

The Experiences of Immigrants Working in the Irish Labour Market

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Abstract

This research explores how immigrants from European and non-European countries experience the labour market in Ireland and how their individual experiences compare. A gap in the research knowledge was identified before this research was conducted. There is little existing qualitative research available comparing the different challenges and barriers faced by European and non-European immigrants in accessing the labour market in Ireland. A qualitative research design was the method chosen for this study and data was collected through in-depth interviews with four immigrants living and working full time in Ireland. The participants in this study were made up of two males and two females ranging in age between 24- 30 years of age. The two females emigrated to Ireland from Venezuela while the males were from Croatia and France. The findings indicated that as non-European immigrants the Venezuelan immigrants faced more challenges and barriers accessing employment in the Irish labour market than their European counterparts. Career progression was also compromised due to visa restrictions which also influenced the susceptibility of exploitation for non-European immigrants in the labour market. Access to education was also much more expensive to access for the Non-European females.

Introduction

Migration throughout the world has been a part of human life since our existence. Over the course of history migration has evolved due to many factors including colonization, advances in technology, accessibility, affordability and globalization. Due to these advances contemporary societies have seen the volume of people who migrate across the globe increase hugely, even if the reasons for people migrating in contemporary societies may have changed compared to the past. Something that is unique to immigrants is their own personal experiences of migration. Immigrants in the labour market can often experience many additional challenges than people from the indigenous workforce face, such as difficulties with language, certain visa restrictions, discrimination, racism and exploitation, yet immigrants can make many important contributions to the labour market in both high and low skilled occupations. The aim of this research is to discover what the experiences are of four immigrants who have migrated to Ireland and are working in the Irish labour market. Two of the immigrants are European and have emigrated from inside the European Union while the other two have emigrated to Ireland from South America. Their experiences will be compared to discover how they experience the Irish labour market.

Literature Review

History of Migration

Boswell and Geddes (2011, p. 2) explain how an international migrant can be defined as someone who lives outside their country of origin regularly or irregularly for a period of 12 months or more. International migration is not a new phenomenon and has existed in different forms for centuries. Though the reasons people migrate vary greatly and differ throughout history, people may migrate to escape political turmoil, armed conflicts or for economic, environmental and cultural reasons. The first large scale international migration arose from European colonisation, European colonial powers such as the British, French, Spanish and Dutch migrated to Africa, Asia and Oceania and conquered the indigenous people (Klein, 2010, p. 77). This colonisation often led to domination through slavery, exploitation of the natives their countries natural resources and even genocide . An important antecedent of modern labour migration is the system of chattel slavery, this formed the basis of commodity production in the plantation and mines of the new world from the late seventeenth century, the production of sugar, tobacco, coffee, cotton and gold through slave labour was crucial to the economic and political power of colonies such as Britain, France, Spain and Portugal (Castles and Miller, 2003, p. 51). Millions of slaves were taken to the Americas to work and were bought and sold as commodities. This was the beginning of large scale migration of people across the globe into international labour markets, albeit through forced migration.

Ireland and Migration

Ireland has a long history of mass emigration, the great famine resulted in millions of Irish people emigrating around the world. Official figures portray that during the period from 1850 to 1910, 4.2 million Irish people emigrated from Ireland (Guinnane, 2001, p. 305). Many of these people were extremely poor and emigrated out of necessity in search of a better life and to seek labour opportunities in more prosperous countries such as America, Australia and throughout Britain. Ireland has experienced other periods of large scale emigration during the economic depression of the 1980' s and more recently during the recession that began in 2007 following the prosperity of the Celtic Tiger years. However, the diaspora who emigrated from Ireland during famine times contrast strongly from those who left in more recent years. Moriarty, Wickham, Daly and Bobek

(2014, p. 75) explain how since the 1980's well educated Irish graduates have been more likely to emigrate during periods of both prosperity and recession, research from the NESC (as cited in Moriarty et al, 2014, p.76) discovered that the least likely cohort of people to emigrate came from stable working-class households.

Migration in Contemporary Society

In contemporary Ireland a prosperous Irish economy coinciding with the effects of globalisation has resulted in a large influx of immigrants into Irish society (Banks, 2008, p.63). The Migrants Rights Centre Ireland ([MRCI], 2007, p.15) discuss how the reversal of migration trends in Ireland from a country of predominantly outward migration to one of inward migration began in the 1990's, this was the beginning of a time of economic prosperity in Ireland that became known as the Celtic Tiger, the arrival of large numbers of immigrants transformed Ireland's cultural and demographic landscapes. Statistics portray how this trend has continued, in 2016 Ireland experienced net inward migration of (+3100) and a net inward figure for immigrants from outside the European Union of 13,300 (Central Statistics Office [CSO], 2016). These figures reveal how contemporary Irish society has evolved into a multicultural society.

Ireland is now the European headquarters of many large multinational companies including Google and Facebook which employ a highly skilled and culturally diverse workforce. This has created many opportunities in the labour force for Irish citizens as well as immigrants. Power and Szlovak (2012, p. 2) highlight the high skill levels of immigrants in Ireland stating that in 2011 45% of immigrants of the working aged population held a third level qualification compared to 32% of Irish nationals, the report also revealed that many immigrants possess important skills such as fluency in multiple languages and that immigrants are more willing to undertake low skilled work that Irish nationals are less prepared to do.

Immigrants in Ireland

In contemporary Ireland Polish nationals make up the largest portion of immigrants with 122,515 people, followed by 103,113 UK nationals and 36,553 Lithuanians (CSO, 2016). In Ireland 12 nations with over 10,000 residents accounted for 73.5% of the total non-Irish national population,

the 12 countries include Poland, America, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Spain and the UK (CSO, 2016). These Statistics further outline the picture of migration in Ireland , as of April 2016 535,475 non-Irish nationals from 200 different countries were residing in Ireland, 293,830 of these immigrants were at work accounting for 14.9% of the total workforce, while almost half of all non- Irish national workers were employed in four different industries (CSO, 2016). The hotel and retail trade sector employed (45,812), accommodation and food services (40,859), manufacturing industries (36,387) and human health and social work (21,779). Figures show unemployment to be slightly higher for immigrants at 15.4% compared to 12.6% among Irish nationals (CSO, 2016). Though, Leibig and Mo's studies (as cited in the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2014, p. 2) state that in most countries apart from those with a large population of older immigrants, immigrants contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in individual benefits, this research also discovered that low educated immigrants have a better fiscal positions between the contributions they make and the benefits they receive than their native born peers.

Foreign Language Students in Ireland

The economy in Ireland at present appears to be strong with unemployment levels as of January 2018 standing at just 6.1% (Central Statistics Office, [CSO], 2018) this means good job opportunities for immigrants coming to Ireland. Ireland is also a very attractive destination for international English language students looking to study here. A newly published report has discovered that Ireland is the most popular destination in the world per capita for international English language students. In 2016 students from 101 different countries came to study English in regulated English schools across Ireland, this presents an 11% increase from 2015 figures, 78% of these international students came to Ireland from inside the European Union but figures from students coming to Ireland from outside the Eurozone continue to rise (Marketing English in Ireland, [MEI], 2018) .These immigrants have contributed to Ireland evolving into one of the most globalised countries in the world, with a highly educated and diverse labour force. A report from the Department of Education (2016, p. 20) titled International Education Strategy for Ireland has estimated that the international education sector contributes 762 million euro per annum to the Irish economy.

Racism

Racism exists in every country throughout the world though the levels and severity of racism varies greatly in different nations. Rolsten (2004, p. 357) explains how racism has been prevalent in Irish society for centuries, as a colony of the British empire Ireland was incorporated in global trade, this resulted in Irish people coming into contact with people of colour and different ethnicities through immigrants, traders, soldiers and entertainers, it also meant Irish people travelled to other countries and met people of colour and experienced new cultures. Rolsten writes how through colonization Irish people have been both racialized themselves and involved in the racialization of others, he attributes these relations to power and whether the Irish were subordinate or dominant in these relationships. The economic prosperity of the Celtic Tiger that began in the nineteen nineties saw a large increase in the number of immigrants arriving in Ireland from a wide range of culturally diverse backgrounds, many in search of emerging labour opportunities. When immigrants arrive in new countries they often find themselves in less powerful positions in society compared to the native populations, this can perhaps make them more susceptible to racism and exploitation.

Ireland has been slow in combating the problem of racism in society, Ireland signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1968 but did not ratify the Convention until December 2000 (The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, 2018). To help combat Racism in Ireland a data base named Ireport was established in July 2013 which enables victims of racial abuse to report this abuse confidentially through an online platform at Ireport.ie, statistics show 400 incidents of racism in Ireland were reported to Ireport.ie during its first year of foundation, reports of racial abuse was highest amongst travellers and people of black or African descent. During a three-month period covering April, May and June of 2014, 105 incidents of racial abuse were reported to Ireport.ie, the type of abuse varied but included 32 incidents of verbal abuse and 5 physical assaults, of the 105 cases reported 70% of the perpetrators were said to be white Irish people while only 20% of the total incidents of abuse were reported to the Garda (Michael and O'Curry, 2014, p. 15).

Exploitation of Immigrants in the Labour Market

In the past many Irish immigrants faced challenges and exploitive practices, although in contemporary society these challenges and risks of exploitation appear to have diminished somewhat and now Irish immigrants face some of the least levels of exploitation. The barriers to migration for Irish immigrants on a whole are now minimal in comparison to other nationalities, Irish emigrants are amongst the most mobile emigrants in the world for many reasons. Moriarty et al. (2014, p. 72) explain how many contemporary Irish immigrants are well educated and there is a relatively straight forward recognition of their qualifications, their ability to speak English and visa permissions also helps, as well as the global networks Irish graduates have access too built up through a family history of migration and peer networks, this means they are much less susceptible to exploitation compared with Immigrants from other countries.

As outlined immigrants in any labour market may face many more challenges than the indigenous population, language barriers, racism, discrimination, cultural differences and access to services are some common problems. In contemporary Irish society the (Migration Rights Centre Ireland [MRCI], 2017) highlights how constraints of the work permit system often leaves immigrant workers much more vulnerable to exploitation from employers, many immigrant workers are fearful to leave exploitive positions in low paid jobs for fear of becoming undocumented, this affects career progression and development, this particularly affects immigrants coming to Ireland from non-European countries where the freedom to live and work is restricted. The MRCI (2015, p. 3) study into immigrants in Ireland portrays a picture of exploitation, discrimination, and racism towards immigrants in the Irish labour market, stating that 44% of immigrants surveyed received less than €8.65 per hour, 61% of those surveyed said they had to work extra hours for no pay and 93% have not been offered a promotion or chance to progress in the last year even though a high proportion of immigrants are overqualified for the jobs they do.

McGrath and Murrays (2007) study into Brazilian migrants in Gort highlights the importance of language, social networks and social capital for immigrants to avoid exploitation. In this study

they explain how immigrants are often reliant on more powerful immigrants already residing in the country to help integrate them into the community and introduce them to social networks that may help them develop friendships or access labour opportunities. McGrath and Murray (2007, p.7) found exploitative practices between Brazilian immigrants in Gort was common, with existing immigrants charging new immigrants for any type of help, this included help with basic accommodation, such as sleeping on a sofa, or help in interpreting with the initial bureaucratic necessities, such as applying for a PPS number. They also explain how the act of selling jobs or charging a commission for menial jobs was common practice, previous research from Goza (as cited in McGrath and Murray, 2007, p. 8) on Brazilian migrants to North America also found evidence of selling jobs which appears to be more prevalent in countries with competitive labour markets and especially between undocumented workers.

Impact of Country of Origin

Statistics show the European Union now has a population of 508 million people made up of people from 28 different member states, Ireland became a member of the European union in 1973 (European Union, 2018). The scope of labour mobility greatly increased with European Union enlargement in 2004 and 2007 which increased the labour markets adjustment capacity, data shows that as much as a quarter of the asymmetric labour market shock that is occurring at different times and with different intensities across countries may have been absorbed by migration within a year (Jauer et al. as cited in [OECD] , 2014, p. 2).

Freedom of movement between people living in member states has resulted in large number of people emigrating within the European Union with few restrictions, international immigrants emigrating into the European Union can only do so if they acquire a student or work visa from an educational institution, a perspective employer or if they are seeking Asylum (Boswell and Geddes, 2011, p. 3). The levels of exploitation and challenges faced by immigrants who come to Ireland will be dependent on many factors. However, immigrants arriving to Ireland from other European member states will automatically have an advantage over people arriving from outside the European Union regarding visa restrictions and the very high costs of education for non-Europeans looking to access it. Non-European immigrants to Ireland may find that the differences in culture and language are more challenging in comparison to European immigrants, also perceptions Irish people have of Non-European immigrants may be more ignorant or

stereotypical which can lead to an added risk of discrimination, exploitation and racism towards immigrants.

Conclusions of Literature Reviewed

It is clear from existing research that immigrants now comprise of a large portion of the Irish labour force. As a result of the influx of immigration the demographics of Ireland have evolved and we are now heavily reliant on our multicultural immigrant workforce. The literature examined details the positive impact migration can have on a country, helping to create a more culturally diverse society. Immigrants also help provide new innovations and create economic growth through the establishment of new businesses and additional consumption and expenditure in the economy. Immigrants also appear to be more willing to undertake low skilled work that the indigenous population are often unwilling to do. Many immigrants are also overqualified for the jobs they do yet they are still subjected to high levels of exploitation and discrimination.

It is not only Irish employers exploiting immigrants, the existing literature portrays how immigrants already living in Ireland sometimes exploit new immigrants who arrive in the country. One of the themes that was prevalent throughout was the challenges faced by immigrants arriving in Ireland from outside the European Union compared to the barriers faced by immigrants within the European Union such as additional visa restrictions and the higher costs of accessing education.

Racism also appears to be a prevalent theme when examining the experiences of immigrants in Ireland with white Irish people often the perpetrators. Though the establishment in 2013 of Ireport.ie provides a confidential online platform to report incidents of racism is progress in the fight against racism. This data can be collected and may provide important evidence for work that needs to be done to eradicate racism and establish a more egalitarian Irish society for everyone.

There does however appear to be many positive pull factors attracting immigrants to Ireland. The European headquarters of many multinational companies such as Facebook and Google provide employment opportunities for a large number of immigrants from many different nationalities. These positions often require employees to be proficient in languages other than English to serve overseas markets, these jobs often favour immigrants who may be fluent in multiple languages. The fact Ireland is now the most popular destination in the world per capita for students learning English is also a major factor for attracting immigrants to our shores. On evidence of the literature there appears to be many positive and negative aspects for immigrants living in Ireland. This qualitative research will attempt to delve deeper beyond the statistics and discover the real-life experiences of immigrants who have come to Ireland from European Countries and non-European countries.

Aims of the present study

The aim of this research is to explore how immigrants in contemporary Ireland experience the Irish labour market. While there appears to have been extensive quantitative research available on certain aspects of immigrants lives in Ireland, there seems to be a gap in knowledge in regards to qualitative research comparing the experiences of immigrants who arrive in Ireland from within the European Union and those who have immigrated from outside of the European Union.

This research aims at comparing and contrasting the experiences of immigrants in the Irish labour market and establishing any differences to their own individual experiences. Through the use of qualitative research methods this study aims at filling this knowledge gap and providing a more in-depth picture of the true personal experiences of immigrants in Ireland today, it asks the question, what are immigrants experiences of working in the Irish labour market?

Methods

Research Design

Qualitative research was conducted to collect data for this study through in-depth interviews. Qualitative research was the method chosen to complete this study as it allowed the researcher to gain a complex insight into the immigrants individual personal experiences, it helped to provide a rich in-depth and multifaceted analyses of the research question that would not be possible using quantitative research methods. Mason (2005, p.1) explains how qualitative research is multi-dimensional and complex and eludes to some of the advantages of using qualitative research, writing how through qualitative research one can explore a wide array of dimensions in the social world including texture and the weave of everyday life, Mason believes this enables the researcher to gain a better understanding of the experiences and imaginings of our research participants.

Interviews were used to gather information for this study as they provide a very deep personal insight into the experiences of the interviewees. Silverman (2005, p.154) describes how interviews as a method of gathering information in qualitative research help provide a gritty reality of people's lives through which interviewers and interviewees generate plausible accounts of the world. The researcher felt this deep level of investigation into the individual immigrant's personal experiences could best be achieved through in-depth interviews.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis was conducted to identify patterned meaning and common themes that arose from the data collected through the interview process. The information gathered through the in-depth interviews was collected through recordings of the interviews. This information was then transcribed onto a Microsoft Word document and was then imported and coded using the qualitative software package NVivo 11. Coded data was then arranged into different nodes and then the relevant information under these nodes was organised under separate themes.

Participants

Four young participants were selected for interview and were acquired through informal personal contacts. Two of the interviewees selected were male and two were female, ranging in age from 24- 30. All four interviewees were immigrants to Ireland and had been residing in Ireland for periods of time ranging from 3 – 5 years. Two of the Immigrants interviewed were originally from countries inside the European Union, Croatia and France, while the two female interviewees were both from Venezuela in South America. All four people interviewed were in full time employment in Ireland. All four of the interviewees had successfully completed third level education in different areas in their respective countries. The two female participants were employed with major multinational companies, one was working in a customer service provider related to Information Technology and the other was employed as a Chartered Accountant. The male interviewees were also employed in different sectors, one was employed in the Hotel and Catering sector while the other also worked in Customer Service for a large multinational company. Three of the interviewees were living and working in Dublin city while the French male interviewee was living and working in Cork city.

Ethics

Before commencing each interview the concept of informed consent was explained in detail to each of the interviewees. Informed consent was given by each of research participants, each interviewee was asked to read and sign a consent form outlining the subject matter and the reasons for conducting the research. Mauther, Birch, Jessop and Miller (2002, p. 53) outline the importance of informed consent when carrying out research but stress that consent should be ongoing and renegotiated between researcher and researched throughout the research process and that ethical considerations should form an ongoing part of the research.

The researcher was particularly aware of the importance of informed consent during this study. Immigrants are sometimes in a more vulnerable position in society so the researcher was aware of the position of power they may have in regards to the interview process with the four interviewees. The researcher took time to ensure that each of the interviewees did not feel pressurised in any way to take part in the interview process. Participants were informed that it was their right to terminate the interview at any moment and stressed that they did not have to

answer any question or questions they felt uncomfortable with. Once the interview had been completed the interviewees were made aware that they had the right to withdraw any information they provided throughout the interview process up until the day of submission of the study.

Ethical guidelines outlined by the Sociological Association of Ireland ([SAI], 2018) were adhered to throughout the research process and the general principles in determining ethical courses of action were followed including the maintenance of professional competence, integrity and social responsibility. Sensitive issues such as racism, exploitation and discrimination were addressed during the interview process. The researcher was aware that these issues could be potentially upsetting for the interviewees so at first did not directly ask the interviewees about their direct personal experiences of racism, exploitation and discrimination but rather asked them to share their general views on racism in Ireland. Only when it became apparent that each of the four interviewees was comfortable and willing to share their personal experiences on these issues did the researcher ask them about their personal experiences on these sensitive topics.

Every interviewee was assured of strict confidentiality, the researcher explained to each of the interviewees that their identity would remain anonymous and no identifying details would be revealed in the study. Each interviewee's name was replaced by a number using the numbers 1-4 to represent the four interviewees ensuring their identities were not revealed. The researcher made each participant aware that the data collected through the interview process was stored on a password protected file that only the researcher had access too.

Findings

Through the process on Thematic Analysis five main themes were identified. The five themes selected were Immigrants Background Knowledge of Ireland and Reasons for Emigrating, Access to Education , Career Progression and Job Satisfaction, Exploitation and Racism and Challenges Faced by Immigrants , each theme will now be discussed in further detail below.

Theme 1

Immigrants Background Knowledge of Ireland and Reasons for Emigrating

The immigrants interviewed came from different backgrounds and countries but did share some of the same experiences. Interestingly all four interviewees knew very little about Ireland before choosing to come here, though they all did know that Ireland was an English speaking country and were aware of some other details such as St. Patricks day, the Shamrock and Ireland being the European headquarters for many multinational information technology companies . Three out of the four immigrants came to Ireland to learn English while the fourth was visiting a family member living in Ireland and chose to remain here as they enjoyed it so much. The two Venezuelan interviewees explained that political difficulties in their native country was also a big motivating factor for them emigrating to Ireland.

Interviewee 1 discusses why they left their home country of Venezuela:

Well it was basically the situation in my country was very bad at the time and it's even worse now but it was really the insecurity when you live there, the political environment.

Interviewee 3 states a similar reason for leaving Venezuela:

First to learn English that was my primary reason to come here and the second was the opportunities to learn in my field. Things were also very dangerous in my country and the political situation is only getting much worse.

The European immigrants who arrived from Croatia and France did not state such problems in their countries of origin as motivating factors for leaving and explained they chose Ireland as a place to learn English.

The immigrants knowledge of Ireland before arrival was limited with Interviewee 2 stating:

No I just knew about Ireland well you spoke English , St. Patricks day maybe the Shamrock but nothing much else.

This response was similar to interviewee 3 who said:

Literally nothing much well I knew about the leprechauns and the gold pots and it was an English speaking counter , but no I really didn't know much to be honest. I just knew it was a cold place.

Interviewee 1 was aware that Ireland was the headquarters of many multinational companies:

Not much really I knew you speak English and I was looking for a place to learn English and also I knew there is a lot of IT companies that have set up their headquarters here so that was my field and I thought it would be a great opportunity to go there and work in my Field.

Theme 2

Levels and Access to Education

All four people interviewed were highly educated and had qualified with third level qualifications from their native countries. Three out of the four had attended English language schools for courses in Ireland while the two Venezuelan interviewees had also attended third level Institutions in Ireland as well. The cost of accessing education in Ireland was an issue for all four interviewees and especially for the Venezuelans interviewed as they were subjected to pay expensive non-European fees.

Interviewee 2 explained how the high cost of education in Ireland put them off even attempting to access education here:

No I never even tried to do a course here , I thought at the time that it was way too expensive for me, it put me off.

Interviewee 1 had a similar view on the cost of accessing education in Ireland and went on to explain how education in Venezuela is free up until masters level:

Price wise for the Non-European it is very expensive, it could be three times the price from what an Irish person pays. I needed to get a big loan to do my level 7 in Computer Science here. The education in my country is free, from the very basic, primary school, secondary school and college, you only pay for masters, but all the other education is free.

The French immigrant number 4 also explained how he found the English course he completed here to be expensive and stated how access to education is also free in France:

The English course I studied here was almost 2000 Euros for only 8 months for me that is well, very expensive to pay for. You see education in France is free it is easier to access and cheaper.

The Venezuelan interviewee 3 stated the only reason she was able to study for Accounting in Ireland was that her work payed for it:

It would have been very expensive for me to pay fees, see now I have to remain working for them for two years after I qualify, so if I leave within this time frame then I have to pay for the course fees back in full to the company.

It appears on the evidence of these statements that non-European immigrants are really at a disadvantage when accessing university education in Ireland which may prevent them fulfilling their full potential and perhaps impacts upon their career progression. Fees for English language schools also appear to be very high.

Theme 3

Career Progression and Job Satisfaction

All four Immigrants shared many similar experiences under this theme. When first arriving in Ireland all four worked in jobs they would consider themselves overqualified for and found they had to work their way up from the bottom to get into their current positions. However, once they had established themselves in their various positions they all explained how they are happy with the positions they are currently in and enjoy the work they do.

Interviewee 3 explains her experience adjusting from working as a qualified Accountant in Venezuela to working as an Au Pair in Ireland:

It was very hard for me when I arrived because I was so used to being an accountant full time in an office job you know looking after a child wasn't really my thing.

She explains how after one year working as an Au Pair she secured a position as an Accountant:

I now work in Ernst and Young It's an Accountancy firm. I think at the moment it is a perfect fit I really like my job now.

Interviewee 2 expresses how he too had to work his way up when he got his first job in a hotel in Dublin. In Croatia he had a good position a senior Hotel Receptionist.

It was tough when I first came I started as a concierge and I worked my way up to receptionist and then to shift leader. However, the problem was salary it always stayed the same. I didn't get any motivation and I decided to quit.

He describes how after the initial struggle to find a suitable job he now thoroughly enjoys the work he does and feels it is the perfect fit for his education and experience levels:

I am progressing and I am good with where I am right now . The people I work with are brilliant and then the atmosphere that I work in, you come to work and you have the whole thing in front of you it's exciting.

Interviewee 1 has also struggled in Ireland to find a position suited to her previous experience and qualifications as a Network Engineer in Venezuela but appears happy she is finally on a career path:

It was very difficult for me I minded children here for 3 years when I came and I mean I worked as an Engineer in Venezuela, but now I work as a Technical Analyst in web development but I am really enjoying it, it's a good place to start for my career here.

Theme 4

Exploitation and Racism

Interestingly out of the four interviewees only interviewee 1 had personal experience of racism towards them in Ireland and this only occurred on one occasion. The rest reported that they had never experienced any form of racism against them and even more surprisingly they were unaware of any incidents of racism against friends or work colleagues.

Interviewee 1 recalled their personal experience of racism which occurred when they were working in a Pharmacy:

A lady was annoyed about the way I was talking to her, the way my English was and my accent, she said, how dare you come to a country like this if you don't speak the language, how do you come here and not do your best, the people cannot understand what you are saying. I was completely shocked because you know for me that was very hard, it made me feel very bad because I was doing my best there.

When interviewed about the exploitation of immigrants in the Irish labour market all four interviewees believed immigrants were more susceptible to exploitation than Irish people and all agreed that non-European immigrants are more vulnerable to exploitation than immigrants from inside the European Union. Interviewee 2 who arrived in Ireland from Croatia explains about their personal experience of exploitation when working in a Dublin city hotel:

I did lots of extra hours for no pay when I came first, you see people come here in search of a better life and they will do things that they don't do in their country they so maybe doing extra hours with no pay, basically employers exploit them and probably they won't say anything thing, because for them it is only good that they have a job and that they have some financial stability.

Interviewee 4 shares their opinion on exploitation:

When they are not European they are more vulnerable to exploitation everybody knows this, even how they treat them in the emigration office is like really bad. When some girls are Au Pairs , the families are just bad very bad, very bad.

Interviewee 2 stated:

I know people that have been exploited , they work for a lot less than the minimum wage just to be able to work more hours. Some of them work in restaurants and some mind kids, it happens a lot but you have to survive somehow.

Theme 5

Challenges Faced by Immigrants

All four immigrants also stated one of the major challenges they faced when arriving to Ireland was accessing adequate rented accommodation at an affordable price. Interviewee 3 commented:

One of the hardest things is getting housing well especially in Dublin anyway. It would be nice if rent was cheaper at the moment it is a pain you know, you have to go onto say Daft and Facebook groups and basically beg for a place.

Interviewee 1 described their struggle to find a place to live in Dublin:

It was very tough I was here all alone with not much money. I lived for three months in a hostel and went to see like twenty places but couldn't get anywhere. I was lucky after a long time I met some people to rent with but the place we lived was not very good and there was lots of us.

All the interviewees believed that it is more difficult for immigrants to get jobs compared to Irish people and that getting a job as a non-European is even harder. Interviewee 1 explains why they believe this is the case:

You see the company has to sponsor you, they have to pay a fee for you in the immigration office that they wouldn't have to pay if they employed a European or an Irish person and plus they have to demonstrate that you are more capable of doing the particular job than an Irish Citizen or the European, also many employers do not recognise my degree, we are last on the list.

Interviewee 3 who also emigrated from Venezuela reveals her struggle to get a job stating:

You see when we come to learn English we have a student Visa so I was only able to work 20 hours a week legally of course. So I had to attend class in the afternoons, and I had to work in the mornings so I struggled to pay for everything.

Interviewee 2 did not experience such visa problems coming from Croatia but agreed it is harder for immigrants to get jobs, often because third level qualifications from other countries are may not be recognised by Irish employers and described their experiences:

It was hard for me I studied hard and even have a masters qualification and still I did not get a job for a long time, I had to start from the bottom because some employers did not recognise my qualifications.

Discussion

This research was conducted to establish the different experiences of immigrants living and working in Ireland. Through a qualitative research design the data collected was organised under different themes. Five main themes were identified, which comprised of Immigrants Background Knowledge of Ireland and Reasons for Emigrating, Level and Access to Education, Career Progression and Job Satisfaction, Exploitation and Racism and finally Challenges Faced. A review of the literature was carried out and it presented both positive and negative aspects of immigrants experiences in Ireland. Some of the findings in this research study coincided with immigrants experiences as highlighted in previous studies. This research discovered that there are many pull factors for immigrants choosing Ireland as a destination to emigrate too, including good job opportunities, high quality standards of living and also the fact that Ireland is an English speaking country proved attractive to many foreign language students looking to study English. However, previous studies also identified Ireland as a place where the exploitation of immigrants in the labour market is common and a society where racism is prevalent. Visa restrictions and work permit issues also prevented some immigrants from gaining access to employment and educational opportunities.

The main research question for this study was What Are The Experiences Of Immigrants Working in the Irish labour market?. The aim of the research was to establish what the immigrants experiences of working and living in Ireland had been since their arrival and what barriers if any existed for them gaining access to the labour market. A gap in knowledge was identified before this research was conducted. Existing research was mainly focused on quantitative studies on immigrants experiences of life in Ireland and while some qualitative research was available in regards to how immigrants experienced the labour market the researcher felt that there was a lack of qualitative research available comparing the experiences of immigrants working in Ireland from European countries to the experiences of those who arrived in Ireland from outside of Europe. Qualitative research was conducted and data collected using in depth interviews. Four interviewees were chosen to take part in interviews, two males and two females, the two female participants were from Venezuela in South America and the other male subjects were both from Europe comprising of one Croatian and one French national.

The participants interviewed for this study had varying degrees of knowledge about Ireland before arriving but the majority were aware that Ireland was an English speaking country and that

it had a good economy with a booming Information Communication Technology (ICT) sector that provided job opportunities for the well-educated immigrants. These were the two main motivating factors for the immigrants choosing Ireland as a destination to emigrate to. This concurs with motivational factors for immigrants choosing Ireland as a destination emigrate from previous research. Banks (2008, p.63) explains that the prosperity of the Irish economy is one of the main attractions for immigrants. While the Department of Education (2016, p. 20) has established Ireland as the most popular country in the world per capita for foreign language students studying English. Power and Szlovak (2012, p. 2) highlight the high skill levels of immigrants in Ireland stating that in 2011 45% of immigrants of the working aged population held a third level qualification. The findings in this study were similar to this previous research, all of the four interviewees were qualified to at least degree level with three of them also possessing post graduate qualifications and fluency in multiple languages. Interestingly, Moriarty, Wickham, Daly and Bobek (2014, p. 75) state the Irish people in contemporary society who choose to emigrate tend also to be amongst the most skilled and well educated people in society. Perhaps less educated or less skilled people may not have the resources to emigrate or are less aware of the opportunities of emigration.

From the literature reviewed high levels of racism were expected to be discovered in this research, surprisingly in this study however this was not the case and the findings discovered only one incident of racism was experienced between all four of the interviewees. Additionally apart from this isolated incident all the participants reported that they were unaware of any racist incidents occurring to anybody they associated with or worked with, they all believed that racism was not a major issue in Ireland. This is in contrast with previous research findings. Michael and O'Curry (2014, p. 15) note that 400 racist incidents were reported to a new online platform called Ireport, which was specifically setup for the anonymous reporting of racism in its first year of establishment in 2013, with 70% of the perpetrators reported to be white Irish people. These figures are only the reported figures and there are estimates the total amount of racist incidents that occur in Ireland on an annual basis are much higher. Michael and O'Curry (2014, p.8) state that people identifying or identified as Black-African accounted for the highest number of victims. This is an noteworthy statement and suggests ethnicity and particularly skin colour may play a significant part in determining who is more likely to be subjected to racism in Ireland. This perhaps could in some part explain why only one incident of racism was recorded in the

findings as two of the research subjects were white European males and the other two Venezuelan women while of Latin ethnicity had pale white complexions.

Exploitation in the labour market was a theme that was identified during the review of the literature and was also a prevalent theme that arose during this study. Findings discovered that all four immigrants had knowledge of practices of exploitation either against immigrants they knew or through direct personal experiences of exploitation in the labour Market themselves. They all agreed that immigrants are often in less powerful positions in society than the indigenous population therefore they are more likely to carry out more menial jobs that they are overqualified for than they would if they were in their native countries.

The interviewees stated working extra hours without pay and being paid below the minimum wage were the most common forms of exploitation they had experienced and were aware of others experiencing. The findings revealed that additional visa restrictions for non-European immigrants meant they were more likely to be subjected to exploitation than their European counterparts. These findings concur with the literature reviewed, the Migration Rights Centre Ireland ([MRCI], 2017) found that due to the additional visa restrictions non-European immigrant workers are fearful to leave exploitative positions in low paid jobs for fear of becoming undocumented, this has an adverse effect on job promotion and career progression. The MRCI (2015, p. 3) study into immigrants in Ireland also discovered widespread exploitation of immigrants in the Irish labour market with immigrants often subjected to pay below the legal minimum wage and some were expected to work additional hours with no extra pay. However, McGrath and Murray (2007) revealed that exploitive practices against immigrants are not just perpetrated by the indigenous Irish population, more powerful immigrants already residing in Ireland may also subject newly arrived immigrant to exploitive practices such as charging fellow immigrants with assistance for bureaucratic processes or assistance with finding suitable accommodation. Though the research in this study found no evidence this practice, with the all four immigrants stating they were unaware that this type of exploitation went on.

Boswell and Geddes (2011, p. 3) highlight the additional challenges faced by non-European immigrants compared to European immigrants who emigrate to Ireland from inside the Eurozone as non-European immigrants can only legally stay in Ireland if they acquire a student or work

visa from a perspective employer or if they are seeking Asylum. These additional challenges posed to non-European immigrants were faced by the immigrants in this research study and were a prominent theme in the findings. The Venezuelan Interviewees believed these visa restrictions had proved to be a barrier to them accessing employment and prevented career progression as companies must pay money to sponsor non-European immigrants in order to hire them. Employers must also prove that no Irish or European applicants are capable of fulfilling the employment position before a non-European immigrant is considered for selection. Student visa restrictions for non-Europeans studying in English schools only allows immigrants work twenty hours per week legally, this limits their income and makes it even more difficult for them to access full time employment. Third level institutions are often much more expensive for non-European immigrants and as highlighted in the findings the immigrants complained about the high cost of living in Ireland especially in regards to rented accommodation in Dublin city, immigrants often have to work longer hours to help maintain themselves living in Ireland. A combination of these factors can ultimately make immigrants more susceptible to exploitation by employers.

This research did have a number of limitations, the small sample size of the study meant only four immigrants experiences of living and working in Ireland could be captured. The four interviewees were from only three countries, Croatia, France and the two Venezuelan women, this limited the depth of the study. No African or Black immigrants were interviewed for this research which limited the ethnic diversity of the study, as research from Michael and O'Curry (2014, p.8) suggests perhaps the awareness of issues such as racism would be more prevalent if this cohort was included. The immigrants all lived in city centre locations in Dublin City and Cork City, a study of rural immigrants may produce different findings.

Further research could concentrate on studying a larger sample size. All four participants in this study were very well educated young immigrants, a larger sample size may help incorporate a wider age range of immigrants with more mixed levels of education. African Immigrants or Black immigrants should also be included in future research to increase the ethnic diversity of the research and help gauge a better picture of immigrants experiences of life in Ireland. Immigrants living in rural locations around Ireland should be included in future research.

Despite its limitations this study has contributed to the knowledge of how immigrants experience the Irish labour market. It has identified a difference between how European immigrants and non-European immigrants experience working in the Irish labour market and has discovered that additional barriers such as the visa restrictions are faced by non-European immigrants which makes it more difficult for them to access employment and progress in their careers. It has also found that immigrants and particularly non-European immigrants are more vulnerable to exploitation than Irish people or European immigrants. The two most prominent forms of exploitation evident from this study were immigrants being paid below the minimum wage and working extra hours for no pay. The high cost of education for non-Europeans also limits their educational opportunities in Ireland which affects their access to the labour market. This study has also helped to outline areas for future research to establish an even greater understanding of how immigrants experience life in contemporary Irish society.

Conclusion

International migration has resulted in Ireland becoming a hugely diverse and multicultural society, globalisation and advances in technology have contributed to the ease at which people can now migrate around the world. International travel is now more affordable and accessible than at any other time in history and while large numbers of people still emigrate from their native countries out of necessity, fleeing wars or poverty, for political persecution or for economic and environmental reasons, there is growing number of well-educated international immigrants emigrating throughout the world by choice to experience new lands and cultures, meet new people, learn new languages or for new jobs or business opportunities. Perhaps the more educated we all are about the lives and experiences of the immigrants living around us the more harmonious the multicultural society Irish society we now live in will be.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Where are you originally from?
2. How long have you been living in Ireland?
3. What did you know about Ireland before you decided to emigrate here?
4. What were your reasons for emigrating to Ireland?
5. What are your education levels?
6. Are you employed in Ireland ? and can you tell me a little bit about what you do here?
7. Do you feel you are over educated for the position you are currently working in ? Can you tell me why you feel this way?
8. I know sometimes when immigrants coming to Ireland they need to gain work permits to work here. Do you know of anybody who has had difficulties getting a work permits?
9. Do you think it is more difficult in your opinion for Immigrants arriving to Ireland to get jobs compared to Irish people maybe going for the same position? Can you explain why you feel this way?
10. Do you feel that immigrants working in Ireland are more vulnerable to exploitation in the Irish Labour Market ? is there any difference between European and non-European immigrants who experience exploitation? can you give reasons for your answer.
11. Do you know of any incidents of racism against any immigrants working or living in Ireland? if so can you explain in detail what happened?
12. What's your favourite and least favourite thing about working in Ireland? and if you could change one things about living in Ireland what would it be? (and you can't say the weather)

Appendix (B)



The Experiences of Immigrants in the Irish labour Market

My name is Cillian Foyne and I am conducting research that explores the experiences of immigrants in the Irish labour market.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves an interview that will take roughly 40 minutes.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. If you do take part and any of the questions do raise difficult feelings, you do not have to answer that question, and/or continue with the interview.

Participation is confidential. If, after the interview has been completed, you wish to have your interview removed from the study this can be accommodated up until the research study is published.

The interview, and all associated documentation, will be securely stored and stored on a password protected computer.

It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the interview that you are consenting to participate in the study.

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact STUDENT Cillian Foyne (10121001@mydbs.ie) or Annette Jorgensen (Annette.jorgensen@dbs.ie)

Thank you for participating in this study.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____