

## Research Articles

# Rural Temporary Migrant Workers: Adjustment and Integration in Portugal

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## Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the main adjustment difficulties encountered by temporary immigrants and to identify the ways in which organizations received them and implemented integration strategies. Using a sample of three human resource managers, six supervisors and 50 immigrants of varying nationalities, the results revealed that although immigrants claimed to feel largely integrated in the new society and the organizations where they worked, the supervisors argued that integration and adjustment practices directed at immigrant workers were almost non-existent. The practices carried out by the organizations were primarily related to the work aspect, alongside a degree of support with bureaucratic issues and in some cases the provision of Portuguese language courses. Studies on rural immigrants are scarce, especially with regard to organizational integration practices. Managing a diverse workforce is one of the great challenges of modern organizations, hence immigrant workers' integration is critical not only for the individuals themselves but also for the performance and success of the companies as a whole.

*Keywords:* Temporary rural immigrants, socio-cultural adjustment, integration, managerial practices

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## Theoretical Background

The diversity of cultures in the contemporary world is an indisputable reality. In one city one can meet people of different nationalities, different religions or different ideologies, who speak other languages and who carry various cultural schemes, ways of dressing, habits and rules. Demographic mobility and migratory flows have always existed, but never with the intensity seen today. According to the International Migration Report about 2015 (“[United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division](#)”, 2016), there are about 244 million international immigrants worldwide. There are thus changes in the demography of the present-day workforce: multicultural collaborators who identify with more than one culture and who have different cultural schemes ([Fitzsimmons, 2013](#)). This is confirmed by the share of immigrants in total employment, which has been rising substantially (e.g., [Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras \(SEF, 2016\)](#)). In spite of high unemployment levels, companies have continued to hire foreign workers, in large part because they believe they represent flexible and low-cost labor ([Standing, 2014](#)), especially in the area of agriculture. In this sense, immigration has been presented as a response to labor flexibility, as the constant search for more flexible and uncertain work by employers has resulted in the increased recruitment of immigrant workers ([Peixoto, 2008](#); [Phizacklea, 2005](#)). Certainly, the business fabric reflects the cross-cultural characteristics of multiculturalism, revealing itself in the multiplicity of daily business experiences with foreign work ([Carvalho, 2004](#)), where integration often becomes a secondary issue ([Sousa et al., 2015](#)). The management of cultural diversity therefore represents a daily necessity for all organizations, which face complex challenges in managing people of different nationalities and cultures, whose values, beliefs and behaviors vary considerably. Such management is



especially challenging in the case of temporary immigrant workers (people coming to engage in a temporary activity, such as agriculture, construction or tourism). Legitimate questions that may consequently be asked include: How do managers manage these multicultural rural workers? How are they integrated? What are their main difficulties?

Given the multiculturalism that characterizes Portuguese society and the high number of temporary rural migrant workers who are contracted here every year, this study is designed on the one hand to identify the integration practices that are carried out by organizations, and on the other the main difficulties that these workers encounter in their daily lives, as well as their degree of adjustment to a new country. To this end, six interviews with the direct supervisors of immigrants and three interviews with the human resources (HR) managers of the companies that employ them were conducted, and some questionnaires were administered to approximately 50 temporary rural immigrants.

### **Cultural diversity management: The Portuguese reality**

Cultural diversity, defined as the cultural variety, race, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religion and cultural differences (e.g., [Amadeo, 2019](#)) that exist in an institution or in the society, constitutes a major challenge for organizations and society. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO, 2001](#)) cultural diversity represents one of the principal developmental resources, not only economically but also as a facilitator of access to intellectual, affective and moral existence. In a cross-cultural organization, the efficiency of managers and employees is highly contingent on their intercultural competences, that is, their capacity to work effectively in all cultural settings ([Whaley & Davis, 2007](#)). Thus, they must be culturally sensitive and avoid treating co-workers as a uniform or culturally monolithic mass ([Rego & Cunha, 2009](#)). Consequently, the impact of the trajectory of professional mobility becomes a significant factor in patterns of social integration ([Egreja & Peixoto, 2011](#)), since the activity developed by the workers of an organization characterized by cultural diversity – whether in terms of foreign workers or nationals of the host country – is subjected to a scenario of complex social relations, especially when concerning temporary rural workers. Negotiating different cultural realities represents a challenge and being self-conscious and informed of a country's cultural habits is insufficient to facilitating appropriate interactions. Indeed, the capacity to adopt culturally acceptable practices and behaviors is also necessary ([Rego & Cunha, 2009](#)).

Cultural diversity management has been defined as a human resource strategy that facilitates the efficient management of the diversity of the workforce; diversity originating in



demographic changes from the late 1980s and early 1990s (Seymen, 2006). In this sense, Portugal is a country that is marked by considerable diversity in terms of foreign communities. From the maritime explorations of the 16th century to emigration in the 20th century, Portugal has long been a space of transition and interaction between peoples and cultures (Gil, 2008). For many years, the emigrants from Portugal have travelled to France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Americas (Mendes, 2010). In the 1970s and 1990s, following decolonization, the country became a welcoming space for African, Asian and Eastern European immigrants (Gil, 2008), such as Ukrainians, Russians, Poles and Romanians. According to the annual Foreigners and Borders Service (FBS) report (SEF, 2016), the number of immigrants in Portugal in 2016 included around 397,731 citizens with a valid residence permit (an increase of 2.3% over the previous year), and Brazilians comprised the main resident foreign community, with 81,251 citizens (20.4%). The primary factor behind the increase is the widespread perception that Portugal is a safe country, as well as tax advantages that derive from the regime for non-habitual residents (SEF, 2016). This situation has led to an inevitable change in Portugal's social, economic and political fabric, as the country has become a multiethnic and multicultural state (e.g., Fonseca, 2008; Marques, 2007). It has also seen an increase in the number of foreign immigrant employers, while the number of Portuguese native employers has not risen (Esteves, 2017; Morén-Alegret et al., 2018). Such cultural diversity has generated some new challenges, in particular the "acquisition of cultural competences that allow a better understanding of the values, practices and social norms connected to new waves of immigrants" (Malheiros, 2011, p. 11).

Regardless of nationality or motive, immigration to Portugal presents several challenges, especially for temporary migrants. These difficulties can be particularly apparent in the labor market (Heilbrunn et al., 2010), encompassing factors such as competition (e.g., Esses et al., 2001; Venturini & Villosio, 2002), lack of experience, adequate work and social networks in the host country (e.g., Heilbrunn & Kushnirovich, 2008; Kogan, 2007), difficulties arising from the macro-economic environment (e.g., Kreinin, 1965), language problems (e.g., Heilbrunn & Kushnirovich, 2007), prejudice (e.g., Heath & Cheung, 2007), and shortage of educational or professional skills (e.g., Offer, 2007). Faced with these barriers and considering factors such as the weight of culture or cultural distance, the process of integration and adjustment of immigrants becomes more complex. The cultural adjustment of an immigrant can be defined, like expatriate adjustment, as the point where an individual feels comfortable and capable of being effective, in spite of being in a new environment (Halim et al., 2014, p. 124). In this regard, one of the basic concepts regarding adjustment comprises the multidimensional sociocultural concept (Black, 1988; Black & Stephens, 1989; Selmer & Luring, 2015). The



first dimension (general adjustment) concerns the psychological comfort associated with the cultural environment of the host country (for example, food, climate and living conditions). The second dimension (adjustment to work) refers to psychological comfort in relation to norms, work expectations and differences in values. The third and last dimension of social adjustment (interactional adjustment) contemplates the psychological comfort associated with the characteristics of the citizens of the new country, as well as with different styles of communication (Black, 1988; Black & Stephens, 1989). In short, adjustment to a new country and a new culture is essential not only for the full integration and well-being of immigrants, but also for organizational success, reflecting positively on satisfaction, professional performance, and, consequently, on increasing their competitiveness (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011; Jonasson et al., 2017). In this way, it is evident that organizations and their HR departments must define strategies that guarantee the organization's success and consider the place and needs of immigrants.

## Temporary migrant workers in Portugal

Following the Cold War, a "second generation" of temporary foreign workers (Castles & Miller, 2003, p. 102) arrived in Europe and North America, resulting in an annual increase in seasonal agricultural migration (Held et al., 1999). Faced with this reality, some countries (e.g., Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America) have moved towards adopting seasonal agricultural migration programmes, the so-called Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SWAP) (e.g., Hennebry, 2008; Scott, 2015). Evidently, global agriculture is dependent on low-paid migrant labor (Findlay & McCollum, 2013; Hanson & Bell, 2007; Rye & Andrzejewska, 2010; Scott, 2015). This situation is confirmed by the increasing recruitment of seasonal agricultural workers, particularly in the fruit and vegetable (horticulture) sectors during harvest times (Scott, 2015)

The migration of temporary workers is usually initiated by employers wishing to employ foreign workers (Martin, 2006). Of all the sectors of the Portuguese national economy, agriculture (along with construction) employs the largest number of temporary immigrants (Carvalho, 2004). The red fruit farms alone use an average of 4,500 foreign workers in the high season (Cabral, 2015). However, it is difficult to account for the exact number of immigrants entering the country each year, primarily due to the temporary and seasonal nature of their stay, as well as in some cases clandestinity. Nevertheless, for businesses, the only way to circumvent the lack of local labor is to attain it from abroad (Cabral, 2015). In addition, agriculture has played an important role in combating the depopulation of some

regions of the Portuguese interior (Castro, 2008). These farms often employ citizens of more than 20 different nationalities (e.g., Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand), (e.g., Henriques, 2019) which represents a challenge for the organizations that hire them. Communication is one of the greatest difficulties, along with the habits, customs and cultural norms that each worker brings. However, the susceptibility faced by migrants in any specific national context does not essentially translate into other contexts owing to differences in immigration policies (Al Ariss, 2010; Hakak & Al Ariss, 2013; Hawthorne, 2008). Therefore, the extent to which multiculturalism and immigration are historically and culturally recognized and valued in each country, as well as variations in immigration policies, create barriers that are contextually specific (Hakak & Al Ariss, 2013; Zikic et al., 2010). Portugal is a multiethnic country, and according to some studies (e.g., Berry & Kalin, 1995; Ho, 1990) in countries with a history of cultural plurality, multiculturalism is successful, and the presence and integration of immigrants in the new society is made easier. Yet, will temporary immigrants become properly integrated? What are the main difficulties and barriers they face?

Research on this topic reveals a lack of consensus regarding the management of cultural diversity, and the theme has been addressed via different approaches (Dadfar & Gustavsson, 1992; see Seymen, 2006 for a revision). Regardless of the approach adopted, managing a diverse workforce requires a comprehensive change in HR strategies (Alcázar et al., 2012). In this sense, certain questions arise: How do Portuguese organizations that employ temporary rural immigrants manage a multicultural workforce? How do they adapt to a new culture? Few studies have explored temporary immigrants in the agricultural sector in Portugal, especially with attention to the personal perspectives of the immigrants and their employers and managers. Given the growing importance of diversity management in organizations, this study thus seeks to analyze the principal adjustment difficulties experienced by temporary immigrants employed in the agricultural sector, and the strategies that organizations adopt to facilitate their adjustment and integration, not only in the workplace but also in a new culture.

## Method

In order to answer these questions, nine interviews were conducted according to a structured script consisting of open questions. For the selection of the sample, several organizations in the agriculture sector that employ temporary immigrants were contacted. A day and time were agreed with the organizations that were receptive to participating in the study, hence interviews were conducted with HR managers and immigrants' direct supervisors. The

Scientific Committee (entity that regulates guarantees and ethical procedures for investigations) authorized the application of the interviews. The participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality of their responses and the interviews were conducted individually. Appropriate questions were asked to elucidate participants' experiences and/or perceptions where necessary. In total, the application took approximately 15-20 minutes. Immigrants were administered a questionnaire with open and closed questions (Likert scale), presented in both Portuguese and English. The participants in this study did not receive any compensation for their collaboration. The interviews and questionnaires were collected between January and April 2018.

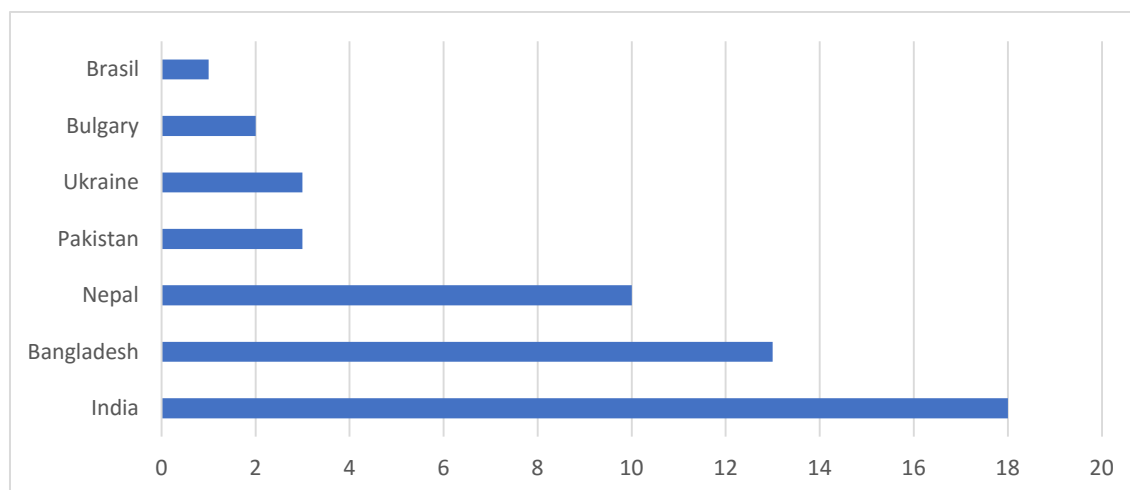
## Samples

### 1. Human resource managers and supervisors

The sample of managers of human resources was comprised of three male individuals, aged between 34 and 38, with an undergraduate level of education, and working within their organizations for at least five years. The supervisor sample ( $n = 6$ ) was composed of two women and four men, aged between 28 and 63 years. Three of the respondents were single and three were married. Approximately 33% ( $n = 2$ ) had a primary education, 33% ( $n = 2$ ) had a secondary education and 33% ( $n = 2$ ) had higher education. These supervisors were responsible for an average of 30 immigrant workers.

### 2. Immigrants

The immigrant sample consisted of about 50 individuals (46 men and four women) aged between 18 and 52 years ( $M = 31$ ;  $SD = 7.45$ ). Most respondents were single ( $n = 30$ ; 60%) and approximately 44% had secondary ( $n = 12$ ; 24%) or higher education ( $n = 12$ ; 24%). The most common nationalities were Indian ( $n = 18$ ), Bengalese ( $n = 13$ ) and Nepalese ( $n = 10$ ) (see Figure 1). This was the first time that most ( $n = 42$ ; 84%) had been in Portugal, and about 12 respondents claimed to have two jobs. All worked in companies producing red fruits, and their main responsibility was for harvesting.



*Figure 1.* Immigrants' nationalities

Note: Frequency (on x axis)

## Interview content

### 1. Human resource managers and supervisors

The interviews with the direct immigrant supervisors addressed several questions regarding the ways in which immigrants were adjusted and the main difficulties of adaptation they faced. The respondents were also asked to describe some complex situations pertaining to adjustment.

The interviews conducted with HR managers focused on the issues related to the recruitment and selection process, and the procedures adopted since departing the countries of origin, stay and return. The interviews also tackled the main difficulties in adapting, integrating and adjusting immigrants; the existence of integration practices of foreign workers and the support provided to them; any conflict situations with the organization and between workers; and the primary difficulties experienced by organizations in the management of these workers (e.g., recruitment, day-to-day management and maintenance of resources).

### 2. Immigrants

The questionnaires administered to the immigrants included some demographic questions, an open question regarding the main difficulties experienced and the strategies used to overcome these, and some closed questions such as "Do you feel you received support from the organization?" (1) Little; 2) Sufficient; 3) A lot), and "What are the main sources of support?" (1) Friends; 2) Family; 3) Others). The degree of sociocultural adjustment was



assessed using the scale of [Black and Stephens \(1989\)](#). This scale was comprised of 14 items evaluating three dimensions of adjustment: general adjustment, interactional adjustment and work adjustment. Given that this scale had been constructed to assess the degree of adjustment of expatriates, whereas this study was focused on temporary rural immigrants, three additional questions were included in the general adjustment dimension (regarding schedules, habits/hygiene routines and documentation/access to services). This scale aimed to assess how adjusted the individual was in a range of situations (e.g., food, shopping, cost of living, daily interaction with sites, performance standards and expectations), through a Likert scale of seven points (1: very unadjusted; 7: completely adjusted). The scale presented a good Cronbach's alpha, both in the total scale (.84) and in the three dimensions: general adjustment dimension composed of 10 items ( $\alpha = .81$ ); interactional adjustment dimension consisted of 4 items ( $\alpha = .83$ ); and work adjustment dimension that includes 2 items ( $\alpha = .83$ ). Since only five immigrants claimed to hold some form of supervisory position, the item 17 was withdrawn from the analysis.

## Results

### **Recruitment and selection process and procedures adopted since departure from the country of origin, stay and return**

Regarding the process of recruiting and selecting immigrants, various sources of support were cited, including government agencies or foreign companies, repeat workers (friends and acquaintances), national companies such as the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, or temporary employment agencies. As a first option, one of the organizations opted for direct contracting and only used other sources when there were production peaks or when local labor was insufficient. Job sites, posters with job vacancies and former worker contacts were also used.

Regarding the procedures adopted since departing the country of origin and immigrants' stay and return, all but one of the companies used certain strategies (and the exception did not recruit externally):

The company has as a procedure the presentation of the project to the potential candidates interested in the country of origin, and finances the expenses with transportation to Portugal, as well as obtaining the documentation. During the

time, the employees are integrated and accompanied by the HR team. The return to the origin country is handled by the organization, if it is the interest of the employee to leave and not look for another job offer, using transport partnerships. (HRM 1, male, 34 years).

At the origin, a selection interview is made. The journey is marked, and the workers are received. On the day of the reception two kits are delivered, one with home things and the other with a small meal. Workers are driven to lodgings and shopping. On day two a presentation and explanation of the contract in the original or English language is given. The necessary elements are collected, and the contract is signed. People start work four to five days later. We have a person of interconnection. At the end of the campaign a trip is scheduled, and the final accounts are made. We take the employee to the destination transport. At the end the employee is contacted to know if everything went well. (HRM 2, male, 38 years).

## Reception and organizational support

After analyzing the interviews with the direct supervisors of the immigrants, it was possible to verify that the reception of these workers was exclusively related to the “work” factor. Indeed, none of the interviewees mentioned any type of programme that aimed to integrate and adjust immigrants, both in general and interaction terms. Thus, the only method used to adjust immigrants to the work they had to perform was demonstration/training, which took place for about 30 minutes to one hour with small groups of workers. On the other hand, the HR managers reported the availability of some support practices, particularly regarding documentation, medical assistance and the provision of Portuguese language courses:

We have Portuguese language courses and habits of cleaning and separation of waste courses, only for the permanent ones. We also handle resident certificates and accompany workers to the health center when needed. (HRM 2, male, 38 years).

Yes, the organization, in particular the HR department, supports foreign employees who do not have a family support network in the country to travel for medical care (consultations or purchase of medication). Some of the workers do not speak Portuguese and have little knowledge of languages other than their mother tongue, which makes it difficult to communicate with health and pharmacy

technicians. In relation to bureaucratic issues the employees who are hired through the program EURES and who require the legalization of documentation, such as a taxpayer number, social security number, European Union citizen's certificate and/or bank account, already have a strategic plan for expediting the obtaining of this documentation with the support of an association of producers. In addition to the contracted through this programme is also given the support in the contact of official entities to all foreign employees who request it in order to resolve bureaucratic issues. (HRM 1, male, 34 years).

From the point of view of the immigrant workers, about 28 claimed that the support given by the organization was considerable and about 21 believed that the organization supported them enough. Only one immigrant claimed that organizational support was insufficient. In terms of support sources, some immigrants claimed to find support from the family ( $n = 14$ ), friends ( $n = 28$ ), family and friends ( $n = 5$ ) and with the staff of the organization where they worked ( $n = 3$ ).

### **Adjustment and main difficulties**

The principal difficulties in terms of immigrants' adjustment, both from the perspectives of supervisors and HR managers, were language/communication, hygiene and unfamiliarity with the country's cultural norms:

In my view, the greatest difficulties of adaptation of foreign employees are the learning of the Portuguese language or another more universal language and the lack of knowledge of the functioning and procedures of the Portuguese institutions that often do not have support technicians who are aware of the difficulties of this type of population. (HRM 1, male, 34 years).

There are several nationalities that do not have hygiene habits according to our standards, so it is always difficult to approach a worker and tell him/her that he or she needs to have a shower every day because they smell bad, and we have standards of hygiene in the harvest that we have to keep. (HRM 3, male, 40 years).

The HR managers indicated that the nationalities with the greatest adjustment difficulties comprised Bulgarian citizens in terms of social issues and Bangladeshi citizens in terms of

cleaning, Thai citizens with communication difficulties and strong cultural habits, and Moroccans who tend to be suspicious, which leads to conflicts between workers:

In our company the nationality that has the greatest difficulty is Thai due to the unfamiliarity with the Portuguese language or the English language among most of the employees, and because they maintain some cultural habits that come into conflict with the national habits, especially with regard to hygiene. (HRM 1, male, 34 years).

The nationality with whom we had some problems are the Moroccans. They are very hard-working people, but they are distrustful and if there are many they tend to organize in groups and cause conflicts. (HRM 3, male, 40 years).

More complex situations were also reported in the process of adjusting immigrants, especially conflicts amongst themselves:

There was a situation with two Bulgarians. One became irritated and threw the fruit to the ground. (Direct supervisor, female, 29 years).

The Nepalese and the Indians started beating because of the division of cultures, and we had to send them away. (Direct supervisor, male, 31 years).

We had a very good Moroccan worker, who one day suspected that her colleagues were making fun of her, and she got into confusion with them. (HRM 3, male, 40 years).

There were some situations of internal conflicts in the housing, using violence, including among women. (HRM 2, male, 38 years).

We had a situation of conflict that resulted in non-serious physical aggression between two employees of different nationalities who inhabited the housing due to communication difficulties. One of them had poor English language skills and misinterpreted the words of one of his colleagues from another nationality. (HRM 1, male, 34 years).

In terms of the difficulty of managing this multicultural workforce, HR managers highlighted the seasonality that rendered it difficult to maintain resources, the management of the expectations of the employees recruited, the difficulties of motivation on the part of the supervisors, high absenteeism (especially on Monday after the mandatory day off), retaining the best workers, and compliance with rules and wage competition:

Ensuring that the procedures of the company's accommodation are complied with for those who are housed there and the understanding of the supervisor's indications in the operation when employees have poor language skills. There is also competition from other European countries with more attractive wage conditions and the fluctuations in production periods that have a direct impact on labor needs. (HRM 1, male, 34 years).

The immigrants appeared to be adjusted in the three dimensions: general adjustment ( $M = 5.77$ ;  $SD = 0.65$ ), interactional adjustment ( $M = 5.89$ ;  $SD = 0.89$ ) and work adjustment ( $M = 4.90$ ;  $SD = 1.36$ ). However, work adjustment displayed a lower mean. A more in-depth analysis of each dimension of adjustment by nationality revealed that the Brazilian immigrant felt more adjusted to work ( $M = 6.6$ ). However, although Brazilians speak the same language as the host country (Portuguese), it is possible that they were less adjusted in terms of interaction in comparison to immigrants of other nationalities. It should also be noted that the Bulgarians ( $M = 4.16$ ;  $SD = 0.23$ ), Indians ( $M = 4.20$ ;  $SD = 0.81$ ) and Ukrainians ( $M = 4.66$ ;  $SD = 1.15$ ) demonstrated a lower degree of work adjustment (see Figure 2).

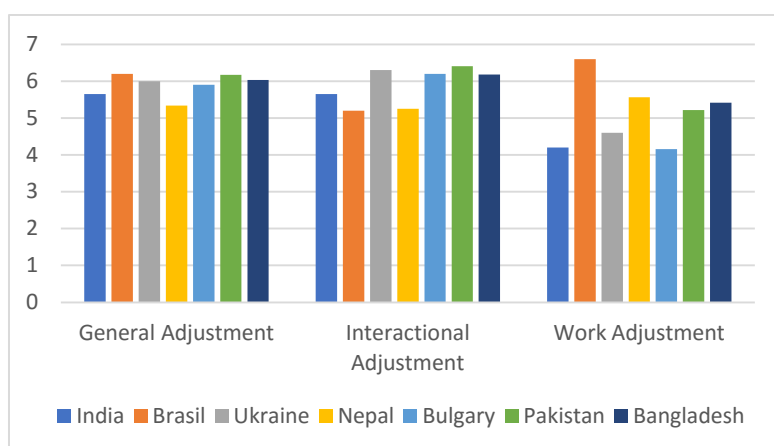


Figure 2. Sociocultural adjustment by nationality

Note: Means (from 1 to 7) (on Y axis)

A closer look at each specific situation of the socio-cultural adjustment of immigrants indicated that the situations to which immigrants had a lower degree of adjustment were: schedules ( $M = 5.47$ ;  $SD = 1.42$ ), entertainment and recreational activities ( $M = 5.53$ ;  $SD = 1.17$ ), interaction with locals outside the workplace ( $M = 5.56$ ;  $SD = 1.16$ ) and the cost of living ( $M = 5.59$ ;  $SD = 1.19$ ). The highest mean pertained to interaction with locals in the workplace (see Figure 3).

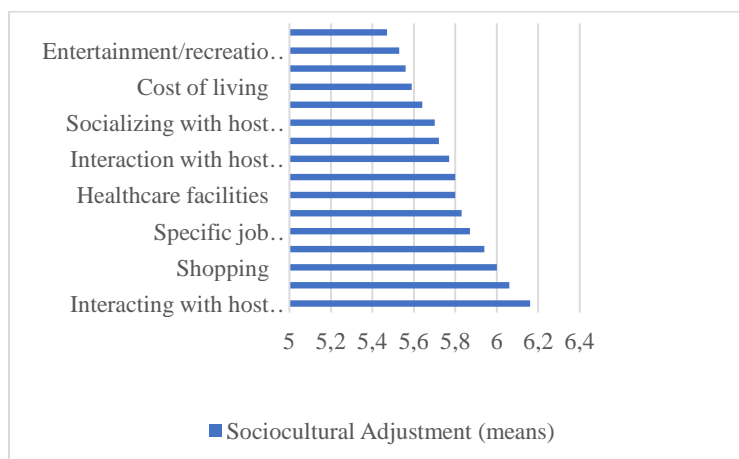


Figure 3. Sociocultural adjustment by items

Although adjustment to documentation and access to service situations produced a high average ( $M = 6.06$ ;  $SD = 0.78$ ), some of the immigrants stated that the greatest difficulties they experienced were in obtaining documents from the FBS.

The main problems I had were with the FBS and the law. (Male, 33 years, Pakistan).

I only had problems with the FBS. (Male, 30 years, Pakistan).

For others, the greatest difficulties were related to loneliness, the absence of a family and having a “home”, although these issues were somewhat mitigated by the support of friends:

Not having a home and feeling alone without my family is difficult. But friends help me to overcome this situation. (Male, 27 years, India).

No residency, no car, no love ... just the friends' company helps me overcome. (Male, 21 years, India).

While most felt supported by the company, some claimed that the reception and training offered by the organization was insufficient, especially in the workplace:

I did not have enough basic training. They did not give me a protective mask. I had a hard time communicating with the team leader. (Male, 28 years, India).

## Discussion and conclusion

The objectives of this study were to analyze the main adjustment difficulties of temporary immigrants, as well as to identify how they were integrated and received by organizations. Cultural diversity is now an indisputable reality, both in society and in particular organizations. Numerous sectors are facing labor shortages, and jobs are largely low-wage, have poor security and are highly seasonal. Agriculture constitutes a sector with a significant foreign labor force, housing workers of different nationalities and various cultures, values and norms. Managing such cultural diversity represents a challenge for human resource management, which seeks to integrate and manage these multicultural workers. In this study, most immigrants claimed to feel integrated in the country and to some extent supported by their organization. In practice, it was possible to observe that the organizations involved offered relevant training, language courses and bureaucratic support. However, almost no policy or strategy of formal integration and socialization was apparent. For supervisors and human resources managers, the main difficulties presented by immigrants were related to language, communication and hygiene. In this sense, it seems relevant the need of the development of managerial practices that help a better adjustment of the immigrants, namely a reinforcement of the Portuguese language courses that would augment communication processes, as well as training in terms of cultural habits (e.g., hygiene). According to the immigrants, the main difficulties were primarily related to interactional adjustment such as schedules, interaction with locals and cultural activities. The interviews enabled us to perceive a reality in which these immigrants seemed to be adjusting to new cultures, linking their social relationships with co-workers, family and friends who could provide some support. Therefore, they exhibited a certain degree of avoidance from local contact, which may be related to communication difficulties. Communication provides the basis for mutual understanding (Tung, 1993). Intercultural communication is defined by Gudykunst and Mody (2002, p. 179) as communication “between two people of different national cultures”. At the individual level, language skills have been deemed as a determining



factor for the social and economic integration of immigrants in the host society (Isphording & Otten, 2014). Poor language skills in the host country result in exclusionary situations, as they create difficulties in interacting with the local population and challenges in accessing the labor market and basic services such as health care and justice. Poor intercultural communication can also lead to prejudice and discrimination (Spencer-Rodgers & McGroven, 2002), as well as poverty (Kaida, 2013; Sousa & Gonçalves, 2015). In this sense, language courses enable immigrants' significant exposure to the language of the host country, enabling them to learn faster, both in writing and in basic communication skills. Ultimately, they will be able to look for work, go to an interview and communicate with co-workers (Beeler & Murray, 2007). Language classes also enable individuals to meet new people and enjoy first contact with their new society (Springer & Collins, 2008), allowing them to feel part of the community, thus increasing their self-esteem (Kaida, 2013; Sousa & Gonçalves, 2015).

It therefore seems fundamental that organizations that manage multicultural workers on a daily basis invest in integration programmes aimed at adjustment, not only to work but also to become accustomed to the culture of the new country and to have greater contact with locals.

## Limitations

Accessing populations of immigrant workers is not always easy, especially in terms of communication. Workers often demonstrated a degree of fear, which prevented them from expressing themselves openly. Thus, some limitations of the study include the relative shortage of information gathered, as many interviewees opted for short answers. Such fear can also lead to a certain bias in the responses. In the process, this situation can condition and camouflage certain issues that individuals preferred not to mention. Language barriers also interfered with data collection, especially among those who do not speak Portuguese or English. Another limitation concerned the sample size of supervisors and human resource managers. Therefore, future studies should include a larger sample, covering a more diverse geographical area of the country. Another area meriting future attention is multicultural skills (e.g., multicultural personality and cultural intelligence), which may facilitate the adjustment of foreign workers to new cultures (Sousa et al., 2015).



## Implications

In spite of these limitations, this study demonstrated a certain lack of formal integration and socialization practices and processes that might facilitate the adjustment of workers from other cultures. The only type of support pertained to work adjustment, while informal support in bureaucratic issues and general or interactional aspects were largely neglected. Only one company appeared to offer Portuguese language courses. Promoting socio-cultural adjustment can facilitate the process of acculturation, including a desire to become integrated and to avoid separating oneself from the host culture or to reject both their own culture and that of the host (Berry, 1997; 1999). In short, investing in cultural diversity management, where cultural and interracial crosses prevail, is a major challenge not only for organizations but for society as a whole. In addition to the integration and inclusion of foreign policies established by the state, it is also necessary to equip members of society with the tools to facilitate integration, because this depends not only on those who arrive, but also on those who receive. To paraphrase Sarmiento (2003, p. 18), “it is not exclusively for immigrants that an adaptation and insertion effort must be developed. It is also to the Portuguese people, to all the forces of civil society, to the institutions of the State that it is necessary to develop the integration of the immigrants”.

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