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Perception of qualifications of migrant workers: the effect of individual characteristics of managers

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Introduction The issue of migrants within Europe has been under extensive discussion. It is increasingly recognized that migrants play an essential role in the economic and societal outcomes as workforce and citizens. Economists and different social scientists including psychologists, HR specialists and sociologists have studied the migrants and their career success mainly through two perspectives: (a) the characteristics of migrants including their human capital (education and professional background), social capital ethnicity and gender; and (b) immigration policy and institutional framework such as supportive policies, systematic and individual discriminations, recognition of credentials and training opportunities. Research taking an organizational perspective is at the initial stage. The lack of research on migrants from an organizational/managerial view leads to an inability to create a more inclusive and supportive system to allow migrants integrate into the job market successfully. Managers at the organizations and official at the government are influential on the decisions regarding employment and employment policies. Beside the human capital of the migrants, the managerial/official preferences and perceptions regarding migrants can affect the employment prospect of the migrants through processes of recruitment process, organizational or national policy making.

Objective This study attempts to find out the most important criteria for employment of migrants from managers and government officials perspective. Then we analyze the factors that influence manager perception of the qualifying criteria. The knowledge raised from such study will assist migrants to develop and improve desired qualification and lets policy makers to take into account organizational concerns in policymaking.

Method The study uses European Social Survey data incorporating responses from 2828 managers in 20 countries. Managers include 77 legislator/senior government officials, 275 managing directors/chief executives and 2828 middle/functional managers. Paired t-test and structural equation modeling (SEM) are used for quantitative analyses of data.

Results Managers have evaluated the importance of qualifying criteria for migrants in six areas: ability to speak country’s language, having good educational qualifications, having needed work skills, commitment to the way of life in the country, being white and having Christian background. The commitment to the way of life in the country is the most important criteria (Mean= 7.31 out of 10) followed by the work skills (Mean=6.62), educational background (Mean=6.32) and language capabilities (Mean=6.29) occupy respectively next places in the ranking. The racial discrimination is significantly lower than religious discrimination. Then, structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to evaluate the effects of characteristics of manager on the evaluation of the qualifying criteria, attitude towards migrants and perception of anti-discrimination law at work. Characteristics of the manager include: 1) individual values (self-transcendence and conservation); 2) exposure to migration (being foreign-born, having contact with migrants); 3) exposure to discrimination 4) attitude towards multiculturalism and 5) demographics (gender, age, education). Attitude towards migration plays a mediation role between values and importance of qualifying criteria. Managers with higher level of
self-transcendence and lower level of conservation have more positive attitude towards migrants and demand lower levels of qualifications from migrants.

**Conclusion** From the managerial or legislator perspective, commitment to be integrated into the host society and adjust the lifestyle is even more important than skills and educational background of the workers. It might be concluded that social capital and acculturation is more important of human capital of migrants. Our analysis shows that attitude towards migration plays a mediation role between values and importance of qualifying criteria. Managers with higher level of self-transcendence and lower level of conservation have more positive attitude towards migrants and demand lower levels of qualifications from migrants.