

The impact of Norwegian language proficiency on effective communication, employee engagement and development

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Abstract

This research investigates the impact of Norwegian language proficiency on the communication competence, employee engagement, and professional development of migrant workers in Norway. Employing a survey research design, an online questionnaire with items derived from established instruments in prior studies was utilized. The study gathered data from 142 migrant workers in Norway. Data analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The findings indicate that Norwegian language proficiency among the samples migrant employees have positive and significant influence on their effective communication. However, a very weak correlation was found between language proficiency and employee engagement, no correlation was found between language proficiency and employee engagement among migrant workers in Norway. The study concludes that linguistic competence plays a pivotal role in shaping employee communication effectiveness. The study recommended that organizations in Norway should actively facilitate the enhancement of linguistic competence among their migrant workforce while simultaneously addressing factors influencing employee engagement and development.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

There has been an increase in the number of migrants around the world. People are moving from their home countries to others for various reasons, including the influence of globalization, escape from war, search for economic opportunities, education, disasters, the need to unite with families, and other reasons (*Hjern, 2012; International Organization for Migration, 2016*). As of 2015, there were 244 million international immigrants (United Nations Organisation, 2015), which has increased to over 280 million (*IOM, 2022*). This study focuses on work-related migrants. *The International Organization for Migration* (2021) shows that there were about 170 million migrant workers as of 2021.

Work-related migrants have access to job opportunities, although there is evidence of some migrants being denied employment based on certain reasons, one of which is the inability of the migrants to speak the official language in the labour force proficiently. This is considered important in many nations like Japan, Germany, Indonesia, and others (Organization, Strengthening Post-Arrival Orientation Programs for Migrant Workers in ASEAN, 2015; Doerr, 2020). This is premised on the idea that the ability to speak the labour force language is a prerequisite to ensuring business activities are effectively conducted to attain business goals. Low productivity and poor service delivery has been attributed to miscommunication in the workplace (*Olanrewaju et al., 2017*). It is safe to conclude that language barriers in the workplace constitute a major impediment to functional business activities.

Effective communication is a key factor that comes into discourse when managing employees from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Salleh, Mohi, Nordin, Mohamad & Razali, 2021). One of the countries with an increasing number of migrants is Norway. *The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2022)* reports that the number of migrants, mostly work-related from EU countries, into Norway has increased from

6.5% in 2000 to 16% in 2020. Migrants in Norway and those born to migrant parents constitute over 17% of the Norwegian population (Czapka, 2020). The immigrant population in the country is dominated by people from Poland, Lithuania, Somalia, Sweden, and Pakistan (Czapka, 2020). However, immigrants coming to Norway are not required to have proficiency in Norwegian before doing so but it is recommended to learn the language if the immigrants plan to stay for a long time to adapt smoothly into the new environment.

At the beginning of 2022, the country had an immigrant population of 819,356 (Statistics Norway, 2022), among which 68.9% between 20 and 66 years were employed in 2021 (Statistics Norway, 2022).

Data from Statista (2022) shows that over 400,000 immigrants are in the Norwegian workforce as of 2022 out of the total 2,965,737 workers in the country (World Bank, 2022). With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the certain immigration policies were amended, and municipalities were asked to accommodate 38,000 refugees, 3,000 more than the previous year (OECD, 2023).

According to Ødegård (2020), there has been a need for migrant employees to speak Norwegian to better integrate into the workplace; social proficiency in the Norwegian language is an integral part of the process for migrant employees. With the large population of migrants in the Norwegian workforce, bearing in mind the relevance of language and communication, there is a need to examine if migrant employees are able to adapt to the language of communication in their various workplaces. How the language proficiency of Norwegian migrant employees has impacted their communication competence, engagement, and development is the main focus of this study.

It is an integral part of any society, as well as the workplace, to develop a common language for interaction (Gammal et al., 2020).

For migrants to fit into the Norwegian workplace effectively, according to (Shrestha et al 2018) it is required to be proficient in the official labour force language shared by employees with several linguistic backgrounds (Shrestha et al., 2018). Addressing the language problem among migrant employees and those born outside Norway, Fafo (2020:2) explains that the language issue has become a recurring theme in EU countries due to the influx of migrants, especially in the workplace. An earlier survey in Norway showed that the language barrier affected 60% of

employees in nursing homes in Norway (Thomas et al., 2012). A similar study in the health sector of the country showed that linguistic barriers led to misinformation and negative health outcomes between migrant pregnant women and care providers (Haugaard, et al., 2020).

A multi-sectoral study by the organization shows that despite language being a social integration factor in the Norwegian workforce, there still exists a language barrier among the employees (Djuve, Kavli & Sterri, 2017). Studies have further shown that language incompetence is a major impediment for migrants to be gainfully employed (Devi, 2016). Understanding the local language of migrant workers can aid their employment and relationships with co-workers as well as enhance their development (Marzouki and Posecion, 2019; Sager et al., 2015). It can also lead to a lack of knowledge of Norwegian labour laws, exploitation by employers, marginalization at the workplace, denial of benefits, accidents, and other risks. Additionally, language barriers do not only affect migrant employees but also their colleagues, managers, and employers. *It can lead to breakdowns in communication, health and safety issues, co-operation problems, reduced productivity, strained employee-customer relationships, and supervisor-employee relationship issues, and also impact the firm's baseline* (Fafo, 2020; Ne'Matullah et al., 2021).

Effective communication, employee engagement, and development are considered crucial for organizational productivity (Rudd & Mills, 2015; Al-Tokhais, 2016; Rockwood, 2022).

In this study, how linguistic proficiency among Norwegian migrant employees affects their effective communication, engagement, and development is a major objective to be examined.

1.2 Problem Statement

Integration is an important factor for migrant workers in Norway, and communication is an integral aspect of the integration process for employees. There have been previous attempts to investigate migrants' language proficiency, communication competence, work engagement, and development in Norway and in other countries, as well as the relationship between Norwegians and migrants. However, many of the studies are qualitative, focused on one industry/profession, students, or nationality and do not examine how language proficiency of the migrants impacts their communication competence, engagement, and development (Gross, Guerrero & Alberts, 2004; Jaeger, Pellaud, Laville & Klauser, 2019; Leren, 2016; Mbanya,

Terragni, Gele, Diaz & Kumar, 2019; Tamrakar, & Das, 2016; Tschirhart, Diaz & Ottersen, 2019; Wright et al, 2013).

These gaps are what the current study will fill, using a quantitative approach to investigate whether Norwegian language proficiency has an impact on employee communication competence, engagement, and development in their respective workplaces. This study will also extend prior research by examining the influence of migrant employees' characteristics (such as length of stay, working experience, and educational background) on their Norwegian language proficiency, communication competence, engagement, and development.

1.3 Operational Definition of Terms

Communication Competence: This refers to the ability of employees to meet communication goals appropriately in an organizational setting. This includes ease of interaction at work, understanding instructions, contributions to ideas, being understood by others, smooth transition on topics, saying what is appropriate and understanding people's feeling while conversing.

Culture: The norms and values of people from a particular country.

Employee Engagement: This is the positive feeling employees have towards their jobs and is measured in terms of absorption, vigour, and dedication.

Employee Development: This is the process of upgrading the skills and competence of employees.

Individual differences: These refer to employees' personal characteristics such as gender, length of stay, working experience, and educational background.

Language Proficiency: This refers to the extent to which employees (especially migrants) in Norway can speak Norwegian. This is measured by the Common Framework of Reference for Language, CEFR, ranging from beginner (A1) to master (C2).

Language Barriers: This refers to the communication challenge that arises from communication between Norwegian and migrant employees.

Migrant Employee: Any employee working in Norway but originally from another country or born to any citizen from countries other than Norway.

Organization: This refers to companies and employers.

1.4 Research Aim and Questions

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of Norwegian language proficiency on communication competence, employee engagement, and the development of migrant employees in Norway. This study will answer the following questions:

1. What is the impact of Norwegian language proficiency on the communication competence of migrant employees in Norway?
2. What is the impact of Norwegian language proficiency on migrant workers' engagement in Norway?
3. What is the impact of Norwegian language proficiency on migrant employees' development in Norway?

1.5 Significance of Study

There have been several studies conducted to investigate the influence of language proficiency at the organizational level, especially on achieving business goals. There has been a debate about how language proficiency influences effective communication, but this current study will extend the discussion to include other variables. It will investigate how language proficiency affects effective communication, employee engagement, and development. Employee involvement is considered a major strategy for business growth as it is the positive feeling employees have towards their jobs and how to integrate themselves into their jobs with vigour. Similarly, employees' skills and competence are needed for the effective discharge of their duties. Development is paramount to employees, but how does employees' ability to speak the native language of communication at the workplace influence their development of skills and competence? This question is the focus of this research. This study will, therefore, contribute to the literature on the influence of language proficiency at the organizational level. With a focus on migrant employees in Norway, the findings of this study will contribute to the development of workplace policy regarding language in Norway. The Norwegian labour force

authorities can reference the findings of this study to develop such a policy for migrant employees in the country. In addition, the findings of this study can help business owners, managers, and Human Resource Managers in Norway to identify the usefulness of Norwegian language proficiency in helping migrant employees develop their skills and contribute to organizational development. This study will be useful not only to the Norwegian labour force but also to other countries with migrant employees. Despite the limitations of this study, it can be replicated in these countries to determine the influence of the native language on employee engagement and development towards achieving an efficient workforce.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study aims to examine the impact of Norwegian language proficiency on effective communication, employee engagement, and the development of migrant employees in Norway. It will determine the extent to which the Norwegian language proficiency of migrant employees in Norway will influence communication, absorption, vigour, and dedication to work, as well as the development of skills and competence. This study will draw samples from migrant employees in Norway. This study is not industry specific. Participants will be drawn from several firms operating in Norway. This is to ensure the study has opinions from employees that cut across sectors in the country.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

Communication Competence: This refers to the ability of employees to meet communication goals appropriately in an organizational setting.

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Migrant Employee: Any employee working in Norway but originally from another country or born to any citizen from countries other than Norway.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One discusses the background of this study and explains the level of integration of migrants into Norwegian employment and the relevance of Norwegian language proficiency in organizations. It also defines the problem statement, aim, objectives, research questions, significance, and scope of the research. The chapter further defines each of the concepts in this study. The second chapter of this thesis contains a review of literature relevant to this study. The chapter is discussed under three thematic areas. The first aspect is the conceptual review, where the variables and concepts in this research are defined and explained. The concepts reviewed are language proficiency, effective communication, employee engagement, employee development, and the influence of language proficiency on the three dependent variables. The second thematic area reviews prior studies in terms of their objectives, methodologies, and findings. The third aspect discusses the theory that underpins the discussion of this research.

Chapter three contains the concrete steps taken by the researcher to gather and analyse data to meet the objectives of this study. The chapter introduces the research design, data collection, and (meta)data about the participants. The fourth chapter presents the analysis of data collected and the discussion of findings in relation to the study objectives, while chapter five presents the summary, conclusion, implications, recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter contains a review of extant literature relevant to language proficiency, effective communication, employee engagement, and development.

2.1 Understanding Language Proficiency

Globalization has brought about a new world order, and one of the sectors where its influence is keenly felt is the business sector. There is transnational mobility of labour, and migrants can be gainfully employed in countries other than their own (Shrestha et al., 2018). The number of migrants in OECD countries is about 115 million or more, and this number continues to increase (Salleh et al., 2021).

As the rate of migration continues to increase globally, coupled with the need for manual labour to promote development and interdependency, organizations have continued to become multilingual and multicultural (Radley, 2016). The workplace has become a contact platform where diverse cultures, orientations, races, backgrounds, and languages meet. This necessitates the need for organizations to adopt a workplace lingua franca acceptable to managers and employees to facilitate interaction within the organization (Salleh et al., 2021). Language is thus regarded as a vital business resource for organizations.

There is usually a weak and dominant culture in an organization. Usually, the local culture and language become dominant over others (Salleh et al., 2021). According to Carvalho et al. (2022), what constitutes language proficiency to an employer may be different from another, as well as among industries. Understanding this relativity in language proficiency is crucial, especially for migrants seeking employment and integration into foreign countries like Norway.

Language proficiency is simply the efficiency in communicating using a language. Communicating in a language refers to the ability to speak, read, write, and understand a language. According to *Clement and Murugavel (2018)*, proficiency in a particular language is not limited to constructing sentences but also extends to using the language for presentation,

conviction, and negotiation. Since humans use language as a major means of communication and exchanging ideas, there is a need to have a common language understood by every party to facilitate effective communication. Not possessing the right language skills brings about a language barrier and dysfunctional communication, which is a common issue within organizations with migrant employees (*Ramlan et al., 2018*).

The importance of language in the workplace has influenced the concept of ‘Language Capital’ (*Bourdieu, 1986; Piekkari et al., 2014; Xu & Jiang, 2020*). The concept explains that the possession of language skills can be regarded as an influential resource that improves a worker’s human capital. Literature has shown that migrant employees with deficiencies in the lingua franca are at risk of unemployment, improper integration into the workplace, and workplace discrimination due to their inability to interact with their colleagues and managers (*Stoylen, 2019*).

Salleh et al. (2021) added that employers usually avoid employing migrants, and many of them are usually engaged in forced labour (*Ayub et al., 2016*). It is usually challenging to have effective communication with immigrant employees with linguistic poverty because they rarely use the host language to interact (*Jenifer & Raman, 2015*).

Studies have shown that language barriers at the workplace also negatively affect business performance, as messages and information is misinterpreted, work becomes delayed, materials are wasted, and general productivity is hampered (*Javadpour & Samiei, 2017; Ne’Matullah et al., 2021; Valitherm & Rahman, 2014*). These issues arise because many migrant employees usually find it difficult to speak the workplace lingua franca.

Olanrewaju et al. (2017) found that the language barrier has a negative effect on work productivity among construction workers. It slows down operations and leads to the waste of resources. In a review of extant studies, *Roshid and Chowdhury (2013)* concluded that English language proficiency has a significant influence on the labour market, especially in countries with English as the lingua franca. He also reported that possession of English language skills is a form of human capital that enhances higher salaries for those who are proficient compared to others.

A study among dementia patients in Norway showed that the language barrier was a major problem between foreign doctors and patients in terms of proper diagnosis and treatment

(Sagbakken et al., 2018). Additionally, Clement and Murugavel (2018) concluded that language proficiency does not only entail being able to speak, read, understand, or write a language but also using such a language to present ideas, convince, and negotiate. This has also brought language proficiency as a prerequisite for employment and workplace productivity (Radley, 2016) because business organizations, especially multinationals, highly depend on the workplace's official language to coordinate their operations towards achieving their goals (Klitmøller & Luring, 2013; Luring & Klitmøller, 2015). The adopted language becomes the medium of communication, and every member of the business unit is expected to have a certain level of proficiency in such language to contribute to interaction and information sharing. In fact, employees with deficiencies in the workplace lingua franca take classes and online language courses to improve their speaking skills (Gammal et al., 2020). Yao and Van Ours (2015) and Tamrakar and Das (2016:34) explain the relevance of language proficiency for migrant employees' integration.

Language skills are considered to be extremely important for the social and economic integration of immigrants. Proficiency in the host language may have positive effects on immigrants' job search and their labour productivity at the workplace. Therefore, the lack of language skills can be a severe obstacle to career success.

Ojanperä (2014) points out that poor English language skills slow down the flow of effective communication, cause misinterpretation, create frustration, and create barriers among employees. This informs why multinational organizations like Coca-Cola, Swiss Technology Group, and Kaspersky offer their employees ELF training to improve their communication skills (Clement & Murugavel, 2018).

In Norway, for instance, the growth of immigration into the country has continued to increase yearly, and migrant employees account for about 400,000 out of the 2,965,737 workforce (Statistics Norway, 2022). Immigrants, as a means of survival, must enter the labour market, but they are usually found in low-wage industries (Stoylen, 2019). Being employed in Norway gives a sense of belonging, bridges social gaps, and alleviates poverty among them (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018).

In most organizations in the country, the Norwegian language is used as the lingua franca, but the majority of the migrant workers are deficient in speaking the language. Odden (2018) explains that migrants in Norway find it difficult to access employment opportunities like the

natives in the country due to their “linguistic poverty”. Stoylen (2019) reported that migrant workers have to learn the Norwegian language for them to properly integrate into the host country, especially the labour market.

Research conducted in the health sector of Norway revealed that language barrier is a major problem for international medical graduates in the country as they find it difficult to collaborate and share information with their colleagues and patients, and this negatively affects the quality of healthcare delivery as well as their perception in terms of competence (Skjeggstad et al., 2018; Woodward-Kron et al., 2015).

It is vital for immigrants to possess language skills as part of their integration into Norwegian society and the labour force (Båtevik et al., 2014). In 2003, the Introduction Act was enacted in Norway to integrate immigrants into the country’s social and economic life (Bahus, 2003). The language and cultural integration training were offered freely to immigrants and must be completed within three years. The training program was a prerequisite to granting the migrant’s citizenship residency permit (IMDi, 2017). The training was available to migrants based on their municipalities (IMDi, 2018).

However, the Norwegian government modified the Act, and migrants from certain countries, such as Poland, were not given the free language training opportunity in 2005 (IMDi, 2011). A later study by Ludvigsen & Ludvigsen (2012) found that the language training program in the country is mainly for immigrant employees, and the encouragement to attend was higher among immigrants than the refugees. This was because the migrants were eager to be integrated into the labour force and get employment. Learning the Norwegian language facilitates the possibility of this. Friberg and Golden (2014) add that acquiring Norwegian Language competence facilitates migrants gaining access to jobs that align with their occupational and educational backgrounds.

2.1.1 Language Proficiency in Other Countries

The relevance of language proficiency in the labour force is also shown by the labour regulations instituted to promote language skills among employers, *especially those from other nationalities*. Owing to the skills deficit and the need for more labour cum the continuous multiculturalism of organisations, the European Commission (2012) reinforces the need for language skills as a major resource for businesses to achieve competitive advantage. Aside

from the necessity for migrants to secure employment, “businesses also require language skills to operate effectively in the global marketplace” (Carvalho et al., 2022, p. 6).

In France, migrant employees are mandated to take French and civic classes to update their skills (Murphy, 2006; Gammal et al., 2020). In Italy, Italian Language proficiency is taught in secondary and higher institutions for non-Italians to learn the languages (Gammal et al., 2020). Migrants in Germany are also required to have a certain level of German Language proficiency (A2 level) to take certain courses or join the labour force. This is not different in the United Kingdom, as migrant employees and students are required to have a good command of the English Language to join the labour force (Gammal et al., 2020)

The country designed English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for those who are from countries without English as their official language or native language but desire to work in the UK (Stevenson et al., 2017). It was found that those with poor English language skills find it difficult to access job opportunities and struggle with social integration in the UK (Haque, 2010; Stoylen, 2019). Therefore, aside from the need to communicate effectively with co-workers and supervisors using English in the UK, migrants need language competence to relate with UK natives as language is a medium of communication (Trevena, 2013).

Table 2.1: Language Requirements for Migrant Workers in Different Countries

Country	Language Requirement for Migrant Workers
France	French language proficiency may be required, especially for certain job sectors.
Germany	German language proficiency is often required, particularly for employment in many professional fields.
Italy	Italian language proficiency might be necessary, especially for jobs involving customer interaction or public services.
UK	The country designed English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for those who are from countries without English as their official language or native language but desire to work in the UK.
Netherlands	Dutch language proficiency is often needed, especially for jobs that involve communication with clients or colleagues.
Denmark	Danish language proficiency is generally required, particularly for jobs that involve direct interaction with Danish-speaking clients.
South Korea	Employment training module on Korean language, work permit regulations, culture and health and safety at is required
China	Mandarin Chinese proficiency might be required, especially for jobs that involve communication with local clients and colleagues.
Turkey	Turkish language proficiency may be necessary, especially for jobs in sectors where interaction with Turkish-speaking individuals is common.

Malaysia	English language proficiency is often required, as English is widely used in business and education in Malaysia.
Australia	English language proficiency is usually required, and applicants may need to demonstrate their language skills through tests like IELTS.

Also, in the Netherlands, immigrants are required to be accustomed to the values and customs of the country as well as their language. The Dutch language is a significant requirement for admission seekers for specific courses in Dutch schools (University of Amsterdam, 2022). In Denmark, there is a three-month course designed for immigrants into the country to take for them to be accustomed to the country’s culture, language, and work ethics. The country’s Migrants’ Integration Act also requires that immigrants must take training in their municipality, except if there is a job offer in other places (Gammal et al., 2020). Immigrants to the Republic of Korea must take an employment training module that lasts for 20 hours, of which sixteen are dedicated to teaching Korean, work permit regulations, Korean culture and health and safety in the workplace and society (Organisation, 2015).

Article 26 of the *Indonesian Regulation on Foreign Workers Utilization* states that “It is the responsibility (and obligation) of the employer to offer language training to the foreign worker. During the foreign worker’s stay in Indonesia, he/she needs to learn Indonesian” (Regulation, 2018). In other words, migrant employees are expected to be proficient to a certain level in terms of speaking Indonesian, and employers are mandated to ensure their employees get the relevant language training needed. The law also mandates employers to employ Indonesian staff as an associate to migrant workers, ensure the Indonesian worker is trained and educated to the level of the migrant worker and facilitate language training for the migrant employees (Group, 2018).

In Turkey, foreign doctors must not have below ‘B’ in language tests as one of the criteria for employment (Agency, 2012). This is also similar to what is obtained in Malaysia, as migrant employees must pass training courses on language, culture and labour force regulations before being inducted into the Malaysian labour force (Shah & Yusof, 2018). The Chinese government has a labour force policy that ranks migrant employees based on their education, working hours, language proficiency and other demographics (Newspaper, 2017). English Language proficiency is one of the attributes Australian employers look out for in graduates for employment (Roshid, 2013; Arkoudis et al., 2009; Syed & Murray, 2009).

In Japan, there exists a bill that local government authorities should implement measures to facilitate migrant workers and students learning Japanese in a bid to promote the acquisition of the Japanese language among immigrants (Doerr, 2020). Even in the US, immigrants are also required by some States to attend English night classes, and violators are penalised (Gammal et al., 2020). In Canada, immigrants seeking work permits may be denied if found to have insufficient skills in Canadian lingua franca (Department, 2017).

2.2 Concept of Effective Communication

At the organisational level, communication is at the heart of business operations. There must be communication among co-workers and between managers and employees to share business operations, ideas, vision, mission, duties, responsibilities, strategies, and other business activities (Musheke & Phiri, 2021). Communication can either make or break an organisation, depending on its utilisation. It serves as the bridge between a company's vision and attaining that goal. Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra (2014) noted that communication is essential to ensure a profitable and productive business. According to Gapor and Doctor (2020), communication is used to educate and motivate employees to enhance their performance. Organisations must communicate with employees to understand their goals and missions and to foster commitment to their employers.

However, this business element has been a significant challenge for many organisations over the years when using communication to promote their business. Therefore, considering the impacts of this element on business dimensions is crucial (Bell & Roebuck, 2015; Keyton et al., 2013; Suh et al., 2012). When wrongly or poorly used, it can lead to a crisis (Musheke & Phiri, 2021). This gives rise to the concept of "Effective Communication."

To communicate simply means to share, and to share is to transmit information from the sender to the receiver. Although there are disagreements about what communication entails due to the various ways people can communicate, including language use, signs, symbols, gestures, and dress, many definitions view communication as a means of passing messages or information (Khemesh, 2017).

However, effective communication goes beyond just exchanging or sharing ideas and messages. Communication is effective when the sender receives the expected feedback. This extends the definition beyond the expectations to real feedback, as explained by Coursera

(2022:5): “Effective communication is the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data so that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose.” In this context, the message is not just sent but is also well received, and the desired effect is achieved. Therefore, both the sender and the receiver must understand the language or medium of communication, and the message must be clear, complete, and correct.

Carvalho et al. (2022:6) posit that “Communication Competence is the ability to express views effectively, enabling one to achieve goals and enhance relationships.” Similarly, Gamil and Rahman (2017) argue that effective communication helps organisations execute projects successfully within both time and cost constraints. This position is supported by the findings of Ne’Matullah et al. (2021) that a lack of effective communication due to language barriers at construction sites slows down operations and wastes resources. For instance, having information on the notice board or a safety symbol is a form of communication for workers in an organisation. Managers expect certain outcomes when they put such information in place, but effective communication occurs only when employees digest the information and act, accordingly, demonstrating that the communication has achieved the desired effects on the receiver and there is feedback.

Literature has shown that effective communication offers numerous benefits to business organisations (Mahajan, 2015). According to Joseph (2016:6), effective communication fosters trust and respect in organisations and promotes the attainment of business goals. Since organisations are collections of people who share the same economic vision, effective communication helps them interact, strategise, and make decisions to achieve their set goals. As added by Marzouki and Posecion (2019), effective communication improves relationships between employees and their supervisors. The authors further state that having effective communication at different levels of a business organisation enhances the firm’s success. Commenting on the relevance of effective communication in the tourism industry, Rudd, and Mills (2015:11) state that:

“In a world filled with intricate relationships, effective communication is critical to success. Essentially, managers must be able to articulate expectations and listen effectively to discover the expectations of employees. They must also be able to persuade others to behave in desired ways. Employees must be convinced to work toward clear and concise goals that fulfill the company’s long-term strategic objectives.”

Adu-Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang (2014) argue that allowing employees to communicate their ideas and opinions effectively to other employees and their supervisors enhances quick resolution of issues and makes employees feel valued, as their opinions are given consideration. Thus, effective communication helps organisations prevent crises, resolve issues, and foster positive feelings at work among staff. Seyitoglu and Yüzbaşıoglu (2015) also add that when organisational leaders effectively communicate with their subordinates, it creates a friendly working environment and improves overall business performance.

Additionally, effective communication reduces the likelihood of industrial strikes and lockouts (Musheke & Phiri, 2021). There are unions and groups that advocate for the interests of their members within organisations. Interaction and understanding between management and these groups are necessary to resolve agitations and concerns before they escalate into industrial crises. For instance, migrant employees may form groups within a firm, and managers need to identify these various groups in an organisation and communicate with them for understanding. This makes effective communication skills essential among managers and supervisors. When managers cannot interact effectively and pass information to employees, they are deemed incapable of fulfilling their responsibilities as expected (Puni et al., 2016).

Beyond the organisation effective communication is necessary to create understanding between an organisation and its customers. It is also vital for facilitating customer retention. According to Marzouki and Posecion (2019), customers are exposed to information from numerous businesses, and being able to communicate effectively with them will foster relationships, loyalty, trust, and retention (Ngatno, 2017).

It is important to note that effective communication is not limited to speaking or using notice boards and symbols within an organisation; it also involves the other three communication skills: reading, listening, and writing. This is why many business organisations provide training on listening skills for employees to enhance their understanding of customers, interactions with colleagues, and communication with other business stakeholders (Mahajan, 2015).

As Norwegian organisations continue to be multicultural due to the employment of immigrants, linguistic barriers are expected, especially between non-EU employees and Norwegian employees. According to Fafo (2020), the way migrant employees express themselves and behave may differ from their Norwegian colleagues. Studies have confirmed that there is often ineffective communication between migrant workers and their native counterparts, leading to

negative impacts on business operations such as employee segregation, business slowdown, breakdown of operations, and difficulty in achieving organisational goals (Støylen, 2019).

Organisations should consider effective communication as a business model that can predict training needs and aid in business evaluation (Keyton et al., 2013). In other words, communication can be used as a major business strategy and as a tool to assess an organisation's performance. Research has shown that clear and accurate information can enhance the success of multicultural and multinational firms (Al-Tokhais, 2016). It was further revealed that ineffective communication between employees and management threatens the future of organisations.

In summary, effective communication is an essential tool for multinational and multicultural organisations. It is necessary for sharing information, interacting, and fostering relationships between employees and management and between employees and customers. It can enhance business growth, employee satisfaction, customer retention, and the equitable use of resources. Organisations must treat communication as a strategic model for business competitiveness, and ineffective communication can lead to crises and other negative impacts on businesses. Multicultural employees "have different norms and beliefs and may also have different values and work ethics" (DA 2014, p. 323), and these forms of diversity lead to complexity and ambiguity for managers and staff. This can also lead to division, segregation, isolation, and overall business unproductiveness. Managers can use effective communication to influence employees' thinking and behaviour (Robson & Robinson, 2013).

2.4 Understanding Employee Engagement

In contemporary business models and practices, employee engagement is gaining attention from organizations and human resource managers, as it is considered a vital resource for organizational success (Lee & Ok, 2015; O'Neill et al., 2015). Globally, organizations are focused on optimizing their employees' performances because, without a productive workforce, no business organization can thrive. Business owners are increasingly interested in ensuring their employees are committed and motivated (Gapor & Doctor, 2020).

However, despite the growing attention this concept has garnered, there have been reports of continuous employee dissatisfaction, ongoing agitations, and low motivation (Odiaka, 2020; Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2016). Many employees lack commitment and

loyalty to their employers and frequently seek employment elsewhere (Akinwade, 2011; CIPD, 2020; Gallup, 2021).

A qualitative study among HR professionals revealed that although the majority of managers rated employee engagement in their companies highly, most of their staff became demotivated and migrated within two years (Kumar & Pansari, 2015). A report by Gallup (2017) showed that only fifteen per cent of global employees are engaged, while the remaining 85% are either disengaged or actively disengaged.

Despite its importance in the current business world, there is a conundrum in establishing a generally accepted definition for the concept of employee engagement. Odiaka (2020) noted that the difficulty in standardizing a definition is due to the various constructs used to explain it. Some authors consider employee engagement as commitment, loyalty, and involvement. For instance, Gapor and Doctor (2020) argue that employee engagement may be related to commitment but is distinct from it. An engaged employee is an asset to the employer, promoting organizational values and vision and collaborating with colleagues for business success. Commitment, on the other hand, is an individual disposition towards work and may not persist like engagement, which is more organization centric (Marzouki & Posecion, 2019).

The concept of employee engagement is attributed to Kahn (1990), who described it as the employees' feelings about their jobs, involving physical, emotional, and cognitive involvement (Kahn, 1990 in Odiaka, 2020:15). Kahn's definition identifies three major constructs: cognition, emotion, and physical dimensions. Another widely cited definition was given by Schaufeli et al. (2002), who defined it as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption" (p. 74). This definition emphasizes persistent dedication, involvement, and energy in work for employees to be considered engaged.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) explain that employee engagement is rather consistent than being a momentary state. In other words, it takes persistent dedication, involvement, and energy to work for employees to be deemed engaged. Their definition is similar to that of Kahn (1990) as they also identify three dimensions of employee engagement, which are absorption, dedication and vigour). Their definition has been widely cited by several authors (Odiaka, 2020; Czapka, 2020).

Saks (2006) defines employee engagement as the extent to which employees are attentive and absorbed in their jobs, focusing on complete involvement. Similarly, Rich, Lepine, and Crawford (2010) define employee engagement as “the investment of an individual’s complete self into a role” (p. 617). The authors add that engaged employees are integrated, attentive and more connected with their jobs. These dimensions are similar to earlier ones identified by Kahn and Saks and are evidence that employee engagement goes beyond mere involvement and commitment.

Gapor and Doctor (2020) relate employee engagement to satisfaction, but they distinguish the two. According to them, employee engagement refers to the eagerness of employees to participate in their jobs, requiring satisfaction with their jobs. This is similar to Gallup’s definition, which describes employee engagement as “an individual’s involvement, satisfaction, and enthusiasm for work” (Odiaka, 2020, p. 12). A satisfied employee may perform their duties without complaints but may not invest additional energy or effort. In contrast, an engaged employee is involved, works with vigour and dedication, and is always concerned with organizational success.

Expanding on the concept, CIPD (2020) asserts that employee engagement refers to the situation where employees are connected with their colleagues and managers, working in a motivated and caring environment feeling satisfied and motivated to work. In this study, Schaufeli et al.’s (2002) definition of employee engagement is adopted, as it is widely cited in the literature. They defined employee engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption” (p. 74). This is because the majority of contemporary definitions of employee engagement are adapted from their definition. According to Odiaka (2020), employee engagement is a combination of physical, emotional, and cognitive integration of employees into their jobs, making it a holistic concept different from mere commitment or organizational behaviour.

Engaged workers exhibit characteristics such as vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Hoti, 2019). Vigour refers to employees discharging their duties with energy and mental resilience, persistently investing their efforts in ensuring business success. Dedicated employees are enthusiastic and have a strong sense of identity with their organizations, while absorption refers to employees being engrossed in their jobs, feeling happy, and loving what they do (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Hoti, 2019; Seppälä et al., 2015).

Possessing these qualities makes employees productive, concerned about organizational goals, loyal, and less likely to leave.

Employee engagement is relevant to organizations because it influences both employees and organizations to achieve improved performance (*Arefin et al., 2019; Bakker et al., 2012; Kirk-Brown & Dijik, 2011; Mongkolworakitchai, 2016*). A scoping review by Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot (2016) revealed that organizations with engaged employees have a competitive advantage and a well-motivated workforce. Highly engaged employees enhance the quality-of-service delivery, customer satisfaction, and the organization's profitability (Karatepe, 2013). Engagement also reduces the likelihood of employees migrating to other organizations (*Al-Tokhais, 2016, pp. 71-75*). Engaged employees are predictors of organizational success, driving increased sales and profits because satisfied employees may influence their performance, customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. *Robinson (2014)* highlights that engaged employees are satisfied with their jobs, active, strive for improvement, are concerned about the organization, are dependable, and help others to be efficient.

Conversely, disengaged employees experience negative feelings and exhibit a negative attitude towards their jobs, which can lead to truancy, unethical behaviour, quick burnout, low commitment, and turnover (*Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013; Johnson & Beehr, 2014*). According to *Gallup (2017)*, disengaged employees are only concerned about the roles assigned to them without any regard for teamwork or the organization. Actively disengaged employees undermine the accomplishments of others and discourage and demotivate their colleagues (Gallup, 2017). They not only hinder productivity but also act as saboteurs.

To ensure employee engagement, managers should assign roles compatible with employees' skill sets, qualifications, and experiences (*Johnson & Beehr, 2014*). This creates a connection between employees and their jobs, reducing anxiety about their technical skills. While this alone may not guarantee engagement, employees tend to find pleasure in doing what they know best, preventing burnout and frustration.

Employee engagement is a way for employees to compensate their employers. According to the equity theory, employees evaluate their inputs (time, skills, dedication, etc.) against the outputs (salary, welfare, job environment, reward systems, etc.) they receive from their employers. When there is a perceived imbalance, they feel dissatisfied (Littlejohn et al., 2021). Therefore, employee engagement is not inherent but is initiated by specific organizational

factors. As Odiaka (2020) argues, the extent of employee engagement in a firm is determined by what employees receive from their employers.

Several factors influencing employee engagement have been identified in the literature, although they vary among organizations, industries, and locations. Integrating these factors into internal strategies can influence employee engagement. Gapor and Doctor (2020) identify a good working environment, supervisor support, a robust reward system, promotion opportunities, recognition, and justice as predictors of employee engagement. Mishra et al. (2014) contend that organizations must value employees and provide the necessary facilities for them to discharge their duties effectively. Research by Mongkolworakitchai (2016) reported a positive relationship between manager-employee relationships and employee engagement among teachers in Thailand, while Smithikrai (2019) found that job satisfaction, positive orientation, and employee attitudes positively influence employee engagement.

The variation in these factors can be attributed to differences in organizational contexts, sectors, and individual employee motivational factors. This diversity indicates that predictors of engagement vary, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. This study will investigate the level of employee engagement among migrants in Norway, adapting the widely used Utrecht Work Engagement Scale by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). Additionally, the study will explore how language proficiency influences employee engagement, an area of research that has received limited attention, particularly concerning migrant employees in Norway.

2.4 Explaining Employee Development

Employees are the heart of any organisation, and their level of development in competence and skills will determine the level of success an organisation can achieve. This is why employee development is prioritised through training and developmental programmes (Satterfield, 2018).

According to Kim (2016), the process through which employees acquire relevant skills and experience will enhance their job performance. Adding to this, Hartung and Wilson (2016) describe employee development as empowering employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet business and market demands. Similarly, employee development is defined as the various forms and procedures for helping employees hone their skills, knowledge, and competence to perform their duties optimally (Garavan et al., 2018). These definitions show that employee development is a process, and the process is continuous. The business world is

dynamic, and there is always a need for skilling and reskilling of employees. Therefore, the development of the workforce becomes a frequent necessity.

According to Holton (2014), employee development aims to support employees to grow. It is believed that the growth of employees is beneficial to them and the organisation. Research has shown that employee development increases the workforce in terms of productivity, motivation, and job satisfaction (McLeod & Henderson, 2015). This is attributed to the fact that employees perceive organisations offering them training and development as concerned about their career progression. As such, they consider training and developmental programmes as an investment in them (CIPD, 2020). Literature also shows employee development can enhance retention (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017).

For organisations, their success, productivity, and competitiveness lie on the knowledge and competence of their employees (McLeod & Henderson, 2015; Sandjong, 2021). This is why organisations spend vast amounts of money to train and retrain their employees to deliver as expected. Business managers need to identify the knowledge gap in their organisations and adopt the proper training and developmental programmes to fill it (Grund & Titz, 2022).

Employee development can be done in several ways. Each training method is organised to address specific skill needs (Tabvuma et al., 2015). According to Rockwood (2022), training must be customised for every skill need, and it may be counter-productive to organise a developmental programme without aligning it with the organisational goal. Employee developmental programmes can include classroom training, job rotation, simulation exercises, on-the-job training, mentoring and others (Zembylas & Billett, 2016). According to Carter and Greer (2018), the 70-20-10 model shows that employee development is most effective when it involves a combination of on-the-job experience, developmental relationships, and formal learning opportunities. This model has been widely discussed in the literature on talent management (McLeod & Henderson, 2015), as has the role of managers in supporting employee development (Holton, 2014).

As identified by Zayum et al. (2018), training and development programmes can be on-the-job or off-the-job. On-the-job training programmes are developmental programmes organised for employees while performing business activities within their firms. Examples of these programmes are mentorship, job rotation and apprenticeship. On the other hand, off-the-job

training is a developmental programme for employees outside their workplaces. Examples are seminars, simulation exercises, and classroom work (Zayum et al., 2018).

Technology has also significantly impacted employee development, as it has made it easier for employees to access learning resources and opportunities (Zembylas & Billett, 2016). However, challenges and limitations to employee development must be considered, such as the time and cost required to support employee development and the need to align development efforts with organisational goals (Garavan et al., 2018). Irrespective of the methods adopted, employee development aims to assist the workers to attain their full potential, grow and contribute to the competitiveness and success of their employers.

2.5 Influence of Language Proficiency on Effective Communication

Language is a medium of communication and one of the unique attributes of humans over other animals. Oral communication may not be possible without language shared by parties in an interaction circle. According to Radley (2016), the essence of workplace official language is to promote unity and achieve tasks. Radley adds, “The socio-cultural nature of language is important not only because language communicates information, but also because in the process of exchange, it creates value within the culture” (Radley, 2016, p. 10). Without language, organisations may find it challenging to communicate their culture to the employees, especially the migrants.

Supporting this, Nasir (2013) argues that having migrant workers in Norwegian organisations will lead to communication crises between the foreigners and the local employees because the migrants usually find it hard to interact in the local language, adhere to safety instructions and signs, and can lead to accidents during operation. To achieve this, linguistic barriers, informed by cultural relativism, must be addressed (Gunnarsson, 2014). Several attempts have investigated how language proficiency, especially among migrant and foreign employees, influences effective communication in the workplace.

A study by Günhan et al. (2012) found that a significant challenge for foreign workers was linguistic poverty, which did not allow them to communicate effectively. Another study by Valithern and Rahman (2014) found that most migrant employees have little knowledge of the local language. This affected their interaction with other employees and their supervisors.

Consequently, it negatively affected their work regarding keeping to safety instructions and completing work on time.

In the construction sector of Malaysia, it was also found that the inability of migrant workers to speak English led to ineffective communication between them and their supervisors. This was found to lead to project complications, project delays, and waste of materials (Wei & Yaznifard, 2015). A recent study in the industry also confirmed that miscommunication due to linguistic barriers negatively impacted the timely completion of projects and the quality of the job done. Also, it was found that linguistic barriers put migrant workers at risk of accidents as they could not understand and comply with safety information. Lastly, the study found that the language barrier also led to a waste of resources (Ne'Matullah et al., 2021). Emuze and James (2013) add that ineffective communication due to a language barrier can lead to additional costs of production budgeting and disputes between organisations and shareholders due to project failure.

Commenting on the relevance of language to effective communication and business progress, Shrestha et al. (2018:2) aver that language helps organisations to communicate and solve problems in the present and plan for the future. No doubt, organisations cannot make any plans, strategies, or tactics for business growth without effective communication, and to ensure this, there must be proficiency in the language being used to communicate by all involved.

Language is a significant element of culture, which also applies to organisations. It communicates organisational identity, and when employees are proficient in the workplace's official language, it promotes that organisation's culture and internalises it (Gelman, 2017). This makes it imperative for migrant employees to learn the lingua franca of their workplace to give them a sense of belonging and corporate identity. Conversely, employees' lack of language proficiency will lead to exploitation, isolation, and marginalisation (Gardner-Chloros, 2016).

A qualitative study by Iversen et al. (2013) among prison inmates revealed that cultural differences, accompanied by linguistic barriers, led to foreign inmates being discriminated against and their needs being given little attention. This led to the inmates isolating themselves. The study shows the necessity of creating an effective communication mechanism in prisons to facilitate interaction between foreign inmates and prison wardens. The study also shows that

migrants are not only discriminated against in the workplace and health facilities but also inside prison facilities, and this is mainly due to cultural and linguistic differences.

The study by Mallows (2014) found that some social and economic challenges migrants face would have been solved if they could communicate effectively using the local language. Regarding employment, Shrestha et al. (2018:2) found that it is difficult for migrant employees without proficiency in the host country's language to perform their duties successfully. This is because it is difficult for them to understand instructions, relate to other employees and team members, and express their experiences and needs while on the job.

Antony (2013) found that language proficiency and effective communication improve productivity in the engineering sector. To ensure this, business managers must communicate with employees, provide them with training, and establish a communication plan for prompt information sharing.

Oetterli et al. (2016) also found that ineffective communication due to a language barrier is one of the significant problems doctors have when relating to patients. Other studies have shown that such problems can lead to wrong diagnoses, perceived inefficiency by doctors, and poor health service delivery (Jaeger et al., 2019; Tschirhart et al., 2019).

In Norway, Mbanya et al. (2019) found that migrants face challenges accessing health care services due to a language barrier and lack of access to and understanding of health information. Without a good understanding of the local language, migrant employees are at risk of work hazards and may also cause avoidable wastage of resources (Ismail et al., 2018). Also, Støylen (2019) found that Polish migrants integrating into the Norwegian labour force faced a linguistic challenge as the Norwegian language was used as the official business language. The migrants had to invest in acquiring Norwegian language skills to be gainfully employed and to enhance their qualifications for the job and skills. This finding was also among Polish migrants integrating into the UK labour force.

A report by Fafo (2020) from a nursing home, construction industry, and academia in Oslo showed that speaking Norwegian became necessary for workers in the three sectors. In the nursing homes, migrant employees were required to acquire Norwegian skills, and tests were conducted to assess their proficiency, as language proficiency was required to deal with patients who were mostly elderly. In academia, there was a linguistic challenge for migrant

employees as the lingua franca for the institutions is Norwegian. This became problematic as many of the employees were used to English. It was then imposed on the employees to acquire Norwegian proficiency to improve their quality of teaching as well as facilitate effective communication between the teachers and students as well as in the workforce. In the construction industry, it was found that employees were grouped based on their language so each team could communicate in their language. Further analysis showed that a linguistic barrier became a significant issue when it came to safety. The migrants who do not speak Norwegian found understanding safety instructions and information challenging, leading to several issues and low productivity.

However, the pressure to speak in the workplace lingua franca without adequate knowledge of such language can lead to migrant employees' isolation and avoidance of speaking (Salleh et al., 2021). This necessitates organisations to organise language proficiency training for their staff, especially migrants, to build their confidence, improve communication skills, enhance employee relationships, and improve business productivity (Gammal et al., 2020).

2.6 Influence of Language proficiency on Migrant Employee Engagement

Language proficiency is a vital resource in organisations for employees to communicate effectively and get tasks done. Studies have been conducted to investigate how language proficiency influences employees and organisations in general. One area with emerging research is how linguistic competence influences employee engagement. As migrant employees continue to dominate the international labour force and the continued need for organisations to ensure their employees are engaged, studies have emerged to investigate if language proficiency will enhance employee engagement. According to Isphording (2015), it will be difficult for foreign employees to adapt and integrate into the workplace without adequate host country's linguistic competence.

Business success relies on employee engagement because employees are a firm's tangible assets (Park & Levy, 2014). However, despite its relevance, getting employees engaged has become a significant challenge for business managers as many organisations experience high employee dissatisfaction and turnover rates (Ling et al., 2016). According to Shuck et al. (2013), unlike job satisfaction, which is based on attitude to work, engagement is focused on employees' psychological state. Losing employees is costlier than retaining them because recruiting new staff, training and integrating them cost the organisation money and non-

monetary losses such as communication, morale, customer and productivity (Freedman & Kosova, 2014; Pathak, 2018). To have a motivated workforce, managers require interacting with the staff to identify their concerns and needs. It is argued that relationships within an organisation, effective communication during training and the creation of enabling environments enhance employee engagement (Anitha, 2014; Roy, 2013).

It is not only the employees who must be competent in language and communication skills; managers must also hone their language and communication skills. According to Sahin, Cubuk and Uslu (2014), positive and timely effective communication by managers also enhances employee engagement. Through communication, managers will engage employees, interact, coach, train and motivate them and facilitate relationships and understanding (Clifton, 2014; Sparrow, 2013; Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). Manager-employee interaction improves staff engagement, as lack of proper interaction limits employees' performance (Gerst, 2013; Puni et al., 2016).

The study by Gapor and Doctor (2020) revealed that a high level of employee engagement positively correlates with high performance. The study emphasised the relevance of employee engagement in organisations. It concluded that when employees are involved, committed, absorbed and work with vigour, their performances improve, and business success is enhanced. Another study by Tran (2018) showed that factors that influence employee engagement among the employees include job conditions, relationships, supervision quality, salary, personal life, and security. The study also showed employee engagement enhances productivity, commitment, and customer retention.

Relationships, employee-supervisor support, and security at the workplace are tied to communication. Therefore, a communication gap, as a result of linguistic barriers, will negatively affect employee engagement. This was buttressed by a study among secondary school teachers that found that the emotional stability of employees influenced their work engagement (Hoti, 2019). This study implies that employees' characteristics can influence their vigour, absorption, and job involvement. As such, migrants' need to integrate into the host country may be impossible without understanding the language (Selmer, 2015), and at the workplace, it helps them to understand their roles, communicate with others, garner co-workers' and supervisors' support and avoid being isolated (Iversen et al., 2013; Onyebuchi, 2019).

Prior studies have shown that effective communication in the workplace is a prerequisite for employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention (Hsiung, 2012; Fragouli & Ibidapo, 2015). However, there has been a call for studies to investigate how linguistic proficiency and communication influence employees in multicultural workplaces due to the challenges managers encounter to effectively communicate with employees from diverse cultures (Tran, 2018).

Brummelhuis, Bakker, Hetland, and Keulemans (2012) found that diversification of communication in the workplace positively influences employee engagement. The study by Mishra et al. (2014) found that business enterprises and their public relations experts have realised that fortifying internal communication will enhance employee engagement. This has informed why these firms employ various forms of communication to build trust, loyalty, and engagement in their employees. However, how will communication be fostered without understanding the language of communication in a culturally diverse workplace? This makes linguistic competence a necessity for migrant employees in organisations. Thus, organisations must train their migrant employees in the host country's language. The only alternative is for the firms to employ only migrants with language competence (Shrestha et al., 2018).

Al-Tokhais (2016) found that effective communication can predict employees' job satisfaction, engagement and turnover in the Saudi Arabian hospitality and tourism industry. This indicates that effective communication can make employees feel involved in their jobs and prevent them from detaching from their employment. Although employee retention and satisfaction are complex and usually influenced by arrays of factors (intrinsic and extrinsic), this study has shown that effective communication can predict them.

In Egypt, Marzouki and Posecion (2019) reported that communication skill positively correlates with employee engagement. This implies that having adequate language and general communication proficiency can influence employees' involvement, vigour, and absorption into the workplace. An exploratory study by Mishra et al. (2014) found that Public Relations executives used internal communication to build and sustain trust and employee engagement. Part of the communication methods used was face-to-face. Without proficiency in everyday language, face-to-face communication might not be possible. This study indicates that organisational communication can make employees feel committed, involved, and absorbed in their jobs.

2.7 Influence of Language Proficiency on Employee Development

Employee development is essential to any organisation's smooth running, productivity, competitiveness, and success. Therefore, employers need to prioritise the development of their workforce. Although several factors are responsible for employee development, research into how language proficiency influences employee development has attracted attention from linguistic scholars.

Exposure to economic opportunities is one of the influences of language proficiency on employee development. A review of extant studies by Shrestha et al. (2018) found that language proficiency is essential for engineers in the workplace, and this is not limited to Nepal but is a necessity across countries. The study concluded that having sufficient skills in English Language has become a prerequisite for engineers to be gainfully employed globally. The implication is that aside from having both soft and hard skills, engineering graduates must possess a certain level of organisational lingua franca proficiency before being considered for employment. This necessitates language training for graduates who seek to work in organisations that adopt official languages other than their native tongues.

Itani, Järnlström and Piekkari (2015) argue that language is a significant career competence for employees. Organisations are going global and multicultural, and language proficiency has become a significant predictor of opportunities (Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2012). Research has shown that students with low foreign language proficiency were reluctant towards international job opportunities as they were aware of the relevance of language skills requirement for job opportunities in the EU labour market (Grasmane & Grasmane, 2011). Lack of language skills hindered employees' career mobility and success (Latukha et al., 2016; Traavik & Richardsen, 2010). In Norway, in a study to investigate the career success of international expatriate women in Norway, Traavik and Richardsen (2010) found language proficiency as a significant predictor of career success for foreign women employees.

Another influence of linguistic competence on an employee is that it enhances their integration. According to Gammal et al. (2020), linguistic competence is essential to the survival of migrant employees in the host country. This is because the ability to communicate effectively in the host language helps the migrant to integrate into the host society economically and socially. For instance, studies have shown that migrant employees with high levels of language proficiency are more opportune to employment opportunities than those with low language

proficiency (Shrestha et al., 2018). Also, migrant employees need language to build relationships, communicate and foster understanding with their co-workers, managers, and people in their host environment. Gammal et al. (2020) add that host language proficiency has a positive influence on the personality of the migrants. Language is a product of culture; speaking the host language helps an employee build and sustain relationships with people in the host environment and workplace (Bharathi, 2016).

According to the European Commission (2012), migrant integration occurs through active participation, labour, and education and without language, integration cannot be possible. This is why many countries like France, Norway, Germany, and others make acquiring their languages compulsory for migrant employees (Extramiana, 2012; Gammal et al., 2020). A Norwegian study by Støylen (2019) found that Polish migrants integrating into the labour force faced linguistic challenges as Norwegian was the official business language. The migrants had to acquire Norwegian language skills to be gainfully employed and enhance their qualifications for the job and skills. This finding was also among Polish migrants integrating into the UK labour force.

In a study by *Martin (2014)*, it was found that language competence helps graduates to develop socially and economically. The ability to communicate and forge relationships has become one of the significant qualities' employers look for when recruiting workers (Jackson, 2014). A similar earlier study among engineers in India also reported that organisations consider communication skills relevant to selecting and recruiting new graduates (*Blom & Saeki, 2011*). A 2017 report on job demands in America shows that most job openings at Bank of America were for candidates with bilingual skills (*New American Economy, 2017*).

Also, language proficiency helps employees to hone their skills. A study by *Anitha (2014)* also showed that a business manager who effectively communicates and gives prompt feedback helps employees develop their skills. For instance, training and development programmes are organised and delivered using language. The inability of the managers or facilitators to use language proficiently will have a negative influence on the development programme. Also, employees cannot comprehend what is being said with competence in the language of delivery (Tamrakar & Das, 2016). As Roy (2013) notes, effective communication during training aids message clarity and accuracy and improves employee development and performance. Possession of language skills improves employees' knowledge, motivation, and networks. It

also develops employees' career competence and helps them surmount work boundaries (Itani et al., 2015).

Migrant employees cannot read, write, or understand information passed without understanding the host language. Acquisition of skills, work knowledge and performance improvement require language proficiency (Gammal et al., 2020). Therefore, it may be difficult for migrant employees without host language competence to develop. Relatedly, linguistic poverty prevents foreign employees from keeping to safety instructions at work, and this can lead to work accidents. Trajkovski and Loosemore (2006), cited in Salleh et al. (2021), found that almost half of the foreign workers could not communicate in English, which is the primary cause of accidents among them.

In addition, language proficiency enhances human capital for employees. The human capital theory sees training as an investment in employees that increases their worth (Littlejohn et al., 2021). The ability to learn and speak the host language is also considered a human capital investment, and it increases the worth of the migrant employee. A study by Leung (2010) in France reported that bilingual employees earn more than unilingual employees. Prince and Singh (2015) also found that many Indian employers did not provide English language learning platforms despite employees' readiness to learn. It was further reported that employees offered learning opportunities appreciated it considerably because it was perceived as a human capital investment. A similar study by Yao and Van Ours (2015) found that female migrant employees with host language proficiency earn 48% more than those with linguistic poverty, who are likely to remain unemployed.

As such, language learning is tied to employee development. Since linguistic competence is essential in an organisational setting, offering employees the opportunity to learn the office lingua franca is a strategy that brings job satisfaction because learning and development are vital to employees' satisfaction and commitment to work (Collins, 2015).

Regarding productivity, language proficiency is a major contributory factor. As migrant employees cannot understand the host language, leading to a lack of effective communication, workplace accident, slow operation, and waste of resources, the performance and productivity of both the employees and the organisations is threatened (Ramlan et al., 2018).

Donohoe (2018) found that linguistic barrier reduces work efficiency, competitiveness, and value. A recent study also confirmed the positive influence of language proficiency on productivity (*Salleh et al., 2021*). As reported by *Habas (2020)*, a lack of English proficiency makes migrant employees unable to express themselves to their colleagues, and they are prone to high risks and work accidents due to their linguistic poverty.

Given the relevance of linguistic competence to their development, migrant employees are usually willing to learn the host language and making organisations that provide training in that regard becomes desirable to them (CIPD, 2020). Professional employees may be deemed creative and have technical brilliance. However, as long as they cannot communicate their skills and competence with colleagues, clients and managers, their brilliancy becomes unacknowledged and useless (Rao, 2016).

In summary, effective communication is a critical factor in an employee's development, both in their professional and personal lives. Proficiency in a language can open new job opportunities, improve communication with colleagues and clients, and help employees articulate their thoughts and ideas. It enhances employees' ability to access and understand information, better problem-solving and decision-making, and improves job performance. Additionally, good communication skills can also improve an employee's ability to build and maintain relationships with colleagues, clients, and other stakeholders, which can positively impact their confidence, self-esteem, overall job satisfaction and career advancement.

2.8 Influence of Individual Differences on Employees

Individual differences refer to how people differ from each other. Certain personality traits may influence how they do or react to things. As humans, these personal differences can impact how employees behave and perform in the workplace. For example, some employees may have a more positive attitude and be more motivated, while others may be more negative and less motivated.

Odiaka (2020) states that individual differences influence employees' work engagement. For instance, employees in an organisation have different levels of vigour, absorption and involvement, which are predicted by certain work-related. People's use of communication and the channels are influenced by their traits, such as demographics and social and psychological factors (Valkenburg et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2019).

Migration requires acculturation and adaptation in the host country, especially in organisations. Cross-adaptation requires both social and psychological adaptation (Kim, 2017). According to Hua et al. (2020), individuals' traits influence how they react to their environments, especially when in foreign lands and how they adapt. For migrant employees, adaptation in the workplace will not take the same process simultaneously.

As Kim (2017) explains, the migrant adaptation process is complex and does not take a linear complex. As such, the personality of the migrants will determine their level and process of adapting to the new environment. This complexity makes migrants' individuality an influential factor from arrival to Norway to integration (Zaw, 2018).

Literature has shown that the level of language competence of migrants is influenced by their traits (Kang et al., 2019). Hua et al. (2020) found that the personality traits of migrant students influence their adaptation, and their cultural intelligence mediates the relationship. Al-Tokhais (2016) found that personal self-esteem and how employees seek information affect their job performance and behaviour, which include engagement. Samovar et al. (2015) found that multicultural factors like personal culture, values, education, beliefs, and attitudes of employees influence employees' communication and information sharing.

A study by Dawson, Madera, Neal, and Chen (2014) found that migrant employees' characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, gender and other backgrounds influence language and communication proficiency. Investigating the influence of age among employees, Mao, and Hale (2015) found that older employees require less information about their job roles than younger employees. This indicates that the age of migrant employees influences their effective communication and communication outcomes.

Lauring (2011) examined intercultural communication in organisations where messages have implications that can be interpreted differently by various groups. Notwithstanding its impact on individuals, cross-cultural communication is an essential strategy for boosting an organisation's business internationally and promoting solutions to contemporary issues affecting an organisation's relationships with its stakeholders and other corporate organisations (Lauring, 2011). Among secondary school teachers, Hoti (2019) found that gender and emotional stability influenced work engagement. It was also reported that emotional stability influences the teachers' work engagement more than other personality traits examined.

As Kim (2012) stressed in her theory of cross-cultural adaptation, the longer a migrant stay in a host environment, the more he or she acquires host cultural dimensions such as language, dressing and behaviour. Chien (2016) and Li and Croucher (2019) also support that migrants must spend quality time in the host country to fit into the environment. This environment can be society in general or a workplace.

Summarily, these findings make it imperative for managers of multicultural organisations to take cognisance of employees (Vasquez, 2014). It is essential for managers and leaders to be aware of individual differences among their employees and to take these differences into account when making decisions and providing support. By doing so, they can help ensure that all employees can perform to their full potential and contribute to the organisation's success. It also influences employees' work engagement, stress management, and relationships with others and guarantees safety. In this study, the gender, age, length of stay in Norway, years of working experience and educational background will be assessed as individual variables among participants.

Summary of Literature and Gap

The literature review explores the impact of linguistic proficiency on the employability and productivity of migrants in various countries. The increasing global migration for job opportunities, especially in developed nations, has led to a focus on how language and communication issues may arise in business organizations employing migrants from diverse cultural backgrounds. Shrestha et al. (2018) found that English language proficiency is crucial for engineers globally, emphasizing its necessity beyond national borders. Roshid (2013) highlighted the positive correlation between English proficiency of Bangladeshi graduates in Australia and their employability, stressing the importance of language skills for job opportunities. Salleh et al. (2021) explored how language barriers and discrimination affect migrant workers' productivity. The study emphasized the positive impact of proficiency in the company's lingua franca on employee productivity, highlighting the role of language in effective communication within organizations.

Ne'Matullah et al. (2021) found that miscommunication negatively impacted project completion and job quality among construction employees in Malaysia, the study highlighted the risks and discrimination faced by migrants lacking linguistic competence. Several studies

in Norway, including those by *Haugaard et al. (2020)*, *Støylen (2019)*, and *Fafo (2020)*, underscored the challenges faced by migrants due to language barriers in accessing employment, healthcare, and integrating into the labor force. These studies emphasize the importance of language proficiency for effective communication and cohesion among workers. Prince and Singh (2015) explored the relevance of English language proficiency in the construction, healthcare, and hospitality sectors in India. The study found that language proficiency requirements varied based on sector and job roles, emphasizing the importance of linguistic competence for employability.

Czapka et al. (2018) highlighted barriers to Polish migrants' access to health services in Norway, revealing challenges arising from linguistic incompetence. Similar findings were observed in studies by Czapka and Sagbakken (2020) and Musheke and Phiri (2021), emphasizing the positive influence of language proficiency on effective communication and organizational performance. The literature review also touches on studies in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Arkoudis et al., 2014), Thailand (Gapor and Doctor, 2020), Finland (Tran, 2018), Luxembourg (Radley, 2016), and Madeira (Carvalho et al., 2022), all emphasizing the role of language proficiency in employability and effective communication.

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into the impact of linguistic proficiency on migrants' employability and productivity, majority of the studies focused on English language proficiency among migrant employees while those conducted on Norwegian language proficiency focused on specific sector, especially health. None of the studies focused on the influence of Norwegian language proficiency on migrant employees' effective communication, employee engagement and development. Given these gaps, the current study will investigate the influence of language proficiency on effective communication, employee engagement and development among migrant employees in Norway.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the principles and procedures undertaken by the researcher to gather and analyze data in order to provide answers to the questions raised in this study. This chapter will be discussed under the following headings: research philosophy, research strategy, study population, sample size, sample selection techniques, instrument for data collection, methods for data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study adopted the positivism approach to investigate language barriers and their impacts on employees' communication competence, engagement, and development in Norway. Positivism is considered because it uses standardized methods and instruments to gather and interpret knowledge. It also allows findings to be generalized and replicated in other contexts since standardized instruments are used (Weber, 2004). There have been several attempts to investigate the influence of language barriers on several variables. Using standardized tools that can be replicated made this research a contribution to the ongoing conversation on the topic on the global stage. This was done by testing existing hypotheses as they apply to the current investigation.

3.2 Research Approach

The deductive approach was used in this study. This selection is informed by the focus of this study on a large and heterogeneous population of migrant employees in Norway. Also, prior studies have developed valid and reliable instruments that can be used to test the relationship between language proficiency, communication competence, employee engagement, and development. This approach aligns with the positivist research philosophy.

3.3 Research Design

Although prior studies have used the three designs to investigate the influence of language proficiency on employees and migrants, given the approach of this research, a quantitative

design was adopted. This was informed by the use of standardized instruments, detachment of the researcher from the investigation, and the need to contribute to prior studies. A quantitative research design relies on the positivist philosophy and deductive approach. According to Saunders et al. (2016), quantitative design uses statistical and numerical tools to investigate the correlation between or among variables and it ensures instruments used for the investigation are reliable, valid and free of researcher's biases. It is mainly used for experimental and survey investigations and collects numerical data.

3.4 Research Strategy

A survey strategy was adopted in this research. A survey is a strategy that uses standardized scientific tools and processes to investigate opinions, behaviour, and relationships between variables (Stephan, 2019). "Survey strategies, using questionnaires, are popular as they allow the collection of standardized data from a sizable population in a highly economical way, allowing easy comparison" (Norouzi & Movahedifar, 2015, p. 182). This strategy is the most popular quantitative research strategy and is mostly used to investigate issues relating to employees in organizations (Akinici & Saunders, 2015). Similarly, a survey makes data collection, sorting, analysis, and interpretation easy for the researcher without the researcher's opinion being infused into knowledge creation (McCombes, 2019). A survey also involves taking a portion of a large population for investigation, and the results obtained will be generalized to the entire members of such a population. It would be difficult for the researcher to investigate the language barrier, communication competence, employee engagement, and development of the entire migrant employees in Norway. A subset of this population of employees was investigated, and the results obtained were generalized for the entire population.

3.5 Time Horizon

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey. Cross-sectional studies collect one-time data from the study population. The focus is to investigate 'what is' and not to measure change over time (Saunders et al., 2019). The current research is allotted a limited time for completion, and this makes a longitudinal study inappropriate. Additionally, the researcher had no external funding for this research.

3.6 Study Population

This study seeks to identify the impacts of language barriers on employee communication competence, engagement, and development among migrant employees in Norway. Norway has a workforce size of 2,965,737 as of 2021 (World Bank, 2022). Norway has an immigrant population of 819,356 at the beginning of 2022 (Statistics Norway, 2022), among which 68.9% of those between 20 and 66 years are employed as of 2021 (Statistics Norway, 2022). There are over 400,000 immigrants in the Norwegian workforce as of (Statista, 2022) and they make up the population under investigation.

3.7 Sample Size

It was difficult to investigate the over 400,000 migrant employees in Norway within the time allotted to this research, necessitating sampling. McCombes (2019) describes sampling as the process of investigating a portion of a large population in order to generalize the results for the whole population. This study investigated 180 migrant employees in Norway.

3.8 Sampling Technique

The participants in this study were selected purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Only migrants, who are 18 years and above and are in the Norwegian workforce were selected for this study. The researcher approached organisations in Norway and dropped the electronic questionnaire link with the HR managers to share with their migrant employees. Only the migrant employees that showed willingness and availability to participate and responded to the questionnaire were recruited for this study.

3.9 Research Instrument

A questionnaire was used in this study. A questionnaire is the most commonly used survey instrument to collect numerical data (Akinci & Saunders, 2015). The questionnaire contains a set of inquiries that require participants to respond to (Young, 2016). The instrument is divided into five sections. The first section contains the demographic information of the migrant employees, including variables such as gender, age, length of stay in Norway, working experience, educational background, and nationality.

The second section contains language barrier scales. The scale contains speaking, reading, listening, and writing Norwegian as variables, measured using a global language proficiency 6-point scale ranging from beginner (1), elementary (2), intermediate (3), upper intermediate

(4), professional proficient (4), and master (6). The third section contains the communication competence measuring scale, adopted from Wiemann (1997), Canary and Spitzberg's (1987), and Salleh et al. (2021) communication competence scale. The scale has ten items measured with a five-point rating scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The fourth section contains the scale used to measure employee engagement, adapted from Schaufeli and Bakker (2004).

The scale contains fifteen items measuring the three dimensions of employee engagement: vigour, dedication, and absorption. This scale has been used by many researchers, and Hoti (2019) found the reliability coefficient to be 0.922, indicating a high level of reliability. A Likert five-point rating scale ranging from never (1) to always (5) is used to measure the scale. The last section contains the employee development scale, adapted from several sources. The scale measures employees' development of new skills and improvement in their existing competence. The scale contains ten items and will be measured with a five-point rating scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

3.10 Method of Data Analysis

The data from the migrant employees were sorted, coded, and analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 20). Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used. Each of the variables was measured using mean and standard deviation. Correlation analysis was performed using chi-square, linear regression, and multiple regression methods.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

First, this study was conducted with diligence, honesty, and objectivity by the researcher. The instrument used in this study does not require respondents to provide any information that could reveal their identity. No participant was coerced or intimidated into participating in this study. The consent of every participant was obtained before they provided their responses. The questionnaire included a consent form for every participant to fill out before attempting the questionnaire. Respondents were allowed to withdraw their responses at any point, whether at the beginning, during, or after attempting the questionnaire. Approval was obtained from Norwegian organizations to administer the questionnaire to their employees.

3.12 Summary

This chapter presents the principles and assumptions that guide the current research. It also discusses the process through which the researcher will gather and analyze data. A positivist philosophy, employing deductive, quantitative, and survey design, was adopted since numerical data were to be collected in alignment with the objectives of this study. Data was collected from both Norwegian employees and migrant employees to investigate how Norwegian language proficiency influences communication competence, engagement, and development among the two sets of employees. A pilot study was conducted, and the instrument was found to be reliable. Data collection was conducted via online platforms, and both descriptive and inferential analyses will be used to analyze and interpret the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings obtained from the analysis of data obtained from the participants, who are migrant workers in Norway. A total number of 180 responses were sampled but 142 responses were considered for analysis as the remaining thirty-eight responses were void and incomplete, giving a completion rate of 78.9%. The demographic information of the respondents was analysed before their responses to the research questions.

4.1 Analysis of Respondents Demographic Characteristics

This section presents the demographic distributions of the respondents in terms of gender, age, length of stay in Norway, years of working in Norway and educational background.

4.1.1 Gender Distribution of the Participants

Figure 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. It shows that a higher percentage of the participants, 66.2%, which is over half of the participants are female while only 33.8% are males. This distribution shows that both genders participated in this study with a skew towards the females.

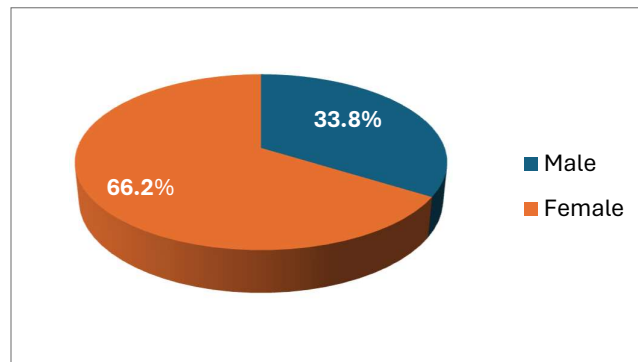


Figure 1: Gender distribution of the respondents.

4.1.2 Age Distribution of the Respondents

Figure 2 revealed that nearly half of the respondents, 48.6%, are within the age bracket of 31 and 40 years old. This shows that most migrant workers in Norway are below 40 years of age. The figure also shows that 91.5% of the migrant workers are genuinely within the workforce age requirement as they are below 60 years of age. It can be inferred that most of the participants are adults within the labour force age range in Norway.

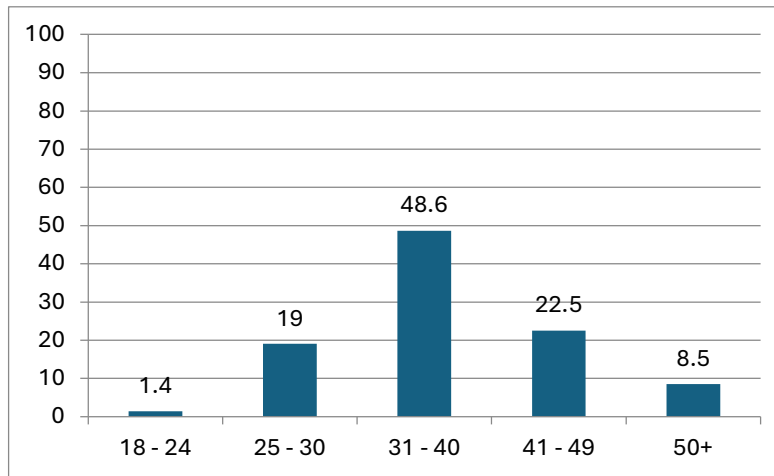


Figure 2: Age distribution of the respondents

4.1.3 Respondents' Length of Stay in Norway

As shown in Figure 3, over a quarter of all the participants have either stayed in Norway for not more than three years and this percentage goes for those that have lived in the country for more than ten years. However, 35.9%, have stayed in Norway between for and 10 years. This result indicates that the respondents have spent an average of 4-10 years in Norway.

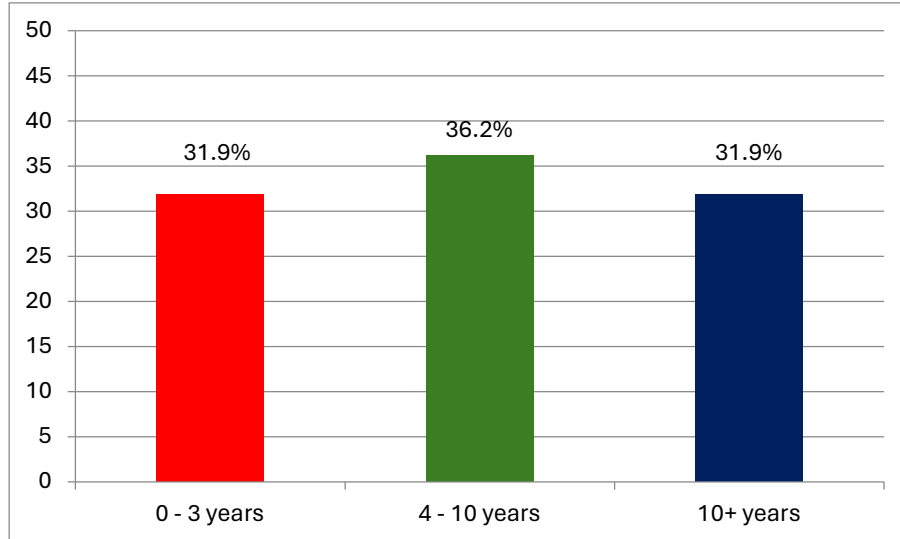


Figure 3: Length of stay in Norway.

4.1.4 Respondents' Years of Working Experience in Norway

Figure 4 shows that while most of the respondents, 35.6%, have spent at least 4 years in Norway, a total of 62% of the respondents have worked in Norway below 10 years. The average working years of experience in Norway is in tandem with the length of stay in the country. This result implies that the length of stay in Norway determines the years of experience of the migrant workers. This result can also translate to the fact that migrant workers are able to secure employment as soon as they migrate to Norway.

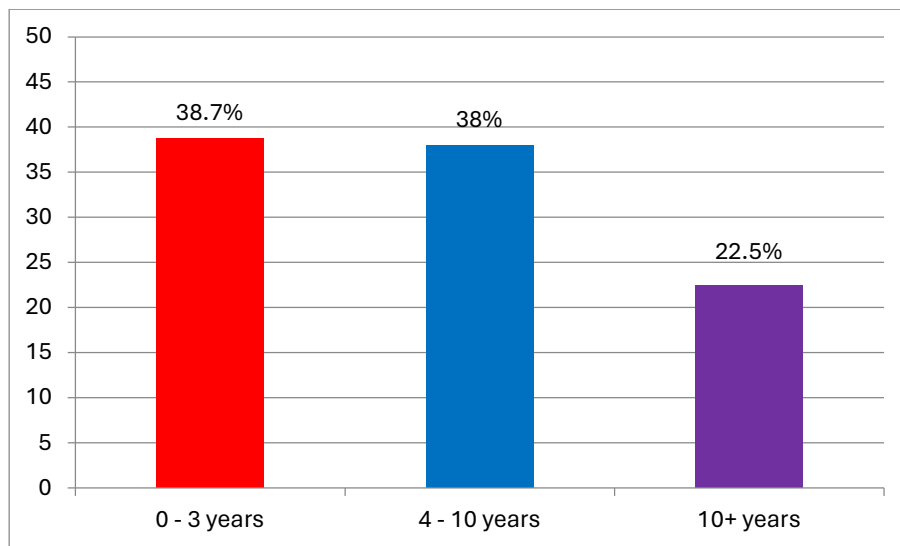


Figure 4: Respondents' Years of working experience in Norway

4.1.5 Respondents' Highest Level of Education

Figure 5 shows that half of the participants, 46.5%, have obtained a master's degree. This however implies that majority of the participants are second degree holders in their respective academic careers. This might be connected to migrants many migrants coming to Norway through the education route, especially for master's programmes.

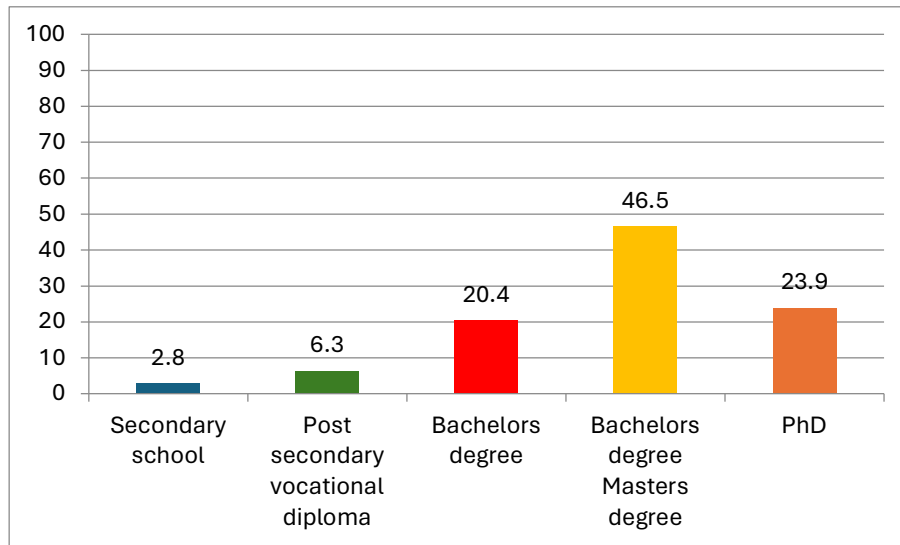


Figure 5: Highest level of education

4.2: Descriptive Analysis of Responses

This section contains analysis of responses provided by the respondents to the items measuring language proficiency, effective communication, employee engagement and employee development.

4.2.1 Norwegian Proficiency Level of Migrant Workers in Norway

Norwegian language proficiency was measured using writing, speaking, listening, and reading skills, using the global language proficiency rating - beginner, elementary, intermediate, upper intermediate, professional and experts.

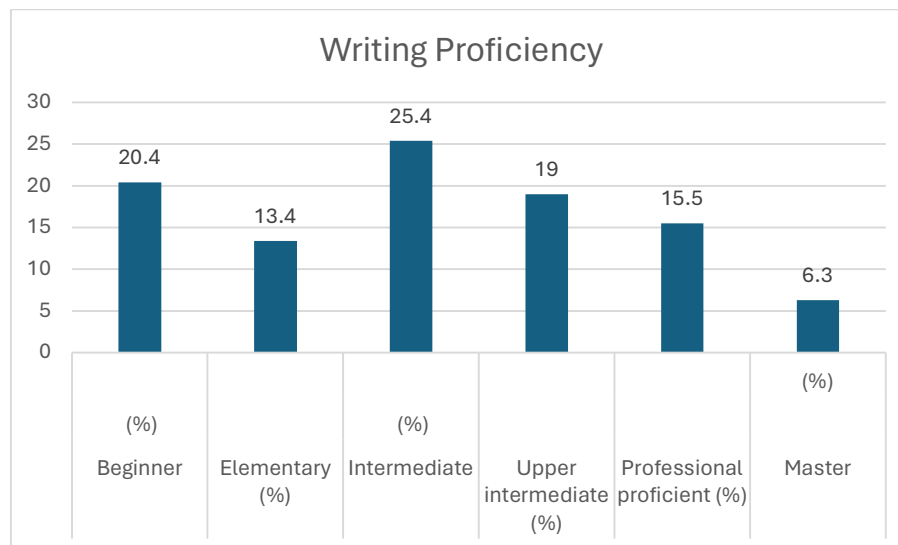


Figure 6: Writing proficiency of migrant employees in Norway

Figure 6 shows the level of writing proficiency for migrant employees in Norway. The figure shows that more than half of the employees, 55% are at least upper intermediate speaker of Norwegian. This implies that most of the respondents can write in Norwegian at work and this will aid their communication with their fellow colleagues and managers.

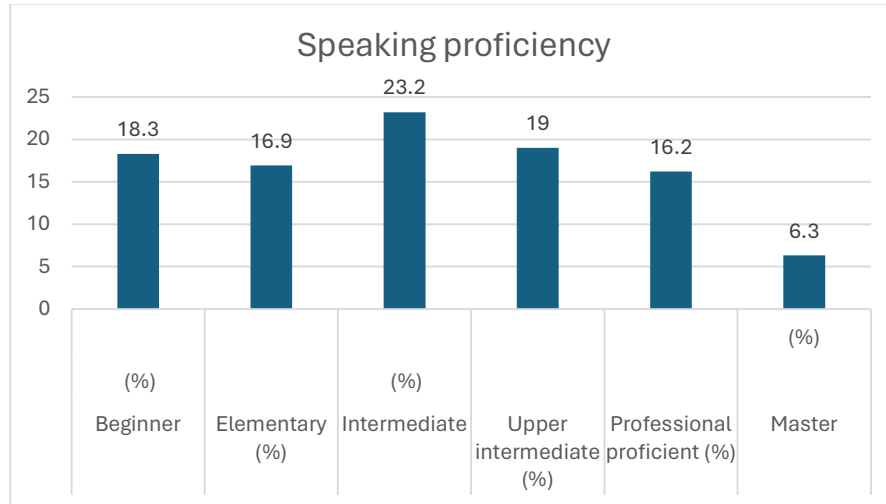


Figure 7: Speaking proficiency of migrant employees in Norway

Similarly, Figure 7 shows that majority of the respondents can speak Norwegian and communicate in a way that can be understood by their colleagues and managers. The implication of this is that it becomes easier for the migrant employees in Norway to seek help, ask for directions and pass information while at work.

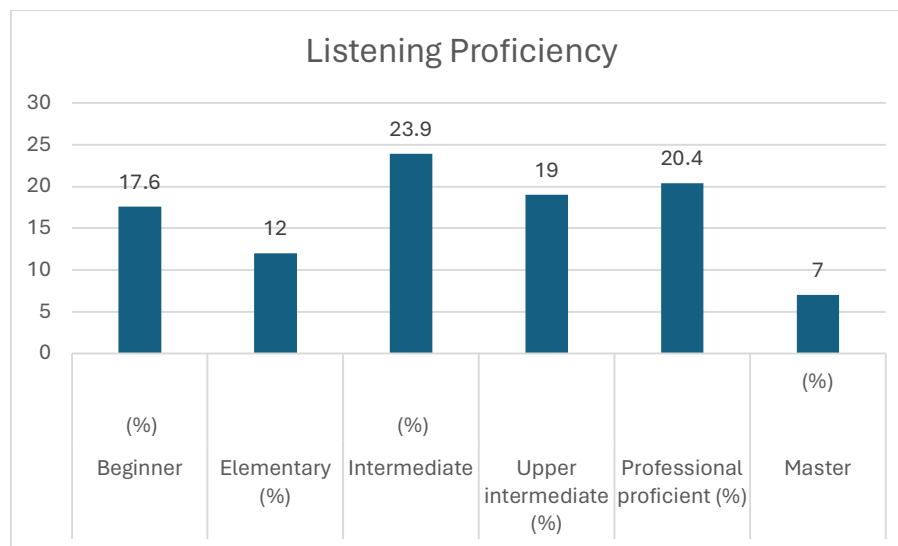


Figure 8: Listening proficiency of migrant employees in Norway

Figure 8 also shows that at least, 70.2% if the migrant employees in Norway can comprehend Norwegian. This is indicating that while at work, majority of the migrant employees can interact with their colleagues and managers, making their work-level relationship building easier.

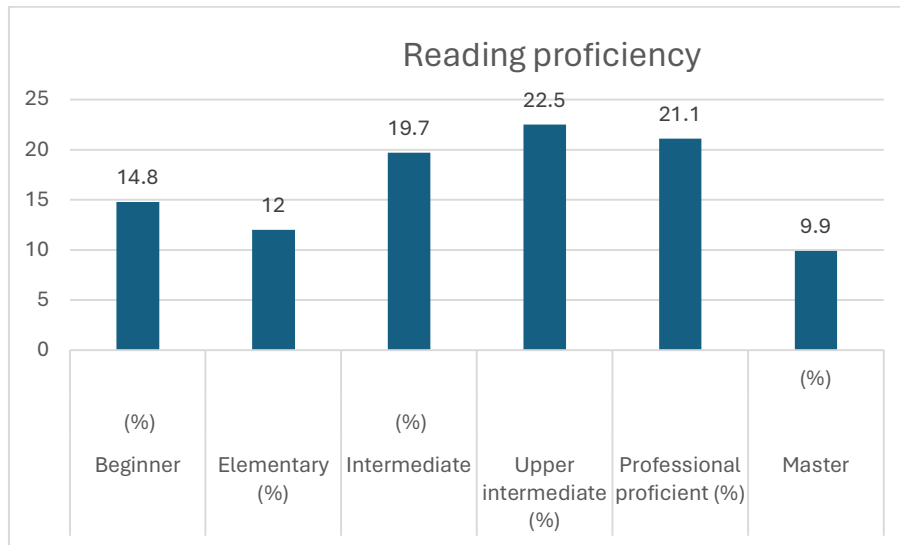


Figure 9: Speaking proficiency of migrant employees in Norway

Lastly, Figure 9 provides proof that majority of the Norwegian migrant employees can read instructions and other texts writing in Norwegian. It can be concluded that majority of Norwegian migrant employees are competent in speaking, reading, writing, and listening in Norwegian, indicating that majority of them possess the ability to interact with their colleagues and managers, facilitating collaboration at work.

Specifically, it can be inferred from the figures that most of the migrant employees are more proficient at reading Norwegian than speaking, listening, and writing the language. It is only at reading that more than 50% of the respondents ranked between upper intermediate speakers and advanced speakers. In writing, speaking, and listening language skills, most of the respondents are moderately proficient.

4.2.2 Communication Effectiveness

The level of effective communication of the migrant workers in Norway was measured on a five-point Likert scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. The mean value and grand mean are used to determine their level of effective communication.

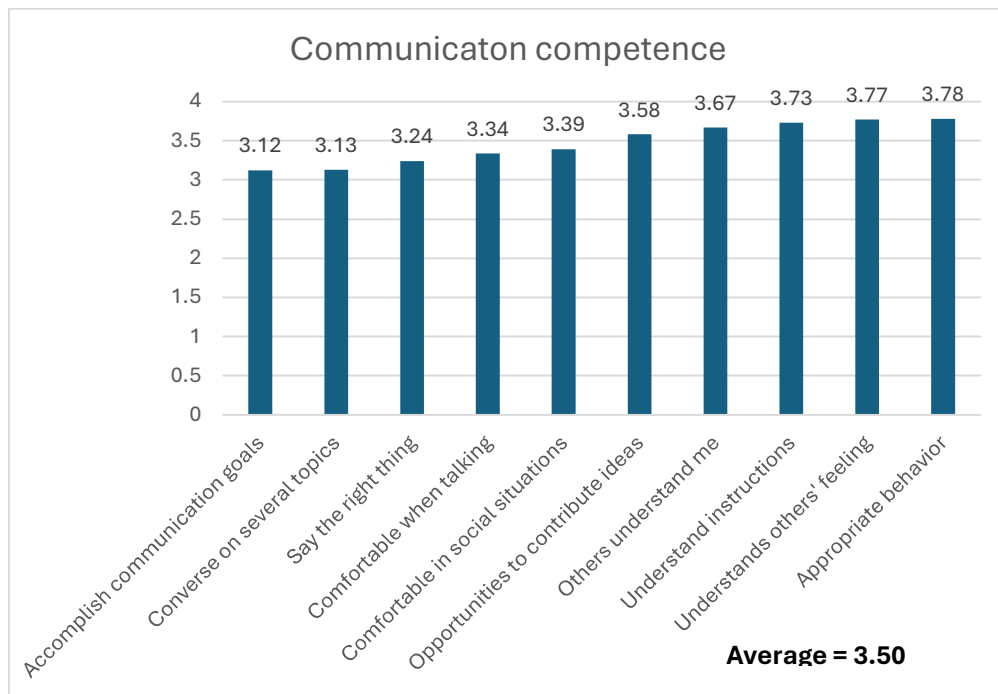


Figure 10: Effective Communication

The implication of the data presented in Figure 10 is that the majority of the migrant workers can communicate effectively in Norwegian, judging by an average of mean value ($\bar{x}= 3.50/5.0$). This translates to most of the migrant workers sampled being able to interact with their employers and colleagues, understand instructions and can effectively make their thoughts and feelings known at work. Majority of them can effectively communicate information, ideas, and messages with clarity, coherence, and impact. Also, it shows that majority of the employees possess clear and concise expression, active listening abilities, adaptability in communication style and tone, empathy towards others, and proficiency in facilitating problem-solving and conflict resolution through discussions and negotiations. This will further have an impact on their job such that it will enhance productivity, improve their horizon, reduce miscommunication, and facilitate customers' satisfaction.

The figure also shows that majority of the participants considered that they generally know the type of behaviour appropriate in any given situation ($\bar{x}= 3.78$), understand how others feel and put them in their shoes ($\bar{x}= 3.77$) and as well understand the working instructions that is given to them ($\bar{x}= 3.73$). These results indicate that the migrant workers have effectively integrated into the Norwegian workforce. The migrant workers' communication effective is summarised in Figure 6.

4.2.3 Employee Engagement

Their level of engagement means the level at which they feel involved and attached to their jobs. Engagement was determined by the participants' vigour, dedication, and level of absorption in their

respective workplaces. Vigour refers to employees persistently discharging their duties with energy and mental resilience, dedication refers to enthusiasm and a strong sense of identity while absorption refers to being engrossed in jobs, feeling happy, and loving one's job. Having a grand mean value of $\bar{x} = 3.49$, which can be approximated to 3.5, it can be inferred that migrant employees in Norway are engaged to a large extent. What this implies is that the employees, to a significant extent, love their jobs, are engrossed in it, and feel happy working in their respective organisations.

Table 1: Level of Migrant Workers' Employee Engagement

Vigour	Decision					$\bar{X} \pm SD$
	Never F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)	Always F (%)	
I feel bursting with energy	2 (1.4)	20 (14.1)	70 (49.3)	40 (28.2)	10 (7.0)	3.25 ± 0.8374
I feel strong and vigorous	4 (2.8)	11 (7.8)	65 (46.1)	51 (36.2)	1 (7.1)	3.37 ± 0.8402
I feel like going to work	8 (5.6)	16(11.3)	47 (33.1)	55 (38.7)	16 (11.3)	3.39 ± 1.0165
Working for very long period	5 (3.5)	9 (6.3)	45 (31.7)	64 (45.1)	19 (13.4)	3.58 ± 0.9244
I am very resilient	1 (0.7)	4 (2.8)	37 (26.1)	77 (54.2)	23 (16.2)	3.82 ± 0.7561
Average mean						3.48
Dedication						
Meaningful and purposeful work	6 (4.2)	14 (9.9)	28 (19.7)	59 (41.5)	35 (24.6)	3.73 ± 1.0728
Enthusiastic about my job	9 (6.3)	10 (7.0)	31 (21.8)	52 (36.6)	40 (28.2)	3.73 ± 1.1356
My job inspires me	9 (6.3)	14 (9.9)	35 (24.6)	52 (36.6)	32 (22.5)	3.59 ± 1.1308
Proud of my work	6 (4.2)	11 (7.7)	24 (16.9)	48 (33.8)	53 (37.3)	3.92 ± 1.1114
My job is challenging	5 (3.5)	14 (9.9)	54 (38.0)	44 (31.0)	25 (17.6)	3.48 ± 1.0088
Average mean						3.69
Absorption						
Time flies when working	3 (2.1)	8 (5.6)	42 (29.6)	56 (39.4)	33 (23.2)	3.76 ± 0.9448
I forget everything else	5 (3.5)	27 (19.0)	71 (50.0)	29 (20.4)	10 (7.0)	3.08 ± 0.9031
Engagement at work	21 (14.9)	27 (19.1)	51 (36.2)	27 (19.1)	15 (10.6)	2.91 ± 1.1862
Happy working intensely	5 (3.5)	10 (7.0)	39 (27.5)	65 (45.8)	23 (16.2)	3.64 ± 0.9553
Immersed in my work	6 (4.2)	11 (7.7)	52 (36.6)	62 (43.7)	11 (7.7)	3.43 ± 0.9023
I get carried away	8 (5.6)	21 (14.8)	70 (49.3)	37 (26.1)	6 (4.2)	3.08 ± 0.8952
Average mean						3.32

Grand mean	3.49
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Specifically, each dimension of employee engagement – vigour, dedication, and absorption – have varying grand mean values. Vigour has an average mean of $\bar{x}= 3.48$, which is moderate but very close to ‘Large extent’. This implies that the migrant workers work with energy and mental resilience in their respective organisations.

Also, in relation to migrant employees’ dedication to their organisations, an average mean value of $\bar{x}= 3.69$ is an indication of high dedication level. The result showed that majority of the participants are dedicated to their job such that most of them are proud on the work that they do ($\bar{x}= 3.92\pm 1.1114$), they find the work that they do full of meaning and purpose ($\bar{x}=3.73\pm 1.0728$) and being enthusiastic about their job ($\bar{x}= 3.73\pm 1.1356$). This infers that having pride and satisfaction in the job of an individual can in turn result in their dedication to their job. This also infers that when the participants take pride in their job, they are more likely to be motivated and performing the best. This sense of pride often leads to increased job satisfaction, higher productivity, and a stronger work ethic. This can as well improve their overall job performance and contribute to a positive working environment, benefiting both the employees and the employers. Metrics used to measure dedication showed that ‘My job is challenging’ has the lowest mean value ($\bar{x}= 3.48$), indicating that the migrant employees have challenging jobs, but they do not consider the challenges as significant.

Furthermore, the level of absorption of the participants in respect to their engagement in their workplace was analysed.

Results showed that migrant employees in Norway absorbed in their jobs to a moderate extent, giving an average mean value of $\bar{x}= 3.32$. This means that the migrant employees are happy with their jobs and loving what they do. Although time flies when they are working ($\bar{x}= 3.76\pm 0.9448$) and they feel happy when they are working intensely ($\bar{x}= 3.64\pm 0.9553$) the migrant employees are moderately distracted with their jobs. The level of engagement among the sampled migrant workers is presented in Figure 11.

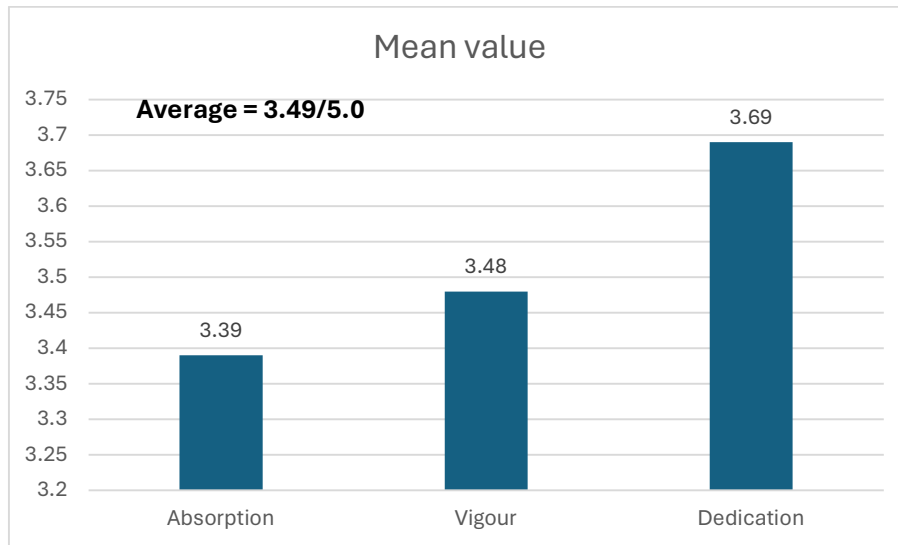


Figure 11: Level of Employee Engagement

In summary, migrant workers in Norway are to a moderate extent engaged in their organisations. Many of them work with vigour ($\bar{x}= 3.48$), are well dedicated to their organisations ($\bar{x}= 3.69$) and are absorbed to some extent ($\bar{x}= 3.32$). However, this data presents that some of the respondents were yet to be absorbed into the Norwegian workforce and do not work with so much vigour. Only dedication has a higher value above average.

4.2.4 Employee Development

We measure the level of employee development among the sampled migrant workers in Norway. An employee development scale of ten items, measured with a five-point rating scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) was used to determine the level of engagement of the Norwegian migrant workers. The mean values of the variables are used for the decision making based on their level of hierarchy.

Table 2: Level of Migrant Workers' Professional Development in Norway

Employee development	Decision					$\bar{X} \pm SD$
	SD F (%)	D F (%)	N F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	
Developed more skills	6 (4.2)	13 (9.2)	21 (14.8)	64 (45.1)	38 (26.8)	3.81 ± 1.0648
Better at handling tasks	4 (2.8)	13 (9.2)	20 (14.1)	78 (54.9)	27 (19.0)	3.78 ± 0.9537
Improved work outcomes	4 (2.8)	11 (7.7)	22 (15.5)	75 (52.8)	30 (21.1)	3.82 ± 0.9500
Received several commendations	5 (3.5)	6 (4.2)	33 (23.2)	74 (52.1)	24 (16.9)	3.75 ± 0.9104

I can effectively take up tasks	2 (1.4)	4 (2.8)	15 (10.6)	73 (51.4)	48 (33.8)	4.13 ± 0.8185
Better work skills	4 (2.8)	12 (8.5)	24 (17.0)	75 (53.2)	26 (18.4)	3.76 ± 0.9480
Accurate task performance	2 (1.4)	1 (0.7)	17 (12.0)	83 (58.5)	39 (27.5)	4.10 ± 0.7372
I meet set targets	1 (0.7)	5 (3.5)	13 (9.2)	90 (63.4)	33 (23.2)	4.05 ± 0.7277
Complete works timely	3 (2.1)	3 (2.1)	24 (16.9)	78 (54.9)	34 (23.9)	3.96 ± 0.8287
Perform given tasks based on specifications	3 (2.1)	3 (2.1)	12 (8.5)	90 (63.4)	34 (23.9)	4.05 ± 0.7749
Grand mean						3.92

Results presented in Table 2 showed that employee engagement has a grand mean of $\bar{x}=3.92$, indicating high level of engagement. The breakdown of the results shows that majority of the migrant employees can effectively take up tasks in their organisations with no or little supervision ($\bar{x}=4.13\pm0.8185$), they perform tasks and job roles accurately ($\bar{x}=4.10\pm0.7372$) and that they do meet set targets and goals ($\bar{x}=4.05\pm0.7277$). Achieving this high development level may be attributed to the improvement in the migrant employees' Norwegian language proficiency and effective communication as they can independently take up tasks in their organisation with no or little supervision, perform tasks and job roles accurately and meet set targets and goals. These tasks can be achieved through effective communication, which is predicted by ability to read, write, speak, and understand Norwegian. The level of employee engagement is presented in Figure 12.

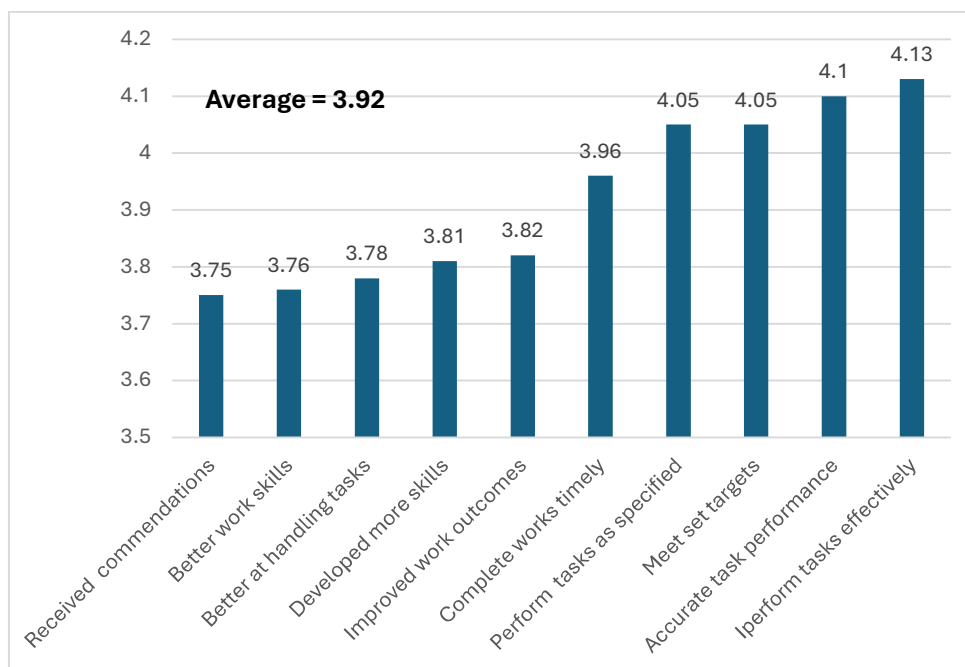


Figure 12: Level of Employee Development

4.3 Correlation Analysis

In this section, the influence of Norwegian linguistic competence of the respondents on their effective communication, engagement and development were tested using Spearman rho correlation test. We further tested how length of stay influence the respondents' Norwegian linguistic competence, effective communication, engagement and development.

4.3.1 Influence of Linguistic Competence on Effective Communication

We tested if there is any influence of linguistic competence on effective communication of migrant employees in Norway. First, Participants were asked to indicate how their level of effective communication was affected by their level of Norwegian language proficiency. Data in Figure 13 show that up to 65.5% of the total participants agreed that their level of Norwegian proficiency affect affected their level of communication, engagement, and duties at work. This infers that most of the migrant employees are aware that the more proficient they are in Norwegian, the better they can communicate effectively in their respective organisations.

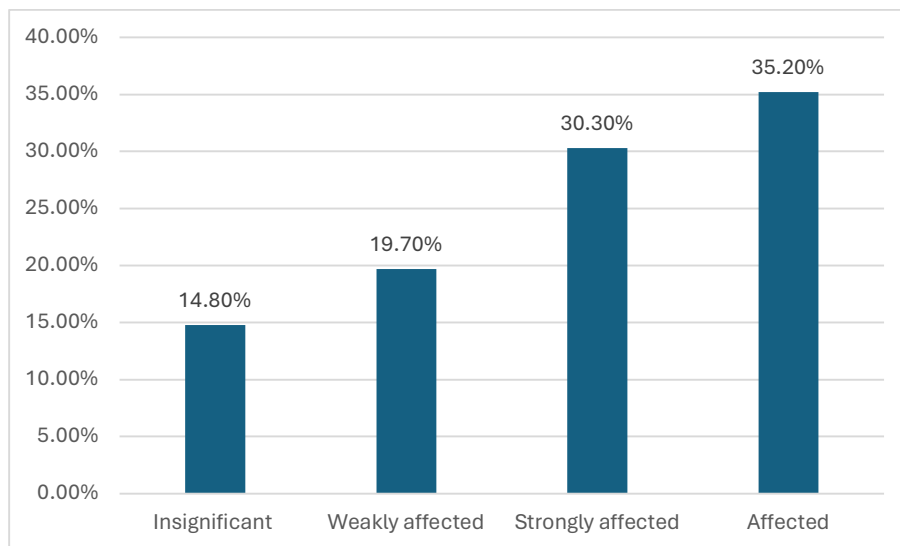


Figure 13: Impact of Language Proficiency on Effective Communication

We used Spearman rho correlation ranking to test the correlation between Norwegian language proficiency of migrant workers in Norway and their communication effectiveness.

Table 3: Correlation between Language Proficiency and Effective Communication

	R	N	p-value	Significance

Effective communication	0.483**	142	0.000	Significant
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The result in Table 3 reveals that language proficiency has a significant influence on effective communication ($p= 0.000 < 0.05$) of the employees. This infers that employees with strong language skills can convey ideas and instructions with precision, reducing errors and miscommunication. Employees who demonstrate exceptional proficiency in writing, speaking, listening, and reading Norwegian communicate more effectively within their organisations and this can enhance their cooperation, problem-solving capabilities, customer connections, and the overall success of their firms. This leads to increased productivity, better teamwork, and improved overall performance. On the other hand, language barriers can hinder employee productivity and lead to misunderstandings, mistakes, and conflicts. To address this, organizations may need to invest in language training programs to enhance employees' language skills and foster a more effective communication environment.

In addition, organizations may need to adopt inclusive communication practices that cater to the diverse language backgrounds of employees. This includes providing language support, using clear and simple language, and encouraging open communication. By doing so, organizations can promote employee success, productivity, and overall performance.

Furthermore, a correlation coefficient of 0.483** in the result suggests a meaningful positive association between the two variables (language proficiency and effective communication), indicating that as the language proficiency of the migrant employees improves, their communication effectiveness also improves.

4.3.2 Influence of Norwegian Proficiency on Employee Engagement

We tested the correlation between Norwegian proficiency level of migrant employees and their work engagement. The participants were asked to indicate how much their level of engagement in terms of types of duties, level of responsibility, effectiveness in completing tasks at work have been affected by their level of Norwegian language proficiency. Figure 14 shows that those that agree that their engagement was affected by their linguistic competence are slightly above average (52.2%). This indicates that the degree of Norwegian language proficiency of the participants in terms of reading, listening, writing, and speaking has a moderate effect on their level of engagement at work.

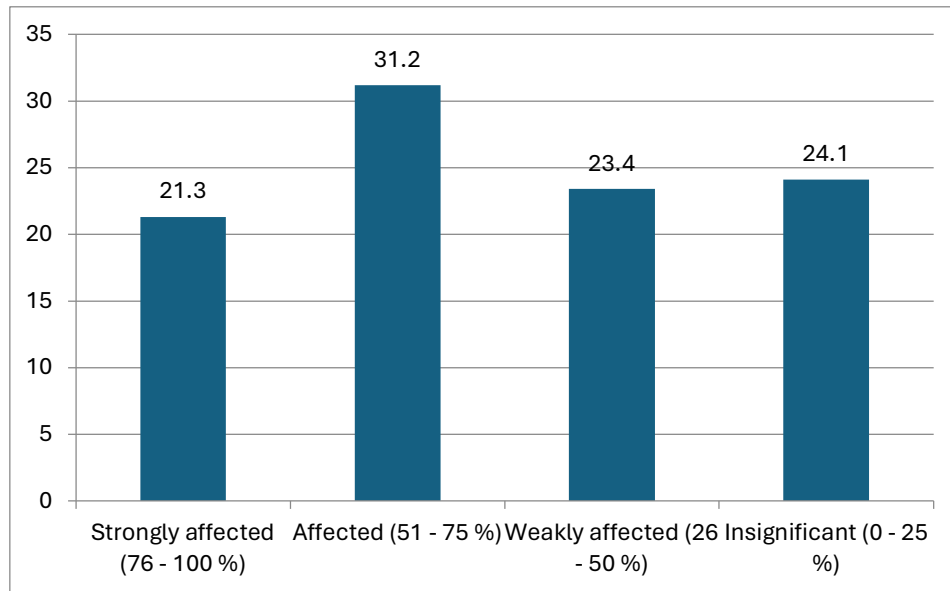


Figure 14: Impact of Language Proficiency on Employee Engagement

We used Spearman rho correlation test to examine the relationship between the linguistic competence and employee engagement of the participants.

Table 4: Correlation between Language Proficiency and Employee Engagement

	R	N	p-value	Significance
Employee engagement	0.076	140	0.370	Insignificant

Significant level at 0.05

Results presented in Table 4 shows that language proficiency have no influence on employee engagement ($p = 0.370 > 0.05$). This infers that the language proficiency of the participants has no tendency of causing a significant change or effect on the employees' engagement and development in their various organizations.

4.3.3: Influence of Norwegian Proficiency on Level of Employee Development

We tested the relationship between the level of Norwegian proficiency of the participants on their level of professional development. Participants were asked to state how much their professional development and opportunities for career advancement have been affected by their level of Norwegian language proficiency.

Results in Figure 15 show that 63.1% of the participants agreed that their professional development and opportunities for career advancement was well affected by their level of Norwegian language proficiency. Most of the participants (37.6%) expressed strong agreement. These results suggest that most of the participants recognised the relevance of linguistic proficiency to their professional development in their organisations to bolster their job opportunities, acquire a competitive advantage, and experience a more fulfilling and dynamic professional trajectory.

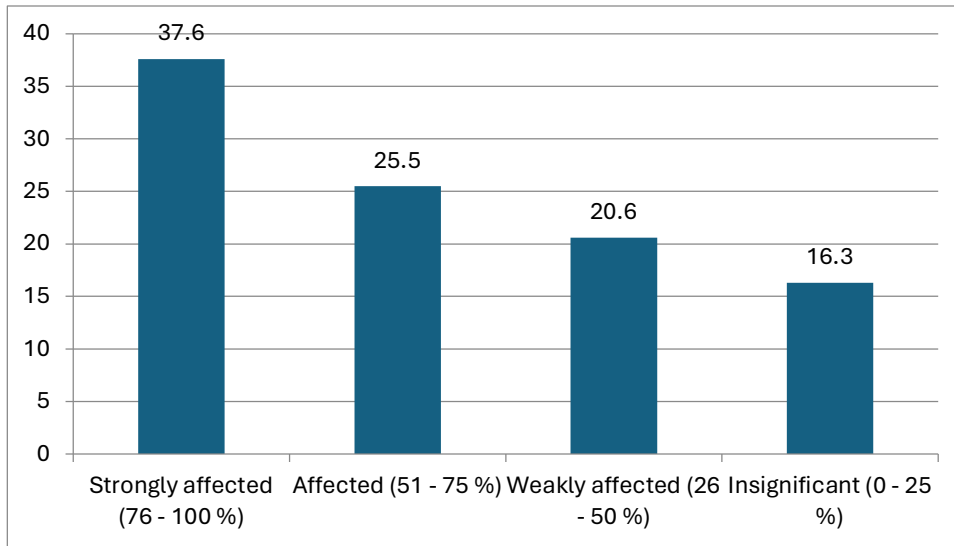


Figure 15: Impact of Language Proficiency on Employee Development

We used Spearman rho correlation test to examine the relationship between the linguistic competence and employee development of the participants.

Table 5: Correlation between Language Proficiency and Employee Development

	R	N	p-value	Significance
Employee development	0.153	141	0.070	Insignificant

Significant at $p < 0.05$

With a p-value greater than 0.05, the results in Table 5 show that language proficiency of migrant employees in Norway have no significant influence on their professional development. This indicates that an improvement in the employees' language proficiency does not translate to their professional development.

4.3.4: Length of Stay and Language Proficiency

We examined if the respondents' length of stay in Norway have any significant relationship with their language proficiency.

Table 6: Correlation between length of stay and language proficiency.

	R	N	p-value	Significance
Length of stay * language proficiency	0.508	141	0.000	Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 6 reveals the spearman correlation test for the significant influence of length of stay on language proficiency ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) and the result revealed that there is a significant relationship between length of stay and language proficiency. This implies that the length of stay has a profound influence on language proficiency of the participants, inferring that prolonged exposure is essential for language development. As the respondents' length of stay increases, so does their opportunity for language interaction, culminating in enhanced proficiency. This shows that language acquisition is a gradual process contingent upon sustained exposure and practice.

The positive correlation between length of stay and language proficiency ($r = 0.508$) suggests that respondents who have spent more time in Norway have benefited from additional language practice and refinement, resulting to superior proficiency levels. This notion infers that language learning is a dynamic process that necessitates extended engagement and interaction. Moreover, the significant influence of length of stay may also be attributed to respondents increased social integration and cultural assimilation. Prolonged residence in Norway may afford individuals greater opportunities for social interaction and cultural immersion, which in turn enhance language proficiency. This underscores the importance of considering the socio-cultural context in which language learning occurs.

This finding therefore indicates that length of stay in Norway among the participants has a profound impact on language proficiency, inferring the importance of extended exposure, practice, and social integration in language learning. These insights have significant implications for language pedagogy and acquisition, emphasizing the need to provide learners with sustained opportunities for language engagement and cultural immersion.

4.3.5: Length of Stay and Effective Communication

We examined if the respondents' length of stay in Norway have any significant relationship with their effective communication.

Table 7: Correlation between length of stay and Effective Communication

	R	N	p-value	Significance
Length of stay * effective communication	0.310	141	0.000	Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 7 reveal the spearman rho correlation test for the relationship between length of stay and effective communication of the participants. The result revealed that length of stay has a significant influence ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) on effective communication of the participants. This infers that the level of communication effectiveness of the Norwegian language among the participants is directly proportional and connected to the period at which they stay in the country. It can as well be said that the more the period the participants stay in Norway, the more their level of communicating effectively in the Norwegian language. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between length of stay and effective communication.

4.3.6 Length of Stay and Employee Engagement

We examined if the respondents' length of stay in Norway have any significant relationship with their engagement in their workplaces.

Table 8: Correlation between Length of Stay and Employee Engagement

	R	N	p-value	Significance
length of stay * employee engagement	0.163	139	0.055	Insignificant

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 8 reveals the Spearman rho correlation test for the significant relationship between length of stay and employee engagement. The result reveals that length of stay of the employees have no significant relationship ($p = 0.055 > 0.05$) on the employees' engagement.

This result infers that the insignificant link between employee length of stay and engagement suggests that prolonged stay in Norway does not automatically translate to heightened commitment, particularly in an organization. Factors such as job satisfaction, workplace culture, leadership dynamics, and personal motivations, may be said to play a more pivotal role in shaping employee engagement. This also means that new employee and experienced employees may tend to exhibit similar levels of work engagement, inferring that length of stay is not a determining factor in ensuring an accurate work engagement of the employees. Therefore, organizations should explore alternative strategies to improve engagement and retention of employees, as longevity alone does not ensure commitment. By recognizing and identifying the complexity of employee engagement, organizations can create a work environment that supports and motivates employees at various stages of their career journey. This approach can lead to increased job satisfaction, productivity, and retention of the employees in their organization, benefiting both the employees and the organization.

Also, a correlation coefficient of 0.163 between the variables suggests a faint positive link between the two variables, indicating a slight tendency for them to move in tandem. While the positive sign of the coefficient confirms the direction of the relationship, the coefficient's magnitude reveals a relatively feeble association. The correlation's strength is decidedly weak, with a coefficient of 0.163 signifying a limited connection between the variables. This implies that other factors influence the employee engagement, making predictions based on their relationship unreliable.

4.3.7: Length of Stay and Employee Development

We examined if the respondents' length of stay in Norway have any significant relationship with their professional development.

Table 9: Correlation between Length of Stay and Employee Development

	R	N	p-value	Significance
Length of stay * employee development	0.249	141	0.003	Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 9 reveals the Spearman rho correlation test for the relationship between length of stay and employee development. The result reveals a significant relationship between length of stay ($p = 0.003 < 0.05$) and employee development. This result shows that length of stay of the participants in Norway is able to influence their professional development. As indicated, the more the migrant employees stay in Norway, the more they become professionally developed.

The significance of length of stay in employee development underscores the need for organizations to prioritize employee growth opportunities. Employees are more likely to remain with an organization that offers opportunities for advancement and professional growth, and extended tenure can prepare

employees for leadership roles. Furthermore, employee development is a long-term process that requires sustained investment and support. By prioritizing employee development, organizations can cultivate a highly skilled, engaged, and productive workforce.

4.2.5 Key Findings

1. Majority of the respondents have moderate linguistic proficiency in speaking Norwegian.
2. Majority of the respondents can communicate effectively in Norwegian.
3. Majority of the respondents exhibit a high level of engagement,
4. Majority of the respondents have professionally developed to a large extent.
5. Linguistic competence of the respondents significantly influenced their communication effectiveness in Norway.
6. Linguistic competence of the respondents has a very weak influence on their engagement in Norway.
7. Linguistic competence of the respondents has no influence on their professional development in Norway.

4.2.6 Discussion of Findings

There have been similar studies conducted prior to this current research but none investigated how Norwegian language proficiency impacted on migrant employee's levels of communication effectiveness, work engagement and professional development, a gap this study has filled. This section connects the findings of this research with extant literature.

Impact of Norwegian language proficiency on communication competence

The first objective of this study was to investigate the impact of Norwegian language proficiency on the communication competence of migrant employees in Norway. Results showed that Norwegian linguistic competence of the migrant employees significantly influenced their level of communication effectiveness. This result underscores that without language competence, communicating effectively at the workplace will be difficult. The essence of workplace official language is not only to promote unity and achieve tasks in organisations but also communicate information, exchange ideas, and facilitate interaction within an organisation (Radley, 2016).

Having migrant workers in Norwegian organisations with lack of linguistic competence will lead to communication crises migrant employees will find it hard to interact with other employees, adhere to safety instructions and signs, and can lead to accidents during operations (Nasir, 2013). To achieve this, linguistic barriers, informed by cultural relativism, must be addressed (Gunnarsson, 2014) and this necessitate the need for linguistic competence among the migrant employees.

This result correlates with the finding of *Fafo (2020)* on a nursing home, construction industry, and academia in Oslo. Fafo reported that speaking Norwegian became necessary for workers in the three sectors. In the nursing homes, migrant employees were required to acquire Norwegian skills, and tests were conducted to assess their proficiency, as language proficiency was required to deal with patients who were mostly elderly. In academia, there was a linguistic challenge for migrant employees as the workplace language for the institutions is Norwegian. This became problematic as many of the employees were used to English. It was then imposed on the employees to acquire Norwegian proficiency to improve their quality of teaching as well as facilitate effective communication between the teachers and students as well as in the workforce. In the construction industry, it was found that employees were grouped based on their language so each team could communicate in their language. Further analysis showed that a linguistic barrier became a significant issue when it came to safety. The migrants who do not speak Norwegian found understanding safety instructions and information challenging, leading to several issues and low productivity.

Günhan et al. (2012) that a significant challenge for foreign workers was linguistic poverty, which did not allow them to communicate effectively but in this study, migrant employees in Norway have a basic understanding of Norwegian and are able to communicate effectively. Also, *Valitherm (2014)* reported that most migrant employees have little knowledge of the local language, and This affected their interaction with other employees and their supervisors. Consequently, it negatively affected their work regarding keeping to safety instructions and completing work on time. This justifies the correlation of linguistic proficiency with effective communication and this study underscores that among migrant employees in Norway.

Studies by *Wei and Yaznifard (2015)* and *Ne'Matullah et al. (2021)* found positive relationship between language proficiency and effective communication in the workplace. *Wei and Yaznifard (2015)* reported that the inability of migrant workers to speak English led to ineffective communication between them and their supervisors in Malaysia. This was found to lead to project complications, project delays, and waste of materials. *Ne'Matullah et al. (2021)* reported that miscommunication due to linguistic barriers negatively impacted the timely completion of projects and the quality of the job done. As *Shrestha et al. (2018:2)* concludes, it is difficult for migrant employees without proficiency in the host country's language to perform their duties successfully.

However, the result of this study did not correlate with prior studies in Norway. Mbanya et al. (2019) migrants have linguistic poverty, and they face challenges accessing health care services due to a language barrier and lack of access to and understanding of health information. Also, *Støylen (2019)* found that Polish migrants integrating into the Norwegian labour force faced a linguistic challenge as the Norwegian language was used as the official business language. The migrants had to invest in acquiring Norwegian language skills to be gainfully employed and to enhance their qualifications for the job and skills.

Impact of Language proficiency on Employee Engagement

The second objective of this study was to investigate how the level of language proficiency of migrant workers in Norway influenced their engagement in their respective organisations. Results show that language proficiency has a very weak influence on engagement of Migrant workers in Norway. Only 52% of the participants agreed that their level of Norwegian proficiency influenced their engagement at work and results of correlation analysis showed that linguistic competence of the migrant employees only influenced their absorption at work, but the influence is not strong. Therefore, there was a very weak influence of language proficiency on migrant employee engagement in Norway.

This result implies that having proficiency in the workplace official language may not translate to employees working with energy and dedication. These factors can be facilitated by job satisfaction, good working environment and attractive incentives (Gallup, 2021; Tilahun, 2018). Employees have goals to satisfy with their jobs and when these goals are not met, they feel dissatisfied and may not exhibit the right attitude to work (*Legbeti, 2021*). Therefore, having competence in official language of the workplace may not necessarily influence employees to be committed, dedicated, and attached to their employers.

As buttressed by prior studies. *Tran (2018)* found that factors that influence employee engagement among the employees include job conditions, relationships, supervision quality, salary, personal life, and security. *Hoti (2019)* adds that emotional stability of employees influenced their work engagement.

This finding of this study does not support the results of previous studies that have shown that language competence in the workplace is a prerequisite for employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention (*Hsiung, 2012; Fragouli&Ibidapo, 2015*). It is insinuated that since linguistic competence influence effective communication and effective communication influences employee engagement. Therefore, linguistic competence will influence employee engagement (Al-Tokhais, 2016; Mishra et al., 2014; Shrestha et al., 2018; Ten et al., 2021).

In Egypt, Marzouki et al. (2019) reported that communication skills, which include speaking, writing, reading, and listening, positively correlate with employee engagement. This implies that having adequate language and general communication proficiency can influence employees' involvement, vigour, and absorption into the workplace. The result of this study did not provide for this as only writing and speaking influence absorption and the influence is not strong.

Influence of Language Proficiency on Employee Development

The third objective of this research was to examine the influence of migrant workers' level of Norwegian proficiency on their professional development. Results showed that Norwegian linguistic competence have no influence on professional development of migrant workers in Norway. This implies that the ability to speak Norwegian does not correlate with the level of professional development and advancement of careers for migrant workers.

In Norway, it is essential for migrant employees to have Norwegian proficiency to be gainfully employed and performed productively in their workplace (Fafø, 2021; Mbanya et al., 2019; Støylen, 2019). Language proficiency is considered vital for migrants to integrate effectively into the Norwegian society and the labour force (*Båtevik et al., 2014*). In view of this, the Introduction Act was enacted in Norway to integrate immigrants into the country's social and economic life (*Introduksjonsloven, 2003*). Language and cultural integration training were offered freely to immigrants and must be completed within three years. The training program was a prerequisite to granting the migrant's citizenship residency permit (IMDi, 2017). The training was available to migrants based on their municipalities (IMDi, 2018). According to the European Commission (2017), migrant integration occurs through active participation, labour, and education and without language, integration cannot be possible. This is why many countries like France, Norway, Germany, and others make acquiring their languages compulsory for migrant employees (*Extramiana, 2012; Gammal et al., 2020*). However, this study does not find any correlation between the two variables.

Contrastingly, a review of extant studies by Shrestha et al. (2018) found that language proficiency is essential for employees in a professional setting and to be gainfully employed globally. The implication is that aside from having both soft and hard skills, employees must possess a certain level of organisational language proficiency. Similarly, *Itani, Järlström and Piekari (2015) argue that language is a significant career competence for employees. Organisations are going global and multicultural, and language proficiency has become a*

significant predictor of opportunities (Peltokorpi&Vaara, 2012). Study has shown that migrant students with low foreign language proficiency could not get international job opportunities in the EU labour market (Grasmane & Grasmane, 2011) and career mobility and success (Latukha et al., 2016; Ridder et al., 2011; Traavik & Richardsen, 2010).

Previous studies in Norway have also found that language proficiency is a significant predictor of career success for foreign women employees (*Traavik and Richardsen, 2010*).

According to *Gammal et al. (2020) and Bharathi (2016)*, linguistic competence is essential to the survival of migrant employees in the host country. This is because the ability to communicate effectively in the host language helps the migrant to integrate into the host society economically and socially. Migrant employees need language to receive training, understand instructing, build relationships, communicate, and foster understanding with their co-workers and managers. *Gammal et al. (2020)* add that migrant employees cannot read, write, or understand information passed without understanding the host language. Acquisition of skills, work knowledge and performance improvement require language proficiency (*Gammal et al., 2020*). The finding of this result does not provide support for these previous findings.

The contrasting finding reported by this research might be because of the participants selected, methods for data collection and metrics used to measure employee engagement. The contrasting finding may also suggest that more research is needed to establish the relationship between language proficiency and employee professional development.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The conclusion drawn from the findings and recommendations are presented in this chapter. The implications of findings, limitations and suggestions for future research are also presented.

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has filled a significant gap in the existing literature by examining the impact of Norwegian language proficiency on migrant employees' levels of communication effectiveness, work engagement, and professional development. The findings revealed noteworthy insights into the correlation between language competence and various aspects of the migrant workers' experiences in Norway.

First, this study established a clear connection between Norwegian language proficiency and communication effectiveness among migrant employees. The results underscore the critical role of linguistic competence in facilitating effective communication within the workplace. Without a sufficient grasp of the Norwegian language, migrant employees face challenges in interacting with colleagues, adhering to safety instructions, and navigating daily operations. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of language proficiency in promoting successful communication in diverse workplace settings, address potential communication crises and enhance overall workplace productivity.

Second, this study explored the influence of language proficiency on employee engagement, revealing a very weak connection between Norwegian language proficiency and the overall engagement of migrant workers. The results suggest that while language proficiency may influence the absorption of migrant employees into their work, it does not strongly impact their commitment, dedication, and attachment to their employers. These finding challenges previous research that associates language competence with employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention. The result suggests that factors such as job satisfaction, working environment, and incentives play a more significant role in fostering employee engagement than language proficiency alone.

Lastly, this study examined the influence of Norwegian language proficiency on the professional development of migrant workers. The findings did not find any significant correlation between language competence and professional advancement. The result suggests that a speaking Norwegian does not translate to professional development in Norway. The result negates previous findings, suggesting more research into the relationship between language proficiency and employee development. In view of these findings, this research concludes that language proficiency significantly impacts effective communication of migrant employees in Norway but does not significantly influence their engagement and professional development.

5.2 Implications of Findings

This study contributes valuable insights into the multifaceted relationship between language proficiency and communication effectiveness, work engagement, and professional development of employees, especially migrant, in organisations. The findings provide a basis for further exploration and practical considerations for employers seeking to create inclusive and supportive work environments for migrant employees in Norway.

For the academia and knowledge, this study fills a significant gap in existing literature by specifically investigating how Norwegian language proficiency impacts migrant employees' communication effectiveness, work engagement, and professional development. Academic researchers can build on these findings to further explore the influence of language proficiency in the workplace, considering its varied effects on different aspects of employee performance and well-being. Significantly, this study has underscores that despite the influence of linguistic competence on communication and development, it cannot enhance employees' dedication, vigour, and attachment to their employers.

The findings of this study underscore the need for them policy makers in Norway to recognize the critical role of language proficiency in fostering effective communication and ensuring the safety and productivity of migrant employees. Therefore, policy that will facilitate improvement of migrant employees' linguistic competence in the workforce needs to be considered. These findings buttress the importance of language integration programs, such as those highlighted in the Introduction Act, to facilitate the successful integration of immigrants into the social and economic fabric of Norway.

For managers of organizations, this study emphasises the need to prioritize the linguistic competence of migrant employees to mitigate communication challenges that may lead to safety issues and low productivity. Recognizing that language proficiency significantly influences professional development, organizations should invest in language training programs to enhance the skills and career prospects of migrant workers. This study suggests that while language proficiency may not strongly influence overall work engagement, it remains a crucial factor for successful integration into the workplace and broader society.

For migrant employees, they should recognize the pivotal role of Norwegian language proficiency in their effective communication, securing job opportunities and professional advancement.

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Organizations employing migrant workers in Norway should consider implementing language proficiency programs. These programs can include language training sessions and resources aimed at improving the Norwegian language skills of migrant employees. This will not only enhance communication effectiveness but also contribute to their professional development.
2. Employers should integrate cultural awareness and sensitivity training into their onboarding processes. Understanding and respecting diverse cultures can help bridge communication gaps and foster a more inclusive workplace environment. This can contribute to effective communication and positively impact engagement among migrant employees.

3. While language proficiency is important, employers should also focus on other job-related factors to enhance employee engagement. This includes providing a positive working environment, attractive incentives, and opportunities for career development. Addressing these factors alongside language proficiency can contribute to higher levels of employee engagement.
4. Employers should invest in continuous professional development opportunities for migrant employees, beyond just language skills. This can include training programs, workshops, and mentorship initiatives that help enhance their skills, knowledge, and career competence. This investment in human capital can lead to improved employee performance and satisfaction.
5. Recognizing that language proficiency may vary among migrant employees, organizations should implement flexible communication strategies. This may include multilingual support, visual aids, and clear communication practices to ensure that important information is accessible to all employees, regardless of their language proficiency.
6. Employers can collaborate with educational institutions to provide language courses and resources for migrant employees. This partnership can facilitate the acquisition of language skills, aligning with the national integration programs and contributing to the overall success and well-being of migrant workers in Norway.
7. The study recommends that migrants should prioritize honing their linguistic competence to facilitate effective communication and enhance professional development.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

This study is limited to migrant employees in Norway and the opinions of 142 participants may not be enough to generalise for the entire migrant employees in Norway. Hence, it is suggested that future research expand this sample size. Similarly, the language proficiency of migrant employees in different sectors is not considered in this research, which creates room for further research. To gain a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of language proficiency on career success, future research can consider conducting longitudinal studies: follow the career trajectories of migrant employees over an extended period, tracking changes in language proficiency, professional development, and other relevant variables.

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