## Precarious Employment Amidst Global Crises: Career Shocks, Resources and Migrants’ Employability

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to contribute to conservation of resources theory (COR), by exploring how global crises influence the perceived employability of migrant workers in low-wage, precarious work.

Design: We conducted 22 in-depth longitudinal interviews with 11 Hungarian migrant workers in the Dutch logistics sector, before and during the COVID-19 crisis, using thematic analysis and visual life diagrams to interpret them.

Findings: We find that resources are key in how migrants experience the valence of global crises in their careers and perceive their employability. When unforeseen consequences of the COVID-19 crisis coincided with migrants’ resource gain spirals, this instigated a positively-valenced career shock, leading to positive perceptions of employability. Coincidence with loss spirals led to negative perceptions.

Originality: Interestingly, when the COVID-19 crisis did not co-occur with migrants’ resource gain and loss spirals, migrants experienced resource stress (psychological strain induced by the threat or actual loss of resources) and no significant change in their perceptions of employability.

Research implications: We contribute to careers literature by showing that resources do not only help migrants cope with the impact of career shocks, but also directly influence the valence of global crises in their perceived employability and careers.

Keywords: migrant workers; resources; global crisis; COVID-19; perceived employability; career shocks
Introduction

Central and Eastern European (CEE) migrants often face precarious employment in Western Europe (Hassan et al., 2023). Precarious employment is “unstable and insecure in the continuity and quantity of work, restricts the power of workers to advocate for change, and does not provide protections from workplace abuses and unsafe working conditions” (Allan et al., 2021, p. 2).

Since CEE migrants generally move to Western Europe to find employment, exploring their employability is crucial for understanding how their aspirations manifest after entering the host country labour market (Croucher et al., 2018).

Employability refers to the ability to find and retain employment over time (Vanhercke et al., 2014). Perceived employability refers to “the individual's perception of his or her possibilities of obtaining and maintaining employment” (Vanhercke et al., 2014, p. 593).

Research showed that personal characteristics such as career identity (who individuals perceive to be in relation to their careers), adaptability (readiness to pursue career opportunities), human capital (education) and social capital (professional network membership) foster perceived employability (De Vos et al., 2011). Personal characteristics however cannot fully explain CEE migrants’ perceived employability, as their (perceived) opportunities to find (less precarious) employment are shaped by context and time. For instance, the quality of labour regulation and social protection in host countries determine the prevalence of flexible working arrangements.

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1 Following the official communication of the Dutch national government, we use the term ‘migrant workers’ to refer to workers from Central and Eastern European countries, later specifically from Hungary, who chose to find employment in a member state of the European Union other than their country of origin, later specifically in the Netherlands. We opted for this term, as it emphasizes the role of employment and job opportunities in the migration trajectory, encompasses various types of mobility within the European Union, does not necessarily implicate a permanent change of residence and includes temporary or seasonal workers, but also those who seek long-term residence in the host country (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2023).
(Wagner and Hassel, 2016). In less regulated contexts, CEE migrant workers are often restricted to flexible, low-wage, temporary employment (Been and de Beer, 2022).

The time period CEE migrant workers spend in the host country may have significant impact as well. Individuals who spent more time in the host country, are more likely to have developed a broader professional network and gained specific work experience, which enhances their prospects of securing higher-quality employment (Manolchev and Ivan, 2022). CEE migrants’ perceived employability is also likely to be affected by global events outside their direct control, such as global crises (Siegmann et al., 2022).

This paper explores the perceived employability of CEE migrant workers during global crises – defined as “events or developments widely perceived by members of relevant communities to constitute urgent threats to core community values and structure” (Boin et al., 2008, p. 83-84). In the 2020s, we experience an escalation in the number and intensity of global crises, such as human-induced ecological crises (fires, droughts,), crises tied to increased global connectivity (social, political, financial, and economic crises), as well as crises brought on by infectious diseases.

The global crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus had an adverse impact on the careers of workers in precarious employment (Kantamneni, 2020). Many workers in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, had already been in a precarious employment prior to the pandemic (Hargreaves, 2022). During the COVID-19 crisis, CEE migrants experienced deteriorating quality of working conditions (Siegmann et al., 2022). For example, social distancing regulations were not adhered to in transportation, housing, or at the workplace (Siegmann et al., 2022); access to COVID-19 testing, vaccination, and healthcare was problematic (Siegmann et al., 2022); mobility bans, and quarantine measures restricted migrant workers’ mobility to and from
their home countries (Martin and Bergmann, 2021). Such worsening working conditions may have materialized as multiple interrelated career shocks, which may have affected migrant workers’ perceptions of finding and sustaining employment (Akkermans et al., 2018).

Career shocks may result in a negatively-valenced thought process, but can also induce positive cognitive responses, for instance when a crisis makes an individual decide to take a valued change in their career that they did not dare to take before (Akkermans et al., 2018). The (positive or negative) cognitive appraisal of opportunities in one’s career can set in motion (positive or negative) thought processes that help or hinder individuals to take action in pursuing a valued career path.

Global crises do not affect individual careers uniformly (Kantamneni, 2020). Those with abundant personal resources are better able to successfully navigate their careers following career shocks than individuals with limited access to resources (De Vos et al., 2020; Akkermans et al., 2020). However, our understanding of perceived employability for individuals in contexts characterized by resource scarcity is still limited (cf. Vanhercke et al., 2015). Access to resources may likely affect perceived employability, particularly amidst global crises. Yet, research on the interplay of career shocks as a consequence of global crises and perceived employability is scant (Ren et al., 2023).

To address this gap, we explore how global crises influence the perceived employability of migrant workers in low-wage, precarious employment. Our research question is: How do resources in times of crises affect the thought processes and actions of migrant workers considering their careers and perceived employability? More particularly, we examine the experiences of CEE migrant workers in low-wage essential industries such as logistics and food production during the COVID-19 crises.
The Importance of Resources in Navigating the Impact of Career Shocks

Individuals experience diverse ranges of career shocks throughout their working lives. We understand career shocks as “disruptive and extraordinary events that are, at least to some degree, caused by factors outside the focal individual's control and that trigger a deliberate thought process concerning one's career” (Akkermans et al., 2018, p. 4).

Career shocks often have clearly defined sources: while a divorce is intertwined with an individual’s personal setting, a promotion links to the organizational context (Akkermans et al., 2018). However, global crises trigger shifts in multiple spheres of life, resulting in simultaneous shocks to one’s career from multiple sources. To illustrate, during the COVID-19 crisis, social distancing practices hindered migrant workers in interacting with colleagues at the workplace, a potential career shock embedded in the organizational context (Siegmann et al., 2022). Furthermore, the crisis posed limitations to migrants’ mobility, restricting options to return to their country of origin. When becoming ill, migrant workers needed to quarantine, resulting in loss of income and social isolation (Siegmann et al., 2022). Additionally, host country populations perceived migrant workers as a potential health hazard, fostering an adverse social climate (Paul, 2020). The COVID-19 crisis altered the context in such way that individuals simultaneously needed to mitigate the impact of multiple types of career shocks (Akkermans et al., 2020).

The direction of the impact of a career shock on careers is referred to as its valence, which can be positive or negative (Akkermans et al., 2018). The valence of career shocks is inherently subjective: while some may experience loss of employment as a negatively-valenced career shock by many, others experience this as a positively-valenced event (Wordsworth and Nilakant, 2021). While previous research posits that the valence of career shocks is inherent to
the event itself (e.g., Akkermans et al., 2018), we argue that individual characteristics, context and particularly resources play an important role in whether migrant workers experience a career shock as positively- or negatively-valenced (cf. Wordsworth and Nilakant, 2021).

Resources, “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies” (COR theory, Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516), can help individuals overcoming the impact of career shocks (Wordsworth and Nilakant, 2021). COR theory traditionally classified individual resources according to their intended or actual use (e.g., energy resources enable the acquisition of further resources, Hobfoll, 1989). Recently, research in the migration context suggests to move beyond Hobfoll’s categorization to allow identifying how conceptually distinct groups of resources contribute to migrant workers’ resource accumulation and mobilization (Hall et al., 2022; Shirmohammadi et al., 2023). We follow the resource framework of Ryan and colleagues (2008), who distinguish between personal (health, resilience), material (money, car), and social resources (stable family life, supervisory support).

Migrants are particularly prone to resource loss post-migration. First, they leave their country-of-origin social network behind (social resources, Ryan et al., 2008). Second, they need to secure employment and housing upon arrival to the host country (material resources, e.g., Cook et al., 2012) and third, – in precarious employment – they often meet physical and mental health hazards (personal resources, Vîrgă and Dragoș, 2017). Individuals with limited access to resources, likely experience a gradual loss of further resources, forming a loss spiral (Hobfoll, 1989). Previous research in the UK shows that seasonal migrant workers with low education and limited language skills often experience homelessness upon job loss (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). In contrast, individuals with ample resources are prone to cumulative gain resources, referred to as
a gain spiral (Hobfoll, 1989). For instance, migrants work experience in the host country can help them obtain further skills’ (language), fostering their ability to find and sustain better employment (Parutis, 2014). Resource loss and gain spirals may influence the direction in which career shocks affect individual’s careers.

We propose that dynamic patterns of CEE migrant workers’ resource gain and resource loss spirals following global crises shape the valence of career shocks, in turn affect the perceived employability of migrants. To understand the valence of career shocks evolving from global crises, we need to understand migrant workers’ resource mobilization patterns both within and beyond the work environment over time. In the following section, we further explain our longitudinal research design.

Methods

Study Context

We did a longitudinal qualitative study with an phenomenological approach, conducting in-depth interviews with migrant workers before and during the COVID-19 crisis. This design allowed us to examine how individuals’ careers and perceived employability change over time.

We focused on CEE migrant workers in the Dutch logistics sector, since there is limited knowledge on how migrants navigate their careers in the precarious logistics sector (Barnes and Ali, 2022; Zanoni and Miszczynski, 2023). Furthermore, the logistics sector accounts for 44% of migrant workers employed through temporary work agencies in The Netherlands (ABU and NBBU, 2020). Migrant workers face precarious working conditions in this sector, including low wages, long working hours, and a general climate of insecurity regarding their employment and their housing (Author, 2020).
We focus on particular CEE migrants from Hungary. Despite the large national diversity of the CEE migrant workers in Western Europe, most studies on the careers of CEE migrants in precarious employment focus on the more dominant (in numbers and resources in the host country) Polish workforce (e.g., Parutis, 2014). By researching Hungarian migrant workers, we aim to gain insight into the career outcomes of a minority CEE migrant group, which due to its size could potentially have less structural access to personal and social resources in the host country (Author, 2020).

Sample and Procedure

We conducted 22 interviews with 11 Hungarian migrant workers in the spring of 2019 (T1, before the COVID-19 crisis) and the summer and fall of 2020 (T2, during the COVID-19 crisis). As part of our phenomenological approach, we combined life-history interviews with in-depth inquiry about career shocks, perceived employability, and resource mobilization (Seidman, 2006). Our interview questions built on theoretical conceptualizations of perceived employability (Croucher et al., 2018); career shocks (Akkermans et al., 2018) and resources (Hobfoll, 2001). While the interviews encompasses career shocks throughout migrants’ entire life history, our analysis specifically focused on the impact of COVID-19 on migrants’ career in this study.

We gained access to the hard-to-reach population of Hungarian migrant workers through an open call via a social media platform. In phenomenological research the sample size is determined during data collection (Wertz, 2005). We interviewed all migrants that reacted in Spring 2019 till saturation was reached, which we established through continuous, iterative comparisons between the coding and the data. During the COVID-19 crisis, in 2020, we invited all participants for a second interview. This resulted in the final longitudinal sample of 22
interviews with 11 respondents. To ensure the anonymity of participants, we assigned pseudonyms to their accounts.

The interviews lasted between 30 and 120 minutes and were conducted by the first author in Hungarian. The first author was able to build rapport with the respondents due to their shared national identity, cultural background, language and experience in precarious work. While all first-round interviews were conducted in person, we had to turn to online interviewing for some of the interviews of the second round due to COVID-19 restrictions and participants’ geographical distance.

Analysis

The richness of the data makes analyzing longitudinal qualitative samples a challenge. We combined thematic analysis with visual interpretations of life diagrams (constructed by the authors post-data collection) to make sense of our data (Söderström, 2020). We used three guiding concepts for the thematic analysis: COVID-19 as a career shock, resources and perceived employability. Successively, we coded the interviews for the valence of career shocks (Akkermans et al., 2018), types of resources (personal, material, social; Ryan et al., 2008), resource mobilization patterns (resource loss, resource gain, resource investment, resource stress; Hobfoll, 2001) and migrants’ perceptions of employability before and during COVID-19 (Croucher et al., 2018). Two independent coders analyzed the interviews and reached agreements on conflicting interpretations to ensure interrater reliability. This counterbalanced potential bias derived from the insider researcher status of the first author. To identify resource loss and resource gain spirals over time, we constructed life diagrams. We interpreted migrants’ perceived employability, by making constant comparisons between the life diagrams, how COVID-19 manifested as a career shock, migrants’ resource loss and gain spirals and perceived
employability outcomes. Figure 1 and Table 1 provide excerpt of a life diagram and thematic analysis table.

**Figure 1.**

*Excerpt from life diagram visualizing resource loss and resource gain spirals (Participant 4, Bence)*
Table 1.

Migrant workers’ demographic characteristics, resource mobilization patterns post-migration, valence of COVID-19 crises and perceived employability outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Resource mobilization post-migration</th>
<th>COVID-19 crisis</th>
<th>Perceived employability outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1: Levente</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bachelor tertiary education</td>
<td>Resource gain spiral (relocation, social network ties, stable accommodation, secure employment)</td>
<td>Positively-valenced career shock</td>
<td>Positive employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2: Lili</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary vocational education</td>
<td>Threat of resource loss (health decline due to emotionally demanding job) and resource gain (new ‘perfect’ job)</td>
<td>Source of resource stress</td>
<td>Resource stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3: Emma</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master tertiary education</td>
<td>Resource loss spiral (loosing employment, period of unemployment, threat of resource loss connecting with family members)</td>
<td>Negatively-valenced career shock</td>
<td>Negative employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4: Bence</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Primary education</td>
<td>Resource loss (loosing valued colleague) and threat of resource loss</td>
<td>Source of resource stress</td>
<td>Resource stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5: Greta</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary vocational education</td>
<td>Resource loss spiral (separation from partner, loosing accommodation and employment)</td>
<td>Negatively-valenced career shock</td>
<td>Negative employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6: Fanni</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master tertiary education</td>
<td>Resource gain cycle (relocation, regained social network, finding job in field of profession)</td>
<td>Positively-valenced career shock</td>
<td>Positive employability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 7: Dorka</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>Resource gain cycle (relocation, finding perceivably higher quality employment)</td>
<td>Positively-valenced career shock</td>
<td>Positive employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8: Dominik</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary vocational education</td>
<td>Resource gain cycle (giving up employment, moving home, working together with family members)</td>
<td>Positively-valenced career shock</td>
<td>Positive employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9: Botond</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Primary education</td>
<td>Resource loss cycle (deteriorating health due to low quality of work, loosing employment, promised new employment does not materialize)</td>
<td>Negatively-valenced career shock</td>
<td>Negative employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10: Rebeka</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>Threat of resource loss (deteriorating health due to low quality of work)</td>
<td>Source of resource stress</td>
<td>Resource stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 11: Aron</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary vocational education</td>
<td>Resource gain cycle (finding better quality employment, relocating to better accommodation)</td>
<td>Positively-valenced career shock</td>
<td>Positive employability</td>
</tr>
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In the following section, we first outline the resources which are central to migrants’ ability to successfully navigate their careers post-migration, and how these form resource loss and gain spirals. Second, we examine how the interplay between COVID-19 as a career shock and resource loss and gain spirals affect perceived employability.

Findings

Migrants’ Resource Mobilization Patterns

We found that migrant workers actively mobilized their personal, material and social resources to navigate their careers in the post-migration context. Personal resources of our respondents were for instance maintaining good mental and physical health, a sense of agency (i.e., perceived control over career decisions), and career adaptability (i.e., being able to keep up with the changing work environment). In addition to these more general personal resources, host-country specific language skills (i.e., Dutch or English), time for personal and professional development and context-specific education were important for migrants to build careers in Dutch logistics. Regarding material resources, financial stability (money, stable employment), access to accommodation (housing independent of employers or temporary work agencies) and modes of transportation (car, bicycle) support migrants in navigating their career. Lastly, social network ties and social support (colleagues, family, friends, fellow migrants in the host country) were essential for migrants careers in Dutch logistics.

Based on a visual analysis of migrants’ life diagrams, we found that the loss and gain of these resources can trigger resource loss and gain spirals. Lili, a logistics administration employee with a direct employment contract, shared that context-specific education and learning the host country language support her ability build a career in the Dutch logistics, resulting in a resource gain spiral:
“Before the pandemic, I studied logistics which let me choose, look for a better job here, and the other one that is important is the language; it was very important that I learnt Dutch and I improved my English, and that is why I am where I am now.” (Lili, T2).

Emma, an order picker in a large warehouse sorting health and beauty products, followed her partner to The Netherlands, who secured employment within his profession upon their move. She went through a resource loss spiral because of the decision to migrate. Due to a lack of language skills, limited social network ties, and overqualification for low-wage employment (she received tertiary education, she was unemployed for one year:

“I experienced it as difficult, because I did not even really want to come and learning languages was never really my strength (...) Also, we had a quite big social life back home which like disappeared all of the sudden. We realized that there is practically no one here. (...) I thought a lot about this, if I should deny everything in my CV and show up there with an empty CV and then, with that they might hire me to be a cleaner. (...) That one year at home, that was very stressful.” (Emma, T1)

We found that resource loss and resource gain spirals influence career outcomes in particular when they occur simultaneously with a career shock. We elaborate on these findings below.

COVID-19 as a Career Shock: Perceptions of Employability

Based on the analysis, the influence of the COVID-19 crisis on migrant workers’ careers depends on dynamic patterns of resource loss and resource gain spirals. We found that COVID-19 influenced migrants’ careers in three ways. First, when coinciding with migrants’ resource gain spiral, the COVID-19 crisis manifested as a positively-valenced career shock (Participants
When the COVID-19 crisis was seen as a positively-valenced career shock, it triggered positive emotions, leading to positive evaluations of employability (e.g., “[The COVID-19 crisis] was good for me, very refreshing” – Participant 8). Second, when simultaneous to a resource loss spiral, migrants experienced the COVID-19 crisis as a negatively-valenced career shock (Participants 3, 5, 9). When experienced as a negatively-valenced career shock, the COVID-19 crisis invoked negative emotions, resulting in negative perceptions of employability (e.g., “Now I'm absolutely looking at the whole thing from the perspective that (...) if a new wave came, or anything else happened that caused a similar crash, like a virus, then which companies are the ones who can stay on their feet, and which ones would fire me in a second.” - Participant 3). Third, when the COVID-19 crisis was not concurrent to clear resource mobilization patterns, migrants experienced it as a source of resource stress rather than a career shock. Following COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we refer to migrants’ resource stress as the psychological strain resulting from being at risk of losing resources or experiencing an actual loss of resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Participants 2, 4, 10; e.g., “The other day I was very angry (...) I got sick. (...) They [told me that] sadly they cannot give me the day off. (...) I did the work, coughing, I was coughing really hard, and I felt cold, and I was shivering from it. (...) I really need to find a new job. So somewhere where it’s not four degrees.” - Rebeka, T2). This excerpt shows how stress due to the perceived risk of losing a crucial resource, health, ensures the continuity of a migrants’ employment.

In the following sections, we illustrate our findings through recounting the career experiences of Levente (Covid-19 as positively-valenced career shock), Greta (Covid-19 as negatively-valenced career shock) and Bence (Covid-19 as source of resource stress).

**COVID-19 Crisis as a Positively-Valenced Career Shock**
The account of Levente, who worked via a temporary work agency as order picker in a warehouse distribution center at the time of the first interview, shows how the COVID-19 crisis manifested as a positively-valenced career shock. After a period of low-quality employment in the Dutch logistics, Levente succeeded in accumulating enough financial resources to move to New Zealand, where he possessed substantial social network ties. There, he managed to secure stable accommodation, followed by a job in the construction sector facilitated through his social network ties. The COVID-19 crisis coincided with this resource gain spiral, resulting in an eight-week lockdown, when all employees received a weekly minimum wage for not being able to work. Levente experienced this as a positively-valenced career shock:

“This was a sort of two-months-long vacation (...) Honestly, from my point of view, this crisis only had benefits.” (Levente, T2).

During lockdown, Levente had time to engage in online courses with the aim of reentering his original profession of software developer engineer. When comparing Levente’s evaluations of his employability across the two time points, we can see that his confidence in finding employment in line with his qualifications improved substantially:

“So, in the long run, I thought I'd find a job in the IT industry, but I don't know how that would work out (...) And I’m over 50 years old, and I’m starting to slide down from this profession or to slip out. (Levente, T1)

“I'm now aiming for the top. (...) I bought these (...) online courses to (...) bring my level back up, so when I am home, I am constantly studying, and I want to go back to be a developer engineer. Basically. Not simply to be programmer, but to be a developer, (...) to be a developer engineer, an application developer engineer.” (Levente, T2).
Levente’s perceptions of employability show that when the COVID-19 crisis coincided with a resource gain spiral in migrants’ careers, a positively-valenced career shock is experienced, which fuels positive perceptions of employability.

**COVID-19 Crisis as a Negatively-Valenced Career Shock**

The experiences of Greta, a booking employee at a warehouse specialized in medical appliances at the time of the first interview, illustrate how the COVID-19 crisis materialized as a negatively-valenced career shock. Greta moved to The Netherlands with her partner, quickly found employment with her partners’ employer, secured a direct employment contract, and bought a house. After the first interview, Greta separated from her partner, sold their house, and lost her employment. The interaction between this resource loss spiral and the COVID-19 crisis hindered Greta in finding new employment, so she experienced the crisis as a negatively-valenced career shock:

“I became unemployed and then it was even harder to find a new job because of the virus (...) I was calling, really, every day 10-15 vacancies, well, we can’t because of the Corona-virus, this and that, I always ran into this (...) virus.” (Greta, T2).

Although Greta eventually found new employment in a warehouse distribution center, her perceptions of employability changed considerably across the two interviews. During the first interview, Greta aspired for long-term employment and eventually a promotion at the organization she was working for, but during the second interview she perceived her employment as a ‘means to an end’:

“I only want to move forward within my current workplace. (...) Now I have been here for a year and a half and I am still there that I can move ahead by three-four positions.
For which you have to work. And of course, every time you get into a new position then it is not boring” (Greta, T1).

“Well, actually, as long as they have work that needs to be done, I can work there. And if they decide that they don’t need me anymore (...) Then I’ll go to the UWV [employee insurance agency, to request unemployment benefits].” (Greta, T2).

The analysis indicate that occurrence of the COVID-19 crisis with migrants’ resource loss spirals, makes them experience negatively-valenced career shocks, leading to negative perceptions of employability.

**COVID-19 Crisis as a Source of Resource Stress**

The experiences of Bence show how the COVID-19 crisis was perceived as a source of resource stress. At the time of the first interview, Bence worked via a temporary work agency as orderpicker at a warehouse specialized in sorting glass bottles. Having limited Dutch and English language skills, Bence relied on Hungarian colleagues to translate between him and his supervisors. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, the temporary work agency relocated Bence to a new location, without any other Hungarian workers:

“I was recruited to work here because of the virus. And then in the end I was supposed to be back in Rotterdam for a long time now, where the other Hungarian guy is. But they do not want to release me from here.” (Bence, T2)

The resource stress of losing the only colleague Bence could communicate with in his native language (resource loss) was coupled with the introduction of COVID-19 measures. The two-week quarantine time, which was required of him upon his return, hindered Bence in visiting his family in Hungary (threat of resource loss). This aggravated the resource stress he experienced:
“I was super upset, to tell you the truth, because I wanted to go back to Hungary at the end of April (...) Then I said I will stay, I won't be quarantining for 15 days.” (Bence, T2)

The analysis indicates that the COVID-19 crisis caused resource stress of migrants when not coupled with resource gain and loss spirals. Resource stress emerged from the loss of resources (losing a colleague) and the risk of losing resources (connecting with family members), although a previous resource gain experienced after migration prevented a resource loss spiral. Our analysis did not indicate a direct link between resource stress and perceived employability: there was no clear patterns in changes in perceived employability between the two time periods for this group of workers. In the following section, we further interpret these findings.

**Discussion**

Global crises disproportionally affect the careers of workers in precarious employment, such as migrants (Cao and Hamori, 2022). This paper aimed at contributing to COR theory, by exploring how global crises influence the perceived employability of migrant workers in low-wage, precarious employment. Based on the analysis of 22 longitudinal interviews with Hungarian migrant workers, we find that the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on migrant workers’ careers is resource-dependent, materializing either as a positively-valenced or negatively-valenced career shock or as a source of resource stress. When the COVID-19 crisis coincided with migrant workers’ resource gain spirals, migrants perceived the crisis as a positively-valenced career shock, which resulted in positive perceptions of employability, as well as concrete actions to improve one’s employability and mental well-being. Coincidence with loss spirals led to negative perceptions. When the COVID-19 crisis was not subsequent to clear resource mobilization patterns, it fueled resource stress due to either the risk of losing or the
actual loss of resources. We found no linear link between resource stress and perceived employability outcomes.

Our findings offer a critical perspective on migrant workers’ resource accumulation and loss due to career shocks. Prior to the analysis, we expected that migrant workers’ patterns of resource accumulation would be underpinned by principles of conservation of resources, including the primacy of loss (individuals are more affected by resource loss than gain) and gain paradox principle (when individuals are deprived of resources, the value of gains becomes more amplified; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Our analysis did not support any of these principles. This can be explained by the basic nature of the resources in migrants’ resource gain and loss cycles in our study. When resources constitute basic human needs, such as access to accommodation, financial stability or health, their loss and gain are equally salient in the resource accumulation process.

The influence of the COVID-19 crisis on migrant workers’ careers resonates the Matthew effect, implying that in the wake of career shocks ‘the rich get richer and the poor poorer’ (Fugate et al., 2021). Those experiencing a depletion of resources because of resource loss spirals need to focus on securing new resources to sustain themselves before considering how a career shock potentially affects their future career. Migrants’ reflections on career shocks and how these affect their perceptions of finding new employment is contingent on having the necessary resources. This implies, that career shocks, rather than actively influencing migrants’ career thinking, are just another form of adversity to tackle in precarious contexts.

We contribute to career literature in three ways. First, we explicitly address how a specific configuration of contextual and individual characteristics, circumstances, and resources influence career outcomes by focusing on COVID-19 crisis as a career shock on Hungarian migrant workers’ perceived employability. Second, we empirically show that the COVID-19
career did not manifest as a negatively-valenced career shock for all migrant workers but was perceived as a positive event when coinciding with resource gain spirals (cf. Spurk and Straub, 2020). Third, adding to previous literature that claims that resources support dealing with the impact of career shocks, we find that resources play an even more crucial role, and determine whether migrant workers consider a career shock as a positive or negative event (Akkermans et al., 2020). Our findings hold implications for practitioners. Facilitating migrants’ access to resources is a shared responsibility of policy makers, temporary work agencies, client organizations and migrants themselves. The resources identified in this study as conducive to migrants’ ability to navigate their careers can serve as a framework for policy reform (improved social safety net, regulation of interdependent employment contracts, developmental opportunities and house rental agreements), human resource management practices (language courses, inclusion at work) and individuals’ career self-management (improving social networks, safeguarding physical and mental health).

This study also has limitations, which present avenues for future research. We adopted a broad definition of personal, material, and social resources, but did not consider how external factors influence migrant workers’ perceived employability. Further exploring migrants’ perceptions about labour market conditions (labour shortages) and about the cultural environment (cultural similarity) can contextualize the role of resources and career shocks in migrants’ perceived employability.

Despite the strengths of our longitudinal qualitative research design, we detected recall bias of our respondents between time periods, where they reported different emotions regarding the same event. This suggests that migrants workers’ access to resources directs recall bias: they evaluated events more positively when followed by resource gain spirals and more negatively
when followed by resource loss spirals. Their further resource mobilization patterns altered their recollection over time (cf. Cassar, 2007). Conducting a diary study following the onset of global crises would probably eliminate recall bias and allow for a more in-depth exploration of the psychological processes through which career shocks impact migrant workers’ perceived employability.

While our study offers insight into the experiences of migrant workers in a specific context, it does not consider the inter-group dynamics between minority and majority migrant worker groups, and how these affect individuals’ access to resources. We call for comparative longitudinal qualitative research to explore differential access to resources between different migrant worker groups in essential industries.

Last, we regarded the group of Hungarian migrant workers as internally homogenous, not considering their intersecting identities. We strongly believe that the careers literature would benefit from studies focusing on how gender, age, social class, ethnicity, educational and migration background influence individuals’ access to resources, ability to deal with the impact of career shocks and eventually career outcomes.

Ultimately, expanding research on global crises as career shocks calls for context sensitivity, especially for resources beyond the control of individuals. In an adverse context, such as low-wage sectors characterized by precarious employment, resources are crucial for migrant workers’ ability to deal with the impact of global crises. It is the shared responsibility of policy makers, temporary work agencies, client organizations and migrants themselves to actively work together on facilitating access to resources and creating a conducive environment in which migrants can thrive.

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Revision 1: Career Development International

Precarious Employment Amidst Global Crises: Career Shocks, Resources and Migrants’ Employability

Prof. Dr. Jennifer A. Harrison
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Career Development International journal

December 15th, 2023

Re: Resubmission of Manuscript ID CDI-10-2023-0357

Dear Prof. Dr. Jennifer A. Harrison,

Our author team would like to thank you for granting us the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript titled ‘Precarious Employment Amidst Global Crises: Career Shocks, Resources and Migrants’ Employability’ for Career Development International journal. We would like to express our gratitude to the two Reviewers, the Senior Editor and you for the thoughtful and constructive comments on our work.

In this letter, we explain how we addressed and incorporated these comments in our revised manuscript. First, we address the comments from the Reviewers, then we explain how we incorporated the feedback from the Senior Editor and conclude by addressing the comment regarding the word count as brought forth by the Editor-in-Chief. Our responses to the comments are indicated in blue. The changes in the revised manuscript are indicated in yellow.

Reviewer 1
Recommendation: Major Revision

We would like to thank Reviewer 1 for the detailed feedback on the manuscript! We particularly appreciate the specific questions in the additional comments, which greatly contributed to the improvement of our work. We have carefully considered each of your suggestions and made revisions accordingly, ensuring that the manuscript is strengthened both in terms of content, contribution and clarity.

Originality: Does the paper contain new and significant information adequate to justify publication?: This paper has the potential to contribute to scholarship around both precarious employment and career shocks. Whilst the current context is quite specific (Migrants and COVID) I believe the future of work will include an increasing number of those in precarious employment (for example through the GIG economy) and therefore this research has the potential to contribute to a broader evolving conversation.

I do have an overarching question regarding your contribution in terms of the role ‘resources’ play. You highlight in your introduction that we already know that those with “an abundance of personal resources are often better able to successfully navigate their careers following career shocks than those with limited access to resources” (Page 4 Line 10) so I believe your findings re the impact of resource spirals on the valence of career shocks may not in of itself be a clear contribution to the literature. You do state in your
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discussion that “resources play an even more crucial role” (Page 19 Line 47) but I’m not sure that has been clearly established.

On the other side of the equation, at an overall level, I appreciate the contribution you make to the interplay between career shocks and employability. I do have some queries around the depth of the analysis and the theoretical grounding that I have included elsewhere in my review, but overall, I believe there is the potential to make a real contribution.

Thank you very much for acknowledging the relevance of our research for career scholarship. We appreciate your overarching question regarding the role of resources in career shocks.

Previous research has shown that resources are important for how individuals can cope with the impact of career shocks (Akkermans et al., 2020). To illustrate this in the context of migrant workers, when migrant workers lose their employment, their resources are crucial for how they can cope with this career shock. Migrant workers with abundant resources (transferable skills, social network ties, savings, language skills) are able to find new employment more promptly than those with a lack of these resources. In our manuscript, we show that resources play a more crucial role in how career shocks influence migrant workers’ perceived employability by determining whether these career shocks manifest as positive or negative valenced events. When migrant workers have an abundance of resources (transferable skills, etc.), and experience a career shock, such as losing their employment, they will not necessarily see this career shock as a negative experience due to the abundant resources they call fall back on. When migrant workers lack resources (e.g., health, lack of spousal or peer support) even generally positively-valenced career shocks, such as an unforeseen promotion, can manifest as negative events. We argue that these findings emphasize that the resource accumulation and mobilization process does not only help workers deal with the impact of career shocks, but play a key role in whether migrants experience a career shock as a positive or negative event. In our revised manuscript, we tried to clarify this on Page 21:

“Third, adding to previous literature that claims that resources support dealing with the impact of career shocks, we find that resources play an even more crucial role, and determine whether migrant workers consider a career shock as a positive or negative event (Akkermans et al., 2020)”

Relationship to Literature: Does the paper demonstrate an adequate understanding of the relevant literature in the field and cite an appropriate range of literature sources? Is any significant work ignored?: There is an appropriate range of literature sources supporting the paper. Thank you. I did have a couple of minor queries around the relevancy of a few sources, which I have included in the attached ‘additional comments’ file.

Thank you, we address this below under ‘Additional comments’.
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Methodology: Is the paper’s argument built on an appropriate base of theory, concepts, or other ideas? Has the research or equivalent intellectual work on which the paper is based been well designed? Are the methods employed appropriate?: I believe the precarity of (CEE) migrant employment warrants further development. On Page 3 (Line 40) you identify an increase in precarity in relation to the deterioration of the working conditions for ‘essential workers”? It might be worth clarifying this as some readers might only understand precarity in relation to continuity. I appreciate you then identify how their work conditions deteriorated post COVID, but the deterioration could then be grounded in the various elements that contribute to precarious employment. For example, I assume (but am not sure) that the restricted mobility of migrants (Page 5 Line 3) increases the precariousness as they don’t have a back stop if they become unemployed.

What you mean by ‘Resource Stress’ as an outcome also requires further clarification.

In terms of the broad methodological approach, I believe it is well designed. I had not encountered ‘life diagrams’ before but as a qualitative researcher I will certainly be adding them to my toolbox. So, thank you. I do have a couple of minor queries that I have included in the attached ‘additional comments’ file.

We appreciate your comment to further develop how migrant workers’ precarious employment pre- and post-Covid-19 are linked together. To establish this link, we moved the section following the research question on Page 3:

“Many workers in sectors most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, had already been in a precarious employment prior to the pandemic (Hargreaves, 2022). In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, CEE migrants experienced deteriorating quality of working conditions (Siegmann et al., 2022). For example, social distancing regulations were not adhered to in transportation, housing, or at the workplace (Siegmann et al., 2022); access to COVID-19 testing, vaccination, and healthcare was problematic (Siegmann et al., 2022); mobility bans, and quarantine measures restricted migrant workers’ mobility to and from their home countries (Martin and Bergmann, 2021). Such worsening working conditions may have materialized as multiple interrelated career shocks, which may have affected migrant workers’ perceptions of finding and sustaining employment (Akkermans et al., 2018).”

We indeed noted that the concept of resource stress was not sufficiently clear from our text. While we mention resource stress for the first time in our methodology section (Page 9), we decided to elaborate on our understanding of the concept as derived from the findings. Therefore, we added two clarification sentences in the findings section on Page 15:

“Following COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we refer to migrants’ resource stress as the psychological strain resulting from being at risk of losing resources or experiencing an actual loss of resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic”(...). “This excerpt shows how stress due to the perceived risk of losing a crucial resource, health, ensures the continuity of a migrants’ employment.”
We are thankful for your appreciation for using life diagrams to interpret longitudinal (life history) interviews. We address your additional comments below.

Results: Are results presented clearly and analysed appropriately? Do the conclusions adequately tie together the other elements of the paper?: Overall, I believe that the results are clearly presented and fundamentally support the conclusions.

- That being said I believe the grounding of the discussion in the CoR theory requires further development. For example consideration of the principles and corollaries of the CoR theory – especially the ‘primacy of loss’ (for loss spiral) and perhaps the ‘gain paradox principal’ (for gain spiral and even when no clear spiral) – are in my opinion warranted.

We appreciate your comment to reflect more in-depth on the principles of conservation of resources theory. We added the following paragraph in the discussion section on Page 20:

“Prior to the analysis, we expected that migrant workers’ patterns of resource accumulation would be underpinned by principles of conservation of resources, including the primacy of loss (individuals are more affected by resource loss than gain) and gain paradox principle (when individuals are deprived of resources, the value of gains becomes more amplified; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Our analysis did not support any of these principles. This can be explained by the basic nature of the resources in migrants’ resource gain and loss cycles in our study. When resources constitute basic human needs, such as access to accommodation, financial stability or health, their loss and gain are equally salient in the resource accumulation process.”

- Your choice of theoretical grounding also warrants some further justification – for example why CoR and not JD-R?

We would like to thank you for this comment on the justification of our use of theory. We opted to rely on the principles on conservation of resources for two reasons. First, COR theory allows for identifying resources valued by the individual that fall outside of the organizational context, whereas JD-R primarily relies on job resources (Wang, 2019). We found it important to emphasize that also resources that are not tied to migrant workers’ working lives have an influence on their perceptions of employability. Second, we opted for using COR theory as it allows for understanding how resources form bundles (resource caravans, resource loss and gain spirals), allowing for a more in-depth exploration of psychological processes. JD-R focuses more on outcomes related to the organization context of employees, such as motivation, burnout, work engagement or performance, which we found less relevant considering our focus on how self-perceived employability experiences. We considered elaborating about our choice for COR in the text, however, considering the fact that we had to reduce our text to 7000 words while increasing the clarity and flow we decided against it.
I really appreciate the use of the T1 and T2 quotes to clearly illustrate the changes in the migrants’ perceptions of employability. That being said I believe that when discussing the changes between T1 and T2 further development of the analysis in terms of the various dimensions of perceived employability would be beneficial. Thank you for this remark. We added the following text in the discussion section of our manuscript, on Page 21: “We adopted a broad definition of personal, material, and social resources, but did not consider how external factors influence migrant workers’ perceived employability. Further exploring migrants’ perceptions about labour market conditions (labour shortages) and about the cultural environment (cultural similarity) can contextualize the role of resources and career shocks in migrants’ perceived employability.”

Given that Hobfoll highlights in a number of his previous publications the importance of considering resources within the frame of their cultural context, did you consider the impact of the cultural difference between the Hungarians and their Dutch employers and the overarching cultural climate in the Netherlands. Thank you for this interesting question. We did not explicitly focus on cultural differences in our study, and unfortunately also do not have empirical data on this from the interviews. The Dutch logistics sector is generally very diverse and employs migrant workers from different EU and non-EU countries. We see that many of these workers are generally Polish (Szytniewski & van der Haar, 2022). Based on our research experience cultural difference would be particularly interesting in reference to other migrant worker groups working in the Dutch logistics sector, as this is the social group with which Hungarian migrant workers generally interact. We included a paragraph on this in our original manuscript in the discussion section on Page 22: “While our study offers insight into the experiences of migrant workers in a specific context, it does not consider the inter-group dynamics between minority and majority migrant worker groups, and how these affect individuals’ access to resources. We call for comparative longitudinal qualitative research to explore differential access to resources between different migrant worker groups in essential industries.”

On a similar note, given that age and education are personal characteristic that are identified as impacting perceived employability, did you consider this during your analysis given the broad spread of ages and education among your participants? Thank you for this remark on how the personal characteristics of age and education also influence perceived employability. Given our small sample, we could not draw conclusive findings on the role of age and education in our paper. These characteristics also did not arise during the analysis process as dominant for interpreting migrants’ perceived employability. During the interviews, we allowed participants to define how they see better employment for themselves and their perceptions of being able to get such a job, therefore we relied on migrants’ subjective assessments during the analysis process. It is also important to note here that we analyzed resources and perceived employability within person and only
interpreted resource gain and loss spirals and career shocks on the between person level.

As we know from previous research, that personal characteristics can interact in shaping skilled migrants’ perceived employability (Farashah et al., 2023), we call for future research on how this manifests in low wage, precarious contexts in our original manuscript. We added age as an additional identity dimension here.

- I have a number of more minor queries regarding the findings that are in the attached ‘additional comments’ file. A number of them relating to the quotations that support the various findings. Thank you.

Thank you very much for the more specific comments. We address these below.

1. Implications for research, practice and/or society: Does the paper identify clearly any implications for research, practice and/or society? Does the paper bridge the gap between theory and practice? How can the research be used in practice (economic and commercial impact), in teaching, to influence public policy, in research (contributing to the body of knowledge)? What is the impact upon society (influencing public attitudes, affecting quality of life)? Are these implications consistent with the findings and conclusions of the paper?: The implications are well considered and clearly grounded in the findings. I particularly appreciate when, as has been done here, implications are identified at an individual, organizational, and societal level. Thank you.

We thank you for your positive evaluation of our implications.

2. Quality of Communication: Does the paper clearly express its case, measured against the technical language of the field and the expected knowledge of the journal's readership? Has attention been paid to the clarity of expression and readability, such as sentence structure, jargon use, acronyms, etc.: The overall quality of communication is good. I have included a few minor comments regarding clarity in the attached ‘additional comments’ file.

Thank you, we address these below.

Additional comments

- Page 1 Line 36: It took me until I read the detailed ‘case’ of Bence on Page 17 to understand what you meant by the “when the COVID-19 crisis did not interact with the migrants resource gain and loss spiral”. The impact of no “clear pattern of resource loss or resource gain spiral” was not clear – I read it as COVID not being a career shock for these participants.

Thank you for this remark to clarify our wording. We adjusted the wording in the abstract on Page 1 as follows: “Interestingly, when the COVID-19 crisis did not co-occur with migrants’ resource gain and loss spirals, migrants experienced resource stress (psychological strain induced by the threat or actual loss of resources) and no significant change in their perceptions of employability.”. We removed ‘clear patterns of’ to make our meaning clearer to the reader.
• **Page 2 Line 5:** My expertise is in more the ‘careers’ than the ‘migration’ discipline, but given many of the readers of CDI may also fall into this category do you think it would be beneficial to clarify the difference between a migrant and an immigrant – and on that note, are your participants actually all immigrants? To clarify the difference between ‘migrant worker’ and ‘immigrant worker’, we added the following footnote in the manuscript on Page 2:

> “Following the official communication of the Dutch national government, we use the term ‘migrant workers’ to refer to workers from Central and Eastern European countries, later specifically from Hungary, who chose to find employment in a member state of the European Union other than their country of origin, later specifically in the Netherlands. We opted for this term, as it emphasizes the role of employment and job opportunities in the migration trajectory, encompasses various types of mobility within the European Union, does not necessarily implicate a permanent change of residence and includes temporary or seasonal workers, but also those who seek long-term residence in the host country (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2023).”

• **Page 2 Line 7:** Are there more recent publications than Anderson (2001) looking at the precariousness of CEE migrants – given the significant geopolitical changes in Europe over the last decade? Thank you for this remark. We initially opted to reference Anderson (2010) in the paper, as this is a key article on how migration and precarious work have become interlinked in the European Union, particularly in the UK. In our revised manuscript, we used two more recent publications on the precarious employment of migrant workers, on Page 1 and Page 3 respectively:


• **Page 2 Line 44:** Why would migrants have less access to flexible working arrangements? Thank you, we clarified the wording on Page 2-3 as follows:

> “For instance, the quality of labour regulation and social protection in host countries determine the prevalence of flexible working arrangements (Wagner and Hassel, 2016). In less regulated contexts, CEE migrant workers are often restricted to flexible, low-wage, temporary employment (Been and de Beer, 2022).”

• **Page 3 Line 6:** I can’t see how the case of Ivan presented in Manolchev and Ivan’s 2022 publication actually supports the preceding statement regarding work experience. My apologies if I have missed this. The article by Manolchev and Ivan (2022) follows the trajectory of a Bulgarian migrant worker, who through several promotions built a career from being a daffodil picker to becoming a welfare manager. The paper, building on longitudinal interviewing, if only of one person, shows that time spent in the host country allows individuals to gain a network and work experience in the host country, and develop their careers.

• **Page 4 Line 6:** How would you define a ‘valued’ career path?
We understand a ‘valued career path’ as a highly subjective concept, that can only be understood from the point of view of the individual who undertakes the given career path. Therefore, we understand ‘valued’ through the perception of the individual.

Page 6 2nd Paragraph: Would it be worth grounding the resource types in the CoR as Hobfoll does identify these 3 categories, and it would clearly signal the theoretical grounding of your subsequent discussion.

Thank you very much for this suggestion. During the analysis phase, we initially relied on Hobfoll’s categorization of resources (condition, personal, object and energy resources). In accordance with other studies on migrants who build on COR theory (e.g. Hall et al., 2022; Ryan et al., 2008; Shirmohammadi et al., 2023), we found that many of the resources brought forth by the participants could not be thematically organized with this framework, as they belonged to several categories. As an example, accommodation, which is categorized by Hobfoll as a condition resource (due to it representing a social circumstance), could also be interpreted as an energy resource (due to its potential to help individuals secure other resources, such as financial security or social network). To be able to have a more comprehensive categorization that was also representative of our participants’ resources, we opted to use the framework by Ryan et al. (2008), which was more specific to the migration context. We changed this text to support this specification of resource categorization on Page 6:

“COR theory traditionally classified individual resources according to their intended or actual use (e.g., energy resources enable the acquisition of further resources, Hobfoll, 1989). Recently, research in the migration context suggests to move beyond Hobfoll’s categorization to allow identifying how conceptually distinct groups of resources contribute to migrant workers’ resource accumulation and mobilization (Hall et al., 2022; Shirmohammadi et al., 2023). We follow the resource framework of Ryan and colleagues (2008), who distinguish between personal (health, resilience), material (money, car), and social resources (stable family life, supervisory support).”

Page 7 Line 45: Is the sentence tense correct?
We checked the entire section again for the consistent use of tense.

Page 8 Line 8: The articles you use to support your focus on migrants’ precarious employment are actually discussing contingent workers and flexible employment so I believe you will need to find other sources to adequately support your assertion re the limited existing research (especially given that a quick search of Scopus would indicate that this might not be completely accurate).

Thank you very much for noting this. We changed our reasoning here and adjusted the text on Page 7 as follows: “We focused on CEE migrant workers in the Dutch logistics sector, since there is limited knowledge on how migrants navigate their careers in the precarious logistics sector (Barnes and Ali, 2022; Zanoni and Miszczynski, 2023).”

Page 9 Line 5: You might want to clarify that only the T2 interviews focus on the impact of COVID. Thank you. We clarify this on Page 8 in the following sentence: “We conducted 22 phenomenological interviews with Hungarian migrant workers in the spring of 2019 (T1, before the COVID-19 crisis) and the summer and fall of 2020 (T2, during the COVID-19 crisis).”

Page 9 Line 10: Is the word “As” required at the beginning of the sentence “As in phenomenological research…” Apologies if I have misunderstood. Thank you. We removed ‘As’.
Page 9 Line 15: How did you establish ‘thematic saturation’? We established thematic saturation through continuous, iterative comparisons between the coding and the data. We added this on Page 8: “We interviewed all migrants that reacted in Spring 2019 till saturation was reached, which we established through continuous, iterative comparisons between the coding and the data.”

Page 9 Line 15: Introducing 18 participants is confusing when really the longitudinal study included only 11. Thank you for this clarification comment. We clarified this in the methods section, and removed references to the full sample from the first round of data collection.

Page 10 Line 14: There are those who argue that being a cultural insider can be detrimental to the research process. Did you take any steps to mitigate against the insider status of the first author? Yes. We address this under the analysis section in the methods section. We added this sentence on Page 9: “This counterbalanced potential bias derived from the insider researcher status of the first author.”

Page 10 Line 25: I am sorry, but I don’t understand why translating the interviews to English contributed to reliability? Was this due to the first language of the multiple coders? What else was done to contribute to the overall quality / trustworthiness of the research? We decided to remove this sentence from the manuscript. We instead specify quality/trustworthiness of the data through linking the potential negative aspects of being an insider researcher to having two independent coders during the analysis process (See above).

Page 10 Line 50: You state the two independent coders applied ‘the codes’ to the transcripts. Does that mean the coding was exclusively deductive based on the literature informed codebook? We used an abductive approach to analyze our data (thematic analysis, building on guiding concepts, but interpreting findings through coding of visual life diagrams). We changed the wording of this sentence as follows on Page 9: “Two independent coders analyzed the interview transcripts and reached agreements in case of conflicting interpretations to ensure interrater reliability.”

Page 12 Line 44: Why are you using a quote from Lili in T2 to support her resources gains pre-COVID? Thank you for noting this. Even though the quote from Lili’s interview is from T2, she is describing a resource accumulation process that took place before Covid-19. This resource gain spiral took place post-migration before the Covid-19 pandemic. We added the following specification to the quote on Page 14: “[Before the pandemic]”

Page 13 Line 32: And, similarly, Botond’s loss-spiral is supported by a T2 quote. My understanding is it is the post-migration resource position (gain / loss spiral or more neutral) at the onset of COVID that is being argued as leading to the valance of the shock. Have I misunderstood? Thank you very much for this question. In the section on how resource gains and losses form spirals, we aimed to illustrate how resource bundles form. Botond’s resource loss spiral co-occurred with the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in a negatively-valenced career shock, and negative perceptions of perceived employability. Considering that we decided to merge the demographics table (Table 1 in the original manuscript) and the thematic analysis table (Table 2 in original supplementary materials), and that this table clarifies more how Botond’s resource loss spiral influenced his perceptions of employability, we decided to remove this example from the section on resource mobilization patterns.
Page 17 Line 38: The loss of colleagues that you use to underpin no clear gain or loss spiral for Bence seems to be based on a post-COVID event. The same can be said for not returning to Hungary due to quarantine restrictions. So, I am not really sure what were the resource mobilization patterns postmigration / pre-COVID for Bence? And actually why they’re not considered to be in a resource loss spiral?

Thank you very much for this question regarding how resource stress cumulates. Bence experienced a resource gain cycle post-migration (see life diagram excerpt in Methods section), which was followed by a resource loss (Hungarian speaking colleague) and threat of a resource loss (continued contact with his family members). This becomes clear from the merged table that we added on Page 11-12 and the changes we made to Bence’s case in the text. Considering that Bence ‘only’ lost one resource, we do not consider this a resource loss spiral in our analysis. We elaborate on this on Page 19:

“Resource stress emerged from the loss of resources (losing a colleague) and the risk of losing resources (connecting with family members), although a previous resource gain experienced after migration prevented a resource loss spiral. Our analysis did not indicate a direct link between resource stress and perceived employability: there was no clear patterns in changes in perceived employability between the two time periods for this group of workers.”

Page 19 Line 22: Are career shocks a “concept of privilege” when 5 out of 11 participants actually had positively valanced outcomes. Or have I misunderstood what you mean by this statement. Thank you for this clarification question. We elaborated what we removed ‘concept of privilege’ from the text, and chose to rather explain what we meant by this on Page 20: “Migrants’ reflections on career shocks and how these affect their perceptions of finding new employment is contingent on having the necessary resources. This implies, that career shocks, rather than actively influencing migrants’ career thinking, are just another form of adversity to tackle in precarious contexts.”

Table 1: What contribution do you feel this table makes to your article? Thank you for this question on the contribution of Table 1. Our author team wanted to showcase not only what constituted a valued resource for them, but also how they articulated this resource. As you indicated that the contribution of the table is limited, we have tentatively removed this table from the supplementary materials.

Table 2: I assume the ‘Resource Mobilization’ is post-migration but post-migration / pre-covid. It might be helpful to label them as such. This is indeed the case. We merged this table with the demographics table from the main manuscript, and adjusted the labelling there.

Table 2: Equally I assume the ‘Excerpt’ is to explicitly illustrate the ‘outcome’. It might be helpful to label them as such. Thank you, we changed the table header accordingly.

We would like to thank Reviewer 1 for the thorough review of our manuscript! Our manuscript has benefited greatly from addressing these comments.

Reviewer 2

Recommendation: Minor Revision
We would like to thank Reviewer 2 for the comments and feedback on our manuscript! We greatly appreciate that you took the time to read and review our work. We addressed each of your points of improvement and incorporated them into our manuscript. We detail this below.

1. **Originality**: Does the paper contain new and significant information adequate to justify publication? Yes. I think the contribution is interesting, adding to literatures on career shocks, employability and global crises.

   Thank you very much.

2. **Relationship to Literature**: Does the paper demonstrate an adequate understanding of the relevant literature in the field and cite an appropriate range of literature sources? Is any significant work ignored? The relevant literature is well cited and runs smoothly into the results.

   Thank you very much.

3. **Methodology**: Is the paper's argument built on an appropriate base of theory, concepts, or other ideas? Has the research or equivalent intellectual work on which the paper is based been well designed? Are the methods employed appropriate? The methods are generally well described.

   In page 9, line 24, should it say longitudinal sample of 11 participants? It reads weird to talk about a sample of interviews.

   Because the authors had decided to stop interviewing when thematic analysis had reached saturation for first interviews (18), when participants where only 11, it questions whether saturation was also reached there. This should be reflected upon. I understand that the paper builds on the 11 longitudinal participants and not the total of 18, right?

   Thank you very much for this clarification question. We removed references to the sample size from the first round of interviews from the manuscript text. We did not aim to reach thematic saturation with the second round of interviews. While we stopped collecting interviews after reaching thematic saturation in the first round, which we reflected on more in depth in the manuscript based on a comment from Reviewer 1, we interviewed those individuals at the second time point, who expressed their interest in participating in a second interview. Here, we particularly valued voluntariness of participation, those who did not respond to us or those who let us know that they did not want to participate in a second round of interview, we did not pursue. Regarding thematic saturation, we adjusted the text as follows on Page 8: *"We interviewed all migrants that reacted in Spring 2019 till saturation was reached, which we established through continuous, iterative comparisons between the coding and the data."*

4. **Results**: Are results presented clearly and analysed appropriately? Do the conclusions adequately tie together the other elements of the paper? Yes. I am only more hesitant about Resource stress as an outcome. Outcomes should be about employability considering how the paper is presented. Therefore, would you say that
when there is no clear resource mobilization but threat, and therefore covid was perceived not as a shock but as a source of resource stress, the outcome in terms of employability is what? neutral? It would be interesting to explore this.

Thank you very much for this comment on the employability outcomes of those participants who experienced resource stress. Following a comment from Reviewer 1, we adjusted the manuscript in such a way that resource stress is more clearly explained. For participants who had no clear resource mobilization patterns co-occurring with the COVID-19 pandemic, the outcome was resource stress, and we could not identify an overarching pattern in their perceived employability. These participants’ perceived employability generally did not change, and in cases when it did, this was attributable to factors external to the COVID-19 pandemic. To make this more clear in the text, we added the following sentences on Page 19: “Our analysis did not indicate a direct link between resource stress and perceived employability: there was no clear patterns in changes in perceived employability between the two time periods for this group of workers.”

5. Implications for research, practice and/or society: Does the paper identify clearly any implications for research, practice and/or society? Does the paper bridge the gap between theory and practice? How can the research be used in practice (economic and commercial impact), in teaching, to influence public policy, in research (contributing to the body of knowledge)? What is the impact upon society (influencing public attitudes, affecting quality of life)? Are these implications consistent with the findings and conclusions of the paper?: Yes

Thank you very much.

6. Quality of Communication: Does the paper clearly express its case, measured against the technical language of the field and the expected knowledge of the journal’s readership? Has attention been paid to the clarity of expression and readability, such as sentence structure, jargon use, acronyms, etc.: Yes, it reads very well.

I was surprised to find Table 2, as it was not identified in the text. I think it is a good idea to have it but should be introduced and explained in the text of the paper.

Thank you very much for this comment. We decided to merge Table 2 from the supplementary materials with our demographics table and bring it to the main manuscript file. This is showcased on Page 11-12.

Senior Editor

Thank you for submitting your manuscript entitled: “Precarious employment amidst global crises: Career shocks, resources, and migrants’ employability” [CDI-10-2023-0357] to Career Development International for publication. Your paper has now been reviewed by two scholars, all of whom have expertise in the field.
As you will see from the reviewers’ comments, they agree that your study is interesting and believe that it has the potential to contribute to our current knowledge base around precarious employment and career shocks. However, the reviewers also expressed some concerns regarding your manuscript with which I agree. Both reviewers think that the issues can be addressed if you are willing to rework the manuscript to address the issues raised. Based on the reviewers’ recommendation, and my own reading of your manuscript, I propose to offer you another opportunity to revise and resubmit your manuscript for further consideration. Although I am recommending a revise and resubmit, I wish to emphasize that this is a high-risk revision and there is no guarantee of the opportunity for further revision or eventual publication.

The reviewers have provided detailed recommendations for improvement which I will not repeat here. Although I outline the major issues that you need to address below, I strongly suggest that you seriously consider all issues mentioned in the reviewers’ comments carefully should you choose to revise and resubmit your manuscript.

We would like to thank the Senior Editor for reading our manuscript, highlighting the major points of improvement as identified by the reviewers, and giving us the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript. As shown above, we have addressed all comments from the reviewers and have revised our manuscript in line with these comments. Below, we further address these comments in particular.

- As you will see, the reviewers would like to see a stronger justification for why COR theory is used as a framework as opposed to JD-R? If you feel JD-R is not relevant and COR is a better fit, then I suggest you offer a stronger theoretical justification grounded in the literature for using COR theory. Thank you very much. We have addressed this point as follows: We opted to rely on the principles on conservation of resources for two reasons. First, COR theory allows for identifying resources valued by the individual that fall outside of the organizational context, whereas JD-R primarily relies on job resources (Wang, 2019). We found it important to emphasize that also resources that are not tied to migrant workers’ working lives have an influence on their perceptions of employability. Second, we opted for using COR theory as it allows for understanding how resources form bundles (resource caravans, resource loss and gain spirals), allowing for a more in-depth exploration of psychological processes. JD-R focuses more on work-context bound outcomes, such as motivation, burnout, work engagement or performance, which we found less relevant considering our focus on how self-perceived employability forms. We considered elaborating about our choice for COR in the text, however, considering the fact that we had to reduce our text to 7000 words while increasing the clarity and flow we decided against it.

- Additionally, there needs to be better alignment between your theoretical framework and your emergent findings. Thank you, we addressed this in the discussion section. We added the following paragraph in the discussion section on Page 20:
“Prior to the analysis, we expected that migrant workers’ patterns of resource accumulation would be underpinned by principles of conservation of resources, including the primacy of loss (individuals are more affected by resource loss than gain) and gain paradox principle (when individuals are deprived of resources, the value of gains becomes more amplified; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Our analysis did not support any of these principles. This can be explained by the basic nature of the resources in migrants’ resource gain and loss cycles in our study. When resources constitute basic human needs, such as access to accommodation, financial stability or health, their loss and gain are equally salient in the resource accumulation process.”

- It might also be helpful for readers if you discussed the impact of cultural differences between the Hungarians and their Dutch employers as well as the overarching cultural climate in the Netherlands (R1). Thank you. We addressed this comment as follows: We did not explicitly focus on cultural differences in our study, and unfortunately also do not have empirical data on this from the interviews. The Dutch logistics sector is generally very diverse and employs migrant workers from different EU and non-EU countries. We see that many of these workers are generally Polish (Szytniewski & van der Haar, 2022). Based on our research experience cultural difference would be particularly interesting in reference to other migrant worker groups working in the Dutch logistics sector, as this is the social group with which Hungarian migrant workers generally interact. We included a paragraph on this in our original manuscript in the discussion section on Page 22: “While our study offers insight into the experiences of migrant workers in a specific context, it does not consider the inter-group dynamics between minority and majority migrant worker groups, and how these affect individuals’ access to resources. We call for comparative longitudinal qualitative research to explore differential access to resources between different migrant worker groups in essential industries.”

- Additionally, you may want to engage in a deeper analysis of your data to tease out the role of age and education or other personal characteristics that might impact/influence perceived employability (R1). Thank you very much for highlighting this comment. We have addressed this comment as follows: Given our small sample, we could not draw conclusive findings on the role of age and education in our paper. These characteristics also did not arise during the analysis process as dominant for interpreting migrants’ perceived employability. During the interviews, we allowed participants to define how they see better employment for themselves and their perceptions of being able to get such a job, therefore we relied on migrants’ subjective assessments during the analysis process. It is also important to note here that we analysed resources and perceived employability within person and only interpreted resource gain and loss spirals and career shocks on the between person level. As we know from previous research, that personal characteristics can interact in shaping skilled migrants’ perceived employability (Farashah et al., 2023), we call for future research on how this manifests in low wage, precarious contexts in our original manuscript. We added age as an additional identity dimension here.

- Table 2 is presented but not explained in the manuscript (R2). Please introduce and explain table 2 in the manuscript. Thank you. Due to its value to supplement the cases presented in
the findings section, we decided to merge this table with the demographics table, and include it in the main text of the manuscript.

- Also, I agree with R2 that your saturation criteria need further explication. Thank you. We addressed this comment as follows: We established thematic saturation through continuous, iterative comparisons between the coding and the data. We added this on Page 8: "We interviewed all migrants that reacted in Spring 2019 till saturation was reached, which we established through continuous, iterative comparisons between the coding and the data."

- R2 also raised an important question about resource stress as an outcome vs. employability which is the general thrust of your manuscript. You might want to address this issue in your discussion section. Thank you, we decided to already address this as part of Bence’s case. We added the following paragraph on Page 19: "Resource stress emerged from the loss of resources (e.g., losing a colleague) and from the risk of losing resources (e.g., connecting with family members), however these did not form a resource loss spiral due to a previous resource gain experienced post-migration. Based on our analysis, we could not find a direct link between resource stress and perceived employability: Changes in perceived employability between the two interviews for this group of workers did not follow a clear pattern."

Editor-in-Chief

Additionally, as you address these revisions, please also reduce your manuscript's word count to about 7,000 words, including figures/tables/references. I notice in several places where paragraphs/sentences are unnecessarily long. Therefore, it is possible to streamline your arguments to be more concise. Further, I see a repetition of references, which could be removed. Additionally, please examine closely your tables/figures and remove information referenced in the manuscript from what is already presented in the table/figure. To further help you decide what to cut, you may use supplemental material that does not contribute to the word count (see attachment). Finally, please ensure that all tables/figures include accurate reporting and check for grammatical errors and typos.

Thank you very much for the call to reduce the word count of our manuscript, streamline our arguments and format the tables. We have addressed this comment as follows:

- We have reduced the word count to below 7000 words, including references, figures and tables.
- We merged Table 2 from the supplementary materials and Table 1 on the demographic characteristics from the main manuscript text, and added this to the main manuscript text.
- We have optimized our references in line with the reviewer comments and the call to shorten our total word count.

References


(1) Separation from long-term partner (social resource loss)

(2) New partner steals money (material resource loss)

(3) Loses driver’s license due to accident (personal resource loss)

Resource loss spiral (pre-migration)

Moving to The Netherlands

(1) Hungarian colleagues in logistics employment (social resource)

(2) Accommodation provided by the employer (material resource)

(3) Obtains forklift drivers’ license (personal resource)

Resource gain spiral (post-migration)

Resource investment