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Integration of refugees involving organizational managers' experiences

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Abstract

This article investigated the organizational integration of refugees from the experience of company managers in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. A basic qualitative research was developed, based on interpretative paradigm assumptions, and the data were collected through a semi-structured interview applied to five managers in charge of refugees in their workplace. The interviews data underwent qualitative content analysis. The results showed potential integration benefits, such as experience sharing, new talents, gratitude, engagement, improvements in the company's reputation, productivity, creativity, and organizational development from the inclusion of new languages. However, factors such as language, diploma revalidation, skill limitation, and low schooling levels were seen as obstacles to efficient integration. The research also found that employers are highly dependent on voluntary assistance from organizations for hiring and integrating refugees, which indicates that, without the presence of these mediators, the possibilities of recruiting the refugee workforce may be affected. The study contributes to broadening the discussion on the organizational integration of refugees, a topic that is still little explored in the field of administration. It also intends to awaken in managers a more sensitive view about people in a situation of refuge and how their effective integration can impact their businesses and individuals.

Keywords: Organizational integration. Refugees. Organizations. Managers. Experiences.

Integração de refugiados envolvendo experiências de gestores organizacionais

Resumo

Este artigo investigou a integração organizacional de refugiados a partir da experiência de gestores de empresas na cidade de São Paulo, Brasil. Foi desenvolvida uma pesquisa qualitativa básica, com base em pressupostos do paradigma interpretativo, e os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevista semiestruturada aplicada a cinco gestores responsáveis pela gestão de refugiados em seus locais de trabalho. Os dados das entrevistas foram submetidos à análise qualitativa de conteúdo. Os resultados mostraram potenciais benefícios de integração, como compartilhamento de experiências, novos talentos, gratidão, engajamento, melhorias na reputação da empresa, produtividade, criatividade e desenvolvimento organizacional a partir da inclusão de novas linguagens. No entanto, fatores como língua, revalidação de diploma, limitação de habilidades e baixa escolaridade foram vistos como obstáculos a uma integração eficiente. A pesquisa também constatou que os empregadores são altamente dependentes da assistência voluntária de organizações para a contratação e integração de refugiados, o que indica que, sem a presença desses mediadores, as possibilidades de recrutamento da força de trabalho dos refugiados podem ser afetadas. O estudo contribui para ampliar a discussão sobre a integração organizacional de refugiados, tema ainda pouco explorado no campo da Administração. Pretende também despertar nos gestores uma visão mais sensível sobre as pessoas em situação de refúgio e como sua integração efetiva pode impactar seus negócios e indivíduos.

Palavras-chave: Integração organizacional. Refugiados. Organizações. Gestores. Experiências.

Integración de refugiados que involucran experiencias de gerentes organizacionales

Resumen

Este artículo investigó la integración organizacional de refugiados a partir de la experiencia de gerentes de empresas de la ciudad de São Paulo, Brasil. Para ello, se desarrolló una investigación cualitativa básica, basada en supuestos del paradigma interpretativo, y los datos se recolectaron a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas aplicadas a cinco gerentes responsables de la gestión de refugiados en sus lugares de trabajo. Los datos de las entrevistas se sometieron a un análisis cualitativo de contenido. Los resultados mostraron potenciales beneficios de integración, como compartir experiencias, nuevos talentos, gratitud, compromiso, mejoras en la reputación de la empresa, productividad, creatividad y desarrollo organizacional a través de la inclusión de nuevos lenguajes. Sin embargo, factores como el idioma, la revalidación del diploma, las habilidades limitadas y la baja escolaridad se consideraron obstáculos para una integración eficiente. La encuesta también constató que los empleadores dependen en gran medida de la asistencia voluntaria de organizaciones para contratar e integrar a los refugiados, lo que indica que, sin la presencia de estos mediadores, las posibilidades de reclutar la fuerza laboral refugiada pueden verse afectadas. El estudio contribuye a ampliar la discusión sobre la integración organizativa de los refugiados, un tema aún poco explorado en el campo de la Administración. También pretende despertar en los gestores una visión más sensible de las personas en situación de refugio y de cómo su integración efectiva puede impactar positivamente en sus negocios e individuos.

Palabras clave: Integración organizacional. Refugiados. Organizaciones. Gerentes. Experiencias.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue on refuge has faced its biggest challenge since the Second World War (Balcilar & Nugent, 2018), having reached unprecedented proportions in the past few years. The number of people who leave their homeland is growing rapidly all over the world, which has had a high relevance in international contexts due to the meaningful volume of migratory flows and to the difficulties related to its control (Knappert, Kornau & Figengul, 2018). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) showed that, in 2017, the number of people who were forced to leave their countries increased to around 68.5 million, of which 25.4 million were refugees. Due to this fact, the integration of these people became an urgent topic for the States and the societies that host them.

It is known that a formal job is one of the most important factors that make refugees integrate with and stay in the countries that welcome them (Ager & Strang, 2008; Cheung & Phillimore, 2014; Gericke, Burmeister, Löwe, Deller & Pundt, 2018; Karlsdóttir, Sigurjónsdóttir, Hildestrand & Cuadrado, 2017), which, in this sense, requires the concentration of efforts from the organizations. Notwithstanding, refugees face several obstacles in order to find a job, depending on the country they consider for settlement. Besides the challenges of being hired, they need to deal with the disadvantages concerning workforce, which, in many situations, leads them to be explored and to have less career opportunities when compared to other migrants and native people (Wassenhove, 2015; Xypolytas, 2018). On the other hand, the organizations face the challenge to help them overcome their inclusion barriers, which are related to language and cultural issues (Campion, 2018), lack of information (Newbold & Mckearney, 2017), previous traumatic experiences upon fleeing to new countries (Esses, Medianu & Lawson, 2013), lack of resources, which comes from an unexpected departure that, most of the times, didn't allow them to properly adapt to a new reality (Buchanan, Abu-Rayya, Kashima, Paxton & Sam, 2018).

Thus, this article investigated the refugee's organizational integration from the experience of company managers in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The choice of investigating the Brazilian business reality goes back to a study that aims to understand how the refugees' organizational integration process takes place in realities in emerging countries, a context that is still under explored when it comes to research on refuge, according to a survey by the authors in research bases such as Web of Science and Scopus. In a comparison, findings show, for example, that, in 2017, European Union countries hosted more than four million refugees (UNHCR, 2018) and that it will take around six years for half of this group to be formally employed and approximately fifteen years for this percentage to reach 70% (Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016). In other words, most of these immigrants who are forced into these places are still in the initial stages of workforce guidance (Pajic, Ulceluse, Kismihók, Mol & Hartog, 2018). Moreover, in developed countries, most managers are interested in employing refugees with the intention to use cheap and promising workforce that will bring them profit at a low cost (Bauman, 2017).

This way, this research fills this gap by expanding the discussions on refugees' integration in organizations in developing countries, such as Brazil. The study also awakens the managers into a new perspective on refuge, showing them that a refugee can contribute significantly to the company's results through their talents and capability to add value to work, thus creating a competitive advantage in their operational context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Initial aspects on refugee's integration

The increased growth of individuals' forced displacement, enhanced by the current crisis that makes thousands of people leave their countries on a daily basis in search for a new start, also resulted in a growing interest in promoting long-run solutions for solving problems, such the proposition of a voluntary return to their country of origin, naturalization or permanent integration and resettlement (Bauman, 2017). However, UNHCR figures (2017) show that, in 2016, only 2.5% of the 22.5 million refugees scattered around the world returned to their former nation, 0.1% were naturalized, and 0.8% were resettled into other countries, especially the United States, Canada and Australia. These results have given rise to several discussions on the outcomes of inclusion programs and place integration as the most efficient option for refugee's resocialization in the host country (Hatton, 2016).

Although there is no conceptual consensus in literature, this research used the concept of integration based on the integration structure by Shore et al. (2010), who define it as the level at which an employee notices he is an estimated member of a work team through treatment that meets their needs of belonging and exclusivity. Generally speaking, it refers to the way how people are included and take part socially and economically in a country, and are treated as a political goal to be met (Robinson, 1998). If the individuals feel that their expectations are not met, they will feel left out (Knappert et al., 2018).

Literature points out that integration depends on bidirectional efforts that involve, on one side, the refugee's desire to try to adapt to a new country and, on the other side, the new country's capability to facilitate their integration, enabling an equal access to resources and opportunities, feeling of social belonging, safety and sense of community for a successful integration (Knappert et al., 2018). It also defends that training, schooling, housing and access to workforce are seen as minimum requirements for the beginning of a successful integration but that, overtime, this process will require several other elements (Fyvie, Ager, Curley & Korac, 2003), as the following sections will address.

Although there is some growing interest in the topic and the acceptance that a good integration might create beneficial effects for the refugees (Miller & Rasmussen, 2016), the number of studies concerning the topic is still considered incipient in order to boost the overcoming of prejudices and inabilities that are customary to the integration of refugees, especially when it comes to workforce (Pyrhönen, Leinonen & Martikainen, 2017).

The employment as an important facilitator of integration

Among the different forms of integration, employment has been seen as a key factor for the integration of people under refuge (Ager & Strang, 2008; Cheung & Phillimore, 2014; Karlsdóttir et al., 2017), which can bring beneficial results to their self-esteem, access to new social networks, financial independence, learning of a new language, self-reliability, and future plans. However, finding a new job in the workforce and progress with it are two of the greatest challenges for the refugee in the host countries (Chiswick, 1978; Chiswick & Miller, 2007; Goodman, Sirriyeh & McMahon, 2017).

Other studies also assessed the average time to find employment and compared the possibilities between refugees and other migrants to find it. A research carried out by Karlsdóttir et al. (2017) showed that in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, among others), the average time to find a job varies from five to ten years. Surveys made by Fasani, Frattini and Minala (2018) and Bratsberg, Raaum and Roed (2017), on the other hand, showed that, in several European Union countries, refugees are 11.6% less likely to find a job and 22.1% more likely to be unemployed. Moreover, their income, life quality and participation in the workforce are inferior when compared to other types of migrants. With the objective to soften the difficulties about finding a job, Australia adopted a welcoming policy which grants the refugees the right to family support and unemployment assistance and excludes them from looking for work for approximately six months, during which time they are trained by companies hired by the State for their new reality (Taylor, 2004).

Hatton (2017), on the other hand, states that one of the issues that can explain the refugee's difficult access to workforce is that a major share of those who seek refuge comes from countries that are considered poor, with a low average income and a common history of persecutions and abuses to human rights, which has given rise to fears in the host nations concerning their capability to absorb a great number of individuals from different cultures, languages and with a possible offer of cheap labor to ensure their survival. Moreover, the forced migration usually hinders specific investments in human capitals before the refugee departs, thus decreasing their chances to find a job (Taylor, 2004).

With the objective to decrease the obstacles and facilitate the integration process of their members, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2016) suggested five policies which, if efficiently executed, will be able to bring success to the refugees' inclusion in the workforce. These practices involve:

- a) Training on languages through native language classes to foreigners;
- b) Adult education and learning at a long run, reinforcing the importance of qualification in the local language;
- c) Skills assessment, which refers to checking work experiences that people under refuge had in their country of origin, in an effort to measure the available human capital quantity and quality for the new workforce and stop these individuals from being submitted to underemployment;

- d) Civic education, which, despite not being directly related to workforce, will help the social and political inclusion; and,
- e) Qualification related to employment, which involves trainings that aim at guiding the relationship between job qualification and expectations each refugee has.

In this picture, Germany stands out for having most of the five policies. Other countries, such as Austria, Denmark, Sweden and Turkey adopt at least one of these.

Another factor pointed out by literature in order to facilitate the refugees' integration process is the assistance from voluntary organizations (Belenkova, Kruse & Vydra, 2018; Hack-Polay & Igwe, 2019). Generally speaking, these mediators act non-profitably (Mcintosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2018), provide needs that the public policies were not able to reach (Mayblin & James, 2018) and are aware of the difficulties which pervade an efficient integration, such as language, lack of appreciation for abilities and skills, prejudice, discrimination, lack of experience and refugees' culture, and can develop holistic practices of guidance and counseling, workforce training courses and employment adaptation, partnerships with schools and companies, and language classes, among other actions (Archer, Hollingworth, Maylor, Sheibani & Kowarzik, 2005), such as refugees' integration into the organizations, as addressed below.

Organizational experiences of refugees' integration

The employers play an active role in the target countries when it comes to the refugee's job offer, training, education, qualification and learning (Karlsdóttir et al., 2017). They also help with their organizational integration, by offering internship opportunities (Alaraj, Allelin, Bergström & Borg, 2018) and the job itself (OECD, 2018). However, these efforts are still sparse and limited to a small share of employers (Wang & Chaudhri, 2019).

Researches have shown different views about the aspects related to refugees' hiring. For example, Borjas (2014) and Ruhs, Anderson and McNeil (2011) found that there may be salary differences between refugees, migrants and natives, based on the opportunistic attitudes of the employers, who may see refuge as a potential source of cheap labor, with expectations that are lower in relation to payment and work conditions, due to their extreme need to find a job. Even though there is a positive intention to include foreigners under refuge into the organizations, this process is still limited and it is a result of direct and indirect acts of discrimination (Forslund, Liljeberg & Åslund, 2017). Moreover, the refugees' integration efforts may reduce job offers in the country and create problems between them and local society (Esen & Binatli, 2017).

In Australia, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007a) investigated the experience of 40 employers who hired refugees and noticed that the high level of unemployment among these individuals, especially those who are qualified, was due especially to the fear the management had to replace native labor by foreigners under refuge, making them waste human capital. From the perceptions of Colic-Peisker (2009) and Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007b), most employers hide their prejudicial acts based on the visible differences they see and this undermines the inclusion of refugees. This perspective may also be observed in researches performed by Fasani et al. (2018) and Karlsdóttir et al. (2017).

A research performed by Archer et al. (2005) stated that the main concerns pointed out by the managers for an efficient refugees' integration included lack of information, fear, suspicion, culture, credentials and inappropriate skills, and the conception that the refugees were unstable, helpless and needy people made the employers avoid hiring them, believing that, in this case, the mediating organizations would serve as bridges between companies and refugees, which would facilitate their hiring and retention.

In fact, the integration into workforce may be undermined due to several problems related to pre-migration factors and motivations that are necessary for their occupational inclusion (Bredgaard & Thomsen, 2018). According to Knappert, Van Dijk and Rosse (2019), these obstacles may include individual, national or organizational factors.

On the individual level, there may be difficulties related to inappropriate skills (Jamil, Aldhalimi & Arnetz, 2012), low schooling (Campion, 2018), low fluency in the new language (Fasani et al., 2018; Hynie, 2018), post-traumatic stress disorders (Bustamante, Cerqueira, Leclerc & Brietzke, 2018; Hynie, 2017; Nygaard, Sonne & Carlsson, 2017), limited work experience in the new country (Marshall, 1989), and identity, age and gender conflicts (Essers, Benschop & Doorewaard, 2008), among others. On the national level, the barriers may include difficulties with diploma revalidation for technical or academic courses (Wassenhove, 2015), economic crisis (Knappert et al., 2019) and social rejection (Knappert et al., 2018). Finally, the

barriers on the organizational level may point out to strict requirements of language and stereotypes and biased procedures (Knappert et al., 2019). As a consequence, people under refuge may be susceptible to unfavorable positions with a tendency to having their labor explored (Anderson, 2010) and to having less career opportunities (Cheung & Phillimore, 2014; Wassenhove, 2015) within the organization.

However, going against negative evidences on the refugees' integration, studies have pointed out the potential benefits from hiring a refugee, such as the tendency to less absenteeism levels (Dench, Hurstfield & Hill, 2006), the fact they are more productive (Ruhs et al., 2011), more satisfied (Spijkerman, Benschop & Bücker, 2018), have skills and competencies that complement those of professionals from the host countries (Münz, Straubhaar & Vadean, 2006), have attitude and ethics at work to the extent that, in some cases, they are noticed by their employers as professionals who are more reliable and grateful than the natives themselves (Hussein, Manthorpe & Stevens, 2010), have wealth of knowledge and experience sharing, which come from linguistic and cultural diversity (Urick, 2017), consumer market expansion, are creative and able to contribute to innovation (Manoharan, Sardeshmukh & Gross, 2019), present skills with other languages, more tolerance to diversity, gratitude and confidence in their work (Archer et al., 2005; Hussein et al., 2010; Ponzoni, Ghorashi & Van Der Raar, 2017), and contribute positively to the organizational performance (Gomez & Bernet, 2019).

Therefore, these findings point out to the importance of creating policies which aim at overcoming refugees' inclusion obstacles in the organizations. One strategy suggested by Bredgaard and Thomsen (2018), for example, would be the encouragement from local governments for the organizations to hire refugees. The State plays a major role in this inclusion process with its legislative structure, fiscal benefits and the capability to shape up the perceptions from the entrepreneurial sector about the refugee's job, which may contribute to the inclusion of this group in the workforce (Knappert et al., 2019; Farndale, Biron, Briscoe & Raghuram, 2015). Holland, for example, included grant policies to companies, with the objective to encourage them to hire refugees (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2018). In the meantime, Sweden created a program of national integration. One of its several pillars is the incentive for companies to hire trainee refugees in order to speed up their inclusion process in the country (Alaraj et al., 2018).

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research's methodology starts from a relativist ontological view that believes that individuals interact with the reality of the phenomena observed (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). It also adopts a constructionist epistemology (Blaikie, 2007; Crotty, 1998) that understands that the construction of meanings, which justified this study's results, comes from this interaction.

Based on the assumptions of the interpretive paradigm (Crotty, 1998), the research was characterized by presenting a descriptive nature and qualitative approach. As a method, he used basic qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), making use of a semi-structured interview (Patton, 2002) applied to five managers of private companies and who had refugees working in their respective organizations.

The interview script was developed based on the work by Knappert et al. (2018), and adapted to the Brazilian context with questions that assessed the refugees' organizational integration process from experiences of the managers investigated (Appendix). The interviewees' profile was presented according to Box 1.

Box 1
Profile of the managers interviewedSource: research data (2019)

Code	Gender	Age	Marital status	Schooling	Role in the organization	Role's service time in the organization	Number of employees	Organization's operation area	Number or refugees hired
G1	Female	45 years	Single	College education	Diversity and inclusion manager	11 years	40 thousand professional	Delivery of several services across the country	95 refugees
G2	Female	27 years	Single	College education	HR Manager	2 years	120 professionals	Job candidate recruiting and selection	1 refugee
G3	Male	55 years	Married	College education	Founder	32 years	80 professionals	Global mobility services	3 refugees
G4	Male	52 years	Married	College education	Company partner	18 years	15 professionals	Accounting consultancy	6 refugees
G5	Female	57 years	Married	College education	Director General	20 years	42 professionals	Human Resources Consultancy	3 refugees

Source: research data (2019).

Data collection took place in February 2019 in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. In the beginning, the researchers used the internet to search for potential participants for the research, being employers who had, at the time of the study, refugees working in their company, and thus could contribute with their integration experiences. Some companies found on Brazilian sites contacted via e-mail refused to participate in the research, causing difficulties in recruiting respondents for the investigation, which led the authors to adopt the snowball strategy (Atkinson & Flint, 2001), a useful technique that, from two managers who agreed to participate in the study, it was possible to reach new respondents through their indications. The refugees hired by these organizations, according to the managers, had a college degree and had been working for at least six months in the five companies surveyed. Its recruitment took place through voluntary organizations in the city of São Paulo that work to prepare people in a situation of refuge for the job market.

Most respondents have extensive organizational experience and hold important job positions. Only one of the interviewees was younger and with less time experience on the job than the others, but this did not undermine the objective of the investigation. Data collection also observed the principle of theoretical saturation, a strategy used to help choose the number of respondents for the survey (Bowen, 2008) and which best represented the public to be investigated (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). Each interview lasted for around 60 minutes. In the beginning of each interview, the work proposal was presented and the study's respondents had their privacy and anonymity guaranteed.

Subsequently, the data were literally transcribed and submitted to a qualitative content analysis (Gläser & Laudel, 2013) for processing, inference, interpretation, and for the establishment of patterns in the texts. No software was used to process the volume of text generated by the interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What refugees can add to Brazilian companies

From the evidences found in the interviews done with the managers, it was possible to see several factors associated to refugee's work in Brazilian companies, such as enthusiasm, commitment, pro-activity, willingness, talent diversity, opportunity valuation, gratitude and appreciation. These qualities enabled some of the interviewees to see them as a differential in the refugees in relation to Brazilian professionals who, according to their perceptions, tend to adopt a more instrumental position in their commitment in many cases. The following lines express these meanings well:

I take our employee as an example. I see her more committed, engaged, she is the first to arrive at the company, always smiling. We ask a few things from the Brazilian employees and, now and then, they will drag their feet and say they can't do it, which is something I never expect from our employee who is a refugee. She goes the extra mile and she is ready for anything (G2).

[...] adds a lot of value; willingness to learn, their anxiety to be able to learn everything quickly while some people don't care and don't appreciate their knowledge at work. She shows more willingness even more than the Brazilian guy (G4).

I see refugees as people who overvalue the job you give them. They are punctual, don't complain about anything. Many Brazilians, on the other hand, see work as an obligation. Gratitude is the strongest difference trait between the two markets since it leads to many consequences in the workplace. [...] most of the refugees are thankful for the job. If I give them a raise of 100 reais, maybe a Brazilian will question: "really, only 100 reais?"; the refugees, no, they will jump with joy (G5).

These findings confirm studies which point out to potential benefits of hiring refugees, such as less absenteeism, more productivity (Ruhs et al., 2011), higher satisfaction (Spijkerman et al., 2018), gratitude and reliability (Archer et al., 2005; Hussein et al., 2010; Ponzoni et al., 2017).

The interviewees also described the importance of integrating refugees in their organizations. G1, who is in charge of the diversity area and which has over eighty displaced professionals working in her company, admits the topic concerning refuge as recent and globally important (Truzzi & Monsma, 2018). As a foreign manager working in Brazil, she demonstrates how multi-culturalism reduces diversity borders and is more and more present in the companies' daily activities. It levels the differences that come from the context that involves the people who are forced to leave their countries to the situation involving women, homosexuals, and disabled people, among others, which shows that, upon aggregating several individuals, a number of benefits will be noticed on a win-win relationship (Gomez & Bernet, 2019; Manoharan, Sardeshmukh & Gross, 2019).

Likewise, G2 showed that the presence of the employed refugee in the work environment in his company was able to change the organizational environment, which showed the Brazilian employees that, no matter the circumstances that shape up the daily activities of each employee, it is possible to be grateful, enthusiastic and engaged in your profession, which they were able to see in their new colleague. This type of behavior, which is able to bring flow into any kind of task, was observed by G3, who learned soon the importance of including refugees in his company and its meaningful gains, but, firstly, he came to the conclusion, from his first experience, that the culture of welcoming people in this condition needs to be present in every level of the organization.

Obstacles for refugees' integration in Brazilian organizations

Managers admit that several obstacles may undermine an effective refugee's integration in Brazilian organizations. The first barrier mentioned by the interviewees concerned the Portuguese language, something that was mentioned in previous studies (Ager & Strang, 2008; Archer et al., 2005; Hynie, 2018; Marshall, 1989). Even so, the interviewees stated that, with a little time in the company, it is possible for refugees to acquire some basic Portuguese skills that will make them communicate with colleagues and coordinators, which prompts the support from high management and other employees, as can be observed from the following reports:

Language, for sure, even though nowadays we are very open to that, for, no matter how many difficulties the refugee faces, we try to communicate in every possible way. [...] thank God our employees' view concerning refugees is open and positive (G2).

Language, but I don't see it as a blocking factor because we are qualified to train the refugees to speak Portuguese. When we grow old in this process of knowing the refugee better, there is a series of people who are committed to welcoming her and teaching her to adapt to this work environment and to give her best (G3).

However, from the G5 content, below, it was possible to see that hiring these individuals faces limitations when it involves positions that demand a higher proficiency in speaking and writing, for, according to the interviewees, basic Portuguese only serves for operational-level positions that do not demand such need, thus impairing jobs that demand a more formal communication.

[...] when it comes to an extremely operational job, there is no problem; but for every office position you need Portuguese, because, if I am not hiring for welfarism, I have to bring in someone who will perform a good job and give me return (G5).

These results are supported by the research by Fasani et al. (2018), who pointed out that lower language proficiency levels in the host country might undermine the refugee's performance in the workforce. In this case, the refugees become vulnerable, at least in the first moment, to positions that do not meet their professional qualifications in Brazil, leveling all the individuals, no matter their technical skills. In order to fill in this gap, it is important to have the support from voluntary organizations in guidance activities, references to Portuguese language classes, partnership with institutions that give free classes for the refugees, and the linguistic assistance in their work environments, among other measures.

Skills' limitation and low schooling level were two other obstacles presented by one of the interviewees (G4):

[...] and depending on nationality, there are more humble people who didn't have many opportunities to study and develop technical skills, which makes it really difficult, right?! Well... (G4).

To G4, these evidences are more related to cases that usually involve women who, in some countries, have a patriarchal culture that is more turned to taking care of the family and home, which hinders their professional development. As they are forced to leave their homeland in search for a restart, they see they are prevented from reaching work opportunities because of their educational limitations and work experiences, which, related to other problems, results in more conformity to the opportunities they have reached (Baran, Valcea, Porter & Gallagher, 2018; Battisti, Giesing & Laurensyeva, 2019; Knappert et al., 2019) when compared to refugees who have higher education.

On the other hand, qualified refugees struggle with the loss of jobs that meet their skills, as stated by G5, below, which is due to the diploma revalidation issue that prevents many individuals from being able to perform the same works they did in their homeland.

[...] in some cases it is diploma validation, because, here, this process may take years and many of them are not able to bring every document or nearly one at all, depending on where they come from (G5).

Bureaucracy, which is the result of rigid legislative processes for Brazilians and foreigners, hampers the exercise of short-term careers, which, consequently, also affects the refugees that come to the country. Many of them are doctors, masters, graduate students, technicians, medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, but here in Brazil they end up losing their skills, at least at first,

which undermines the continuity of their career in their new home. Besides the bureaucratic issue, the migration, usually unplanned, stops most of them from being able to bring their documents and diplomas into the country, which makes it even more difficult to search for opportunities that are similar to those they previously had. As a result, they are more likely to be unhappy with their underemployment and to be dissatisfied (Campion, 2018).

Remuneration procedures, occupational mobility and the relevance of voluntary assistance (mediators)

In terms of salaries and professional progress, the managers interviewed stated they adopt fair criteria of work rules and procedures, as well as the payment of their employees. However, when it comes to promotion policies, they recognize there are obstacles that stop the growth of many refugees within the company, such as language and the impossibility of individual resources' transferability.

Currently, my employee here doesn't have the same chances to be promoted as the others do. Why? Because her spoken Portuguese is understandable but her writing is very limited. So, the possibilities we have in our company involve customer relations in a good oral and written communication. So, in our company today, she has a great blocking factor in order to progress, which is the language. I believe it depends a lot on the context of every company, but I think that, for most of the promotions, criteria such as language and diploma evidence might prevent refugees from progressing in their careers (G5).

The statement by G5 shows that, not matter how much the company knows of its refugee employee's potentials, the two difficulties shown concerning proficiency in the Portuguese language and the revalidation of foreign diplomas are still a blocking factor for vertical progress. These findings support the studies by Chiswick and Miller (2007) and Chiswick (1978) and have shown that refugees that have recently arrived at the host country and who do not know the local language and can't easily exchange their individual skills tend to experience drops in their occupational status in the first years, besides the difficulties concerning vertical progress within the companies.

Another question to be taken into account is that the companies investigated are highly dependent on voluntary organizations' assistance. When questioned, for example, if the chances of the displaced people to find a job without the assistance of voluntary organizations would decrease, the interviewees showed that:

Yes, of course! Why does the company need and want to hire a refugee, for example, where they will be easily found? So, it is important to have a link that connects us and prepares them for this position (G1).

As a manager, I would hardly hire a refugee who knocks on our door because they go through many, many problems before getting here [...] not all of them are psychologically prepared to embrace a profession. So, I think an NGO is able to facilitate this process (G5).

There is a thought among the managers surveyed in the sense that they believe that mediation is essential for the process of finding a job for people under refuge. This result confirms researches that prove the direct influence of voluntary organizations' assistance in the integration process (Belenkova et al., 2018; Hack-Polay & Igwe, 2019). To them, the mediators' role facilitates their recruiting, for it reduces time, costs, helps with choosing the ideal profile for the position offered and with psychological preparation for the job challenges, as clearly stated by G4 when saying that not all the refugees are able to work, even though this is their first need upon arriving in Brazil, and, in his opinion, this is due to a series of problems that preceded their coming to the country and that still has effects over their adaptation process, which partly explains the reasons why the managers hardly hire people who come in independently and knock on their doors in search for a job.

CONCLUSIONS

This article investigated the organizational integration of refugees from the experience of business managers in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The results suggest that, once the organizations overcome the refugees' integration obstacles, their managers will be able to enjoy the talents and capabilities these individuals will add to the organizations.

In the past few years, Brazil has been a more and more desired destination by people who are running away from their homeland in search for a new start. However, as they arrive and look for reestablishment through work, the refugees face lack of preparation from many managers who, due to the fact they don't know the real meaning of the word and the conditions of a refugee, will discriminate and overlook people under refuge.

Therefore, this work brings important contributions. Firstly, the study gathers current theoretical elements on concepts and researches that deepen the knowledge about the topic on refuge. Secondly, the research brings the discussion on refugees' integration into the field of developing countries, showing in the Brazilian reality, what the challenges are and what the investigated companies are experiencing in their initial experiences of including people in a situation of refuge, which can lead their managers as well as new companies to reflect on the importance of integrating these groups into their organizational activities, creating strategies to soften integration difficulties and enhance their benefits in favor of sustainable growth.

This research's limitation lies on the fact that, in the context of the companies surveyed in the city of São Paulo, the results obtained can't be generalized to the rest of the country or even to other developing nations. There is also the fact that the refugees' opinion was not included in the sample, besides the organizations that are in charge of inserting the refugees in companies, which requires the need for studies that come to understand the refugees and mediators' perception about the integration of these groups.

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APPENDIX

1. MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guidelines for employers

Thank you for taking the time and effort to participate in this study. Before we begin, I would like to give you a brief summary of this research project. We are conducting these interviews to gain insights into how managers perceive the process of integrating refugees in Brazilian organizations.

To begin, I would like to ask you some general questions about your history.

1. Tell me about yourself and your academic and professional background. How old are you? Formation? your current role in the organization? how long have you been working in this role?
2. How important is it to include refugees for the organization you are working for?
3. What role does the organization play in improving the integration of refugees in work? How involved is your organization in improving the inclusion of refugees in work in Brazil? - For example, what specific action does your organization carry out, for example, special practices, initiatives or programs?
4. What are the obstacles facing the organization for the inclusion of refugees? How is the competitiveness between these and the Brazilians looking for jobs or growth within the company?
5. Are there any facilitators to help you improve the inclusion of refugees in the organization?
6. Do you work in partnership with any national or international organization / institution on inclusion? How does this partnership work?
7. Is there communication between the organization and other actors (for example, government, unions, human rights organizations) that will facilitate the integration of refugees in the company?
8. [Regarding internal obstacles]: Does everyone within the organization agree on the importance of including refugees and on the main topics discussed in this regard? Or are there different opinions? If so, what are these different positions? Can you think of an example that illustrates these different opinions?
9. Are there differences between groups of refugees when it comes to finding a job in Brazil? Do you think there are differences between male and female refugees?
10. Does the organization offer training to help the inclusion of refugees?
- If so, what training? Why do you think the training is useful? Who are you collaborating with [different institutions / people]?
11. Do you see typical differences between refugees and Brazilian professionals regarding processes such as recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, promotions or access to information?
- If so, why do you think this is the case? Do you have an example?
12. What factors can hinder or improve the inclusion of refugees in your workplace? [for example, language, communications with colleagues and customers, participation in decision-making, lunch breaks and social events]
13. What do refugees bring as positive factors and challenges for managing work?

Thank you!