant worker, Monsutti (2007) made the same observation. The dangers of the journey may be understood as a difficult separation from family and home. During this time, they have to prove their capacity to face hardship and save money, while living among itinerant working teams represents the liminal period. Goby viewed dependency on money as a threat to the position of the migrant worker: 'such conditions make these nationals likely to comply with whatever workforce practices they encounter in the companies of their host country' (Goby, 2015, p.416).

Adhikary, Keen and van Teijlingen (2011) studied health issues among Nepalese migrants in the Middle East. Several years before, Adhikary *et al*., (2008) studied the same issue in the UK context. Both studies concluded, that the health of the migrant worker is worse than the health of the local population. The health risks and vulnerability of migrant workers contrast sharply with the human needs for well-being (Diener, 2000; Schwarzer, 2008), often referred to as subjective well-being (Bak-Klimek, 2015; Bak-Klimek *et al*., 2015; Bak-Klimek *et al*., 2017; Boehm, Lyubomirsky and Sheldon, 2011; Diener, 1984; Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2001; Diener and Diener, 1995; Lyubomirsky, King and Diener, 2005; Lyubomirsky, Sousa and Dickerhoof, 2006; Wiedemann *et al*., 2011). The term subjective well-being is used, as the definition of well-being will vary from person to person. Factors which are commonly understood to increase well-being are judgements about one's life, work satisfaction, income, pleasant experiences and positive emotions (Diener, 2000; Diener and Diener, 1995; Lyubomirsky, King and Diener, 2005), while Diener and Chain argue 'the case that subjective well-being influences health and longevity is compelling' (Diener and Chan, 2011, p.1).

Adhikary, Keen and van Teijlingen (2011) conclude that migrant workers in the Middle East face health risks related to contagious illnesses like tuberculosis as well as work-related accidents and injuries, depression, suicide and anxiety. Research carried out by the

Department of Community Medicine of the United Arab Emirates University amongst migrant workers, led to a similar conclusion. Al-Maskari *et al*. (2011) studied 'the prevalence of depression and suicidal behaviors among male migrant workers' (Al-Maskari *et al*., 2011, p.1) and concluded that depression and suicidal thoughts amongst migrant workers are 'extremely high compared to the general UAE population' (Al-Maskari *et al*., 2011, p.3).

Although the importance of subjective well-being does not differ between migrant workers and non-migrant workers, Diener and Biswas-Diener (2001) concluded that financially poor people have a larger risk of being unhappy, than people who are rich. An increase in income does enhance the feeling of well-being for a poor person, although only to a certain extent 'involuntary poverty is associated with a higher risk of unhappiness' (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2001, p.162). Bak-Klimek *et al*., (2015) studied the determinants of well-being among migrant workers and concluded that optimism, self-esteem and social support are important determinants. They also noted that 'many of the gaps that currently exist in the literature on immigrant well-being should be addressed in future research' (Bak-Klimek *et al*., 2015, p.185).

As part of the research for her thesis, Bak-Klimek (2015) studied well-being among Polish migrant workers in Scotland. The theory applied in her research was the sustainable happiness model, developed by Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade (2005). They refer to three major factors determining a person's chronic level of happiness: genetic determination, circumstantial factors, including 'occupational status, job security, income and marital status', and activities and practices (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade, 2005, p.117). Happiness and subjective well-being contribute to mental health (Diener and Chan, 2011; Bak-Klimek *et al*., 2015). Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005) conclude that happiness contributes to being successful, which underlines the importance of well-being amongst migrant workers, as addressed by several authors (Chowdhury and Hamid, 2016; Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2001; Diener and Seligman, 2002; Tarabain, 2015).

Some of the challenges migrant workers have to deal with in terms of earning money and saving for the family have been explored in the earlier sections. Problems migrant workers face related to well-being are a perhaps unknown challenge. The sustainable happiness theory indicates the importance of well-being on the one hand, but the findings from Chowdhure and

Hamid (2016), as well as Tarabain (2015) researching migrant workers indicate that job security and happiness are not a given fact for migrant workers.

Summary and discussion

This paper has addressed some of the barriers organisations are confronted with striving for high performance. Although these factors may not be always visible, they have an impact by deviating the organisations from their original tasks. Organisations needs resources
Challenges which migrant workers face have been illustrated by describing situation of the migrant worker living on a tight budget to save for his family, and being expected to bring presents and gifts in addition to the financial support given to the family. But also, in addition to leaving their families and home communities, the hardship and health risks when being abroad, both in physical as in mental health.

Another contrast explored is the challenge for the home communities and home countries in benefitting from the remittances as a result of the work done by the migrant workers being abroad on the one hand, but losing workers in the home community and in the home country, leading to a redefinition of tasks, or causing situations in which activities are no longer carried out.

Living in a World today with mass migration, for which the United Nations (2018) formulate the urgency 'the time for debating the need for cooperation in this field is past' (United Nations, 2018), illuminating the potential 'dark sides' and hidden challenges for migrant workers and organisations may be important as well, which was the intention of this paper.

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