

CONTEXTUALISING HIGHLY SKILLED SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANT WOMAN AS A WORKER: EXPLORING HER WORK EXPERIENCES IN TRADITIONAL MIGRATION COUNTRIES

Shruti Kalyanaraman*

Abstract *This review addresses the career trajectory of highly skilled Asian migrant women. Previous studies have highlighted a plethora of experience of these women across work, family and immediate environment. This review offers a feminist perspective on this category of women as a productive part of labour force in the host country and to bring popular research pieces of the last decade under one roof is the objective of this review. The countries in focus are traditionally immigrant friendly nations such as USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Experiences at each level of work life are traced: right from job search to on- the-job experiences. Coping mechanisms of situations are detailed with possible influence in the identity of the worker. The review concludes with instances of highlight for this category of women in the state policy framework.*

Keywords: *Job Stress, Job Burnout, Indian Sectors, Recession, India*

INTRODUCTION

The growth of a global knowledge economy has seen the development of a globally mobile workforce of skilled migrants, including highly qualified knowledge workers from countries of the emerging regions of Asia, for instance, India, China and South-east Asia, who emigrate seeking better career opportunities and living conditions in the developed economies, such as the USA, the European Union and Canada. These countries are known to recruiting large numbers of permanent and temporary skilled migrants to overcome perceived skills shortages across industries and occupations (Devos, 2014). Traditional immigration countries have specific characteristics that make immigration favourable for most Asian migrants. These include the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Migration policy Institute offers interesting statistics that reinforce the focus of this review on aforementioned host countries. United States currently hosts around 28% Asian immigrants (MPI Tabulations, 2013). This is a phenomenal increase from 17,000 in 1965, the year the U.S. Congress dismantled the quota system. Most Asians chose U.S. through family reunification provisions, though refugee or skilled worker movements as the first link in the migratory chain. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2007 American Community Survey, immigrants from the Philippines (1.70 million) made up the second largest group after Mexico. Indian immigrants (1.50 million) were the third largest

group, followed by Chinese immigrants (1.36 million).

Asian immigration to Australia follows a similar trajectory. Among Australia's top 10 source countries in 2005 were China, India, the Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Hong Kong. The 2006 Australian census put the Asia-born population at about 1.2 million, over one-quarter of all immigrants. The recent 2011 census put forth a similar figure, but also pointed out that Asian immigrants are clustered in big cities characterised by tertiary education as well as in areas characterised by knowledge-worker jobs. (Salt.B, 2013, 12 September). Canada follows a non-discriminatory selection criteria with an emphasis on family and refugee entry. This opened the door to Asian migration in 1976. Since 1993, the country hosts over half of all immigrants from Asia (primarily China, India, and the Philippines). Between 2006 and 2011, Asians formed 56.9 per cent of immigrants, a little less than the projected 60% in the first half of the decade (Canadian Press, 2013, May 8). New Zealand began opening up in the 1950s, as economic and political links with nearby Pacific islands gave rise to new inflows. From 1991, policies encouraged immigration of people with professional skills and capital for investment. Most of these were Asians. According to New Zealand's 2006 census, Asians now contribute close to one percent of the total New Zealand population. The percentage though insignificant, the proportion is huge compared to the already sparse population of the country.

* M.Phil Research Scholar, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. Email: shrutisharad86@gmail.com

Factors Contributing to Increasing Migrant Population

Globalization has been a major force for an increasing flow of migrant workers from countries with limited economic opportunities. Immigrants primarily fill gaps in nations with a dwindling labour supply. Globalization may foster the acceleration of trade and investment, it does not construct an environment to consciously protect migrant workers economic, social and physical security. Specifically, when it comes to women migrant workers, their numbers have been increasing, they now constitute 50% or more of the migrant workforce in Asia and Latin America. Studies indicate specifically for women migrant workers that they contribute to the development of both sending and receiving countries. This is primarily through remittances from their incomes which account for as much as 10% of the GDP in some countries. In 2008, remittances were estimated by the World Bank at US\$305 billion. These monetary investments used for food, housing, education and medical services along with newly acquired skills of returnees, can potentially contribute significantly to poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (Migrant Workers, n.d., para 1).

CONTEXTUALISING WORK EXPERIENCES - A TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST CRITIQUE

Asian women migration and their work environment has been largely focused on domestic workers and other occupations of care economy and sex Industry. Asian countries have been mass providers of women migrants in care occupation and sex industry. Women who move with family are studied from a sociological perspective. From an economic perspective, highly skilled immigrant women of Asian origin remain largely under researched. (Liversage, A., 2009). The limited literature focuses on a range of lived experiences such as work lives, family structures, intimate partner relationships to name a few. This review aims to integrate existing literature on work experiences.

This review purely looks at a highly skilled Asian woman migrant as a worker. I base my argument of choosing this category of women with the backdrop of transnational feminism. Transnational feminism questions western feminist theorizations of gender relations as furthering the images and social experiences of mostly privileged women in the 'first world'. Transnational feminism encourages focus on the asymmetrical relationships between first/third world, one-third/two-third worlds or north/south countries. Transnational feminists culturally diversified, violated and produced knowledge and images of how the female Other was to be constructed and discursively institutionalized (Das Gupta, 1997; Hosein, 2011; Massey, 2005; Mohanty, 2003;

Trotz, 2007 in Pio and Essers, 2014). The female Other has to resist and/or negotiate the layers of history and meanings ascribed to migrant women in society and in organizations, ordiscursive institutionalizing, in order to create alternative meanings of the female Other. Transnational feminism signals attention to destabilize rather than maintain boundaries of nation, race and gender. This outlook presents possibilities for a deeper understanding of how professional migrant women engage with Othering at work. It creates new ways of scrutinizing how women create their spaces as they move away from the margins in negotiating gender hierarchies and hegemonic practices (Pio and Essers, 2014)

Highly skilled immigrant women are just as likely as men to migrate in search of a better life for themselves and their families. They enter the host country as legal migrants or as refugees or their routes to entry maybe illegal. A number of these women seek to escape the harsh realities in their home country to move to a country that appears to have better systems of government, a well maintained infrastructure, less bureaucracy, flexible educational systems, and a more equitable life for both men and women. The aspirations of these women are also tied to careers of their husbands, if married and on a family visa. Despite, dependency on family environment, this category of women possesses high degree of agency and motivation to upgrade their careers. (Pio, 2007; Devos 2014).

A LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review largely involved key word searches in leading online journal databases like JSTOR, EMERALD MANAGEMENT XTRA. The timeline of review was restricted to papers published in the last decade. Papers were reviewed keeping four host countries in the mind: Canada, USA, New Zealand and Australia. Work environment was found largely to be consistent in experiences, however, specific instances to each country has been highlighted, if any. Keyword searches included words and phrases like "Highly skilled migrant women; Asian women migrant"; "Asian women migrants in Australia/USA/Canada/New Zealand."

Literature review is organised in following categories: First section gives a Background of Highly Skilled Asian migrant women in the context of general job environment. The next section explores job search experiences of these women. The third section, continues to highlight on- the- job experiences while the fourth section concludes with coping and responses to various situations experienced

In the international labour market, Asian Diaspora poses challenges of race and power in receiving nations. The immigrants who compete for jobs and resources in the highly skilled category are largely from privileged backgrounds in their home countries.

For instance, Asian Indians in the USA represent came from the wealthy upper strata of Indian society, many had studied in English medium schools in India and they migrated for further economic prosperity and world-class education for them as well as their future generations. There are instances of these migrants are the chief executives, owners and top management in Silicon Valley (Pio, 2007). Since 1990's, the host countries in focus have altered their immigration regulations to facilitate entry of skilled migrants. However, the particular criteria adopted for filtering in people with skills have varied across different countries and have influenced migrant women differently. From a gendered point of view, Immigration regulations have considerable influence on highly skilled women's ability to migrate. In countries where the selection of migrants favours occupations, such as information technology, mathematics, engineering and natural sciences in which more males than females are generally trained and employed, a heavily masculinised skilled migration results. As a recent analysis of gender and skilled migration in New Zealand commented, "gendered migration may be more connected with the type of occupation the migrant is coming to New Zealand to work in rather than with the source country." (Kofman & Raghuram, 2009)

Employers have made considerable use of immigration policies favoring highly skilled workers in order to alleviate labour shortages in the above mentioned sectors (Ong and Azores 1994 in Lopez.M.J, 2012). On one hand, prearranged employment opportunities reduce occupational mismatch for immigrants in a host country. On the other, occupational segregation could contribute to a wage differential between US natives and immigrants. This may be a disadvantage for immigrants if these jobs pay less than the jobs in which US natives are concentrated. But this should be seen as a result of immigration policies and labour shortages and not necessarily the result of discrimination by employers.

Contextualising the job Environment in Traditional Immigrant Countries

Immigration policies however may not result into assured job for the immigrant. For instance, Canada follows the 'Skilled Worker Program' to address labour shortages. Increasing evidence demonstrates that the majority of immigrants who enter Canada through the Skilled Worker Program are unable to secure full-time permanent positions in their field of training. As a result, many remain unemployed or underemployed. (Employed in positions that underutilise their education and skills). Most of these are not permanent employment, and rarely utilise the skills and education of the skilled immigrants (Lopez. M. J, 2012).

As a small respite, a pilot study by the Department of Labour on 1240 migrants in New Zealand, findings showed that employment rates improved for all migrants between

six months after arriving. However, people from the UK, South Africa and North America do better in the job market than those from Asia. Such experiences are often taken in stride and seen as a learning process to assimilate oneself in the new culture (Pio, 2005). I further go on to understand a woman's experience in such a situation.

Additional Influences Specific to Women

Research instances in New Zealand indicate the nature of work and the experiences of interactions in the work place were the prime determining factors for the women's movement towards integrating her ethnic identity. Such movements were steps towards continued appreciation of one's own ethnicity (Pio 2005)

Decisions to work and searching for jobs in the case of Asian women is found to be heavily influenced by the family which is an integral expression of their ethnic identity. The career goals of women are often subsumed under the interests of fathers, husband and children. This cultural context at the base sets a rolling process with the gendered impacts of migration and settlement, and the ways the experiences of migration and settlement, and the decisions made in these processes, are likewise gendered. At all points then, education, visa conditions and the hurdles of recognition or non-recognition by professional bodies frame the women's life and work and learning trajectories. (Devos, 2014)

Besides the family, afore quoted research of Edwina Pio, a leading professor in New Zealand on gender and diversity, points to colonial mental models which do not give credence to qualifications from Asian countries and question the competence and skill-set of ethnic minority women. Author sites instances of hidden discourses of lack of acceptance and fear of not finding appropriate employment often results in the discomfort of being judged or found unwanted.

HIGHLIGHTING JOB SEARCH EXPERIENCES

The ideal: Recognition of qualifications and experience

The most successful migration transitions occurred when an individual skilled migrant's professional capabilities and networks were maintained through entry with permanent residency and employer sponsorship because this mode recognised existing skills and experience. By transitioning immediately to work in an industry or profession where professional networks developed through pre- or post-migration associations could be utilised, female primary migrants, without children and from different ethnic backgrounds and countries, experienced relatively untroubled transitions (Webb.S, 2015).

The Reality: Highly Skilled Migrant Asian Women Face Numerous Complications During Job Search

Although women constitute significant proportions of highly skilled labour force, evidence suggests that they face many complications in accessing jobs. In the countries considered, immigrant women appear to have a lower labour force participation rates than either foreign-born men or native-born women. The employment rate of foreign-born women is 10 to 13% lower than that of the native-born (6% difference in Canada). These aggregate figures hide important variations by country of birth. As established in the earlier section, race, ethnicity and nationality act alongside gender to affect which women have access to which kinds of jobs.

Experiences of Deskilling Faced in Job Search

Specific to highly skilled women migrants, another significant factor is the framework for recognising skills. Although deskilling is a common experience among all migrants, women face a particularly high level of deskilling. My literature review has directly and indirectly pointed out that women are more likely to be overqualified for their jobs than men (Kofman & Raghuram, 2009; Liversage, 2009). Professional women racist stereotyping influenced their ability to gain employment. The lack of support structures for newly arrived qualified immigrant forces them to rely on informal networks. Jobs obtained through informal, social networks may further lead to deskilling.

Unexpected Infrastructural Requirements Lead to Further Deskilling

Lack of affordable, accessible and appropriate professional language courses for qualified immigrants are also contributing factors for challenges in job search. Qualified immigrants were found to have difficulties in finding proper housing, which produces problems of access to the labour market and fuels discrimination and further social exclusion. However, some of these factors influence women more than men. For instance, the ability to attend professional language courses may be more limited for women who have childcare responsibilities. The loss of social networks, personal and professional, after women migrate can be worse for women if family responsibilities prevent them from accessing new networks. Women's need to re-skill or to get accreditation may also be given less priority by families when there is gender hierarchy within households. Eventually, lengthy periods out of the labour market and under-employment harm the self-esteem of such migrants and increase deskilling.

An exception to this deskilling is observed in a study of US Labour market experiences of Filipino Americans. Relative to white men, highly educated Filipinas experienced less discrimination than highly educated Filipinos. This was observed as these women were to be perceived as less of a threat to native men than native women are in terms of professional skills, which made the employers to prefer hiring qualified immigrant women (Kofman & Raghuram, 2009).

Other Non-Negotiable Variables

The limited literature on high-skilled female Asian immigration has mainly pointed to a set of variables that are part of their migration and cannot be controlled by women, including the comparison with their male counterparts (Donato et al., 2006; Kofman, 2004 in Liversage, 2009).

skills: males to a larger extent possess scientific, technical, and managerial skills that are not only more easily internationally transferable but also more often in high demand (Cornelius et al., 2001; Saxenian, 2001 in Liversage, 2009). Women may instead move within fields such as medicine and teaching, where qualifications can be more difficult to transfer (Aggergaard-Larsen et al., 2005; Raghuram and Montiel, 2003 in Liversage, 2009). **Entry:** male dominated entry routes of work migration or inter-company transfer often creates additional work-related obstacles, such as lack of work permits for accompanying spouses as women are entering as dependants (Boucher, 2007; Purkayastha, 2005 in Liversage, 2009). Women generally immigrate for non-work reasons, as a result face greater barriers in finding work. **Gendered family divisions of work:** Women traditionally hold major responsibility for childcare – an especially demanding task considering that these women have lost their former social networks (Kofman and Raghuram, 2006; Salaff and Greve, 2004 in Liversage, 2009) which makes job search not a huge priority. **Additional gendered obstacles:** Labour market discrimination (Reskin, 1993 in Liversage, 2009). High-skilled women becoming 'refeminized' in their post-migratory lives (Ho, 2006 in Liversage, 2009). While these studies quite uniformly point to the hardships suffered by high skilled women immigrants, very few studies have paid attention to how and when high skilled women may be successful in entering new labour markets.

Social Networks and Job Search Experiences

Though there are evidences of deskilling of a candidate due to a job obtained known social networks in the host country; a qualitative case study of skilled migration to a regional non-metropolitan area of Australia, the article discusses the importance of building 'right' social networks in order to obtain jobs that were suitable to one's qualification. Women in the study reported that 'It's who you know, not what

you know' which enabled both skilled migrants and their partners to secure employment commensurate with their qualifications and previous employment histories. A 'regime of skills' was used by employers, employment agencies for employment which opened up opportunities for some or closed down for others through processes of misrecognition of the migrants' experiences and skills and the prioritising of localised knowledge and native-like English accents. Through this process of misrecognition, who should be employed and in what capacity was sustained. (Webb.S, 2014)

To sum up, the process of deskilling is often hinted at during the job search period itself. Deskilling is accompanied by other variables in the environment which could mean anything from one's visa status to family consideration. These issues seem very generic and superficial, however, experiences leave a permanent scar in the career trajectory of a highly skilled woman. Having enumerated the challenges faced during job search in the host country, I further move on to highlight on-job-experiences of highly skilled Asian migrant women.

EXPLORING ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCES

Job experiences of migrants in general and skilled women migration (care and sex work) have been researched. Relatively few studies have been seen on highly skilled migrant women. Adding the Asian element to it, the number would go down further. Limited studies on work lives of these women have identified areas that of social exclusion, wage differentials and questioning of the ability despite years of experience; to name a few.

Wage Differences as Compared to Natives

A notable study on US Labour market discrimination identified that highly skilled immigrant women experience an earnings disadvantage as a result of both gender status and nativity status (Lopez, 2012). Study examined the extent to which highly skilled immigrant women in the US were underpaid relative to men as a result of gender status. But a wage penalty due to gender status is not the only penalty immigrant women experience. Skilled Asian immigrants earn less than US-born white men, even after controlling for differences in human capital, and that skilled immigrants face a glass ceiling in employment (Tang.J 1997b; Fernandez.M 1998 in Lopez, 2012). The combination of gender and nativity earnings discrimination would suggest that immigrant women suffer from a double earnings penalty. *Wage differentials* arrived from the fact that women have lower levels of human capital than men and may thus face wage disadvantage. The wage difference between US-

born men and immigrant women could also result from statistical discrimination or taste based discrimination on account of gender status and/or nativity status. For example, both women and immigrants may experience discrimination by receiving lower returns to their endowments than men or US natives.

A final explanation for the wage differential may be a lack of assimilation among immigrants. When immigrants arrive to the US, they lack US-specific human capital and as a result earn lower wages than US natives (Lopez 2012). Though there is some degree of discrimination in earnings observed, Montgomery and Powell (2003) discuss several reasons why highly educated women in the US may face less discrimination relative to women with lower levels of education. First, higher education may promote greater tolerance among workers, resulting in less discrimination. Second, academic degrees provide a signal to the employer about a worker's innate abilities and may lower the extent of statistical discrimination women face. Women with college or advanced degrees may be less likely to leave the labour force because it requires time, money, and motivation to obtain such degrees (see also Wood, Corcoran, and Courant [1993] in Lopez, 2012). Finally, individuals with degrees can command higher wages. Therefore, the opportunity cost of taking time out of the workforce is much greater for the highly educated relative to individuals with less education.

Under Employment and Low Self Esteem in Initial Years

In a qualitative study of highly skilled Indian women migrants' work experiences in New Zealand, discouraging findings came up. Low esteem and under employment made it difficult for women to adjust to their new work environment. This means accepting work at many levels lower than what they had been used to even though many were past the rough patch. This wounding was expressed by all the women in this study. Some women were very angry about their initial work experiences. Many faced social exclusion at work. (Pio, 2005)

Initial Underemployment Social Exclusion in a Job Environment

These women also faced ridicule and exclusion on basic choices of food, clothing, taste in music and behaviour in general. Behaviour included questioning one's ability to convene a meeting, formulating minutes of the meeting post the meeting deeply questioning one's ability to work in a team and thus alienating the person (Pio, 2005). Pio later on goes on to explain in her research that these women overcame their difficult time and moved ahead in careers. Social exclusion at work for women migrants in general

and specific to Asian women migrants is still largely under-researched and could be a possible question for research on diversity management at workplaces. It can be deduced that challenges of lower wages, discriminations and social exclusions are seen as initial assimilation exercises and learning process. While the women researched, moved ahead due to their qualification and sheer resilience, Pio asks a valid question. *Is it possible to reduce this initial months of uncertainty in job environment for these women?* (Pio, 2007)

IMPACT OF WORK EXPERIENCES ON WOMEN AND COPING MECHANISMS

Physical and Emotional Health Concerns-Deskilling a Unique Cause

Existing literature on employment and health demonstrates the links among unemployment, a loss of identity and social status, and declines in both mental and physical health (Ross and Mirowsky 1995, Wilkins et al. 2002, Raphael 2004 in Dean and Wilson, 2009). The women interviewed largely revealed physical and mental stress, due to deskilling. Physical because, the work became more manual and mental due to underemployed situation and an alien job environment. Physical health impacts of work stress did vary according to the individual as some felt physical pain and strain, while others experienced an increase in blood pressure and weight loss. Specifically, skilled immigrants in this research discussed their unemployment and underemployment circumstances as responsible for increases in physical pain, weight loss, high blood pressure and physical strain (Dean and Wilson, 2009).

Mental health impacts Existing Literature prove that deskilling majorly results in a loss of social status, another factor influencing health. Most of the immigrants interviewed in various studies discussed a perceived loss of social status because they were not working in their profession (Dean and Wilson, 2009). This suggests that the role of employment is particularly important for skilled immigrants who have their personal identity and social status tied to a number of facets of employment. Identity and social status are often tied to being an employed person in society. Finally, and especially relevant to skilled immigrants in Canada, is the sense of identity derived from one's status as a professional. Mental health is impacted in a negative way: a loss of identity, which accompanies under/unemployment, leads to feelings of unhappiness, frustration and anxiety. In addition, others spoke of increased feelings of depression. Many participants in this study expressed concern that their inability to find employment in their field would affect the health of their family members at home. Specifically, the stress, anger, and frustration of not finding work are discussed as influencing

the home environment and those within it in an unhealthy way (i.e., shouting at family, children observing parents' depression and feeling the same way, children experiencing adult stressors) the multiple pathways through which employment impacts mental health include lack of income, loss of employment-related skills, and loss of social status, and extend beyond the individual to reach the families of the immigrants as well.

Coping Mechanism to Overcome Situations

Entrepreneurship and self-employment The congruence of ethnicity and gender and the need for family cohesion established before, have led to women getting into entrepreneurship. The enterprises primarily supplied ethnic products not easily available in the wider market, and services wherein the mind-set of the ethnic customer is understood. Examples include art work, beauty/haircare, café and catering services, crèche, language classes, travel (to India) and retail stores. Thirdly, the internal process of identity reconfiguration represents struggle and optimism as the women negotiate their past and present as non-white minority migrant women. The women, who come from business families and are first generation migrants, generally go directly into business and so avoid the experiences of discrimination particularly when they function within the ethnic community. For other first generation migrant women they go through the stage of shock with low-permeability for entry in the labour market, followed by low self-esteem but still clutching the dream of a better life. As they set up their business they start regaining their self-esteem. Where their business involves contact with a diversity of customers they seem to develop an entrepreneurial identity that represents pride in being a New Zealand Indian as well as in their ability to navigate both the Indian community and that of the majority host culture. In negotiating their past and present these Indian women were able to move towards "cultural openness and multi-textured identities" through a repertoire of self-images. The entrepreneurial identity represents status for it connotes a certain amount of independence both from the patriarchal and colonial aspects of their existence (Pio, 2005).

Strengthening the Ethnic Social Bonds in the Host Community

Though work is a defining factor for identity negotiation, social bonding with people belonging to ethnic roots was effectively harnessed by women as a coping mechanism. The goal of coping mechanism was 'stable family life', the husband 'holding a job', and the children 'doing well in school'. The first two years seem to function as the crucial time for identity negotiation. The women who were able to

integrate and develop a bicultural identity, were also more positive about the host culture and themselves, and seemed to enjoy life in New Zealand. (Pio, 2005)

Many women refuse to be 'ghettoized' and question the 'othering' of host culture by staying in non-native areas of the town. Take for instance, Pio's study on Asian migrant women entrepreneurs in New Zealand, an example of a woman entrepreneur is quoted. She refused to accept colonized views of Asian women being illiterate and less educated. Asymmetrical societal power relations experienced were unacceptable to her. She started catering to a more diverse clientele, thus trying to beat the societal power relations in a subtle manner.

Negotiating power of knowledge and self-respect

Asian women uphold their ethnic identity through dressing for example and refuse to change for colleagues or to blend in the host environment. Women also get knowledgeable about local workforce systems and laws, so they are not taken for a ride. This gives a clear signal for the host community to respect the individual for their skills rather than 'othering' them. (Pio & Essers, 2014).

Sourcing Strength

Sourcing strength involves locating and utilizing resources to create perceptions of professional migrant women that decentre being Othered (Pio & Essers, 2014). Utilizing the strength of ethnic skills and qualities, taking suggestions from close family member, relatives and peer group is an example of sourcing one's strength. Also, understanding host country's business expectations and skill requirement is a strong way of sourcing strength.

Based on their specific Indian context within NZ. In addition, Women constantly look at positive features of the host country work environment like gender equality, transparency and the professional working environment of the first world countries. (Pio and Essers, 2014)

Reframing, Re-Qualifying and Negotiating Re-Imagining Futures

For permanent skilled migrants without a job offer, the transition often involved reframing their qualifications and experiences, downgrading their expectations and negotiating with local gatekeepers and sponsors to gain recognition for job opportunities. On arrival in Australia, households faced immediate financial pressure to accept any job to support their families, particularly as skilled migrants were usually ineligible for benefits payments for the first two years. The expectations of a smooth transition encouraged by the skilled migration policy was more difficult for 'visible'

migrants from the Indian subcontinent and Africa compared with those from the UK, Europe and Hispanic Central and South America.

Women secondary migrants faced additional difficulties of isolation from their pre-migration networks of support to help with childcare. Until childcare could be found often through other family members joining the migrants, female secondary migrants often withdrew from the labour force and experienced a life of intensive domestication. In prioritising financial security, families in this situation would often make gendered decisions about who would take care of the children and who would seek work, perhaps reinscribing traditional cultural patterns of who should take responsibility for children and for earning a family wage. Even those migrating with qualifications and experiences in short supply were not guaranteed an easy transition to appropriate employment. Professional accreditation requirements to complete further assessments in Australia would often take time and entail payment of high fees and perhaps further local experience, all of which necessitated the migrant to be self-supporting.

CONTEXTUALISING THE URGENT NEED TO RECOGNISE HIGHLY SKILLED ASIAN MIGRANT WOMEN

Academic and social research informs policy framework of a state policy. Individual nations in question need to recognise the category of highly skilled migrant Asian women.

UN Women in Action

In August, 2010, UN Women (part of UN Women) facilitated a Regional Consultation on Empowering Women Migrant Workers for Asia and Arab States. A highlight of the Consultation was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indian Council of Overseas Employment, Government of India and UN Women South Asia Sub-Regional Office. The MoU establishes an institutional framework for the Indian Government to work with UN Women and other agencies to address the challenges of migrant women at all levels. The Consultation concluded with a number of key recommendations for UN Women to focus on, including:

1. Incorporating gender perspectives in legal framework and policies.
2. Capacity building of key policy makers, service providers and women migrant workers.
3. Sharing of good practices for capacity building and advocacy.
4. Ensuring sex disaggregated data is available.
5. Focusing on domestic workers at sub-regional, regional and global levels of work

Sex disaggregated data should be followed by specific focus on various categories of skilled women workers for larger benefit. The emphasis on migrant women in less skilled sectors of the labour market has obscured the significant presence of skilled migrant women in the labour market. As the majority of immigration receiving countries encourage and facilitate the flow of skilled migrants, it is important that one begins to pay more attention to female skilled migrants.

CONCLUSION

The review paper and case studies were very objective in its approach to highlight experiences of highly skilled migrant Asian women. There is also a subtle acknowledgement of positive waves of change. For instance, New Zealand is witnessing more ethnic minorities entering the workforce and gradually moving to positions of influence. The recent appointment of the first Asian Governor General of New Zealand in August 2006. (Pio & Essers, 2014)

In Canada, education and language attainment reflecting human capital has replaced occupation as a filter for migration, and lead to an increase in the proportion of females in the skilled worker class migration category. Although women are still a minority amongst skilled worker principal applicants, this shift to a broader human capital approach is likely to be more advantageous to women as their educational qualifications increase and with continuing shortages in sectors such as care-work and nursing. The only country that has begun to recognize the inherent gender-selectivity involved in skilled migration programmes is Canada. It has instituted a gender-based analysis (GBA) of immigration policy. This is a process that assesses the differential impact of proposed and/or existing policies, programs and legislation on women and men. It makes it possible for policy to be undertaken with an appreciation of gender differences, of the nature of relationships between women and men and of their different social realities, life expectations and economic circumstances.

In order to sum up, for a smoother transition of highly skilled Asian migrant women into host countries, multi-stakeholder ownership is required. Policy framework needs to address different categories of highly skilled migrant women, for example- primary versus secondary, job implication of travelling through family visa to name a few. Private Corporations should play a major role in assimilating a migrant into the host culture of the organisation. Academic research should get more inter-disciplinary in its objective to address this category of women. More stories of lived experiences and voices of these women needs to be researched in order to inform changes at a larger level.

REFERENCES

- Findlay, A, McCollum, D., et al. (2013) The role of recruitment agencies in imagining and producing the 'good' migrant. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 14(2), 145-167
- Dean, J. A., & Wilson, K. (2009). Education? It is irrelevant to my job now. It makes me very depressed ...': exploring the health impacts of under/unemployment among highly skilled recent immigrants in Canada, *Ethnicity & Health*, 14(2), 185-204
- Devos, A. (2014). The educational work of belonging, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 12(3), 403-419
- Pater, I. E. D., Vianen, A. E. M. E., Fischer, A. H., & Ginkel, W. P. V. (2009). Challenging experiences: Gender differences in task choice. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 24(1), 4-28
- Joseph, C. (2014). Boundaries, work and identity practices: Being 'Asian' migrant educational workers, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 12(3), 420-435,
- Kofman, D., & Raghuram, D. (2009, April 1). Skilled female labour migration. Retrieved from http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/typo3_upload/groups/3/focus_Migration_Publikationen/Kurzdossiers/PB_13_skilled_fem_1_m.pdf
- Liversage, A. (2009). Vital conjunctures, shifting horizons: High-skilled female immigrants looking for work. *Work, Employment & Society*, 120-141
- Lopez, M. J. (2012). Skilled immigrant women in the US and the double earnings penalty. *Feminist Economics*, 18(1), 99-134
- Pio, E., & Essers, C. (2014). Professional Migrant Women Decentring Otherness: A Transnational Perspective. *British Journal of Management*, 25, 252-265
- Pio, E. (2005). Knotted strands: Working lives of Indian women migrants in New Zealand. *Human Relations*, 1277-1299
- Pio, E. (2007). Ethnic minority migrant women entrepreneurs and the imperial imprimatur. *Women in Management Review*, 22(8), 631-649
- Bergh, R. V. D., & Plessis, Y. D. (2012). Highly skilled migrant women: A career development framework. *Journal of Management Development*, 31(2), 142-158
- Salt, B. (2013, September 12). Asian influence adds spice to melting pot. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/opinion/asian-influence-adds-spice-to-melting-pot/story-e6frg9jx-1226717198780>
- Krummel, S. (2012) Migrant Women: Stories of empowerment, transformation, exploitation and resistance. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38(7), 1175-1184

State Demographics Data - US. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/US>

Webb, W. (2015). The feminisation of migration and the migrants VET policy neglects: the case of skilled women secondary migrants in Australia. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 67(1), 26-46

Webb, S. (2015). It's who you know not what': migrants' encounters with regimes of skills as misrecognition. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 37(3).

Young, suburban and mostly Asian: Canada's immigrant population surges. (2013, May 8). from <http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/05/08/young-suburban-and-mostly-asian-canadas-immigrant-population-surges/>