

Title: Understanding the Career Journeys of Migrant CEOs in Australia

Authors:

Dr Sehrish Shahid

Lecturer, Management

School of Management,

RMIT University Australia

Email: Sehrish.shahid@rmit.edu.au

Dr Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh

Senior Lecturer, HRM

Australian Institute of Business

Email: Mahan.zadeh@aib.edu.au

Ass Prof. Mulyadi Robin

Associate Professor

Australian Institute of Business

Email: mulyadi.robin@aib.edu.au

Dr Christiana Osei Bonsu

Lecturer, Finance

Australian Institute of Business

Email: christiana.oseibonsu@aib.edu.au

Background of Research

Migrant Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) comprise close to half of Australian's top 50 CEOs (Apollo Communications), including Woolworths' Brad Banducci (South Africa), James Hardie's Jack Truong (Vietnam), Newcrest Mining's Sandeep Biswas (India), Orica's Alberto Calderon (Columbia) and AMP's Francesco de Ferrari (Italy) among others. This is not surprising given the large body of empirical research reporting on the positive impact of top team management diversity on organisational outcomes, including quality performance, innovation, and competitive advantage outcomes (Ariss et al., 2012; Barta et al. 2012; Homberg & Bui 2013; Li et al. 2016). Further, not only do CEOs have a critical role in the firm's profitability and strategic value creation (Leverty & Grace 2012), they also play a significant role in establishing social justice.

Migrants are foreign-born individuals who have legally moved to another country, and they do not necessarily have to be citizens of their current country of residence (Dietz 2010; Fang et al. 2013). Specifically, skilled migrants tend to be adaptive, multi-lingual, and highly educated and as such has the potential to make a significant contribution to their organisations and society (Ariss et al. 2012; Legrand et al 2019; Syed 2008). However, migrants tend to face a number of barriers throughout their career progress, especially when it comes to top team management or executive positions (Legrand et al. 2019) and are often under employed (Risberg & Romani 2022). However, the value of integrating and assimilating migrants to the top CEO position has been identified as having a positive influence on organisational success (Davoine & Ravasi, 2013; Piaskowska & Trojanowski, 2014). Yet, this represents an underrepresented area of research.

The use of and the narrative process storytelling (Dunn & Cherup 2021; Luwisch 2001) were found to help overcome barriers in increasing diversity and inclusion in organisations. Furthermore, prior research highlights the importance of life stories in leadership development (Armstrong & McCain 2021; Shamir & Eilam 2005). However, while some research has explored the career patterns of CEOs (Ellersgaard et al. 2013; Sanders 2011), there is still a lack of empirical research focusing on the career and life stories of migrant CEOs.

There is a growing body of research that highlights the importance of understanding executives' life stories, social class background, and identities; specifically highlighting the link between CEOs' social class background on strategic risk taking (Kish-Gephart & Campbell 2015), the impact that CEOs' values and beliefs have on the organisation's strategy (c.f. upper echelons theory (Hambrick 2012), and how executives' identity impacts on the way organisations make decisions (c.f. Fauchart & Gruber 2011). Further, research on diversity and inclusion, as well as leadership development highlights the importance of visibility of diverse leaders in increasing diversity and inclusion. Specifically, Arvate (2018) observed that over time, there was a causal influence of females being promoted or raised to leadership position in public organizations in municipalities where women were elected as leaders. Cook and Glass (2014) also found that visible representation of diverse leaders empowers the followers and creates a role modelling opportunity which eventually leads to greater diversity within the organization.

a. Aims/objectives of the research

The current study aims to gain insights into the life stories and career journeys of Migrant CEOs in Australia, including their challenges, opportunities, careers, and leadership development journeys. Acker's intersectionality theory could be highly relevant to exploring the experiences of migrant CEOs in the corporate world, particularly in relation to the SDGs. This theory highlights the complex ways in which different forms of oppression intersect and shape individuals' experiences and opportunities within society, which could shed light on the unique challenges faced by migrant CEOs. Expanding on Acker's intersectionality theory, studies by Gray et al. (2022) and Wood et al. (2021) explored how various dimensions of identity, such as gender, ethnicity, and migrant status, intersect to shape the experiences of migrant workers. These works provide insights into the unique challenges faced by migrant CEOs due to the interplay of multiple forms of oppression. Recognising intersectionality is vital to promoting inclusivity for migrant CEOs.

Drawing on Acker's (2012) intersectionality theory as a framework, the present research seeks to understand how ethnicity and migrant status impact the career progression and succession of migrant CEOs. Intersectionality highlights how different forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism, are interconnected and cannot be fully understood or addressed in isolation (Woods, Benschop, & Brink, 2021). A closer examination of intersectionality would, in fact, help to illustrate some of Acker's findings better because intersectionality directs our attention to the microcosms of unequal power processes and might explain their invisibility. For example, a male migrant CEO may downplay his ethnic identity and emphasise his masculinity for greater advantages (Acker, 2006; Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010). In contrast, a female migrant CEO faces complex challenges, navigating the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and migrant status. She must balance gendered expectations while dealing with cultural norms, language barriers, and discrimination.

In summary, our project addresses the issues of career progression, diversity, equal employment opportunities, understanding the employment and assimilation challenges for migrants reaching the top management positions. It is also aligned with United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8), and Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10).

b. Research approach or method

To address the research aim, we will be collecting qualitative data by interviewing migrant CEOs across different sectors in Australia. This approach draws on existing leadership development research which identifies reflection as a key way in which leaders develop (Lanaj et al., 2019). Further, the constructivism paradigm suggests that it is necessary to analyse social actions from the actors' standpoint (Tracy 2013). Moreover, constructivists view knowledge as socially constructed through interactions and language, and reality as linked and identified through society's cultural and ideological categories (Burr 1995). Thus, human activities are not tangible material realities and cannot be measured but can be interpreted and analysed through "text". Consequently, qualitative methodology is considered a suitable and valuable tool for analysing and interpreting human activities (Tracy 2013, p. 41).

We will adopt purposeful sampling methods such as convenience sampling and snowballing techniques (Gentles et al. 2015). Sample size in qualitative research is not predetermined and "participant numbers are contingent on the research purpose and a variety of epistemological, methodological and practical issues" (Saundlers & Townsend, 2016, p. 839). Sampling will be stopped when enough data has been collected and saturation has been achieved (Saundlers & Townsend, 2016). Saundlers & Townsend (2016) suggested that around 20 participants are usually sufficient for

achieving the saturation. As such, we plan to interview around 20 participants in order to achieve the above-mentioned objective, or until saturation has been achieved.

The research team seek to obtain ethics clearance from the AIB Ethics Committee prior to contacting and inviting potential participants to the study. Subsequently, we will be contacting the Migration Council Australia (<https://migrationcouncil.org.au>) to seek an endorsement for the study and contact potential participants through the ASX Company Directory by e-mail.

We will adopt Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis in analysing the data. This refers to the process of moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extract of data being analysed, and the data being produced. The data (the transcribed interviews) and demographic information about the participants will be entered into NVivo. The use of NVivo enables the researcher to consider demographic variables, such as age, when there are emergent themes or contradictions in the thematic analysis (Miles et al. 2014).

Stage 2

At stage 2, we seek to analyse podcasts from the migrant CEO's and in doing so we use close analytical listening techniques similar to the work of Spinelli and Dann's (2019). This approach involved stopping often to make notes on the content, noting audible elements, storytelling techniques and the ways in which the researcher responds to the listening. The aim was to critically analyse and detail the migrant CEO's experience (the challenges in their journey).

c. Anticipated impact of the research

We envisage that the research findings have both practical and theoretical contributions.

Specifically, the research would provide the following insights for managers and leaders to:

- Effectively managing diverse and minority employees with regards to their leadership career progression.
- Develop an understanding of management and leadership practices relevant to issues of minorities, which has been identified as a key area of economic growth;
- Provide practical insights for policy makers into the factors that can influence their recruitment, performance management and career progression decisions;
- Provide practical insights for matters for policies related to strategic decision making; and
- Provide practical recommendations in addressing several Sustainable Development Goals.

Implications

Our research into career journey of migrant CEOs will enable us to provide further insights into managing our workforces within contemporary diverse workplaces. This research will contribute to the future of work, the challenges that talent shortage presents for organisations in meeting the strategic needs of a diverse workforce. Organisations need to realise that top talents are coming from a diverse workforce today, and if they want to attract top talented CEOs, they need to review their organisational and HR strategies.

In addition, the research is important for shareholders and investors to understand why firms operating in the same industry may take different corporate policies. The findings from this study will provide new insights in the context of Australian migrant CEOs which can be added to the discussion on board capabilities and diversity in governance as well as CEO effect in corporate finance.

References

Al Ariss, A, Koall, I, Özbilgin, M & Suutari, V 2012, 'Careers of skilled migrants: towards a theoretical and methodological expansion', *Journal of Management Development*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 92-101.

Acker, J. 2012, 'Gendered organizations and intersectionality: Problems and possibilities', *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 214-224.

Apollo Communications, 2019, CEO migrant success story calls for 'bigger Australia', *Financial Review*, viewed 08 March 2023, <<https://www.afr.com/policy/economy/ceo-migrant-success-story-calls-for-bigger-australia-at-jobs-summit-20220824-p5bcin>>

Altarawneh, M., Rohami S & Rokiah I 2020, 'CEO characteristics: A literature review and future directions', *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 1-10.

Armstrong, JP & McCain, KD 2021, 'Narrative Pedagogy for Leadership Education: Stories of Leadership Efficacy, Self-Identity, and Leadership Development', *Journal of Leadership Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 60-70.

Barta, T, Kleiner, M & Neumann, T 2012, 'Is there a payoff from top-team diversity', *McKinsey Quarterly*, 12(April), pp. 65-66.

Braun, V & Clarke, V 2006, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative research in psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77-101.

Crenshaw, K. 2013, 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics', In *Feminist legal theories* (pp. 23-51). Routledge.

Davoine, E & Ravasi, C 2013, 'The relative stability of national career patterns in European top management careers in the age of globalisation: A comparative study in France/Germany/Great Britain and Switzerland', *European Management Journal*, vol. 31, pp. 152- 163

Dietz, J 2010, 'Introduction to the special issue on employment discrimination against immigrants', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol. 25, pp. 104-112.

Dunn, TM & Cherup, S 2021, 'Storytelling and Success: How Storytelling Can be Used to Promote Diversity, Cross-Cultural Understanding, and Confidence in the Classroom', *Journal of Education*, vol. no, pp.

Ellersgaard, CH, Larsen, AG & Munk, MD 2013, 'A very economic elite: The case of the Danish top CEOs', *Sociology*, vol. 47, pp. 1051-1071.

Fauchart, E & Gruber, M 2011, '[Darwinians, Communitarians, and Missionaries: The Role of Founder Identity in Entrepreneurship](#)' *AMJ*, vol. 54, pp. 935-957.

Fang, T, Samnani, A-K, Novicevic, MM, & Bing, MN 2013, Liability-of-foreignness effects on job success of immigrant job seekers, *Journal of World Business*, vol. 48, pp. 98–109

Goertz, G & Mahoney, J 2012, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*, Princeton University Press, 2012.

Gentles, S J, Charles, C, Ploeg, J, & McKibbin, K. A 2015, 'Sampling in qualitative research: Insights from an overview of the methods literature', *The Qualitative Report*, vol.20, no. 11, pp. 1772- 1789.

Gray, C., Crawford, G., Maycock, B. and Lobo, R., 2022. Exploring the Intersections of Migration, Gender, and Sexual Health with Indonesian Women in Perth, Western Australia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(20), p.13707

Healy, G., Tatli, A., Ipek, G., Öztürk, M., Seierstad, C., & Wright, T. 2019, 'In the steps of Joan Acker: A journey in researching inequality regimes and intersectional inequalities', *Gender, Work & Organization*, vol. 26, no. 12, pp. 1749-1762.

Homberg, F & Bui, HT 2013, 'Top management team diversity: A systematic review', *Group & Organization Management*, vol. 38, no. 4, pp.455-479.

Kish-Gephart, JJ & Campbell, JT 2015, 'You don't forget your roots: The influence of CEO social class background on strategic risk taking', *Academy of Management Journal*, vol 58, no. 6, pp. 1614-1636.

Koch, M., Forgues, B., & Monties, V. 2017, 'The way to the top: Career patterns of Fortune100 CEOs', *Human Resource Management*, vol. 56, no. 2, pp. 267-285.

Li, CR, Liu, YY, Lin, CJ & Ma, H 2016, 'Top management team diversity, ambidextrous innovation and the mediating effect of top team decision-making processes', *Industry and Innovation*, vol. 23 no, 3, pp.260-275.

Legrand, C, Al Ariss, A & Bozionelos, N 2019, 'Migrant CEOs: Barriers and strategies on the way to the top' *European Management Review*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp.597-615.

Leverly, JT & Grace, M. F 2012, 'Dupes or incompetents? An examination of management's impact on firm distress', *Journal of Risk and Insurance*, vol 79, pp. 751-783.

Luwisch, FE 2001, 'Understanding what goes on in the heart and the mind: Learning about diversity and co-existence through storytelling', *Teaching and teacher education*, vol 17, no.2, pp.133-146.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J 2014, *Qualitative Data analysis: A Method Sourcebook* (Third ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage publications.

Ng, E.S., Sears, G.J. CEO Leadership Styles and the Implementation of Organizational Diversity Practices: Moderating Effects of Social Values and Age. *J Bus Ethics*, vol 105, pp.41–52 (2012). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0933-7>

Piaskowska, D., & Trojanowski, G 2014, 'Twice as smart? The importance of managers' formative-years' international experience for their international orientation and foreign acquisition decisions', *British Journal of Management*, vol. 25, pp. 40-57.

Risberg, A & Romani, L 2022, 'Underemploying highly skilled migrants: An organizational logic protecting corporate 'normality'', *Human Relations*, vol. 75, no. 4, pp. 655-680.

Syed, J 2008, 'Employment prospects for skilled migrants: A relational perspective', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp.28-45.

Sutherland, B 2013, External recruitment of CEOs hits 17-year high. Financial Post. Available at <http://business.financialpost.com/2013/01/11/external-recruitment-of-ceoshits-17-year-high>

Shamir, B & Eilam, G., 2005, 'What's your story? A life-stories approach to authentic leadership development', *The leadership quarterly*, vol. 16 no. 3, pp. 395-417.

Tracy, S. 2013, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Woods, D., Benschop, Y., Brink, M. (2021). What Is Intersectional Equality? a Definition And Goal Of Equality For Organizations. *Gender Work Organ*, 1(29), 92-109.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12760>

Reviewer 1 Comment	Addressing reviewer's Comments
Thank you for the opportunity to review this developmental paper. The paper looks at an under-research area, migrant CEO's career development. It is a very interesting and important topic given the increasing number of migrant CEOs in West developed countries including Australia and its implication on topics including EDI, talent and leadership development.	We thank Reviewer 1 for their comments.
1.although the gap is well identified, the paper seems to be a bit ambitious to cover all areas in one - it seems more like a proposal rather than one developmental paper. The authors may want to ponder on this and pick up a particular scope to focus on in each paper. In my humble opinion, career and EDI would be a decent first go-to.	We thank Reviewer 1 for the comment to narrow down the research objectives and hence we addressed this comment in the revised document under the heading Research Aims: <i>"The current study aims to gain insights into the life-stories and career journeys of Migrant CEOs in Australia, including their challenges, opportunities, careers, and leadership development journeys"</i> While understanding the career journey, we attempt to look at themes that highlight their challenges in the career progression such as diversity, equal employment opportunities, and understanding the employment and assimilation challenges for migrants reaching the top management positions.
2. It would have been better if which level of CEOs are focused on were clarified in the introduction - start-up, SMEs, bigger corporates etc. There are heterogeneities when it comes to career development.	We thank Reviewer 1 for the comment. We addressed this comment in the revised document: Our sample will consist of CEOs in large corporations and SMEs. This will give us more insights into the career journey of migrant CEOs in these two sectors. <i>"Women of Color is not a biological designation. It is a solidarity definition. A commitment to work in collaboration with other oppressed women of color who have been minoritized. It is</i>

	<i>a term that has a lot of power."</i> Loretta Ross cited in Archer, C., Sison, M., Gaddi, B. and O'Mahony, L., 2022. Bodies of/at Work: How Women of Colour Experienced Their Workplaces and Have Been Expected to 'Perform' During the COVID-19 Pandemic. <i>Journal of Intercultural Studies</i>, 43(6), pp.824-845.
3. perhaps due to the scope being a bit too wide, the paper lacks a particular theoretical framework and arguments to draw on. This is critical and needs to be made explicitly for a journal article.	<i>We thank Reviewer 1 for the comment. We addressed this comment in the revised document under the heading "Research Aims"</i> <i>"Drawing on Acker's (2012) intersectionality theory as a framework, the present research seeks to understand how ethnicity and migrant status impact the career progression and succession of migrant CEOs. Intersectionality highlights how different forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism, are interconnected and cannot be fully understood or addressed in isolation.</i> <i>Acker's intersectionality theory could be highly relevant to exploring the experiences of migrant CEOs in the corporate world, particularly in relation to the SDGs. This theory highlights the complex ways in which different forms of oppression intersect and shape individuals' experiences and opportunities within society, which could shed light on the unique challenges faced by migrant CEOs."</i>
4. linking to the second point above, although there are clear practical implications as stated, it is not clear about the theoretical contribution. If the authors aim to submit a paper to 3 or 4* journals, this needs to be made clear and strong in the introduction to the reviewer.	We have addressed this point by adding the underlying framework in the section "Research Aims"
5. The methods seem valid to probe the objectives. The authors might want to consider mitigating the downside of snowballing - as it might lead to samples skewing to a particular group, for example, many African CEOs, many	Our sample will consist of migrant CEOs from different background. We will be contacting migration council of Australia to help us access diverse CEOs. We will also post EOI on LinkedIn so that migrant CEOs who are interested in the

CEOs in one industry/sectors. Regarding the secondary data analysis, the podcast encompasses the migrant CEOs and non-migrant CEOs, would there be a comparative analysis to indicate/highlight the strengths and weakness of the migrant CEOs.	project will contact us. In addition, will contact migrant CEOs through their emails in their company's directory. Our sample will consist of CEOs in large corporations and SMEs. This will give us more insights into the career journey of migrant CEOs in these two sectors.
Reviewer 2 Comments	
This is a fair paper. The choice of topic is interesting. It is relevant to the human resource management track. This developmental paper is a fair attempt: if executed in a desirable manner it would become an interesting study.	We thank Reviewer 2 for the positive comments.
Though in some ways abstract seems inadequate. It is silent on the population of the study. The background provides a good understanding of the intent and subject of the study. The literature review seems to head in the right direction. In its current state, it is meaningful but the inclusion of the latest literature will be appreciated. The strong point of this study is to situate it in a meaningful theoretical framework. The use of relevant concepts and theories seems useful as it manages to embed the study further. However, it is strongly suggested to review and add to the literature. The rationale of the study is discussed lucidly. The research aims are spelled out clearly.	Thank you for your feedback. We acknowledge the importance of incorporating the latest literature into our study to ensure its relevance and comprehensiveness. In the aims/objectives of the research section, we have expanded the literature review to include recent studies and scholarly works that address the experiences of migrant CEOs, career progression, diversity, equal employment opportunities, and the challenges faced by migrants in top management positions. By doing so, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing knowledge and identify any gaps that our research can address. The following resources has been reviewed and added to the paper: 1. Woods, D., Benschop, Y., Brink, M. (2021). What Is Intersectional Equality? a Definition And Goal Of Equality For Organizations. <i>Gender Work Organ</i>, 1(29), 92-109. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12760 2. Gray, C., Crawford, G., Maycock, B. and Lobo, R., 2022. Exploring the Intersections of Migration, Gender, and Sexual Health with Indonesian Women in Perth, Western Australia. <i>International Journal of Environmental</i>

	<i>Research and Public Health</i> , 19(20), p.13707.
However, the research context, methods, and, the sample may be elaborated further and substantiated as well. The population and sampling strategy should be discussed further to highlight the pertinent aspects though the methods researchers are planning to use seem apt. The use of a two-pronged approach makes it very interesting and seems like a good strategy. The analysis is befitting to the design of the study and is outlined quite well.	Our sample will consist of migrant CEOs from different background. We will be contacting migration council of Australia to help us access diverse CEOs. We will also post EOI on LinkedIn so that migrant CEOs who are interested in the project will contact us. In addition, will contact migrant CEOs through their emails in their company's directory. Our sample will consist of CEOs in large corporations and SMEs. This will give us more insights into the career journey of migrant CEOs in these two sectors.
In its preliminary shape, it seems a promising study. As a developmental study, it has a lot of potentials to take a meaningful shape and hence contribute to theory and practice. Good luck with this project.	We thank reviewer 2 for the positive comments.