Migrant workers and workforce integration: challenges for managers in European companies

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Abstract
Background: In contemporary economies the migrant workforce is increasing around the world and represents a challenge both for domestic economies, companies and economic flows. The emergence of the European labor market highlighted a major lack of a qualified workforce and a rapid spread of migrant workers especially in the labor intensive economic sectors. In this perceptive, by striving to attract foreign workers with unique and complementary skills, knowledge, and ideas to the workplace, managers encounter many obstacles. **Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to identify challenges managers in European companies face in the process of attracting and managing migrant workers. In this article, we analyze the impact of the migrant workforce on the internal labor market transformations and identifying the main managerial challenges for the European companies and management during the attracting, mobilizing and managing the migrant workers in economic system.
Study design/methodology/approach: The authors evaluate both the existent assumptions in literature and conduct a systematic review of the managerial approaches in the field. A quantitative approach was employed. The data that contains responses from 1,127 managers from ten European countries, five EU and five non-EU member states, was collected between August 2021 and April 2022.
Findings/conclusions: The main study results reveal that the most common obstacles and challenges that managers face occur in the process of recruitment, socialization and integration, training and development, workplace operations, and innovation. The study recommends a permanent focus of company management on these issues. It also lays the foundations for a theoretical framework that provides a better understanding of the significance of creating efficient and specific management policies for foreign workers based on employee diversity.
Limitations/future research: The present study is limited in scope as the sample only includes managers from ten countries. Each research question can represent a broad enough basis for independent research, so this work opens up the possibility for numerous researches that can be treated as a continuation and expansion of the existing work.

Introduction

Poverty, armed conflicts, climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, insecurity, poor health or education system, uncertainty, and inability to find employment are just some reasons why people choose to leave their country of origin and seek a better life in another country, on the same or some other continent. The number of economic migrants, as well as refugees, is on the rise worldwide (ILO, 2021).

The stock of international migrants worldwide was estimated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) at 272 million, 245 million of which are of working age (aged 15 and over) in 2019 (ILO, 2021). Thanks to the high standard of living, the European countries, especially those in the western part of the continent, are among the most attractive and desirable destinations. They are preferred destinations for migrants from Asia and Africa, as well as for those from the rest of the European continent. For instance, in 2020, 8.6 million non-EU citizens were employed in the EU labour market, out of 189.1 million persons aged from 20 to 64, corresponding to 4.6% of the total (European Commission, 2022). It is estimated that 23.7 million people (5.3%) out of 447.2 million people living in the EU on 1 January 2021 were non-EU citizens (EUROSTAT, 2022). In 2020, there were about 1.9 million immigrants to the EU from non-EU countries; more than 950 thousand people emigrated from the EU to a country outside the EU, and, in addition, 1.2 million people previously residing in one EU Member State migrated to another Member State (EUROSTAT, 2022). To compare, in 2019 there were approximately 2.7 million immigrants to the EU from non-EU countries and about 1.2 million people emigrated from the EU to a country outside the EU; in addition, 1.4 million people previously residing in one EU Member State migrated to another Member State in 2019 (EUROSTAT, 2022).

As the unemployment rate is getting lower, the shortage of qualified and skilled workers is getting higher. Between 2013 and 2019, many companies in the European Union complained that "the availability of labor was a factor limiting production – increased nearly fivefold in construction, quadrupled in industry, and more than doubled in the services sector" (Eurofound,

2021, p. 3). At the same time, remaining European countries (non-EU member states), whose labor force is emigrating predominantly to the EU area, are also facing labor shortages. However, they have also become in the meantime interesting for migrants who mostly come from Asia and Africa. Europe has been witnessing an extremely large movement of people that reached its peak between 2015 and 2019 with migrants from Asia and Africa. It continues further on with migrations between the eastern and western European countries, and the conflict in Ukraine has generated a large number of refugees to whom European countries offered work permits and employment to include them in their labor market. The issue that all migrant workers and refugees face is their integration into society and the workplace. Research conducted in Germany indicates that despite some differences between labor migrants and refugees workplace integration is more successful than integration in society (Schmidt & Müller, 2021).

Migration within the European continent is not a new phenomenon. In the last century, it began significantly after the end of the Second World War and lasted for decades with higher or lower intensity. Thanks to migrant workers, many countries, especially Germany, recovered their economy in a relatively short time and raised economic growth to an enviable or, better said, the highest possible level. A strong economy contributed to a higher standard of living, and it, on the other hand, created a new culture and lifestyle that differed from the one based on traditional family values. The result is reduced birth rates and an aging population.

The aging of the population means that a certain number of working-age people is decreasing, while the number of older people within the population is increasing. This situation will have profound implications, not only for individuals but also for business and society as a whole. These implications will primarily affect health care, labor markets, pension funds, etc. To avoid the worst-case scenario, many countries create migration policies to support companies' recruitment of foreigners (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013). European countries are trying to establish the stability of the system by raising the retirement age (Fouejieu, Kangur, Martinez, & Soto, 2021). Such measures may partially and temporarily help to some extent. European companies will have to find a workforce

from some other sources to ensure business stability (Smit, Tacke, Manyika, & Thiel, 2020).

However, recruiting, developing, and managing a foreign workforce can sometimes be a great challenge for employers and managers. This challenge may be reflected in cultural, linguistic, and other differences that can be an obstacle to the socialization and integration of newcomers. At the same time, it can be a great opportunity because a different way of thinking, a different approach to work, and new and different skills and knowledge can create an environment productive for developing new ideas and innovations. This paper will focus on challenges that managers face in terms of recruitment, socialization and integration, training and development, workplace operations, and innovation.

1. Literature review

Migrations allowed companies to access a wider talent pool and therefore to select more suitable candidates for vacant posts. Many companies rely on the "Recruiting influences employees' motivation, performance, and retention" (Phillips & Gully, 2015, p. 1416). In the recruitment process, it is very important to hire employees who have the abilities necessary for the company's success (Lämsä, Mattila, Lähdesmäki, & Suutari, 2019). Risberg & Romani (2022) state that recruitment studies involving migrants point to three factors influencing the organizational perception of their employability: recruiter characteristics (recruiters' tendencies to hire persons similar to themselves are observable in the recruitment of migrants); organizational norms (person-organization fit, indicating the organizational norms against which a candidate's suitability is assessed); and size and the international orientation of the organization (larger and internationally oriented organizations are likely to hire migrants).

The diversity in the workforce is increasing due to the aging population in Western society and the increased amount of migrant workers moving around the globe (Bleijenbergh, Peters, & Poutsma, 2010). Migrant workers differ in knowledge and skills, languages they speak, gender, age, motives for migration, and the like. They are "more likely to be engaged simply for their knowledge of the target market, facilitating risk management and market entry" (Enderwick, 2011, p. 87). The mobility of skilled immigrants is of great importance and interest because of the valuable contributions that they make globally

(Sayyad Abdi, Partridge, Bruce, & Watson, 2019). They bring a unique culture and complementary skills to their new work environment and approach challenges in different ways.

The diversity of knowledge and skills leads to the improvement of the organization's ability to solve problems quickly using the best techniques. Hirst et al. (2021) emphasize that the employment and workplace integration of refugees has positive effects on economic growth. However, recruiting the right ones may be sometimes rather challenging. Assessing migrant job applicants is often a complex task for managers (e.g. managers are not familiar with the migrant's previous employment, educational institutions, cultural differences and language barriers) who are, therefore, likely to make mistakes during the recruitment process (Farashah & Blomquist, 2020).

New technologies influence the competitiveness of European companies. The organizations require broader skills profiles, and qualified "players than can play at more than one position". Most of the jobs occupied by migrant workers are low-skilled jobs (Forde & MacKenzie, 2009). Hainmueller & Hiscox (2010, p. 79) find that "rich and poor natives are equally opposed to low-skilled immigration in general; in states with high fiscal exposure, poor (rich) natives are more (less) opposed to low-skilled immigration than they are elsewhere". On the other side, "if highly skilled migrants are seen as a threat and employment is seen as placing them in a relationship with the object at risk (organizational normality), then it makes sense from an organizational perspective to limit this relationship; the obvious way to minimize the relationship is not to recruit them, not hire them, place them in internship positions, or promote them at a lower level than they enjoyed in their home country" (Risberg & Romani, 2022, p.17).

Organizational effectiveness is secured by recruiting the right talent (Phillips & Gully, 2015). It means that candidates should possess desirable work experience in the industry besides formal education and qualifications. In some cases, there may be a kind of discrepancy between the work experience required for the job and the work experience held by migrant workers so that applicants are directed to lower-skilled jobs. It is not unusual for migrant workers to volunteer to develop their experience and acquire references to meet job demands.

Difficulties in the workplace can arise because of language or cultural differences. Lack of language skills can cause communication barriers and create problems in terms of workplace cohesion. Lack of language skills is seen as a lowered efficiency if a new employee does not speak the language well, and there is always an assumption that the person's ability to do the job properly will be negatively impacted. (Risberg & Romani, 2022). Faaliyat et al. (2020) argue that a lack of communication skills among foreign employees can affect their involvement in decision-making, which can affect career advancement opportunities. Problems with communication may arise when the communication tasks become unpredictable (Cheng, Im, Doe, & Roy Douglas, 2021). Further on, Cheng et al. (2021) added that in addition to overall communication topics, migrant workers sometimes find it difficult to understand technical expressions and terms used in the workplace.

Lack of cultural awareness in daily interactions with co-workers and customers may affect the migrant's integration within the organization. Migrants who are not fully socialized and integrated may experience emotional suffering, fear, and isolation, which leads to a decline in worker motivation. The process of socialization and integration may fail for several reasons, usually related to cultural differences, stereotyping, lack of communication skills, the nature of coworkers, personal life issues, etc. To avoid these, companies may use some socialization strategies to ease the integration process of the newcomers. Besides, newcomers are also responsible for their integration. Cooper-Thomas et al. (2012) developed three broad categories of newcomer strategies, namely change role or environment, learn or change self or seek information, and mutual development. Their research aimed to provide the full range of strategies that newcomers use to facilitate their organizational socialization.

Organizational socialization depends on the organizational procedures and practices, as well as the immediate managers' and supervisors' commitment. To use the full potential of newly arrived workers it is necessary to ensure their full integration. "Migrant workers often suffer from social exclusion in the workplace and therefore identify less with their organization and engage less with their work" (Adamovic et al., 2022, p. 377). Coworkers' perceptions of newcomers are important for their integration as well. What is

seemed to be a must is the fairness of employee compensation systems. Usually, employees compare their income with the income of their colleagues and other workers, and that comparison is related to their pay satisfaction (Ikävalko & Kohvakka, 2021). Otoo & Mishra (2018) suggest that company management should ensure that employees' pay is equivalent to current market trends. The question is if migrant workers depress the wages of native workers. The researchers, in general, have different opinions on this issue. Although there is a huge number of empirical studies on this topic it is still hotly debated (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010).

The managers should pay attention to and be aware of what is in theory called diversity management. Diversity management should be connected to all aspects of human resources management with an added emphasis on the organizational culture (Bleijenbergh, Peters, & Poutsma, 2010). Some studies show that native and immigrant managers differ in their hiring preferences – native managers hire fewer immigrant workers than immigrant managers (Åslund, Hensvik, & Skans, 2014). Diversity management promotes the greater inclusion of employees across a variety of backgrounds. It values the skills, knowledge, and attitude that every employee brings to the organization and rewards them accordingly. Companies should adopt diversity policies and strategies to influence Human Resources (HR) processes, and promote and ensure diversity, cultural awareness, and the ethical context of an organization. The type of diversity, as well as time, impacts the success and level of inclusion. Diversity, especially demographic, can be positively associated with inclusion because even though some individuals may feel uncomfortable or have some fear of working in diverse groups at first, that fear and apprehension usually disappear over some time (Singletary Walker, Ruggs, Botsford Morgan, & DeGrassi, 2019).

"Organizational culture and demographics are associated with the choice of diversity strategy and, consequently, HR processes" (Farashah & Blomqusit, 2021, p. 289). The quality of the relationship of migrant workers with co-workers and colleagues is positively related to their perception of mutual similarity in the sense of attitudes, perspectives, and values (Valenzuela, Jian, & Jolly, 2020). Organizations need to provide institutional protection for employees in terms of their diversity. The diversity policy demonstrates

the organization's will and commitment to providing equal opportunities and rights to all workers and promoting and encouraging diversity in the workplace. "If diversity is about answering the 'what' question, diversity policies describe the 'how' portion of managing diversity in terms of how diversity management should be carried out" (Jin, Lee, & Lee, 2017, p. 306). Porcena et al. (2021, p. 2623) argue that "the ethical context of an organization is a critical contextual framework through which diversity can affect organizational performance".

Equal and fair treatment and compensation will not only contribute to the fulfillment of basic legal obligations but will also increase the satisfaction of workers and will increase their productivity. Fair conditions in the workplace will lead to the elimination of employee dissatisfaction, and they will more easily identify with the organization, its mission, and goals. A fair work environment increases organizational identification, and it results in higher work engagement (Adamovic et al., 2022). To support workplace integration and provide the newcomers with orientation, organizations use various measures such as welcome events or seminars (Ortlieb & Ressi, 2022). Organizations use different strategies to tackle cultural differences between foreign workers and host nationals that may serve as a barrier to workplace integration (Lamba & Krahn, 2003). Bleijenbergh et al. (2010, p. 419) claim that "the implementation of diversity management does not provide inclusion of women, the elderly, and migrants in the workforce *per se*, but that achievement of this aim depends on its fit with the socio-cultural context and its integration in the human resources management system of the company in particular". Nardon et al. (2022) argue that the position of women has weakened during the pandemic and put them in an even worse situation. It pushed them towards unemployment, lower-skilled jobs and positions, and less stable employment, and made their career trajectory delayed or interrupted (Nardon, Hari, Zhang, Hoselton, & Kuzhabekova, 2022).

The reduction of uncertainty in the socialization of newcomers primarily focuses on minimizing the negative effects of job requirements rather than providing the resources needed to facilitate work engagement and integration (Saks & Gruman, 2018). As migrant workers perform the same duties and tasks as other workers they need the same training programs. Besides, additional training related to languages, cultural differences, ethics,

and communication may back up their integration. The full integration of newcomers is not complete without proper and adjusted training and development. Career development plays a significant role in maintaining employee efficiency in the organization (Jehanzeb, 2020). Training in its earliest phase of orientation and socialization is crucial, especially when we talk about workers who are exposed to occupational hazards as well as dangerous working conditions. However, workers often report a lack of safety training despite the dangerous nature of their jobs (De Castro, Fujishiro, & Sweitzer, 2006).

Facilitating the socialization and integration of newcomers is beneficial to new employees' well-being and performance, as well as to the organization's efficiency (Cranmer, Goldman, & Houghton, 2019). One way to facilitate career development and advancement, and decrease the turnover intention of newcomers is through formal socialization programs (He, Gao, & Yan, 2020). For conducting everyday tasks, maintaining high-level motivation at work is very important. Increased motivation helps newcomers acquire more knowledge about the organization, which is, in turn, related to increased organizational knowledge (Jokisaari & Vuori, 2018). Job satisfaction affects job performance through career development (Lee & Lee, 2018). A high level of job satisfaction decreases the level of fluctuation and increases job performance and overall organizational efficiency.

Organizations are, in general, responsible for maintaining a high level of job satisfaction by eliminating job and work-life issues. When employees receive support from their superiors, they will have more resources to deal with the problems of work-family conflict, maintain their job and life satisfaction, and retain their current jobs (Zhang, Rasheed, & Luqman, 2020). Li et al. (2020) claim that it is important for organizations to take care of migrant workers' families, their needs, and career-related concerns. Such a relationship would positively affect employees' emotions and their perception of the organization. Positive emotions and job satisfaction mediate the positive association between motivation and job performance (Reizer, Brender-Ilan, & Sheaffer, 2019). However, it is always important to keep in mind that different things motivate different people. Also, when conducting performance appraisal, it is important to keep in mind the fact that what is a good indicator of productivity in the

case of one employee may fail in the case of another (Moore & Piwek, 2017).

Migrant workers bring not only different skills and knowledge to the organization but also a different attitude towards work. In general, they appreciate the opportunity to have a job and do their best to meet the expectations of the employer and management, unconsciously creating a competitive atmosphere among coworkers. Competitiveness in the workplace does not necessarily mean a negative phenomenon. On the contrary, it can lead to higher productivity and better business results. However, at the same time, it can create a feeling of discomfort and uneasiness in some workers. Employees have a strong feeling of competitive anxiety when their tasks are interdependent on one another (Lee, 2020). In some cases, rivalry can be a problem because domestic workers may feel threatened by newcomers. A high level of workplace competition can cause unwanted consequences that can manifest in the lack of desire of employees to share knowledge with coworkers. Some authors believe that competition in the workplace is one of the causes of knowledge hiding. Anand et al. (2020) identified categories of events that lead to knowledge hiding, one of them related to performance and competition. The impact that migrants have on businesses through knowledge sharing is of great importance for many business entities. Therefore, companies often ensure a mix of staff working together to encourage knowledge transfer and added value for the organization. Knowledge sharing elicits and supports the flow of ideas and experiences and helps improve reliability and mutual understanding within an organization (Fait & Sakka, 2020).

Facilitating and managing knowledge sharing is challenging since individuals are not always willing to share (Lam & Lambermont-Ford, 2010). People in an organization blend their experience and learning into knowledge which becomes a strategic resource that requires to be managed effectively (Goswami, Agrawal, & Goswami, 2021). Interactions between individuals, whose education and experiences are different but complementary, provide opportunities for collective learning (Jøranli, 2018). Workers of foreign origin are significant subjects in knowledge transfer, especially where there are some obstacles, such as international borders, economic, cultural, or other barriers (Williams, 2007).

Knowledge hiding can also occur in response to ruined relationships in the organization and the occurrence of workplace incivility. Workplace incivility can arouse negative emotions, and the victim will respond by engaging in knowledge hiding (Irum, Ghosh, & Pandey, 2020). Organizations should prevent accumulated and exaggerated competition impact workplace discipline and, in some cases, causing conflicts and communication issues. Managing discipline and conflicts has always been challenging. Avoiding conflicts is the simplest and most common management tactic. However, some authors argue that this is not very effective as it may have harmful effects, and prolong and worsen conflicts (Patton, 2020). A diverse workplace with people of different cultural backgrounds may experience conflicts deriving from cultural differences (Brett, 2018) defined by the dignity, face, and honor cultural framework (Leung & Cohen, 2011).

A positive work atmosphere creates the preconditions for pleasant and productive work. Productivity will be higher and work more enjoyable in an environment that encourages and supports initiative and creativity. Newcomers usually have a different approach to looking at things and solving problems than existing workers (Malik & Manroop, 2017). Workers with diverse perspectives develop new ideas and business solutions and thus contribute to the innovation process within the company. The more diverse the workforce, the higher the chances for greater creativity. "The higher usage of HR development practices goes along with the higher level of organizational innovative performance" (Berber & Lekovic, 2018). Innovation is essential for businesses. New jobs, and company expansion and development, are created by translating innovations into new products and services and bringing new approaches to problem-solving and decision making. This may be useful for companies operating in developing countries since some studies point out a positive causal link between innovation and migration inflows (Aldieri, Kotsemir, & Vinci, 2020). Migrants bring their competencies, work practices, and personal networks to both, their home and host countries. These three serve in direct support of innovation (Herstad, Sandven, & Ebersberger, 2015). Migrants' connections are unique and valuable assets. Companies benefit from those connections when expanding and creating new consumer markets for products or services. When migrants return to their homes they build networks that help the companies internationalize, and often they become official and authorized representatives in

their country. They are involved in the social and political affairs of the home countries and may reinforce the home country's innovative capacity via scientific, technological, and cultural exchanges (Gevorkyan, 2015).

2. Research questions and methodology

According to the above said, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1. How challenging is the process of recruiting the new workforce?

RQ2. To what extent is it difficult to socialize and integrate newcomers?

RQ3. How complex is it to encourage training and development?

RQ4. To what extent do managers find it hard to manage regular daily workplace operations?

RQ5. How complicated is it to foster innovation?

To prepare an adequate questionnaire for research, the first phase consisted of interviewing the managers and examining their challenges when employing and managing the migrant workforce. Based on the experience and recommendations of 12 company managers, the 18 most common issues are grouped into five sections: 1. Recruitment (RE): skills, experience, and language; 2. Socialization and integration (SI): cultural differences, stereotyping, and emotional suffering, fear and isolation; 3. Training and development (TD): learning, application of newly acquired skills, and career development; 4. Workplace operations (WO): workplace performance, workplace motivation, workplace competition, maintaining discipline, knowledge sharing, and communication; and 5. Innovation (IN): creating new products and services, creating new approaches to problem-solving and decision making, and building networks and internationalization. Those questions are incorporated into a survey, and a five-point Likert scale was used (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree) to allow the respondents to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement.

The research was conducted in ten European geographically connected countries: five EU member states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania, and Slovenia) and five non-EU member states (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia).

A minimum quota was set on the number of migrant workers in the company: 2+ workers for

micro-enterprises (< 10), 5+ for small enterprises (< 50), 15+ for medium (< 250), and 25+ for large companies (> 250). The invitation to participate in the online survey (a link with an online form with all fields mandatory), respecting the given quota, was sent to 64.519 managers drawn from the EUMMAS database and the authors' LinkedIn profiles. The following industries were offered in the survey: Agriculture; Basic metal production; Chemical industries; Sales; Construction; Financial services; Health care and social assistance; Food processing; IT and Telecommunications; Forestry, wood, pulp and paper; Hospitality and tourism; Mechanical and electrical engineering; Textiles, clothing, leather, footwear; and Transport and logistics, as well as the option *"Other"*.

3. Findings and discussion

A total of 1,127 responses were received from managers from ten European countries: Romania (19,1%), Slovenia (17,7%), Serbia (13,9%), Bulgaria (10,9%), Greece (9,9%), Croatia (9,2%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (8,3%), Montenegro (4,0%), North Macedonia (4,2%), and Albania (2,8%).

Most responses were from the Construction industry (30.1%) followed by Hospitality and tourism (12.2%), Transport and logistics (8.4%), IT and Telecommunications (8.2%), Mechanical and electrical engineering (6.3%), Food processing (5.9%), Agriculture (5.7%), Forestry, wood, pulp and paper (3.9%), Basic metal production (3.7%), Health Care and Social Assistance (3.3%), Chemical industries (2.8%), Sales (2.6%); Financial services (2.0%), and Textiles, clothing, leather, footwear (1.4%). The remaining 3.5% of the respondents selected the option *"Other"* for their industry.

RQ1. How challenging is the process of recruiting the new workforce?

For the purpose of this research, low-skilled jobs are defined as low-wage jobs/positions regardless of the educational background and/or work experience of the incumbent, or jobs/positions that require workers to have no more than a secondary school diploma and less than a year of job-related work experience. Data show that 53.9% of the workforce that was recruited were low-skilled workers based on this definition. Unlike *Skills* and *Experience*, the vast majority of the managers agree that *Language* was a challenging issue in the recruitment process (Table 1).

Table 1 Survey Questions and Responses: Recruitment

		RE1. The process of Recruitment of new workforce is challenging in terms of Skills.		RE2. The process of Recruitment of new workforce is challenging in terms of Experience.		RE3. The process of Recruitment of a new workforce is challenging in terms of Language.	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	86	7.6	220	19.5	80	7.1
	Disagree	380	33.7	311	27.6	154	13.7
	Neutral	224	19.9	103	9.1	175	15.5
	Agree	248	22.0	291	25.8	528	46.9
	Strongly Agree	189	16.8	202	17.9	190	16.9
	Total	1127	100.0	1127	100.0	1127	100.0

Source: the authors' research

All twelve managers who were interviewed in the process of identifying possible challenges stated that the current level of language proficiency was generally too low. Acquiring a foreign language is a time-consuming process. It is not always about what is said but also how, when, and in what situation and context. Lack of technical language is an additional obstacle. The newcomers' communication problems may happen due to poor vocabulary, and unfamiliarity with conversation topics (Cheng, Im, Doe, & Roy Douglas, 2021).

RQ2. To what extent is it difficult to socialize and integrate newcomers?

The international career help employees improve their language and business skills, knowledge, cultural adaptability, international teamwork skills, creativity, etc. (Berber & Lekovic, 2018). Cultural differences contribute to workforce conflict and to the challenge of managing it (Brett, 2018). Managers, generally speaking, find it challenging to manage cultural differences. One reason for that is the fact that some of them have not undergone any appropriate training. Mandatory cultural training will help newcomers feel more comfortable and develop a positive attitude toward their colleagues (Malik & Manroop, 2017). In organizations with a low level of workforce diversity and internationalization, all employees, including managers, need to attend at least some training programs. Organizations must provide cultural training to equip, develop, and empower their immediate managers (Faaliyat, Townsend, Peetz, & Ressia, 2020). Their own culture is another reason why they fail. People, in general, try to understand someone else's culture by comparing it to their own. More than 56% of respondents expressed a high degree of agreement with the claim that it is difficult to manage the *Cultural difference* (Table 2).

Table 2 Survey Questions and Responses: Socialization and Integration

		SI1. It is difficult to manage Cultural differences.		SI2. It is difficult to prevent Stereotyping.		SI3. It is difficult to eliminate Emotional suffering, fear and isolation.	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	62	5.5	89	7,9	72	6.4
	Disagree	182	16.1	428	38,0	142	12.6
	Neutral	249	22.1	480	42,6	143	12.7
	Agree	568	50.4	96	8,5	431	38.2
	Strongly Agree	66	5.9	34	3,0	339	30.1
	Total	1127	100.0	1127	100,0	1127	100.0

Source: the authors' research

However, one of the items in the survey referred to the origin of the respondents and 14.6% of them declared themselves as foreigners. The majority of them, more than 84%, disagreed with the *Cultural difference* statement (Table 3). The result in terms of *Emotional suffering, fear, and isolation* is also similar. The personal experience of migrant managers helps to overcome problems such as *Emotional suffering, fear, and isolation*. On the other side, neither managers of domestic (45.5%) nor foreign (47.5%) origin find it difficult to prevent *Stereotyping*, and their responses are similar.

Table 3 Survey Questions and Responses: It is difficult to manage Cultural differences – Cross-tabulation

		SI1. It is difficult to manage Cultural differences.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Please select your type of origin.	Domestic	30	75	237	558	63	963
	Foreign	32	107	12	10	3	164
Total		62	182	249	568	66	1127

Source: the authors' research

RQ3. How complex is it to encourage training and development?

A complex cultural environment may have an impact on the knowledge management process (Goswami, Agrawal, & Goswami, 2021). Learning may be very challenging and complex. It requires a great commitment from organizations, managers, and employees. In a diverse workplace, it may face a number of obstacles. Learning and development are limited because learning in the workplace is complex, considering the social, cultural and other barriers that influence learning (Billett & Choy, 2013). Managers find it complex to encourage the process of *Learning* and motivate *Career development* (Table 4). When there is a high rate of turnover, and when a great proportion of the workforce is low-skilled it is hard to encourage learning, and motivate employees to work on their personal career development.

Table 4 Survey Questions and Responses: Training and Development

		TD1. It is complex to encourage the process of Learning.		TD2. It is complex to encourage the Application of newly acquired skills.		TD3. It is complex to motivate Career development.	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	41	3.6	78	6.9	20	1.8
	Disagree	71	6.3	183	16.2	33	2.9
	Neutral	196	17.4	680	60.3	177	15.7
	Agree	490	43.5	147	13.0	746	66.2
	Strongly Agree	329	29.2	39	3.5	151	13.4
	Total	1127	100.0	1127	100.0	1127	100.0

Source: the authors' research

The majority of migrant workforce do not stay long with their companies (Table 5). Turnover and succession planning help companies reduce the costs related to recruitment, selection, orientation, and socialization. Human resources planning improves the regular workplace operations, enhances employee loyalty, and improves engagement and morale. It creates a diverse pool of skilled and talented individuals within the organization and increases job security while developing individual skills (Ali & Mehreen, 2019). Reduced turnover results in greater employee commitment to career development and the learning process, and would ultimately improve the *Application of acquired skills*. Learning does not happen by itself. It must be planned, stimulated, and directed.

Table 5 Survey Questions and Responses: Training and Development

		D9. How long do Migrant workers stay with your company?	
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Less than one year	241	21.4
	Between one and three years	795	70.5
	More than three years	91	8.1
	Total	1127	100.0

Source: the authors' research

RQ4. To what extent do managers find it hard to manage regular daily Workplace Operations?

Motivation is an important workplace mechanism, and motivating employees constitutes a noticeable challenge in contemporary organizations (Reizer, Brender-Ilan, & Sheaffer, 2019). The level of motivation will, in general, affect employee performance. Employee

performance can be improved if employees' job satisfaction is taken into account (Hendri, 2019). The organization must create a supportive workplace to meet employees' expectations and motivate them. A supportive workplace affects employees' motivation and job satisfaction (Tran, Thi Vinh Hien, & Baker, 2021). On the other side, a toxic workplace atmosphere and abusive management practices are negatively associated with employees' job performance and positively associated with employees' turnover intentions (Tariq & Ding, 2018). Our research shows that managers do not find it challenging to influence *Workplace performance*, *motivate employees*, and *maintain discipline* (Table 6). On the other side, managing effective *Communication*, controlling *Workplace competition*, and encouraging *Knowledge sharing* is considered to be hard tasks. Communication issues may occur since the majority are low-skilled workers. Communication with migrant workers is a great challenge, particularly in companies that employ low-skilled

workers (Hopkins, 2012). Knowledge hiding, as already stated, can be caused by workplace competition. Riege (2005) identifies the following barriers to knowledge sharing: at an individual or employee level (lack of communication skills and social networks, differences in national culture, overemphasis on position statuses, and a lack of time and trust), at an organizational level (the economic viability, lack of infrastructure and resources, the accessibility of formal and informal meeting spaces, and the physical environment), and at a technology level (unwillingness to use applications, unrealistic expectations of IT systems, and difficulties in building, integrating, and modifying technology-based systems). Knowledge hiding does not only occur horizontally between coworkers but vertically as well, due to a lack of personal relationships, especially when the senior manager and their reporting manager come from different cultural backgrounds (Butt & Ahmad, 2019).

Table 6 Survey Questions and Responses: Workplace Operations

		WO1. I find it hard to influence Workplace performance.		WO2. I find it hard to manage effective Communication.		WO3. I find it hard to Motivate.	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	374	33.2	109	9.7	209	18.5
	Disagree	442	39.2	155	13.8	540	47.9
	Neutral	200	17.7	209	18.5	246	21.8
	Agree	84	7.5	310	27.5	88	7.8
	Strongly Agree	27	2.4	344	30.5	44	3.9
	Total	1127	100.0	1127	100.0	1127	100.0

cont.

		WO4. I find it hard to control Workplace competition.		WO5. I find it hard to Maintain discipline.		WO6. I find it hard to encourage Knowledge sharing.	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	18	1.6	393	34.9	24	2.1
	Disagree	180	16.0	504	44.7	41	3.6
	Neutral	431	38.2	154	13.7	204	18.1
	Agree	371	32.9	41	3.6	517	45.9
	Strongly Agree	127	11.3	35	3.1	341	30.3
	Total	1127	100.0	1127	100.0	1127	100.0

Source: the authors' research

RQ5. How complicated is it to foster innovation?

Human resources management practices encourage employee involvement and engagement and foster a favorable perception of an organizational climate focused on innovation (Palumbo, Manesh, Pellegrini, & Flamini, 2022). Participation in decision-making encourages employees to take on more responsibilities, learn a wider range of skills, and have a greater level of communication skills (Goñi-Legaz & Ollo-López,

2017). Managers find it more complicated to foster the Innovation process in terms of *Creating new approaches to problem-solving and decision making*, than *Creating new products and services* (Table 7). This can be partly understood through the prism of skills and qualifications because decision-making is often linked to a highly-skilled workforce. Participation in decision-making may be viewed as an extra workload and can generate negative attitudes toward employees (Goñi-Legaz

& Ollo-López, 2017). In addition to skills and qualifications, another reason lies in the fact that the degree of fluctuation is relatively high. This can mean either a low level of job satisfaction or a limited and short contract period. *Building networks and internationalization* is significant for companies wishing to expand their business beyond national borders. They sometimes do this to bring their products or services closer to customers and clients in other markets, and sometimes to gain logistical support and people whose knowledge and skills can improve the organization's business, especially in the area of innovation. Building networks and internationalization is inevitable in cases when a company cannot obtain a profile of workers necessary for innovation, or when people with specific skills are expensive or not available (Kerr & Kerr, 2018). Internationalization requires skills, previous connections, entrepreneurial spirit, and experience. Our results do not show a very high interest in this activity with migrant workers.

Table 7 Survey Questions and Responses: Innovation

		IN1. It is complicated to foster the Innovation process in terms of Creating new products and services.		IN2. It is complicated to foster the Innovation process in terms of Creating new approaches to problem-solving and decision making.		IN3. It is complicated to foster the Innovation process in terms of Building networks and internationalization.	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	245	21.7	130	11.5	91	8.1
	Disagree	371	32.9	105	9.3	102	9.1
	Neutral	412	36.6	276	24.5	116	10.3
	Agree	65	5.8	332	29.5	594	52.7
	Strongly Agree	34	3.0	284	25.2	224	19.9
	Total	1127	100.0	1127	100.0	1127	100.0

Source: the authors' research

Conclusion

The study aimed to reveal challenges that managers face in managing migrant workers. *Language; Cultural differences; Emotional suffering, fear and isolation; Learning; Career development; Communication; Workplace competition; Knowledge sharing; Creating new approaches to problem-solving and decision making*; and *Building networks and internationalization* seem to be major obstacles in managing the migrant workforce. In addition, the research reveals the impact of the managers' background on most of the management processes including most of the aforementioned challenges. This becomes obvious starting with the recruitment process and language issues, then socialization, communication, cultural issues, etc. Companies can try to compensate for the diversity of management in terms of the supervisor's background, for example, with quality cultural or language training. However, future research should provide an answer to the question of whether such a measure can be adequate. In addition, learning and knowledge sharing are, as a rule, replaced by knowledge hiding in organizations with a high turnover rate. Tables 4 and 5 show that in organizations with a high turnover rate, it is difficult to encourage learning. As the majority of migrant workforces do not stay long in their companies, this implies that turnover and succession planning in such companies needs to be improved to reduce costs related to recruitment, selection, orientation, and socialization.

Study limitations and future research directions

There are several limitations related to this study resulting manly form the design, approach and methodology employed. Firstly, the number of respondents should be larger in any future research if we are talking about a phenomenon that should generalize certain questions. Secondly, it is necessary to take into account the fact that age and gender greatly influence the issues that this study deals with, and that in the following work we should also focus on this specificity of the respondents according to certain variables. Third, each research question can represent a broad enough basis for independent research, so this work opens up the possibility for numerous researches that can be treated as a continuation and expansion of the existing work. Also, it could represent an input study for further research concerning migrant workers and workforce integration in European companies and business environment.

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