

Graduate Women New Zealand Mid-Year Report 2020

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GWNZ Fellow

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The GWNZ Fellowship award was a true blessing to me, the timing couldn't have been more perfect. In my final year of my PhD, it has allowed me to focus fully on my data analysis and writing up of my findings. Something that I had struggled with, trying to balance study, work and a family. My mid-year report is nowhere near as exciting as some that you may have read. For me, the fellowship allowed me to knuckle down and write. So, I thought I would share with you why I did this research and the impact it has left on me.

My research is on the career experiences of skilled migrant women, an area very close to my heart. The women in my family have all been migrants. Both of my grandmothers when they migrated from India to Africa, my mother when she subsequently migrated to the UK, and I, when I chose to migrate to New Zealand. Despite being educated and skilled women, the outcomes each of us faced were vastly different. My grandmother forsook her ambitions to become a home maker, while my mother had to undertake lower-skilled work to put food on the table for her children. I have been privileged to have been able to work in my chosen career field, although there have been some major challenges along the way. I have faced both racial and gender discrimination. This motivated me to study the experiences of skilled migrant women in New Zealand.

I was amazed when I started my field work how many skilled migrant women reached out to me. I was really worried about not finding enough participants. And I did struggle for several months. Until Immigration New Zealand heard about my study and reached out to

me. Over a course of a weekend, when they actively promoted my study, I suddenly found my email inbox growing to an extent that I could not keep up. While it was overwhelming and heartening to me that so many wanted to tell me their stories, several times I was left in tears at the end. While I have experienced challenges in my career and personal life, these were never at the level these women had experienced. Some stories were worse than what my mother and grandmother experienced. Occasionally, I would hear a story with a happy ending, but even then, there were several years of struggle. Almost 300 women contacted. I ended up interviewing 40 before reaching saturation.

I ended up with thousands of pages of transcripts to go through, and data analysis has taken me almost 18 months to do. It has been a continual and at times a never-ending process. And I have loved every minute of it. My research has come out looking very different to how I thought it would at the beginning. My aim and purpose changed from trying to explore and understand to building a framework that helps skilled migrant women manage challenges they face daily in their careers. I am so grateful to the GWNZ for giving me time (a very precious commodity to many women) to focus solely on my research.

So, thank you so much to everyone at the GWNZ for the support and encouragement to keep going with my research. We all have moments of self-doubt, but having these fellowships helps immensely during those times. For me, it was a true blessing. I am now on the home stretch and very close to finishing. Somewhere I would not have been had I not received this fellowship.

Thank you again,

Warmest Regards

Nimeesha