

Examining the Determinants of Migrants' Career Development Opportunities in the New Zealand Hospitality and Tourism Industry

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Abstract

Ethnic minority employees are an important part of the workforce in the hotel and tourism industry in New Zealand (Liu-Lastres & Wen, 2021). However, previous studies have largely focused on the impact of human capital and other individual-level factors on career progression, with a strong focus on the role of structural conditions and intersecting social identities remaining largely neglected (Buford & Flores, 2025). This study addresses this gap by analysing the relationship between demographic characteristics and employment attributes and how these influence employee's perception of career development opportunities (CDO).

Based on human capital theory (HCT) and intersectionality, this study examines the effect of seven variables, demographic characteristics and employment attributes, on perceived CDO (PCDO). The analysis is drawn from secondary survey data, and has been collected from 17 cities and regions across New Zealand. A multiple linear regression model was applied to study the predictive effects of seven basic variables: gender, age, ethnicity, immigration status, business type, managerial responsibility, and work location. The results show that the identity and background of employees have a measurable impact on their PCDO. However, this influence works indirectly, mainly through factors that are congruent with organisational decision-making processes. The study concludes that CDO are determined not only by individual effort and skill but also by the ways in which organisations and society more broadly recognise, interpret and evaluate the potential and value of employees from different identity groups.

Table of Content

Abstract	1
List of Figures	4
List of Tables	4
Abbreviations	5
Acknowledgements	7
Chapter 1 Introduction	8
Chapter 2 Literature Review	12
2.1 Effects of Gender on Career Development Opportunities	13
2.2 Effects of Age on Career Development Opportunities	14
2.3 Effects of Ethnicity on Career Development Opportunities	16
2.4 Effects of Immigration Status on Career Development Opportunity	18
2.5 Effects of Business Type on Career Development Opportunities	20
2.6 Effects of Management Responsibility on Career Development Opportunities	22
2.7 Effects of Location on Career Development Opportunities	24
2.8 Theoretical Framework	26
2.8.1 Human Capital Theory	26
2.8.2 Limitations of Human Capital Theory	28
2.8.3 Intersectionality Theory	29
2.9 Summary and Research Gap	33
Chapter 3 Methodology	34
3.1 Research Paradigm	34
3.1.1 Positivist Paradigm	34
3.2 Methodology	35
3.3 Method	35
3.5 Sample	36
3.6 Participants	36
3.7 Measures	39
3.7.1 Dependent Variable	39
3.7.2 Independent Variables	40

3.7.3 Reliability and Validity	42
3.8 Data Analysis	42
3.8.1 Preliminary Analyses	42
3.8.2 Assumption Test	43
3.8.3 Independence of Residuals	43
3.8.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis	43
3.8.5 Main Analyses	44
3.8.6 Statistical Criteria	44
3.9 Ethics	45
Chapter 4 Results	46
4.1 Gender	46
4.2 Age	46
4.3 Ethnicity	47
4.4 Business Type	48
4.5 Management Responsibility	48
4.6 Location	49
4.7 Immigration Status	50
Chapter 5 Discussion	52
5.1 Sociodemographic Factors	52
5.1.1 Gender	52
5.1.2 Age	53
5.1.3 Ethnicity	54
5.1.4 Immigration Status	55
5.2 Organisational Factors	56
5.2.1 Business Type	56
5.2.2 Management Responsibility	57
5.3 Geographical Factors	58
5.3.1 Location	58
Chapter 6 Conclusion	61
6.1 Implications	61
6.1.1 Theoretical Implications	61
6.1.2 Practical Implications	61
6.2 Limitations and Recommendations	63
6.3 Conclusion	65
References	66

List of Figures

Figure 1 *Integrated Human Capital and Intersectionality Theory Model*32

List of Tables

Table 1 *Demographic Characteristics*38

Table 2 *Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Gender*46

Table 3 *Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores*.....46

Table 4 *Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Ethnicity*47

Table 5 *Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Business Type*48

Table 6 *Mean and Standard Deviation of CDO Scores by Management Responsibility*48

Table 7 *Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Location*49

Table 8 *Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Immigration Status*...50

Table 9 *Correlation Matrix*.....51

Table 10 *Multiple Regression Analyses of Effects of Variables on CDO*51

Abbreviations

CDO	Career Development Opportunities
HCT	Human Capital Theory
PCDO	Perceived Career Development Opportunities
PR	Permanent Resident

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that the submitted work is my original work. To the best of my knowledge and belief, except for properly cited portions, the research does not contain any material previously published or written by others. Furthermore, this thesis has not been submitted to any other university or higher education institution to obtain a degree or diploma.

Signed:

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Over the past two decades, the population of New Zealand has become more diverse and this trend continues to influence the labour market in New Zealand. To overcome long-term lack of skilled labour, the New Zealand government has adopted immigration as a long-term strategy to maintain economic growth (Iqbal, 2017). As early as 2006, immigrants made up 22.9% of the national population (Meares, 2010), and the number has continued to increase. According to the 2023 census, Europeans are still the largest ethnic group at 62.1%, followed by the Maori at 17.8%, Asians at 13.6% and Pacific Peoples at 8.2% (Stats NZ, 2024). Auckland is now one of the world's most ethnically diverse cities and New Zealand is now ranked fourth among the most ethnically diverse countries in the world (Ministry of Social Development, 2020) in terms of the percentage of overseas-born residents. These data clearly point to the increasing demographic diversity of the country.

The hotel and tourism sector has long been a mainstay of the economy of New Zealand. In addition to creating an enormous amount of GDP, it creates a wide range of job opportunities. As of March 2024, the sector employed about 300,000 people (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, 2025). The industry has made extensive use of multicultural and immigrant labour to fill vacancies, providing businesses with greater flexibility and operational benefits (Treuren et al., 2021). Although immigration policy has alleviated labour shortages to some extent (Stringer et al., 2022), challenges associated with inequality and diversity remain throughout the labour market due to differences in culture, language, identity and other social factors.

Research has found that immigrant workers frequently face subtle forms of exclusion and barriers to career advancement (Grant, 2016). These barriers are the result of the differences in language and culture, stereotypical assumptions held by managers, and the closure of internal social networks (Grant, 2016; Kenny & Briner, 2010; Villotti et al., 2019). Gender further exacerbates these challenges; for example, women working

in the hotel industry often experience constraints in relation to family duties, male-dominated organisational cultures and traditional promotion systems (Gebbers et al. 2020; Carvalho et al. 2014). Additionally, low base salaries, irregular working hours and the seasonal nature of the sector make it less appealing as a long-term career pathway (Richardson, 2010). Importantly, these factors do not work independently. Instead, they cross to form implicit selection mechanisms that limit access to development opportunities for employees (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2017; Crenshaw, 1989).

Much of the research on career development that exists has focused on human capital, where quantifiable attributes such as education, training, and work experience are believed to be major predictors of compensation and performance (Silva et al., 2021; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). However, there is increasing evidence that individual effort and skill alone cannot explain disparities in career advancement. Characteristics that are not related to human capital, but remain linked to promotion and selection processes, include gender, age, or immigration status (Rogers, 1998; Zhang et al., 2020). These characteristics can also influence subjective evaluations of leadership potential by managers, and thereby unintentionally marginalise employees from ethnic minority or otherwise disadvantaged groups (Correll et al., 2007).

In labour-intensive industries like hotels and tourism, career development opportunities (CDO) have a significant role to play in the growth and potential realisation of employees, and are an important strategy for organisations to attract and retain talent. In a distinctly hierarchical work environment, the perceptions of the employees regarding the opportunities for promotion directly affect the motivation and performance of the employees (Baum, 2006). Although in earlier research career development and promotion opportunities have frequently been addressed as separate constructs, in practice, especially in the hotel industry, they are closely interrelated. Therefore, this research conceptualises CDO as a comprehensive

indicator that reflects the subjective perceptions of employees on both career development and promotion prospects.

Career development is an emerging issue in management and sociology (Akkermans et al., 2021). Yet, most empirical work has focused on the technology industry in developed nations (Caunedo et al., 2023), and quantitative research that addresses the hotel and tourism industries in multicultural contexts such as New Zealand is still lacking. To help fill this gap, the present study examines the influence of demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity, immigration status) and employment attributes (business type, managerial responsibilities, location) on the perceived CDO (PCDO) of employees.

This research is based on two major theoretical frameworks: Becker's (1962) human capital theory (HCT) and Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory. HCT is the idea that people can boost their productivity and thus earn higher wages or promotions through accumulated education, skills, and experience (Becker, 1962; Schultz, 1961). Intersectionality theory, however, emphasises that social identities interact within workplaces, and influence the resources and opportunities available to individuals (Crenshaw, 1989). While HCT implies a relatively direct relationship between effort and reward, intersectionality points out that cultural biases and institutional screening mechanisms affect whether the human capital of different groups is recognised or rewarded (Grant, 2016; Rivera, 2012). This study therefore uses an integrated perspective to explain the variations in CDO among employees who have similar levels of human capital.

The data for this study were taken from a large-scale national survey called the Employee Experience Survey, which was carried out by New Zealand's ministry of business, innovation and employment (MBIE). Through quantitative analysis, this research investigates the disparity in employee access to training opportunities and resources for promotion among various demographic and employment backgrounds, and the factors that contribute to such disparities. Grounded in HCT, the results further

show that the abilities and efforts of employees alone do not determine their chances for promotion or career development. Rather, their social identities and the organisational environments in which they work also affect the extent to which their human capital is recognised and rewarded. From a practical standpoint, the study underlines that the internal structure of an organisation and the design of its systems play a significant role in shaping the perception of employees regarding their career prospects. To ensure that employees feel that they have meaningful opportunities for growth, organisations should optimise their training and promotion systems and strengthen fairness in career-related processes.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In the hospitality and tourism industry, CDO include the access of employees to training, the enhancement of their skills, and the variety of the tasks they perform, which reflect opportunities for career growth, as well as their perceptions of promotion pathways and upward mobility within the organisation (e.g., Huo, 2021; Preko & Anyigba, 2022). Research shows that when employees feel they see a clear path for promotion and have a strong organisational support for development, their career commitment and intention to stay in the organisation is significantly increased (Huo, 2021). On the other hand, migrant workers or employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds often see fewer opportunities for promotion as a result of structural barriers in the sector, resulting in a weakened career optimism (Manoharan et al., 2021). Based on this understanding, the present study defines CDO as the overall perception of employees with respect to their access to developmental resources, such as training and mentoring, as well as their chances for upward mobility, including promotion opportunities.

A wide range of things affect the CDO of employees. These determinants work at the individual level (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, immigration status) and organisational level (e.g. business type, work location, managerial responsibilities). Each factor can have a positive or negative impact depending on how the factor is operating in a particular organisational environment and the mechanisms by which it influences the access of employees to opportunities. Guided by the analytical framework of this study, we categorize these determinants into two broad groups, demographic characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity, immigration status) and employment characteristics (business type, industry, managerial responsibility). The following sections discuss the potential impacts of these variables on CDO and place the discussion in the context of extant research. This study uses HCT and intersectionality theory to explain differences in CDO due to measurable qualifications as well as social identity.

2.1 Effects of Gender on CDO

Across industries and cultures, gender has always been a key factor in career advancement. In many societies, men and women are still not equally represented in the labour force, with immigrant women in particular being faced with compounded disadvantages due to the intersection of gender, race and age (Mooney et al., 2017; Purcell, 1996). These women are often limited to low-level or low-value service occupations and domestic work is often presumed to be compatible with so-called feminine characteristics (Mooney et al., 2017). Stereotypes concerning childcare responsibilities and assumptions about women's availability further limit their opportunities for advancement. Even in the female-dominated hospitality and tourism sector, managerial and leadership roles remain disproportionately occupied by men, leaving minority women at a structural disadvantage in their pursuit of leadership roles (Mooney et al., 2017). Gender has an impact on CDO through overlapping structural and cultural mechanisms. Structurally, women are frequently sidelined from informal leadership pipelines, receive less mentorship support, and are concentrated in roles with less upward mobility (Ng & Pine, 2003; Ryan et al., 2010). Culturally, leadership traits such as decisiveness and assertiveness are often coded as masculine and women may be penalised when they exhibit these same qualities (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). The motherhood penalty and assumptions regarding childcare commitments also influence the perception of women as being professionally engaged by employers (Correll et al., 2007). Together, these mechanisms systematically undermine women's access to leadership pathways, especially in male-dominated managerial structures.

Beyond structural constraints, deeply-entrenched gender stereotypes exacerbate inequality. Cultural norms often valorise leadership traits perceived as masculine, such as competitiveness, authority and risk-taking, thereby lowering the likelihood that women will be recognised as good leaders (Cerezo et al., 2019; Ljunge, 2016). While women are often considered to be good at interpersonal communication and problem-solving, these traits are underappreciated in competitive organisational settings (Liu et al., 2021). Such gendered perceptions of leadership are contributing to systematic disadvantage in promotion processes, especially where implicit biases and institutional

screening mechanisms remain. Although some scholars suggest that gender disparities are declining in increasingly egalitarian societies (England et al., 2020), symbolic gender roles and personality stereotypes still influence workplace structures (Deaux & Kite, 1993; Tews et al., 2023; Thébaud et al., 2021). These gendered expectations also affect negotiation behaviours and employer's allocation of opportunities. For instance, women are generally seen as less assertive when negotiating salary, partly because of lower economic expectations and a higher prioritisation of flexibility, while men are seen as primary earners who put more emphasis on promotion and competitive rewards (Rembeza & Radlińska, 2021; Sholevar & Harris, 2020). Furthermore, women, particularly those in low-skilled and low-income positions, often need more flexibility in their work to balance family commitments, which restricts their access to managerial positions that require a significant time commitment (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Schneider & Hastings, 2017).

Although countries like New Zealand have made progress in promoting gender equality, including initiatives to support the leadership of minority women (Pshembayeva et al., 2022), these improvements are uneven and have not eradicated pervasive gender barriers. Consequently, as many studies show, gender still has a negative impact on CDO, especially in the hospitality and tourism industry, where women's chances of advancement are still limited on a global scale.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Female employees will perceive fewer CDO than male employees.

2.2 Effects of Age on CDO

Age has long been recognised as an important factor influencing CDO. From a career development perspective, older employees are often considered to be more mature, able to better anticipate challenges, and more able to develop long-term strategies. They are also seen to be more experienced in the management of people, coordination of systems, and organisational structures (Oshagbemi, 2004). In contrast, younger employees tend to be characterised as being energetic, results-oriented and open to flexible forms of management, bringing innovation and new perspectives to

organisations. Although different age groups have different strengths, intergenerational synergies have become increasingly important at the workplace in the contemporary world, where older employees are staying longer and younger employees are advancing to higher positions faster because of technological empowerment (Mitchell, 2005; Oshagbemi, 2004).

Despite these changing dynamics, younger employees are often subject to negative age-related stereotypes that prevent them from developing their careers. Daldrop et al. (2025) emphasise that perceptions of young people's leadership deficiencies are often based on prejudice rather than on actual competence. These stereotypes can result in more negative judgments of young leaders (Buengeler et al., 2016), resistance from older subordinates (Kunze & Menges, 2017), lack of access to key resources (Irehill et al., 2023), and even self-doubt among young employees (Zhang & North, 2020). North (2019) goes further, suggesting that ageism, specifically prejudice against younger workers, is both prevalent and under-recognised, with some organisations implicitly reinforcing such prejudices (Martin & North, 2022).

However, research has also shown that in performance-oriented organisations, younger employees might be better served by quicker advancement opportunities as a result of strengths such as digital literacy, adaptability and innovative thinking. Posthuma and Campion (2009) state that the pace of change in technology has led many firms to appoint younger employees in managerial positions to refresh organisational practices. In some organisations, promotion systems based on performance have replaced the traditional seniority-based systems (Chiang & Birtch, 2007). Therefore, while age frequently makes a positive contribution to career development, the influence is moderated by organisational culture, institutional arrangements and industry characteristics.

In terms of the influence of age on career development trajectories, Daldrop et al. (2025) differentiate early, middle and late career stages. Younger adults are overrepresented in service, support and training-related occupations (e.g., servers, retail workers, food service staff), which tend to offer little responsibility and few chances for advancement (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). In contrast, middle-aged and older

employees tend to have mid- and senior-level jobs that require accumulated experience, specialised expertise, and knowledge transfer capabilities, jobs that have greater responsibilities and greater potential for promotion (Burmeister et al., 2018; Francioli & North, 2021).

Although many organisations have moved towards promotion systems based on performance, older employees still tend to have an edge because of their accumulated experience, knowledge of the organisation and established networks. While younger employees can bring innovation and adaptability to the table, age-related biases persist in restricting their advancement, especially in cross-generational teams where their competence may be undervalued. As employees advance into their middle and late career stages, their perceived competence, access to organisational resources and strategic positioning generally improve, which enhances their CDO (Chasteen et al., 2002; Reeves et al., 2021). In summary, age affects not only the perception of role positioning and perceived competence of employees in organisations but also their access to resources and promotion opportunities, which become particularly evident during the later stages of their careers.

Second Hypothesis (H2): Age will be positively associated with PCDO.

2.3 Effects of Ethnicity on CDO

Ethnicity has a significant impact on the job opportunity and career development of employees in the hospitality and tourism industry. As labour and consumer markets become more diverse, organisational value of diversity has also increased with distinct strategic and operational benefits (Combs et al., 2012). Houkamau and Boxall (2015) suggest that organisations that create an environment that is supportive of racial difference and that actually value diversity benefit in two significant ways: they create a more positive organisational culture and increase their ability to attract and retain employees. Despite these advantages, persistent inequalities still affect ethnic minority and migrant employees. Grant (2016) explains the disparities in access to training and career guidance between immigrant and native-born employees as a result of implicit bias, lack of career development resources and poor inclusion practices. Immigration

status and ethnicity are often connected, which results in non-citizens being faced with further barriers to job security and advancement (Grant, 2016). For example, migrant employees are often placed in positions that match their language skills or cultural affinity with guests, rather than positions that match their broader competences or leadership potential (Grant, 2016). Moreover, structural constraints, such as temporary contracts, immigration requirements, and rigid promotion systems, also restrict their career mobility (Erdem et al., 2021). Consistent with broader trends in the hospitality industry, migrant workers remain in operational positions rather than advancing to supervisory or managerial positions (Erdem et al., 2021). At the same time, organisations may demonstrate a preference to hire or promote local employees, especially men, reinforcing structural inequities (Mooney et al., 2017).

For employees from migrant or minority ethnic backgrounds, it is often particularly difficult to progress into managerial positions. Arday (2018) and Bush et al. (2006) point out three main barriers experienced by ethnic minority employees: gender discrimination, linguistic and cultural adaptation challenges, and cognitive gaps due to different cultural values. These barriers are compounded by deeply ingrained prejudicial narratives in workplaces, for example, assumptions that minority employees lack strategic leadership capability, further lowering their chances of being recognised as potential leaders (Adserias et al., 2018). Ospina and Foldy (2009) note that Whites and Asians are more often seen as having successful leadership traits than other ethnic groups, although Bass and Stogdill (1990) note that Asian employees may be simultaneously disadvantaged because of cultural norms of modesty and stereotypes of passivity, which may weaken their chances for promotion.

Recent studies of the gap between leadership prototypes and racial stereotypes add more evidence of these disparities. Daldrop et al. (2025) find that Black and Asian employees are less likely than Whites to be seen as fitting a leadership profile and are rated less favourably as leaders despite having good objective performance. Indeed, regardless of actual performance, minority employees are frequently evaluated as having less leadership potential and effectiveness (Carton & Rosette, 2011; Sy et al., 2010). According to Gündemir et al. (2019), these biased evaluations are not based

on actual evaluations of competence but on implicit associations between racial characteristics and the perceived suitability of leadership, which systematically influence differential outcomes. In summary, ethnicity, especially when combined with immigration status and cognitive bias regarding leadership, has a significant impact on the access of career opportunities for employees in the hospitality and tourism industry. While many organisations formally adopt diversity and inclusion policies, there are still persistent structural barriers and racialised stereotypes that continue to limit the visibility, recognition and advancement prospects of employees from minority ethnic backgrounds. Hypothesis 3 (H3): Employees from the majority ethnic group will perceive more CDO than ethnic minority group employees.

2.4 Effects of Immigration Status on CDO

Employment is closely related to nationality in many countries (Govind, 2021). Some employers hesitate to employ foreign workers due to the possible complications of visa (Ullah et al., 2024). For example, a foreign applicant may not pass an interview or be unable to start working because of visa delays, which in turn affects hiring decisions. Rizvi and Bell (2015) further state that in some occupations, the value of an applicant's passport influences employer preferences, with candidates from countries that are ranked highly on the Passport Index being favoured. According to Yasin et al. (2024), some nationalities are perceived to hold values that are not congruent with the expectations of employers, a factor that contributes to the South and East Asians being disproportionately placed at the bottom of the labour market in Western societies. In addition, migrants are frequently exposed to legal restrictions through work permit and visa conditions, which directly impact on their career development (Ariss, 2010). When migrants are not able to acquire the right permits, they may be confined to jobs that are below their academic or professional qualifications (Inkson & Myers, 2003). In contrast, state-issued visas can also be mechanisms for attracting highly skilled foreign professionals to fill labour shortages (Lambert et al., 2019). At the same time, some employers willingly hire migrants whose limited job mobility may make them more

willing to work longer hours for lower wages than equally qualified local workers (Hira, 2010).

Although the migrant workforce represents a substantial proportion of the hospitality and tourism industry, research has consistently shown that immigration status continues to limit the opportunities for advancement of employees. Employees with temporary visas or without permanent status of residence (PR) are often marginalised in promotion pathways and human resource development initiatives because of legal, structural and cultural barriers (Anita, 2022). Hunt and Xie (2019) point out that foreign workers with employer-sponsored visas often are not able to change employers freely, which reduces their bargaining power. This reliance on employers leads to a type of monopsony where companies are able to suppress wages and limit access to training, job rotation, and internal promotion opportunities (Starr et al., 2021). Anita (2022) states that even highly skilled migrants often experience underemployment, often taking up low-level jobs that are not commensurate with their qualifications due to difficulties in validating credentials, cultural and linguistic barriers, and the systematic underestimation of their potential. This situation makes migrants dependent on limited internal opportunities to advance their careers.

Research by Krings and Olivares (2007) indicates that migrant employees are more likely to experience implicit discrimination during the recruitment and assessment processes, especially for positions that require good communication skills or a lot of contact with customers. Applicants of North African or minority ethnic backgrounds are significantly less likely than native White applicants to be invited for interview, despite having identical qualifications (Krings & Olivares, 2007). These biases spill over into organisational settings, limiting migrants' chances of supervisory or managerial roles. In New Zealand, Aitken and Hall (2000) found that although employers in the tourism sector outwardly emphasise cultural and linguistic diversity, in practice they frequently show favouritism to locals in the recruitment and promotion processes. Migrant workers may be greatly appreciated for customer-facing jobs (e.g. tour guides, receptionists, front-line service positions), but face ongoing barriers to accessing middle and senior-level management. Their linguistic and cultural skills tend to be

categorised as operational rather than managerial competencies which make it difficult to convert these skills to upward career capital (Janta et al., 2012).

At the macro level, Edo (2019) suggests that in countries with high levels of employment protection and rigid wages, incoming low-skilled migrants may increase wage inequality between local workers, further entrenching a dual labour market between highly educated locals and less educated migrants. Within organisations, this dualism is played out in the marginalisation of migrant employees in terms of access to training and promotion resources. Although some migrants show high levels of career optimism, Manoharan et al. (2021) emphasise that lack of organisational and institutional support limits their career trajectories. Visa uncertainty, a lack of career planning advice, and low organisational recognition make substantive promotion very difficult even for high performing migrant employees. A study by Jones et al. (2024) during the Covid-19 pandemic found that employees on temporary visas were more likely to be targeted for redundancy which highlights their structural vulnerability and substitutability within organisations.

In summary, factors such as immigration status, particularly temporary visa status, severely limit the ability of employees to access promotions, training, and long-term CDO in the hospitality and tourism industry. Structural inequality, institutional exclusion and cultural bias combine to put migrant employees at the periphery of organisational career trajectories.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): New Zealand citizens and permanent residents will perceive higher CDO than temporary visa holders.

2.5 Effects of Business Type on CDO

In the hospitality and tourism industry, there are significant differences in CDO in different business types. Organisational structural characteristics, for example, hierarchy, size and departmental functions, have a direct impact on promotion pathways and the likelihood of career mobility (Sparrowe & Popielarz, 1995). For example, the hotel industry usually has a clearly defined promotion ladder, from frontline positions (such as front desk staff) to supervisory and managerial positions,

particularly in large hotel chains. These organisations often have formalised promotion systems, internal labour markets and mechanisms for cross-regional mobility, which presents an ideal environment for employees seeking structured career advancement (Cassel et al., 2018; McCabe & Savery, 2007).

By comparison, other subsectors within tourism and entertainment have broader and less linear career paths. Positions such as tour guides, itinerary planners and cultural promoters tend to focus on creativity, flexibility and communication skills. Although these roles are diverse, promotion systems are usually less standardised, with employees often moving horizontally across projects or functions, which is described as a "butterfly" career path (McCabe & Savery, 2007; Kalgi & Hire, 2024). McCabe and Savery (2007) emphasise that human capital and experience in these sectors is accumulated by diagonal, lateral and even cross-industry mobility, which is appropriate to roles in meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions, and freelance engagements.

The hospitality industry and, in particular, large hotel chains, frequently offer clear promotion ladders from frontline to managerial and executive positions, with the support of formalised processes, internal labour markets and cross-regional mobility systems (Okurame, 2014). In contrast, in the transportation sectors such as airlines, cruise lines, and tour buses, promotion paths are often stable but more rigid and controlled by normative systems and seniority-based regimes (Clagett et al., 2015). For instance, in the case of flight attendants, they usually progress from trainee cabin crew to senior cabin crew and chief of service or cabin master roles. Furthermore, organisational changes, such as mergers, restructuring, or layoffs can disproportionately affect various business segments, affecting the promotion prospects of employees and thus, the importance of the interaction between organisational environment and individual initiative in career progression (Okurame, 2014).

In summary, the hospitality and tourism industry has different business subsectors with different organisational structures that have a significant influence on the career path of employees. Research shows that more structured sectors (e.g. accommodation and transportation) have clearer opportunities for advancement in

formalised systems, whereas more flexible sectors (e.g. travel and entertainment) allow more scope for directional development for employees possessing autonomy and cross-functional skills (Kalgi & Hire, 2024; McCabe & Savery, 2007). Therefore, business type is not only determinant of the mechanisms of career growth within organisations, but also has a profound impact on the career strategies and career development expectations of employees.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Employees working in structured business types will perceive higher CDO than those in less structured business types.

2.6 Effects of Management Responsibility on CDO

Within the hospitality and tourism industry, whether an employee has managerial responsibilities often becomes a crucial distinguishing factor in their career path. Research has shown that managers usually have more access to training, promotion pathways and career development support provided by organisations (Gross et al., 2013; Kay & Moncarz, 2004). For instance, in interviews of Malaysian middle managers, Patah and Zahari (2022) found that employees in managerial positions were more often included in career planning systems that include professional training and cross-functional rotation. These opportunities not only help them improve their skills but also encourage them to take the initiative to apply for higher-level management positions. Unlike the relatively high turnover and low job stability which are common among the junior staff, managerial career paths tend to be more complex and are influenced by factors such as organisational structure, cultural background, training provisions and leadership requirements (Ladkin, 2011).

Baum (2006) and Kong and Baum (2006) noted that while promotion paths for hotel managers are not the same in all cultural contexts, there is a general trend toward more structured and clearly defined advancement paths for managerial employees. These include the cross-country transfers, the expanded responsibilities and the standardised managerial job systems. In contrast, general employees who seek similar development opportunities often have to rely on multiple job rotations or even job-

hopping, which are costlier and less certain (Baum, 2006; Kong & Baum, 2006). Moreover, when junior employees do receive training, it is usually short-term and skill-specific and is intended to improve immediate job performance, rather than to support systematic career development (Kong & Baum, 2006). Conversely, managerial employees are more likely to be offered medium- to long-term developmental resources that are directly related to career advancement. Schinnenburg and Böhmer (2025) emphasize that leadership development programs and succession planning focus mainly on managerial levels, and junior and frontline employees are still underrepresented in strategic human resource initiatives. This disparity implies a managerial bias in the distribution of career development resources, with organisations focusing their investments in employees already in managerial positions.

A systematic review by Gross et al. (2013) confirms that leadership development mechanisms such as mentorship, succession planning and competency assessments are mostly focused on managers, with limited opportunities for non-managerial staff to participate. Chuang and Dellmann-Jenkins (2010) offer empirical evidence that mentorship programs have a significant impact on the retention and promotion rate of middle managers. Similarly, Kay and Moncarz (2004) and Giousmpasoglou et al. (2021) suggest that competency models that focus on strategic thinking, employee orientation and cross-hierarchical communication provide developmental benefit to managerial employees. Ladkin (2011) concludes that while the hospitality industry espouses hybrid career paths, these paths structurally favour those who have managerial experience and can therefore achieve both vertical and horizontal mobility within organisations, while general employees are confined to more limited hierarchical routes of promotion. In summary, extensive research indicates that taking on managerial responsibilities not only enhances the visibility and access of employees to organisational resources, but also serves as an important determinant in the prioritisation of career development in organisational systems.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Employees in managerial roles will perceive higher CDO than those in nonmanagerial roles.

2.7 Effects of Location on CDO

Geographic location has a great influence on career development through both explicit differences in employment opportunities and implicit differences in cultural and career path expectations (Alexander, 2024). Freeman (2009) noted that geography has a significant impact on individual career advancement, not only on the availability of jobs, but also on career strategies, rate of development, and mobility of industry. Cassel et al. (2018) further emphasized that the hospitality industry is not homogeneous across regions, factors such as labour market size, employer density, and infrastructure conditions result in a considerable variation of employee career trajectories. In big cities, a strong competition for jobs typically leads to employees changing jobs more often in hopes of finding better compensation or more opportunities for growth. The high availability of opportunities in these cities makes mobility a normal career strategy (Cassel et al., 2018). In addition, for cities where there are several hotel brands, workers are able to move from one location to another within the same brand, without having to change locations, which would improve promotional flexibility. On the other hand, in smaller cities and towns with fewer employers, career advancement often requires the need to move across industries or geographic locations.

Pshembayeva et al. (2022) emphasized that career progression is inherently a process of movement through both time and space, and therefore geographic location is an inherent contextual factor. Regions with thriving economies and well-developed labour markets tend to provide much faster promotion rates and higher incomes than less developed regions (Gordon, 2015; McCollum et al., 2018). Such regions also tend to offer more access to educational resources, vocational training programs, social networks, and better work-life balance (Dickmann & Cerdin, 2014; Hanson & Pratt, 1992), which are all strongly correlated with career success. Urban environments often encourage a results-oriented professional culture; Montanari et al. (2021) found that metropolitan employees usually value extrinsic rewards (promotions and salaries) over work-life balance. This orientation promotes the greater investment of time and energy into career development which leads to higher career rewards (Ng et al., 2005).

Beyond city vs. town differences, differences at the country level are another way to illustrate the role of location. Developed countries hospitality industries usually have more obvious promotion systems, formal training mechanisms, and well-established career paths (Preko & Anyigba, 2022). In contrast, developing countries, while providing fast entrepreneurial development of tourism-related sectors, tend to be lacking long-term institutional security. For example, in Turkey, career development in the hotel industry is based to a great extent on individual experience and language skills as opposed to standardized promotion systems (Okumus et al., 2016). Similarly, in Timor, gender and cultural factors limit upward mobility for female employees, indicating the lack of institutional support (Brites da Silva et al., 2021). Thus, geographic location affects the potential of advancement at both macro (country) and micro (city and town) levels.

Employee career trajectories are often closely related to the "career ecology" of their city, especially in global cities. Vaclavik and Macke (2024) suggest that global cities act as magnets for professionals because they have high capitalisation levels and large international networks, which contribute significantly to better access to resources and visibility of career opportunities, especially in relation to international training, cross-cultural customer service and leadership in the industry. Global cities provide important opportunities for international training, cross-cultural exposure and integration into elite power structures. For example, international hotel groups such as HRC International and Marriott base their leadership development programs and internships primarily in global cities, allowing them to serve multilingual clients and work with multinational management teams, which helps them accelerate their professional credibility and cross-regional career capital. Vašaničová (2025) states that the network-node features of global cities make them important centers for the aggregation of industry resources, and Rivera (2012) states that employees who exhibit cultural integration within these elite professional networks are more likely to be included and promoted based on cultural fit. This elite career ecological embeddedness effect is particularly pronounced in the highly globalized hospitality and

tourism industries, highlighting the complex effect of geographic location on career paths and development potential.

H7: Location has positive effect on PCDO

2.8 Theoretical Framework

2.8.1 HCT

To investigate CDO and their influencing factors for employees in the hotel and tourism labour market in New Zealand, this study is based on Becker's (1962) HCT. Becker conceptualised education, training and work experience not as consumption, but as investments that would pay off in the future in terms of economic returns by increasing an individual's adaptability and competitiveness in the labour market. Subsequent research has added to this framework by including informal, on-the-job skills and experiences such as job rotation, involvement in internal training, and assuming additional responsibilities (Marimuthu et al., 2009; Swanson, 2001). These forms of human capital accumulation are especially influential in the service industries of hospitality and tourism, where they affect the career trajectories and rate of promotion of employees.

The fundamental assumption of HCT is that people become more productive and employable by investing in education, vocational training, and work experience on a continual basis (Becker, 1993; Sweetland, 1996). Although these investments may have opportunity costs, such as lost income or reduced workforce participation, the long-term benefits are usually realized as higher wages, greater job security, and better promotion opportunities (Cornacchione & Daugherty, 2013; Jepsen & Montgomery, 2012). Originally developed to explain the relationship between education and income differentials (Benhabib & Spiegel, 1994; Blaug, 1976), HCT has since been used widely in human resource development, organizational planning, and labor market analyses.

HCT offers a measurable framework to determine if people get their fair share of returns from similar human capital investments (King & Cortina, 2010). In theory, employees with similar education, skills and experience should have access to equivalent CDO. However, in practice, particularly in the hospitality and tourism industries, structural and cultural factors often get in the way of this competency-based assumption. For example, employees with temporary visas or short longevity, even though they acquire substantial amounts of firm-specific knowledge, can be excluded from promotion routes because of organizational constraints (Gross et al., 2013; Janta et al., 2012). On the contrary, managerial employees tend to have more access to training and leadership development programs (Schinnenburg & Böhmer, 2025). Becker (1962) further distinguished between general human capital, transferable skills such as language, computer literacy, and firm-specific human capital, which refers to knowledge that is only valuable in a specific firm, such as knowledge of internal systems (Grip & Sauermann, 2013). In dynamic industries such as hospitality and tourism, investment in firm specific human capital is often a priority for firms in order to reduce the risks of turnover (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1999). This organizational selectivity has the effect of marginalizing certain groups within the organization, such as junior staff and temporary visa holders, which restricts their ability to translate experience into concrete promotion opportunities.

As Gutteridge (1973) and Judge et al. (1995) stress, the value of human capital is not only dependent on its possession but also on its recognition and transformation into opportunities for advancement within institutional frameworks. For example, frontline workers or workers with temporary visas may accumulate a lot of experience; however, without access to formal training, promotion opportunities or leadership programs, the human capital of these workers often goes underutilized (Gross et al., 2013; Janta et al., 2012). In contrast, managerial employees benefit from capacity-building programs, succession planning and leadership development, which boost the market value and career prospects of their human capital (Schinnenburg & Böhmer, 2025). Nevertheless, despite investment in human capital, structural barriers often interfere with the equal

achievement of career development outcomes (Ng & Feldman, 2010; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019).

2.8.2 Limitations of HCT

While HCT provides a powerful and systematic analytical framework, it is based on the assumption of a level playing field where all investments in human capital are objectively and fairly recognised and rewarded within organisations (Becker, 1962; Schultz, 1961). Although HCT is an important source of information, it does not address structural and cultural inequalities, which limit its explanatory power, especially for marginalised groups who may not realise equitable returns on their human capital. For example, people from minority or disadvantaged communities can be similarly educated and experienced as majority groups but still experience barriers that are systemic in nature such as discrimination in hiring and promotion, and occupational segregation. Relying only on HCT to explain occupational differences runs the risk of not taking into account the explicit and implicit biases experienced by employees with marginalised social identities in the workplace (King & Cortina, 2010). Moreover, HCT cannot fully explain persistent disparities faced by minority groups despite equal investment in human capital (King & Cortina, 2010). This narrow focus risks creating a misattribution of promotion limitations to inadequate individual effort, and in the process, obfuscating the structural factors at play. While HCT is good at explaining the economic logic behind "input-output" relationships, it is inadequate at explaining why in practice similar inputs produce unequal results. Specifically, it does not sufficiently take into account the role of social identity and institutional structures in determining the recognition and valuation of human capital. Therefore, combining HCT with intersectionality theory in a larger structural framework is necessary to capture more fully the interaction between institutional arrangements and social identity in the recognition, utilisation and reward of human capital.

2.8.3 Intersectionality Theory

This study uses the theory of intersectionality to better understand the role of multiple social identities in career development and access to promotion opportunities. Intersectionality theory was originally proposed by American legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to describe the systemic challenges faced by Black women in the United States, who were marginalised both as women and as people of colour that were often overlooked individually by gender- or race-based policies (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Crenshaw argued that the policies targeting gender equality or racial equality separately often failed to recognise Black women, and therefore created institutional blind spots. Since its inception, intersectionality has become a critical framework of social theory, widely used in the fields of education, health, social policy and labour studies (Bowleg, 2012; Collins, 1990; Wright & Chan, 2022).

At its most basic, intersectionality theory argues that social identities do not exist in isolation and intersect and interact within structural environments (Bowleg, 2012). Social categories such as gender, race, immigration status, class and religion interact in institutional, cultural, historical and organisational structures to influence people's opportunities in the labour market. Crenshaw emphasized that inequality is not just a product of individual identities themselves, but also how these identities are viewed, defined, and reacted to in power structures. Thus, intersectionality is not only a theory of identity but an important analytical tool for understanding the operation of power relations and institutional oppression in tandem (Crenshaw, 2015; Ferree, 2018).

The intersectionality framework helps researchers account for the complex interplays of gender, ethnicity, immigrant status, and other axes of social identity in the distribution of CDO. This is especially relevant with regard to marginalised groups, who are not only influenced by their human capital but also by the ways in which their identities are perceived and evaluated in organisational and social hierarchies. Integrating HCT with intersectionality theory is based on the realization that structural discrimination objectively exists in labour markets. For example, unfair practices in

recruitment, performance evaluation, promotion and resource allocation systematically limit the career development and economic returns of marginalised groups. Ignoring this integration risks underestimating the effect of these background factors on the conversion of qualifications to income and career opportunities. Together, these theories provide a more comprehensive view on labour market inequality.

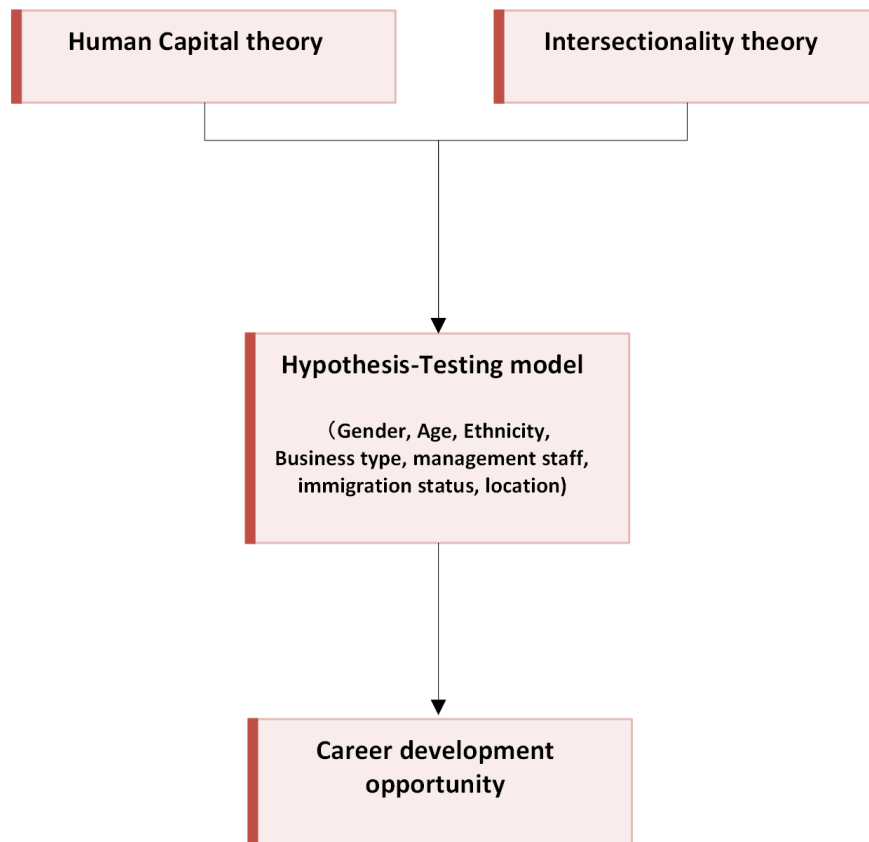
This research takes Crenshaw's original formulation of intersectionality as the starting point because this is very strong in emphasising the relationship between institutional power and identity making it particularly appropriate to analyse unequal access to CDO involving organisational selectivity, institutional pathways and cultural exclusion. Compared to the expanded versions of intersectionality that focus more on group experiences or individual perceptions (e.g. Bilge, 2013; Collins, 1990), Crenshaw's model privileges the role of intersecting identities in structural oppression, and therefore offers a clear explanation as to why some groups struggle to achieve equitable career development despite possessing human capital. This is particularly the case for employees who are marginalised due to a number of factors such as immigrant women of colour who may be subject to structural barriers such as informal exclusion, cultural mismatches and invisible ceilings within organisations (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2021; Settles et al., 2020).

Although the intersectionality theory provides a complex and wide-ranging analytical tool, it is also not without methodological challenges. Primarily, it is a qualitatively oriented framework and getting it right in quantitative research is still subject to debate (Bowleg, 2012; Hancock, 2007). Furthermore, its emphasis on the indivisibility and nonadditivity of identities requires careful classification of variables and complex statistical modelling. To overcome these challenges, this study uses the intercategorical approach of Leslie McCall (2005) which retains the complexity of intersectionality, but makes it possible to analyse structural differences between groups by explicit variable modelling (McCall, 2005).

All in all, the intersectionality theory and HCT are complementary in this study. While HCT is concerned with the accumulation of investable capabilities by individuals, intersectionality theory is concerned with whether these capabilities are recognised and equitably translated into CDO in a variety of institutional contexts and intersections of identities. This integrated framework therefore provides a more holistic explanation of why some groups, despite having equal or more human capital than majority groups, nevertheless perceive themselves as having less access to promotion pathways and developmental resources. Figure 1 illustrates the integration of HCT and intersectionality theory as a hypothesis-testing analytical model for the study of impacts of demographic characteristics and employment attributes on CDO.

Figure 1

Integrated Human Capital and Intersectionality Theory Model



2.9 Summary and Research Gap

Existing research has examined the individual factors of gender and age and their relation to career development in great depth. However, there is a notable gap in the literature in respect of empirical studies which combine demographic factors with employment attributes in a coherent analytical framework. This gap is especially noticeable with regard to immigrant status, enterprise type and regional differences, where large sample quantitative research is lacking. Furthermore, there is lack of quantitative research which focuses on the subjective perceptions of employees regarding their CDO, and as a result, there is lack of empirical understanding about career advancement opportunities within multicultural workplace contexts.

In order to overcome these gaps, this study adopts an integrated research approach to re-examine the concept of CDO. It considers not only quantifiable factors, such as human capital and job characteristics, but also the importance of social identity and institutional contexts in differences in employee perceptions. This holistic approach enables a better understanding of disparities in career development in the hospitality and tourism sector in New Zealand and new understanding of occupational mobility in diverse labour market environments.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter has presented a detailed account of the research methodology that was used in this research study, implying that it is relevant and applicable. The research is based on the philosophical perspective of empiricism which is the basic approach used in the research. Quantitative methods have been utilised for their strength in the hypothesis testing and finding relationships between variables. The chapter goes on to define the major components of the research design, such as the sources of data, the characteristics of the samples, the measurement of the variables, and the techniques for analyzing the data.

3.1 Research Paradigm

3.1.1 Positivist Paradigm

The basic principle of positivism is the belief that there is an objective truth in the world (Haardörfer, 2019), and that researchers can find this truth through the systematic collection and analysis of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Research findings are expressed as observable and measurable evidence with positivism focusing on the fact that only knowledge that is derived from direct observation or measurement is considered reliable (Ladyman, 2007). This study is based on the positivist paradigm.

Positivist research tends to follow a "hypothesis-deduction" model, where hypotheses are developed based on theory and then tested according to the analysis of data (Park et al., 2020). Accordingly, this study proposes a series of testable hypotheses on the basis of relevant theories and uses structured questionnaires and statistical analysis in order to analyze functional relationships and potential causal mechanisms between variables.

Quantitative research methodology is basically grounded on the positivist paradigm (Bryman, 1984). By using surveys, experiments, and statistical methods, it converts social phenomena into quantities, and uses mathematical and logical methods to prove hypotheses. During the research design process, potential confounding variables are carefully identified and controlled in order to ensure that a precise examination of

causal relationships between independent variables (X) and dependent variables (Y) is performed. This methodology enables the systematic and verifiable research of CDO for employees of the hospitality and tourism sector in New Zealand.

3.2 Methodology

This research adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships among demographic and employment related factors and PCDO in the hospitality and tourism industry in New Zealand. Quantitative research primarily focuses on measuring the extent of occurrence of phenomena by collecting data in a quantifiable form through surveys, experiments, etc. and then using statistical analysis to find out if the collected data support the research hypotheses (Coolican & Coolican, 2017). As Bryman (2016) highlights, quantitative research is grounded on positivist assumptions, with a focus on objectivity, measurability and the identification of causal or correlational relationships. By converting social phenomena into numerical measures, quantitative techniques allow the comparison and testing of hypotheses in a systematic manner across groups.

In contrast, qualitative approaches are more concerned with describing the experiences and underlying reasoning of individuals, and uses narrative data such as interviews and observations to explore meaning and context. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, are typically employed to test hypotheses that are already in existence, as opposed to formulating new hypotheses (John, 2021). This study utilizes a large-scale national dataset. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), quantitative research is perfect when investigating the relationship between variables in a theoretical framework or model that enables the researcher to draw conclusions from a small sample that can be applied to a larger population.

3.3 Method

This quantitative research involved the usage of a survey in order to gather information from individuals who were working in the hotel and tourism industries in New Zealand. According to Tourism Industry Aotearoa (2025) the sector supported a total of 303,420 jobs as of March 2024, which suggests that the data collected by the survey gives wide

representation across ethnicities and other relevant factors such as education. The survey was distributed around New Zealand in an online format, and represented employment conditions across a wide range of employment in New Zealand.

This study was a cross-sectional study, which used secondary data from the 2024 New Zealand tourism and hospitality employee experiences survey, commissioned by the MBIE (Williamson & Candice, 2024). The dataset is available through academic collaboration with Auckland university of technology (AUT) and contains responses from a nationally representative sample of people employed in the hospitality and tourism sector in urban and regional areas. Although the original dataset was a longitudinal study, the present research is focused on data from the most recent survey in an attempt to provide a snapshot of PCDO at a specific point in time.

3.5 Sample

The original dataset was made up of survey responses from 798 hospitality and tourism employees across New Zealand from the 2024 New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Employee Experiences Survey (Williamson & Candice, 2024). Respondents came from every region in New Zealand, including the major urban centres, such as Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, and more remote tourist centres, such as Hurunui, Waitaki and Tasman. For this study, statistical analyses were performed only on samples with complete data on the core research variables. Following data cleaning and treatment of missing values, the final analytical sample was 661 valid questionnaires, i.e. 82.8% of the original respondents.

3.6 Participants

After data cleaning, which included filtering out incomplete or inconsistent cases using listwise deletion, the final sample of validated data for analysis included 661 participants. The respondents came from a variety of demographic backgrounds such as gender, age, ethnicity, visa status and geographic location. Employment-related variables, e.g., type of business, responsibility of management, were also captured. All

responses had been anonymised before access. Valid responses for individual variables ranged from $n = 654$ to 657 because of minor missing data.

In this sample, 39.9% identified as male, 58.8% identified as female, and 1.2% identified as other gender identities. With regard to ethnicity, 50.6% of the participants were New Zealand European ($N = 332$). The largest age group was 18 to 25 years of age ($n = 137$, 36.5%), followed by age 61 or older ($n = 111$, 29.5%), and 22.1% were aged between 26 and 35 years ($n = 83$). Employment sector distribution revealed that 43.9% ($n = 276$) were engaged in the food and beverage sector, 40.4% ($n = 254$) in accommodation and 10.7% ($n = 67$) in tourism services. Half of the participants (50.3%, $n = 329$) had management positions. Geographically 37.9% were based in Auckland ($n = 248$) and 35.9% in other locations ($n = 235$). Concerning visa status, 88.6% were New Zealand citizens or permanent residents ($n = 582$), 11.4% were on temporary visas ($n = 75$). Table 1 presents additional demographic information on the survey participants.

Table 1*Demographic Characteristics*

Demographic characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	262	39.9%
Female	386	58.8%
Other	8	1.2%
Age		
18–25 years	137	36.5%
26–35 years	111	29.6%
36–45 years	83	22.1%
46–60 years	38	10.1%
61+ years	6	1.6%
Ethnicity		
New Zealand European	332	50.6%
Māori	54	8.2%
Pacific	45	6.9%
Indian	73	11.1%
Filipino	31	4.7%
Chinese	21	3.2%
Other Asian	27	4.1%
Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA)	20	3.0%
Other	53	8.1%
Hospitality business type		
Tourism service	67	10.7%
Transport	13	2.1%
Accommodation	254	40.4%
Food & beverage	276	43.9%
Entertainment	9	1.4%
Other	10	1.6%
Management responsibility		
Yes	329	50.3%
No	325	49.7%
Location		
Auckland	248	37.9%
Wellington/Wairarapa	44	6.7%
Christchurch/Canterbury	83	12.7%
Queenstown/Wanaka/Central Otago	44	6.7%
Other	235	35.9%
Immigration status		
NZ citizen or PR	582	88.6%
Temporary visa holder	75	11.4%

Note. Percentages are based on valid responses for each variable (n = 654–657). Minor rounding differences may occur.

3.7 Measures

For the multiple linear regression modeling, original categorical variables (e.g., gender and ethnicity) were entered directly into the statistical package, statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), without the need for manual dummy coding. SPSS automatically treated these variables as nominal and performed internal dummy coding, with the lowest coded category (e.g. "New Zealand European" for ethnicity and "Male" for gender) being used as the reference group. For descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations, a number of variables, including visa status, management responsibility and location, were transformed into new binary variables using the "Recode into Different Variables" function in the statistics package, IBM's SPSS. These recoded versions allowed for easier interpretation and reporting of frequency in the summary tables.

3.7.1 Dependent Variable

CDO was the main dependent variable and was operationalised as a composite index based on five items from the self-reported survey (Questions 40.1 to 40.5) from the 2024 New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Employee Experiences Survey commissioned by the MBIE (Williamson & Candice, 2024). The dataset was accessed through academic collaboration with AUT. These items included perceived frequency of training, access to career advancement, and developmental support in the current workplace. Responses were rated on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = never to 7 = every day). The CDO scale showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .946$). Prior to analysis, a total score was obtained by adding up the responses of the items (range 5-35), with higher scores reflecting more favourable perceptions of CDO. There were no reverse coded items. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) supported the unidimensionality of the scale.

In Questions 40.1 to 40.5, participants were asked "How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?" The five development-oriented items were:

- *At work, I find myself learning often*
- *At work I continue to learn more as time goes by*
- *At work I see myself continually improving*
- *At work I am learning*
- *At work I am developing a lot as a person*

These items together reflect an underlying theme of growth, learning, and personal development in the workplace. Together, they have good content validity by emphasizing both experiential learning and self-perceived growth as important elements of upward mobility. Although the original purpose of these items was to broadly monitor employee experience, these items do align closely with the accumulation of knowledge, skills and learning emphasised in HCT as essential foundations for career advancement (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). By measuring the frequency and scope of developmental experiences of employees at work, this scale is an appropriate proxy for PCDO. In structured service industries like hospitality and tourism, where career advancement is strongly tied to internal training systems and performance-based advancement, this measurement approach provides a lot of explanatory power.

3.7.2 Independent Variables

This research incorporated a variety of demographic and employment related variables as independent variables, including age group, gender, ethnicity, immigration status, business type, managerial responsibility, and work location. Each hypothesis (H1-H7) was tested by multiple linear regression models in the SPSS, with the PCDO of employees as the dependent variable.

The regression model is given by:

$$CDO = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Gender}) + \beta_2(\text{Age}) + \beta_3(\text{Ethnicity}) + \beta_4(\text{Immigration Status}) + \beta_5(\text{Business Type}) + \beta_6(\text{Management Responsibility}) + \beta_7(\text{Work Location}) + \varepsilon$$

Where β_0 represents the constant term, β_1 – β_7 denote the unstandardised regression coefficients for each predictor, and ϵ represents the error term.

H1 (Gender) and H3 (Ethnicity) were included as categorical variables in descriptive and bivariate analyses but were not included in the final multiple regression model because of lack of statistical significance.

H2 (Age) was considered an ordinal variable and coded from 1 to 5, which corresponds to different career stages: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-60 and 61 and above to improve the interpretation.

H4 (Immigration status) was created by combining two of the original variables, visa status and citizenship/PR into a single binary variable distinguishing New Zealand citizens and PR holders from all other visa holders. Categorical variables were introduced into the regression model via dummy coding with the reference categories being assigned automatically by the software (SPSS) and are usually the first category (alphabetically or numerically).

H5 (Business type) was originally divided into 20 different groups. For the regression analysis, these were grouped into six broader categories in order to balance the sample and keep the model simple.

H6 (Management responsibility) was a binary categorical variable (yes/no) indicating whether respondents were in supervisory or managerial positions and was included as an important predictor.

H7 (Work location) was initially coded in 17 cities and towns. To improve its interpretability and to reflect the major geographic centres in the New Zealand hospitality and tourism labour market, this variable was recoded into a nominal variable with five categories, comprising:

- **Auckland**
- **Wellington/Wairarapa**
- **Christchurch/Canterbury**

- **Queenstown/Wanaka/Central Otago**
- **Other Regions** (including all remaining areas)

This recoding maintained the visibility of the four big employment clusters, but it aggregated smaller regions to ensure adequate subgroup sizes for statistical analysis. Predictors were entered into the regression model based on their level of measurement. Nominal variables (e.g., ethnicity, business type, and work location) were automatically dummy-coded by the SPSS during estimation, with the first category serving as the reference group. Although gender is binary, it was treated as a nominal variable and it was automatically dummy coded by the statistical software (SPSS), where male was used as the reference category. In contrast, immigration status and management responsibility were manually recoded into binary indicators (0/1) and entered directly into the model. The ordinal variable age group was coded from 1 to 5 to represent various stages of career.

For descriptive statistics and the presentation of group characteristics, the full classification of the original data was maintained to assure the integrity and interpretability of the results.

3.7.3 Reliability and Validity

Before performing the regression analysis, the reliability and validity of CDO scale were determined. The scale was found to be highly reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha of .946, indicating high internal consistency and correlation between items. EFA supported the construct validity of the scale, confirming a unidimensional factor structure. Factor loadings ranged from .848 to .940 and communalities ranged from .719 to .884, all above the commonly accepted threshold of .50. Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(10) = 2626.468$, $p < .001$), indicating that the data was appropriate for factor analysis.

3.8 Data Analysis

3.8.1 Preliminary Analyses

Data screening included missing data patterns, outliers (standardized residuals ± 3.29), normality and linearity assumptions. Missing data were handled by listwise deletion,

as described in Section 3.5. All analyses were performed by using the software of the SPSS version 24.

3.8.2 Assumption Test

We used the Belsley covariance diagnostic (Belsley et al., 1980) to test for possible multicollinearity among the predictors. Most conditional indices were less than the threshold value of 10. Although one dimension had a high conditional index (> 20), only a few variables had a proportion of variance > 0.50 on one dimension, indicating that multicollinearity was not severe. Residual plots showed no serious deviations from linearity or homoscedasticity. While the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated a statistically significant deviation from normality ($p < .05$), the deviation evident in the normal $P-P$ plot was minimal and unlikely to have a significant impact on the results of the regression given the large sample size.

3.8.3 Independence of Residuals

To test for autocorrelation among the regression residuals, the Durbin-Watson test (Krämer, 2025) was performed. This test is useful in detecting the possibility of autocorrelation problems and for making changes in the specification of the model, thus increasing the reliability and validity of the regression analysis. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.982, which is close to the ideal value of 2, suggesting that the residuals are roughly independent, and that the assumption of independence of the residuals is met.

3.8.4 EFA

In order to evaluate the measurement structure and structural validity of the dependent variable CDO, EFA was conducted on the five CDO items. Prior to factor extraction, the Kaiser - Meyer - Olkin (KMO) test showed high sampling adequacy (0.898) (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(10) = 2626.468, p < .001$), which indicated that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix and the data were suitable for factor analysis.

This study used principal component analysis (PCA) to extract factors, keeping those with an Eigen value greater than 1. The communalities for the five items were between

0.719 and 0.884, which is all greater than the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hair, 2009). These values were also consistent with the more stringent criteria proposed by MacCallum et al. (1999, 2001) of individual communalities >0.60 and an average value close to 0.70. This means that the majority of the variance in each item is explained by the common factor, indicating high inter-item correlation and consistency of measurement. The results of the analysis supported the single-factor structure with the first principal component having an eigenvalue of 4.112 and accounting for 82.24% of the total variance. All items loaded strongly on this factor with loadings ranging from 0.848 - 0.940, indicating good unidimensionality of the construct of CDO. As a result, a single factor composite score was calculated and used in the following regression analyses.

3.8.5 Main Analyses

1. Descriptive analysis: Means, standard deviations and frequencies were calculated for all variables to give an overview of the sample characteristics.
2. Bivariate analysis: Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to measure the associations between continuous variables and point biserial correlations were used to measure associations between categorical and continuous variables.
3. Multiple regression: Simultaneous multiple regression analyses were performed to test the predictive effects of demographic and employment-related variables on PCDO combined. This approach was chosen because of the exploratory nature of the study and the absence of good theoretical rationale for hierarchical variable entry. Each hypothesis (H1-H7) was tested by looking at the direction and statistical significance ($p < .05$) of the respective regression coefficients (β). Model fit was determined by R^2 and the F -statistic. Diagnostic checks revealed assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity (variance inflation factor [VIF] < 5) to be satisfactorily met.

3.8.6 Statistical Criteria

Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$ for all analyses. Effect sizes were interpreted according to Cohen's conventions, with small, medium and large effects defined

as .10, .30 and .50 respectively for correlation coefficients and .02, .13 and .26 for r^2 values. Although a Bonferroni correction was considered in order to correct for multiple hypothesis testing ($N = 7$), it was not implemented because of the exploratory nature of the study; this limitation is recognized and discussed accordingly.

3.9 Ethics

Ethical clearance for the original data collection was sought by the MBIE research team. Since the current study consisted of analysis of fully anonymised secondary data, it was considered exempted from further ethics review according to the AUT research ethics guidelines.

Chapter 4 Results

This section outlines the results of the descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations and multiple regression analyses of the predictors of PCDO among 661 hospitality and tourism employees in New Zealand. The analysis followed a three stage process: (1) descriptive statistics summarised CDO scores and the characteristics of the participants (Tables 2 to 8); (2) bivariate correlations explored the initial relationships between variables (Table 9); and (3) multiple regression analyses evaluated the combined impact of demographic and employment related factors on CDO (Table 10). Results showed that age, business type, and management responsibility were the most important predictors of PCDO, whereas gender, ethnicity, location, and immigration status showed limited or no unique effects.

4.1 Gender

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Gender

Gender	<i>M</i> (CDO score)	<i>SD</i>
Male	14.21	7.17
Female	15.22	6.54

Notes. CDO = career development opportunities.

Female participants had slightly higher PCDO scores ($M = 15.22$, $SD = 6.54$) than males ($M = 14.21$, $SD = 7.17$), as shown in Table 2. Gender was weakly but significantly correlated with CDO in the bivariate analysis ($r = .090$, $p = .038$; Table 9). However, in the multiple regression analysis, gender was not a significant predictor of CDO ($p = .294$, $\beta = .044$, $p = .044$; Table 10). Thus, H1 which stated that gender has a negative effect on CDO was not supported. When controlling for other variables, gender did not account for a meaningful amount of variance in perceived development opportunities.

4.2 Age

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores

Age	<i>M</i> (CDO score)	<i>SD</i>
18–25 years	15.05	7.39
26–35 years	13.09	5.74
36–45 years	11.60	5.50
45–60 years	11.93	6.64
61+ years	4.00	0.00

Note. CDO = career development opportunities. The SD for the 61+ years group is 0.00 because all respondents in this category reported the same score.

PCDO showed a consistent decrease across the age groups with the youngest (18-25) reporting the highest scores ($M = 19.33$, $SD = 5.57$) while older age groups reported progressively lower scores (e.g., 46-60: $M = 11.60$, $SD = 5.50$), as shown in Table 3. Correlation analysis showed that age was significantly negatively related to CDO ($r = -.303$, $p < .001$; Table 9). Age was a significant negative predictor in the multiple regression model ($\beta = -0.264$, $p < .001$; Table 10). Therefore, the H2 predicting a positive effect of age on CDO was not supported, rather, younger employees perceived more CDO than their older counterparts.

4.3 Ethnicity

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	<i>M</i> (CDO score)	<i>SD</i>
NZ European	15.45	6.68
Māori	14.53	6.62
Pacific	15.22	7.20
Indian	12.43	7.48
Filipino	16.04	6.65
Chinese	13.19	5.06
Other Asian	12.96	5.38
MELAA	15.31	8.39
Other ethnicities	14.40	7.26

Note. CDO = Career development opportunities.

Descriptive statistics in Table 4 show that the average CDO scores of New Zealand European participants were the highest ($M = 15.45$), followed by Indian ($M = 12.43$) and Chinese ($M = 13.19$) participants. However, correlation analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and CDO ($r = -.073$, $p = .094$; Table 9), and ethnicity was not a significant predictor in the regression model ($\beta = -.052$, $p = .248$; Table 10). Consequently, H3 which predicted a positive effect of ethnicity on CDO was not supported.

4.4 Business Type

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Business Type

Business type	M (CDO score)	SD
Tourism service	12.82	5.66
Transport	10.56	5.66
Accommodation	13.37	6.68
Food & Beverage	16.80	6.84
Entertainment	15.57	5.19
Others	18.88	7.77

Note. CDO = career development opportunities.

Table 5 indicates that the PCDO scores of employees in the food and beverage sector ($M = 16.80$, $SD = 6.84$) and accommodation sector ($M = 13.37$, $SD = 6.68$) were higher than those of employees in the tourism services sector ($M = 12.82$) and transport sector ($M = 10.56$). Business type was significantly and positively correlated with CDO ($r = .228$, $p < .001$; Table 9), and was a significant predictor in the regression model ($\beta = .088$, $p = .039$; Table 10). These results support H4 that predicted a positive effect of business type on PCDO.

4.5 Management Responsibility

Table 6

Mean and Standard Deviation of CDO Scores by Management Responsibility

Management responsibility	M (CDO score)	SD
Yes	13.56	6.61
No	16.13	6.83

Note. CDO = career development opportunities.

Participants who had managerial responsibilities had higher PCDO scores ($M = 16.13$) than those without managerial responsibilities ($M = 13.56$), as reflected in Table 6. A significant positive correlation was found between managerial responsibility and CDO ($r = .189$, $p < .001$; Table 9). Regression analysis also confirmed that managerial responsibility was a significant predictor of CDO ($\beta = .098$, $p = .026$; Table 10). Therefore, H5 that stated a positive effect of managerial responsibility on CDO is supported.

4.6 Location

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Location

Location	M (CDO score)	SD
Auckland	15.09	6.51
Wellington/Wairarapa	16.09	6.37
Christchurch/Canterbury	15.52	6.91
Queenstown/Wanaka/Central Otago	14.19	7.36
Others	14.32	7.13

Note. CDO = career development opportunities.

There were little differences in CDO scores between employees from various regions. For example, participants from Auckland ($M = 15.09$), Wellington ($M = 16.09$) and Christchurch ($M = 15.52$) had slightly higher scores than participants from Queenstown ($M = 14.19$) and other regions ($M = 14.32$) as presented in Table 7. Correlation analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between location and CDO ($r = -.057$, $p = .188$; Table 9), and the regression model also found no significant effect ($\beta = .015$,

$p = .716$; Table 10). Therefore, H6, which predicted the positive impact of location on CDO, was not supported.

4.7 Immigration Status

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations of CDO Scores by Immigration Status

Immigration Status	<i>M</i> (CDO score)	<i>SD</i>
NZ Citizen or PR	15.04	6.83
Temporary visa holder	13.09	6.63

Note. CDO = career development opportunities.

There were little differences in CDO scores between employees from different regions. For example, the average scores of participants from Auckland ($M = 15.09$), Wellington ($M = 16.09$) and Christchurch ($M = 15.52$) were slightly higher than those of participants from Queenstown ($M = 14.19$) and other regions ($M = 14.32$) as shown in Table 7. Correlation analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between location and CDO ($r = -.057$, $p = .188$; Table 9) and the regression model also showed no significant effect ($\beta = .015$, $p = .716$; Table 10). Therefore, H6, which predicted that location would have a positive impact on CDO, was not supported.

In the final regression model, age ($\beta = -.264$, $p < .001$), business type ($\beta = .088$, $p = .039$), and management responsibility ($\beta = .098$, $p = .026$) were the best unique predictors of PCDO. After accounting for these factors, the results did not show statistically significant effects of gender, ethnicity, location and immigration status. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(7, 653) = 10.92$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 12.8% of the variance in CDO ($r^2 = .13$). This amount of explained variance is in line with effect sizes frequently reported in social science research on subjective perceptions (Cohen, 1988).

Table 9
Correlation Matrix

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1.61	.512								
2. Age	21.50	13.549	-.024 (0.541)							
3. Ethnicity	3.01	2.652	-.109** (0.005)	-.104** (0.008)						
4. Business type	3.281	1.004	.036 (0.371)	-.382*** (< 0.001)	.029 (0.473)					
5. Management staff	1.50	.500	.128** (0.001)	-.312** (< 0.001)	.045 (0.248)	.195*** (< 0.001)				
6. Location	6.43	4.874	-.017*** (< 0.001)	.173*** (< 0.001)	-.141*** (< 0.001)	-.177*** (< 0.001)	-.150*** (< 0.001)			
7. Immigration status	1.114	.318	-.149*** (< 0.001)	-.072 (0.065)	.362*** (< 0.001)	.007 (0.857)	.070 (0.075)	-.039 (0.324)		
8. CDO			.090* (0.038)	-.303*** (< 0.001)	-.073 (0.094)	.228*** (< 0.001)	.189*** (< 0.001)	-.057 (0.188)	-.088* (0.041)	

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; CDO = career development opportunities.

Table 10
Multiple Regression Analyses of Effects of Variables on CDO

Demographic or attribute	β	CDO
Gender	.044	.294
Age	-.264	$< .001$ ***
Ethnicity	-.052	.248
Type of business	.088	.039*
Management responsibility	.098	.026*
Location	.015	.716
Immigration status	-.083	.062 [†]
r^2		.128
F		10.920 ($p = < .001$)
df		522

Note. [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$; $R^2 = R$ -squared, CDO = career development opportunities

Chapter 5 Discussion

This section is a reading of the findings of the regression analysis, which places the results of the study in the context of the integrated theoretical framework of the study, which draws mainly from HCT (Becker, 1962, 1993) supplemented with intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991, 1997). Each predictor variable is discussed separately, taking into account not only the statistical relationship with PCDO, but also the alignment of the variable with the existing empirical and theoretical literature. This dual lens brings into focus the role that economic investments in human capital and institutional structures of power and identity play in shaping the perceptions of employees in terms of career advancement and access to developmental resources in the hospitality and tourism sector in New Zealand.

5.1 Sociodemographic Factors

5.1.1 Gender

The statistical results show that gender is not a significant predictor of PCDO, although female respondents had slightly higher scores than males. From a HCT perspective (Becker, 1993), this may indicate that gender as such does not directly determine access to developmental resources such as training or promotion opportunities, implying that organisations may be adopting relatively gender-neutral formal policies for resource allocation. Superficially, this finding suggests a more equal distribution of career development resources than is commonly reported in the literature. However, existing research is extensive and highlights that gender is a deeply entrenched mechanism of inequality within the hospitality and tourism sector, especially to women in frontline roles. For example, Mooney et al. (2017) found that women, particularly immigrant women, are concentrated in low-level jobs such as customer service with few opportunities for promotion. Ng and Pine (2003) also noted that although women are predominant in these industries, the leadership positions are mostly held by men, and female employees are often excluded from informal leadership networks.

Intersectionality theory further explains how gender inequality is manifested through cultural norms and leadership stereotypes (Crenshaw, 1991). Heilman and Okimoto (2007) showed that women with strong leadership styles are often negatively evaluated, due to implicit biases that may not be captured through quantitative models. Such structural gender impacts are often indirect, through informal exclusion, cultural biases and institutional gatekeeping. Moreover, when gender intersects with other forms of social identity, such as ethnicity or immigration status, these inequalities can be further compounded (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Therefore, while gender was not statistically significant in this study, its intersectional effects and subtle mechanisms of exclusion need to be further examined qualitatively. That is, statistical nonsignificance should not be taken as evidence of structural equality.

According to HCT, organisations are more inclined to invest more resources in employees who promise immediate returns. Job levels and business types, which are closely related to organisational investment decisions, may mediate the effect of gender on CDO. In the regression model, when controlling for these organisational factors, the direct impact of gender was reduced, indicating that the effects of gender are indirect and work through mediating variables that are more directly linked to corporate decision-making. For example, gender differences may arise when it comes to interacting with immigration status, ethnicity, or type of business (e.g., Gender x Immigration Status). Thus, the lack of a direct statistical effect does not mean that there are no gender-based disparities, but it means that these disparities are intertwined with other factors and need a more nuanced, intersectional approach to be made apparent.

5.1.2 Age

Age has a significant negative impact on PCDO, with younger employees reporting better access to development resources than older employees. This finding is contrary to the traditional HCT assumption of the natural promotion advantages of accumulated experience and tenure. Instead, it is consistent with the performance- and flexibility-oriented mechanisms of promotion that are common in the service industry. Posthuma and Campion (2009) noted that many organisations are focusing more on innovation

and digital capabilities than seniority in making promotion decisions. Younger employees are commonly viewed as having more room for development and thus are preferred targets for investment in medium- to long-term training and development programs. This reflects Becker's (1962) logic of selective investments, in which firms strive to optimise returns on human capital investments. Compared to older employees approaching retirement, younger workers are perceived as longer-term assets and therefore worth greater organisational investment. However, Martin and North (2022) note that despite calls for intergenerational equity in society, there is still scepticism and structure constraints towards young leaders. Thus, the negative correlation between age and PCDO is a more accurate reflection of organisational biases in favour of perceived potential and malleability, rather than a truly equitable allocation of developmental resources on an age basis. Importantly, in the regression model, the negative impact of age was significant even after adjustment for factors related to employment. This suggests that while older employees may have greater human capital in the form of experience, skills and seniority, these advantages are not sufficient to offset organisational preferences for younger employees as investments with greater expected returns.

5.1.3 Ethnicity

The results of this study showed that ethnicity does not have a statistically significant predictive effect on PCDO. At face value, this may imply ethnic neutrality in organisational resource allocation and development processes. However, extensive previous research draws attention to the fact that structural barriers associated with ethnicity do not always manifest themselves directly in quantitative models. Instead, they work on the basis of implicit cultural assumptions and informal organisational mechanisms (Mooney et al., 2017; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). For instance, Grant (2016) concluded that in New Zealand's hospitality industry, minority ethnic and migrant workers are often excluded from the promotion pathways because of cultural mismatches and stereotypical perceptions of leadership ability. Similarly, Kenny and Briner (2010) emphasised the fact that migrant workers are often excluded from the

core decision-making networks because of the lack of inclusive organisational practices, which undermines the recognition of their development potential.

From the lens of intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991), ethnicity intersects with other social identities such as gender and immigration status, creating complex overlapping mechanisms of marginalisation within organisations. Even where there is some formal equality, minority ethnic employees may face informal exclusion or cultural incongruences that are embedded into organisational culture, performance evaluation and client preferences. These subtle but pervasive barriers prevent the conversion of human capital into career advancement. Moreover, research shows that despite diversity policies, many service organisations show evidence of symbolic inclusion, where minority employees are present in entry-level positions but struggle to move into management positions (Grant, 2016; Mooney et al., 2017). This leads to structural inequalities which may not be detected by quantitative analyses.

Additionally, some ethnic groups included in this study had small sample sizes, such as Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA) at 3.0% and Chinese at 3.2%. The MELAA category itself is heterogeneous, as it combines different groups with potentially different experiences, which may dilute detectable effects. Within-group variability increases the standard errors and decreases the statistical power and likelihood of finding significant results. Therefore, the fact that ethnicity was not significant statistically should not be taken as an indication of structural equality. Rather, it highlights the need for more qualitative research and more complex modelling techniques to identify the mechanisms of institutional and cultural exclusion that remain below the surface.

5.1.4 Immigration Status

This study found an overall marginally significant negative relationship between immigrant status and PCDO. Although this relation did not achieve conventional levels of statistical significance, it has important explanatory value when viewed in the context of the theory. According to HCT, organisations tend to allocate training and development resources to employees in a way that favours those from whom they are

likely to get controllable, long-term returns. Temporary visa holders, who are often working with short-term or casual contracts with limited periods of residency, are often viewed as short-term labour. Consequently, organisations may consider them less valuable investments and therefore limit their access to internal development mechanisms. Research by Hunt and Xie (2019) and Janta et al. (2012) emphasises the negative consequences of visa systems for migrant workers, both the weakening of their bargaining power in the labour market and their exclusion from internal job rotations, management training programmes and talent pools. These constraints have a negative impact on the accumulation and utilisation of their human capital. Even where temporary visa holders have similar skills and experience, their potential is often systematically ignored because of low expected organisational returns. From an intersectionality perspective (Crenshaw, 1991), the status of migrant is an intersectional with other dimensions of identity such as gender and ethnicity, which together create an institutional ceiling within organisations. Such structural barriers limit migrant employee's perception of development opportunities and block the routes of upward mobility. Despite equal competencies, migrant employees often face assumptions based on their identity which make career advancement channels nominally available but practically inaccessible.

In the dataset analysed, the immigration status originally distinguished between 8 different visa categories, such as work visas, tourist work visas and student visas, each with different conditions and implications. For the purposes of statistical analysis, these different types of temporary visas were combined and compared to New Zealand citizens and permanent residents. This aggregation may have obscured the particular disadvantages faced by more precarious visa holders, and may thus have understated the real negative impact on the most vulnerable subgroups.

5.2 Organisational Factors

5.2.1 Business Type

This research found that business type has been found to be a significant predictor of PCDO. Employees working in firms with higher structural complexity (for example

accommodation and food services industries) generally reported higher perceptions of development opportunities. As Baum (2006) and Okurame (2014) note, hotel companies generally have well-defined promotion structures and well-organized internal talent mobility schemes that allow employees to translate positive feedback into human capital investments such as training and skill development. Such structured firms depend heavily on firm-specific human capital, specialised internal skills and organisational adaptability, which gives them an incentive to offer systematic training programs and clearly defined promotion routes. This in turn increases the confidence and expectations of the employees towards their career progression (Becker, 1993). From the perspective of HCT these investment behaviours are consistent with organisational logic that is focused on controllable returns, whereby employees that are easier to retain and are better suited to organisational processes are considered worthwhile investments (Becker, 1993). As a result, employees of structurally complex firms are more likely to report higher PCDO as a result of clearer role hierarchies, well-defined training pathways and formalised systems of internal advancement. On the other hand, employees in less structured industries tend to have a lower perception of CDO (Cassel et al., 2018; McCabe & Savery, 2007; Okurame, 2014). In summary, the type of enterprise has an impact on employees' assessment and expectations of development opportunities through the level of organisational complexity and approach to human capital management. A clear organisational structure with defined processes enhances the visibility and convertibility of human capital investments and, thus, positively influences the perceptions of employees regarding career development.

5.2.2 Management Responsibility

This study found that employees with managerial responsibilities are more likely to perceive CDO to be accessible. Organisations tend to focus on giving training, promotion opportunities, and development resources to the employees who are in high potential, high return jobs (Becker, 1962). Employees in managerial positions are generally considered as potential candidates for strategic leadership positions and thus have a higher chance of receiving mentoring, systematic training and being

included in succession planning, which together improve their PCDO scores. As Gross et al. (2013) and Schinnenburg and Böhmer (2025) have noted, there is a managerial bias in the distribution of resources, as managers are more frequently included in organisational talent pools and internal promotion pipelines. Such biases are not random but are rational investment decisions to maximise returns on human capital. According to Becker's model, firms allocate resources to roles that are closely related to their long-term strategic goals in order to optimise their return on capital.

However, from the point of view of the theory of intersectionality, the access to managerial positions is determined by the underlying identity structures. This implies that CDO are not exclusively a function of an employee's accumulated human capital but are also dependent on their ability to overcome institutional barriers, the initial threshold of gaining entry into roles deemed worthy of investment by the organisation. Thus, this resource allocation bias goes beyond the distribution of capital; it uncovers the way in which structural organisational mechanisms decide who will be deemed worthy of investment (Becker, 1962). Therefore, although managerial responsibility is a predictor of higher PCDO scores, the fairness and accessibility of this pathway requires further investigation, especially in relation to employee identity characteristics and organisational culture.

5.3 Geographical Factors

5.3.1 Location

Although some studies have highlighted that global cities, by virtue of their concentration of resources, cross-regional networks and dense industrial opportunities, tend to provide employees with greater career development resources and mobility opportunities (Vaclavik & Macke, 2024), this does not seem to be the case in New Zealand. As a country with relatively small land mass and concentrated regional development, geographical position has a limited effect on the CDO of employees. Furthermore, the increased prevalence of remote working, online training, and digital talent management systems has made many development resources available across

regions, thereby reducing the traditional constraints imposed by physical location on employees' accumulation and conversion of human capital (Zhang et al., 2024).

From the perspective of HCT, access of employees to developmental inputs is a function of the perceived return on investment (ROI) of the employees within the organisation and the existence of institutional structures to capitalise on human capital returns. Compared to physical spatial differences, organisational-level arrangements, such as training systems, promotion pathways and job hierarchies, more directly influence the visibility and convertibility of human capital. Consequently, in countries where there are little geographic disparities, the impact of spatial variables is often absorbed, or mediated, by institutional factors such as enterprise type and managerial responsibility.

The hospitality and tourism industry in New Zealand is based on a common set of standardised processes and brand guidelines (Sandoff, 2025). Its chain-based structures (national branches) and standard operating procedures guarantee uniform operating models in different regions. Additionally, the widespread adoption of digital training platforms has standardised access to development resources, allowing employees across the country to receive training of similar format and content. These industry trends have mitigated the impact of regional differences directly on PCDO.

Overall, although geographical location is often thought to be an important factor affecting occupational mobility and development, in the geographically concentrated environment of New Zealand, its importance seems to be replaced by other structural variables. This finding indirectly supports the institutional logic underpinning HCT, that the allocation of resources is dependent on an organisation's structural assessment of expected returns on human capital investment, rather than on the spatial location of employees per se.

In summary, this study finds that while HCT is an effective way of explaining the economic rationality behind organisation's allocation of training and development resources, it does not go far enough to capture the structural barriers employees face when their social identities intersect. Intersectionality theory addresses this gap in the theory by exposing the institutional screening logic that governs who is considered

worthy of investment. Together, these theories emphasise that PCDO are dependent not only on the accumulated human capital of employees, but also on how their identities are perceived and recognised within organisational systems.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Implications

6.1.1 Theoretical Implications

The results of this study show that, in the hotel and tourism industries, the traditional human resource assumption of a linear and fair relationship between human capital and CDO is only partially true. The conversion of human capital into career advancement of an individual depends to a great extent on the external factors such as nature of the position and organisational system of the enterprise. This research extends HCT by providing a more nuanced view: inequalities in career development are caused not only by differences in individual human capital but also by the way organisations recognise and value that capital and the returns that they expect. Furthermore, these inequalities are built into the design and working of internal systems and mechanisms in enterprises. This challenges the HCT assumption that effort and capability will inevitably be rewarded and draws attention to the central role of the organisation in determining whether human capital translates into career outcomes.

Simultaneously, this study revisits the applicability of intersectionality theory in the context of the hotel and tourism sector in New Zealand. The findings suggest that in a diverse and highly institutionalised environment, the impact of social identity differences such as gender, ethnicity and immigration status may be attenuated. Instead, organisational structure and internal systems have more impact on career development. This suggests that in industries such as New Zealand's hotel industry, where regulations are relatively comprehensive and there is relatively high workforce diversity, the influence of gender or ethnicity may be neutralised by organisational policies and cultural inclusivity so that they are less important determinants of career progression.

6.1.2 Practical Implications

The research findings suggest that differences in the career development of employees are mainly caused by the organisational structures and hierarchies in jobs

and not by identity differences such as gender and ethnicity. Consequently, enterprises should concentrate on how to redistribute development resources to ensure that career opportunities are distributed fairly across all levels of employees. However, the effect of immigration status is still a major barrier and organisations need to address the hidden barriers that are imposed by visa restrictions and internal policies. To create a truly fair and inclusive career development environment, companies must go beyond symbolic efforts to promote diversity and make a commitment to real equity. This can be accomplished by creating transparent and evidence-based systems for career development that are supported by data-driven strategies.

6.2 Limitations and Recommendations

Despite the statistical robustness of the modelling approach and the good national representativeness of the sample, there are a number of limitations which may impact on the scope and depth of the findings. First, the distribution of some key variables was not even. For example, temporary visa holders were only about 11% of the sample, which may limit the generalisability of conclusions related to this group, and reduce the statistical power to detect subtle effects. Additionally, although the study controlled for a variety of employment-related factors (such as business type, geographical location, and managerial responsibility), it did not include direct measures of employee performance, such as supervisor evaluations, promotion records, or performance ratings. This omission may have resulted in an underestimation of the role of ability-based promotion mechanisms and an overestimation of the role of structural or identity-related factors. Second, the entry of all variables simultaneously in the regression analysis was selected in order to improve comparability and interpretability. However, this approach may have masked possible interaction effects between variables. For example, investigating interactions between gender and age, or between immigration status and type of business might show more complex, nuanced relationships. Such interactions are at the core of intersectionality theory and are essential in understanding the complex workings of inequality.

Moreover, the exclusive use of quantitative methods, while useful to capture overall trends, may have missed microlevel structural barriers, cultural biases, or informal exclusionary practices. For instance, some employees may perceive the lack of development opportunities due to organisational culture, customer preferences or informal networks, rather than institutional restrictions. These subtle dynamics are often not reflected through surveys but are experienced in the day-to-day interactions in the workplace.

Building on these limitations, future research could take a number of directions. First, the inclusion of direct performance-related indicators such as performance evaluations and promotion histories would allow for a more complete understanding of the relationship between performance and structural and identity factors. Second, using

hierarchical regression or interaction term modelling might help to understand the interactive effects between significant variables, e.g. exploring differences in perceived development opportunities between migrant employees of different genders in different industries, thus advancing the empirical application of intersectionality theory.

Finally, qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups or organisational ethnographies could reveal implicit mechanisms and complex social dynamics that might be missed by quantitative methods. Knowing the authentic experiences of employees, especially migrants and younger workers in terms of access to training, promotion opportunities and cultural adaptation, may identify hidden barriers and informal exclusion processes that are not easily identified in quantitative data.

6.3 Conclusion

This study used nationally representative data to analyse the impact of seven variables on PCDO using a dual theoretical framework of HCT and Intersectionality. Theoretically, the findings defy the assumption of neutrality in traditional HCT, showing that returns on human capital are conditional on organisational recognition and valuation mechanisms related to the identities of employees. Empirically, employment characteristics, including type of business and managerial responsibility, had stronger impacts on PCDO scores than did identity-related variables. Of particular note was that age was significantly negatively related, suggesting that younger employees see greater opportunities for career development in New Zealand's hospitality and tourism industries, which is at odds with the traditional HCT assumption of experience-based advantage. Although gender, ethnicity and immigration status were not statistically significant predictors, this is likely due to the limitations of quantitative methods in capturing institutional exclusion mechanisms, sample representativeness issues or complex confounding factors affecting subjective perceptions.

The results suggest that the disparities in PCDO cannot be explained by individual characteristics such as education, skills, or experience. Instead, organisational institutional arrangements and wider structural factors, such as industry characteristics, policy environments, and recruitment practices play critical roles in the shape of access to opportunities. Therefore, to promote equitable career development, it is not only the capabilities of employees that need to be improved, but it is also an imperative for businesses and policymakers to improve institutional frameworks and management practices, so that diverse groups in the workforce have fair and equal access to development pathways.

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