

# FORCED MIGRATION: TALES OF DOWNWARD MOBILITY

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**Abstract**  
Forced migration is referred to as the forcible displacement of people to new regions. When highly educated professionals are forcibly displaced, they need to cope with the challenge of integrating into the host country's economic system. Unfortunately, being a well-educated immigrant does not automatically guarantee a professional job in most host countries. Barriers such as lack of work permits, unfamiliarity with the system, incomplete professional certifications, language limitations, and limited networking prevent them from incorporating into the host economy. Under these circumstances, many high-skilled new immigrants are practically forced to take low-skill and low-payment jobs, that are physically demanding. This phenomenon is known as downward mobility. This phenomenological study focuses on understanding downward mobility's negative effects among well-educated immigrants. It provides recommendations to cope with the phenomenon. A Downward Mobility Readiness Survey (DMRS) is included to create awareness about this topic.

**Purpose and Significance**  
The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the experiences and challenges faced by well-educated immigrants when they are forcibly displaced from their home countries.  
From a social constructionist paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018), the study focuses on specific contexts in which forced immigrants live and work, describing their downward mobility experience and expressing their perceived meaning about the world in the host country.  
The study provides recommendations to cope with downward mobility. It fosters acculturation and integration into the host economy.

**Causes of Forced Migration**  
Armed conflicts  
Civil unrest situation  
Political persecution  
Environmental disasters and change  
Poor economy and oppressive poverty  
Threat of physical safety

**Methodology**  
This qualitative study used a phenomenological design. The study adhered to ethical guidelines and followed the institutional review board (IRB) protocol. Snowball sampling was used to locate individuals for the study. The participant is a middle-age, male, professional, facing downward mobility. All information from the participant was masked and coded for reporting purposes. The data collection was completed through a face-to-face semi-structured interview, with open-ended questions. The interview was audio-recorded and transcribed, then coded, and organized into themes, based on the affinity of the codes. The trustworthiness of the study was ensured by cross-checking the coding and results with peers.

**Themes Identified**

Better education "once I finish my degree, then I will apply for a better job"	Children education "we came here for better children education"	Quality of life "we will get better time in the future"
Challenges "Everything is challenging, and you know, new country [laughing]"	Time constraints "you try to balance [activities] accordingly. Time is one constraint... it's very difficult. It's not easy"	Language barriers "I want to learn the language and getting accustomed to the culture, faster"
Multidimensional roles "I have a lot of pressure like study, family"	Skills and Experience degradation "they [family] know that we're not our degree from our country"	Acculturation [My actual job] "would help me to know the culture context"
Diaspora "sometimes we go with them [diaspora]"	Transitional stage "they [family] know that we are in a big transition"	Long distances and family dependence "I have to drop my son, pick my son and daughter, sometimes and I need to give ride for my wife about"

**How to Cope with Downward Mobility**

- Use the multidimensional role such as food provider, driver, connector, and even translator to strengthen family's bonds.
- Find ways of acculturation to the host economy.
- Try to get a local accreditation or certification.
- Understand this stage as a transitional period.
- Identify, connect, and socialize with their diaspora.
- Pushing children to perform well in their classes to get a college degree and a good job.

**Literature Review: The Negative Effects of Downward Mobility**

- Low self-esteem: immigrants with higher level qualifications end up doing unskilled jobs (Bhugra, 2004).
- Depressive episodes: first-generation of Latino and Asian immigrants residing in the United States (Nickett, 2009).
- Status decline: jobs are attained to social status in their home countries (Gans, 2009).
- Language barrier: low-interaction jobs (Gans, 2009).
- Education-occupation mismatch: education and skills of immigrants do not match the job acquired (Leontjeva, 2014).
- Glass gate: keeping immigrants from entering professional communities (Guo, 2013).
- Glass floor: keeping immigrants from being hired on some specific fields (Guo, 2013).
- Glass ceiling: restricting the immigrants from rising to management positions & salaries (Guo, 2013).

The devaluation of immigrant's prior learning and work experience delay their integration process (Guo, 2013).

**Downward Mobility Readiness Survey (DMRS) Could You Survive Downward Mobility? Use a QR scanner and take the challenge**

**References**

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This phenomenological study focuses on understanding downward mobility's negative effects among well-educated immigrants. It provides recommendations to cope with the phenomenon. A Downward Mobility Readiness Survey (DMRS) is included to create awareness about this topic.

## References

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## Downward Mobility Readiness Survey (DMRS)

Dear Educational Researcher:

The Downward Mobility Readiness Survey (DMRS) has been developed to assess the readiness of professionals to cope with downward mobility and creating awareness about this topic. Imagine yourself experiencing any of these situations in your country: armed conflicts, civil unrest situation, environmental disasters and change, political persecution, weak economy and oppressive poverty, or threat of physical safety. Based on the conditions mentioned above, you are forced to move to another country. Check one response answer (Yes = 1 / No = 0) by each item statement you agree/disagree with or willing to do. If you score more than 7 points, you might survive a downward mobility situation. However, resilience is a key trait among migrants who successfully cope with downward mobility challenges and acculturate and integrate into a host country.

Questions.

Dimensions of Downward Mobility	Yes 1 Point	No 0 Points
1. If my credentials and degrees are not recognized in the host country, I am willing to get my degree again.		
2. If necessary, I am willing to work at any lower-ranking low-pay job available.		
3. If I cannot work in my professional field, I have the skill-set to perform labor-intensive jobs.		
4. I can tolerate that my work's supervisor (s) is/are people with less education than mine.		
5. I am willing to work overtime in a low-paying job or have two or three jobs just to make a more decent payment.		
6. I can tolerate being discriminated against every day and treated with prejudice because of my lower-ranking low-pay job.		
7. If I do not speak the local language, but my kids have learned it at school, I am willing to allow them to become my translators at most interactions.		

8. I can get by without a car and know how to use public transportation systems.		
9. While settling down in the host country, I am willing to accept government support and live with less income than than the average income I used to have in my home country.		
10. I am willing to share a living space with other people or families in the host country, whereas in my country, I live in my own home.		
11. What is your actual educational level? a. I have completed my graduate studies Masters/Ph.D. / EdD/ b. Pursuing or completed undergrad studies c. High School or GED d. Less than High School		
12. What is your working experience? a. No working experience b. 1-2 years of working experience c. 3-5 years of working experience d. 6-10 years of working experience e. 11 years or more of working experience		

In advance, thank you for disseminating this survey and use it as reference material for further research on the topic of downward mobility.

Author's statement: This survey can be used as a reference for further research on the topic of downward mobility.

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