

WHITE PRIVILEGE IN AUSTRALIA: MIGRANT UNDERSTANDING ANALYSIS AND THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION IN ENCOURAGING RACIAL AWARENESS

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis pemahaman para migran terhadap konsep *white privilege* di Australia serta mengevaluasi peran Organisasi Internasional untuk Migrasi (International Organization for Migration/IOM) dalam meningkatkan kesadaran rasial di kalangan komunitas migran. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis deskriptif yang memanfaatkan teknik studi pustaka. Dengan menggunakan konsep organisasi internasional, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa banyak migran memiliki pemahaman yang terbatas mengenai *white privilege*, yang umumnya dipengaruhi oleh latar belakang budaya serta pengalaman pribadi mereka. Penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi perlunya strategi yang lebih partisipatif dan kontekstual dalam membangun kesadaran rasial yang lebih baik di kalangan migran, serta menegaskan pentingnya kerja sama antara organisasi internasional, pemerintah, dan komunitas lokal dalam menangani isu diskriminasi rasial di Australia. Melalui penelitian ini, ditemukan bahwa tingkat kesadaran masyarakat lokal maupun komunitas migran terhadap isu rasial masih relatif rendah, yang disebabkan oleh sifat *white privilege* yang tersembunyi dan sistematis, serta masih terbatasnya peran IOM dalam meningkatkan kesadaran mengenai isu tersebut.

Kata kunci: Australia, Migran, Ras, *White Privilege*, Sosial.

ABSTRACT

This research analyses migrants' understanding of the concept of white privilege in Australia and evaluates the role of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in raising racial awareness among migrant communities. Using a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method that uses literature study techniques. Using the concept of international Organizations, this study found that many migrants have a limited understanding of white privilege, which is often influenced by their cultural background and personal experiences. This research recognises the need for more participatory and contextualised strategies to build greater racial awareness among migrants, and assesses the importance of cooperation between international agencies, governments and local communities in addressing the issue of racial discrimination in Australia. Through this research, it was found that the awareness of both local and migrant communities regarding racial issues is still very low due to the hidden and systematic issue of white privilege and the role of IOM.

Keywords: Australia, Migrant, Race, White Privilege, Social.

BACKGROUND

Racial inequality and power dynamics based on skin colour are issues that have been widely studied in social research in many countries, one example being Australia. Although Australia is known as a multicultural society that values diversity, the daily reality reveals the continued existence of white privilege, which is enjoyed by a group of white people living there (Frey, W. R., 2019). White privilege refers to the pervasive advantages obtained by white individuals, which are often unrecognised by both themselves and minority groups. Migrants, particularly those from outside Australia such as Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, still face numerous integration challenges from both social and economic perspectives in Australia. Knowledge about white privilege can influence migrants' thinking about power structures, human rights, or opportunities available to them (Walton et al., 2016). However, studies examining the extent to which migrants are aware of or understand the concept of white privilege in relation to racial issues in Australia are still considered limited. This gap in understanding can lead to delays in intergroup communication and efforts to support racial equality.

The Immigration Restriction Act, implemented from 1901 to 1973 and more commonly known as the White Australia Policy, was a tangible manifestation of institutionalised white supremacy in Australia's social and legal structures (National Archives of Australia, n.d.). This policy systematically rejected non-European migrants, particularly from Asia, on the grounds of preserving racial and moral diversity in society. As a result, white cultural standards became the dominant measure for assessing migrants' skills, morality, and adaptability. Although this policy has been repealed, its influence is still felt today in the form of inequality in employment opportunities, social discrimination, and cultural exclusivity in public spaces. Through this, the privilege enjoyed by a group of white people becomes an important component that is often overlooked by non-white migrants. Ignorance or lack of awareness of the existence of white privilege prevents many migrants from critically navigating the social challenges they face in Australia. When cultural standards, work practices, and social values are dominated by white groups, non-white migrants often have to work twice as hard to gain recognition and equal opportunities.

This is where the role of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) becomes vital. As an international agency that works directly with migrants, the IOM is strategically positioned to promote awareness of racial issues, including through various educational and intercultural understanding programmes (IOM, 2021). This study seeks to explore how migrants in Australia understand the concept of white privilege and to what extent IOM plays a role in opening up space for discussion and reflection on this issue. By examining the interaction between migrants' experiences and the role of global institutions such as IOM, we can understand how racial

awareness can grow both from the bottom up, through personal migration experiences, and from the top down, through institutional policies and interventions. Based on this background, this study aims to identify the level of migrants' knowledge about white privilege, as well as the factors that hinder their understanding. Using a qualitative exploratory approach, this study will explore the perceptions, experiences, and barriers felt by migrants in understanding the existence of white privilege around them. The results of this research are expected to provide recommendations for various government agencies, community Organizations, and integration programme organisers to design more effective cross-racial education and communication strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study uses international Organization theory/concepts. In international relations, early thinkers, especially realists, believed that in the international system, states were the only actors in international relations. States were considered the only actors with military and economic power, so other actors without such power were not considered very important. This included international Organizations. However, as time progressed, issues in international relations evolved from mere issues of war and peace to far more complex issues, including economic issues, feminism, the environment, non-traditional security, terrorism, and so on. The development of these issues has given rise to new actors in international relations, such as multinational corporations, international Organizations (both intergovernmental and non-governmental), transnational communities, and even individuals.

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that international Organizations are important actors that play a significant role in international relations. International Organizations are defined as formal bodies or institutions that have been established through agreements formed by actors in international relations (Evans and Newham in Hennida, 2015, p.7). A similar view is expressed by (Archer, 2001, p.68-92) in his book entitled 'International Organizations,' explaining that international Organizations are formal, ongoing structures formed based on agreements between two or more countries to achieve common interests. From this, it can be seen that international Organizations are institutions formed through agreements between actors with the aim of achieving common interests. What the experts emphasise most clearly is the word 'agreement,' whereby international Organizations are formed on the basis of agreements between actors, who are then obliged to commit to maintaining and implementing these agreements. Archer also complements the statements made by Evans and Newham that the formation of international Organizations aims to achieve common interests.

Thus, every country within an international Organization that is bound by an agreement will help one another to achieve their collective interests, whether those

interests are security, welfare, or others. In addition, international Organizations are divided into two categories, namely:

1. Intergovernmental Organization (IGO): An Organization whose members consist of governments from countries around the world. Examples include the United Nations, NATO, AUKUS, and the IOM.
2. Non-Governmental Organization (NGO): These are independent, non-profit Organizations that focus on providing services and assistance to communities in various fields such as social, environmental, advocacy, and humanitarian issues. Examples of NGOs include Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Red Cross, and others.

Furthermore, Clive Archer classifies the roles of international Organizations into three categories: 1. Instrument, 2. Arena, and 3. Actor.

1. Instrument: This means that international Organizations can be a tool for members involved in them to achieve their interests. Members can communicate, coordinate, and cooperate with each other in solving problems and reaching agreements.
2. Arena (Facilitator/Forum): International Organizations act as facilitators that provide a forum for members to discuss or negotiate with each other.
3. Actor: International Organizations act as independent actors that are not dependent on or bound to any party and are free to create their own policies to achieve their interests.

In this case, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental international Organization that can perform the three roles above. As the IOM is an intergovernmental Organization, the first role it will perform is to act as an instrument for the countries within it (in this case, Australia and the migrants' countries of origin) to fulfil their national interests in promoting racial awareness and preventing racial disparities through cooperation. Second, IOM acts as a facilitator, providing a space for discussion and negotiation between Australia and the migrants' countries of origin to address this issue. Thirdly, IOM can act as an independent actor capable of developing anti-discrimination campaigns, racial awareness campaigns, educational programmes, cross-cultural dialogue, advising governments on policies that are pro-migrant and ensure their rights, and overseeing the implementation of such policies.

RESEARCH METHOD

The object of this study is migrants' understanding of the concept of white privilege in Australia and the role of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in promoting racial awareness. This study focuses on the phenomenon of white privilege in the context of migrants' material lives in Australia. This phenomenon is closely related to the history of colonialism, white cultural dominance, and forms of

racial inequality that affect the multicultural life of Australian society. Formally, the study also emphasises an analysis of the efforts made by the IOM to enhance the inclusivity of racial understanding and awareness among migrants. How does IOM's strategies, programmes, and interventions build racial awareness and fight for equal rights for migrants? Through these two aspects of the study, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the social structure in Australia that influences the experiences of migrants and how international institutions such as IOM can work to bring about change.

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach. Qualitative methods are the most appropriate approach for understanding phenomena and social contexts naturally (Nanda, 2025). This approach was chosen because it is suitable for understanding complex social phenomena, such as migrants' perspectives on white privilege and the forms of intervention by international Organizations. Data was collected through a literature review of academic journals discussing issues of white privilege, migration, and racial equality in Australia, official IOM reports, policy documents related to migration and integration in Australia, and recent news articles about racial relations in Australia. Analysis was conducted by comparing various sources to understand migrants' perceptions of white privilege and assess IOM's contributions to enhancing racial awareness. The analysis was conducted systematically, beginning with data collection, followed by theme categorisation, interpretation of meaning, and narrative construction. By focusing on the subject matter and applying appropriate research methods, this study aims not only to describe social realities but also to analyse efforts that can be made to foster a conducive environment in Australia.

DISCUSSION

White Privilege Awareness

Awareness of white privilege and structural racism in Australia remains an issue that is often overlooked or even denied, despite the country being known for its multiculturalism policies. Considering how Australia was formed with great ethnic diversity, the process was complicated (Wicaksono, 2006). In line with many cases that have occurred, Australian society does not openly discuss this issue, and as a result, many individuals, especially those from non-white backgrounds, are not fully aware of how the existing social structure systematically benefits white groups. One of the main factors is the influence of the concept of meritocracy, where social standards are the dominant determinant in Australia. Society believes that individuals succeed based on their talent and effort, not external factors such as race or background. However, this meritocracy often overlooks the reality that equal opportunities are not always available to everyone.

White privilege is often hidden behind this meritocracy narrative, where white individuals are considered to have greater opportunities for success because they already conform to prevailing cultural and social norms. Here we see how Australia made the decision to approve the arrival of Asians and make Australia a racially diverse country. However, based on the Liberal Party's response, a law related to citizenship was enacted, known as the Naturalisation Act of 1903. This regulation established that Australian citizenship was approved by the Australian government, but it only applied to Australians of European descent (Erlina, 2019). Despite this, discriminatory treatment by white Australians—who are themselves immigrants—towards Aboriginal people and Muslim or Arab communities in Australia persists (Wicaksono, 2006).

Covert discrimination remains widespread in Australia, even though explicit discrimination, such as open racism, is no longer accepted. This form of discrimination is often not immediately visible but persists in the form of social exclusivity, negative stereotypes, and prejudices that are overlooked or disguised as cultural norms. For example, migrants who do not speak English with the appropriate accent or do not understand the prevailing social norms are often perceived as less competent or struggling to adapt. On the other hand, denial of the existence of white privilege is also a major obstacle to racial awareness in Australia, particularly among white individuals. Many of them do not feel that they benefit more from the existing system, viewing everything they achieve as the result of their own efforts, without realising that the social structure has provided them with unconscious advantages from the outset. The lack of education about structural racism also exacerbates this situation. The educational curriculum in schools and universities remains limited in addressing power dynamics, racism, and social inequality within the Australian context, leaving many people without sufficient understanding of how racism does not only occur in individual actions but also manifests in broader policies and practices. The presence of diversity is an important starting point for quality inclusion, as differences are a step towards building civilisation and cooperation. Multiculturalism has the characteristics of celebrating diversity and negotiating differences (Kymlica, 2011).

The media also plays a role in shaping public perceptions of race and privilege. Unfortunately, the mainstream media in Australia often ignores discussions about white privilege and instead focuses on individual success stories without revealing the inequalities faced by many migrants in accessing these opportunities. For this reason, the role of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is crucial in helping to raise racial awareness among migrants. IOM provides critical education that helps

migrants understand the realities of white privilege dynamics in Australia and facilitates open discussions about how existing social structures are not always fair to everyone. Additionally, IOM supports the development of more targeted integration policies that not only consider cultural backgrounds but also address existing racial dynamics. By involving migrants in discussions about white privilege, IOM seeks to

strengthen collective awareness and create a more just and equitable society. Therefore, more space is needed for open discussions and adequate education on structural racism and white privilege to create a safer and more harmonious environment for all social groups in Australia.

IOM's Role as Instruments

Looking at the role of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) through the perspective of Clive Archer, it is important to position the IOM in its implementation of multiculturalism in Australia. Clive Archer (2001), in his work 'International Organizations,' emphasises that international Organizations can function in three capacities: as instruments, arenas, and actors. When an Organization acts as an instrument, it is essentially used by a state or other actor for specific political, social, or economic purposes. In this context, the IOM serves as a strategic tool to support efforts to empower migrants and promote awareness of the structures of racial injustice reflected in the phenomenon of White Privilege in Australia.

The IOM plays a central role in strengthening the capacity of migrants through various advocacy programmes, training, and the provision of information related to migrants. The IOM's programmes aim to help migrants understand the social dynamics of their destination country and enable them to identify and respond to forms of racial discrimination that are often hidden behind diverse social structures. As an instrument, IOM also facilitates the exchange of information between national and international actors regarding migrant conditions, thereby strengthening the intellectual foundation and data-driven arguments to promote more inclusive policies in Australia. The Australian government and the international community utilise IOM to assist in managing the social impacts of migration flows, particularly in the context of rising racial tensions. The IOM works to facilitate social integration, reduce the potential for conflict, and promote multicultural values. The Organization helps countries maintain social stability while improving their international image in terms of human rights protection. Through its support for multiculturalism and racial awareness campaigns, the IOM encourages changes in public perceptions of migrants, who are often victims of negative stereotypes and discriminatory treatment.

As part of its instrumental approach, IOM also conducts various academic research and policy analyses that reveal the links between racial structures, such as White Privilege, and the experiences of migrants. These findings strengthen evidence-based advocacy and clarify the urgent need for social reform. In many cases, IOM's role is not limited to programme implementation, but also extends to shaping the international discourse on racial justice and migration that promotes equality. Clive Archer's (2001) analysis of IOM's role as an instrument clearly shows that IOM functions as an instrument that strengthens the empowerment agenda for migrants, builds awareness of structural injustice, and promotes social change towards a more just and equitable Australian society. However, the development of this role also

opens up opportunities to see how the IOM can gradually move towards becoming an independent actor that promotes universal values in racial and migration issues, going beyond its instrumental function alone.

IOM's Role as Arena

As a forum and facilitator, IOM provides various multi-stakeholder platforms where migrants, local communities, governments, and NGOs can discuss, share and exchange experiences, and negotiate issues related to race. IOM develops various inclusive forums and activities, such as through the Organization of national diaspora meetings and community discussions. Through these forums, migrants are encouraged to share their experiences regarding discrimination or integration challenges they face (IOM, 2019). By creating these spaces for dialogue, IOM helps raise collective awareness of racial issues and white privilege. For example, the Organization has supported the implementation of National Diaspora Forums in several countries, where diaspora representatives share their experiences regarding development strategies and social problem-solving in their destination countries. Although specific sources for Australia may be limited, similar models are applied in the Asia-Pacific region, which are relevant to migrant communities in Australia.

Conceptually, IOM's role as a facilitator aligns with Barnett and Finnemore's (2004) perspective, which emphasises that international Organizations have a function in generating social norms through interactions among actors that emerge through negotiation forums. In line with this understanding, IOM helps build new awareness of the dynamics related to ongoing racial inequality through the dialogue forums it facilitates. Furthermore, IOM often plays a role in orientation training and migrant integration programmes that are cross-border in nature. For example, IOM has entered into a cooperation agreement with the Australian government to organise courses for prospective migrants in their countries of origin, providing positive information about social life in Australia. This programme also serves as an initial framework within which migrants are educated about cultural differences and social norms, including discussions on racial equality and non-discrimination. Thus, IOM facilitates these activities as a forum or platform for migrants and relevant authorities, supporting mutual understanding in line with its mandate to 'enhance understanding of migration issues.'

Internationally, IOM often hosts conferences and workshops related to migration issues. For example, through the International Dialogue on Migration (IDM), which is an annual IOM forum that aims to bring together NGOs, government representatives, academics, and migrants to formulate recommendations on migration policy. In such forums, issues such as racism or racial equality are initiated as part of the agenda of 'social and economic development through migration.' Similarly, IOM plays a role in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), providing a space where challenges related to migrant discrimination can be raised and addressed. These

initiatives demonstrate how IOM, as a facilitator, provides an arena for cross-border discussion and negotiation on migration. This is also in line with Clive Archer's (2001) concept in his book entitled 'International Organizations,' which states that international Organizations have a role as facilitators that provide various forums for members to discuss or negotiate with each other.

IOM's Role as Independent Actor

As an independent actor, IOM has the authority to develop its own policies and programmes that are not directly bound by the interests of any particular party or country. As an intergovernmental Organization with 174 member states and 8 observers, IOM is able to act across sectors and jurisdictions (Bradley, M. (2017). This independence allows IOM to pursue various initiatives focused on racial justice without being tied to domestic political agendas. For example, IOM can independently design guidelines or strategies to improve migrant inclusion. In its Strategic Plan 2024–2028, diaspora engagement is one of IOM's priorities, reflecting a global initiative aimed at empowering migrant and diaspora communities. Although the original source is not publicly available, this initiative highlights IOM's ability to shape new agendas (such as the Diaspora Initiative for Sustainable Development) without relying on a single national policy.

Specifically, regarding white privilege in Australia, IOM can develop independent programmes in the form of training, research, and internal campaigns that emphasise awareness of racial equality. For example, IOM is involved in the UN Migration Network, which calls for the elimination of racial discrimination (IOM, 2023). Through networks such as those mentioned, IOM advocates for the importance of combating racism in migration to mitigate future negative impacts, emphasising that migrant rights protection must be 'based on rights, not privileges.' As an independent actor, IOM can also release global reports and policy recommendations (such as the World Migration Report) highlighting issues of racial justice among migrants. Although IOM does not directly create laws, its voice and research are internationally recognised, providing a policy foundation for countries like Australia to improve their integration and anti-discrimination systems.

Another example of initiatives undertaken are cross-border programmes funded by IOM and its partners. For example, the Global Migration Film Festival, initiated by IOM, uses creative mediums to raise public awareness about migrant issues, including racial stereotypes. Such programmes are designed by IOM itself and funded from various international multi-donor sources, not by instructions from a single country. Thus, IOM acts as an independent actor and is able to create and implement its own programmes to promote racial equality at the national and international levels. Furthermore, IOM, as an independent actor, takes sovereign measures to combat discrimination among migrant communities. This role aligns with its mission to enhance understanding of migration-related issues and give special attention to the

rights of migrants. IOM consistently conducts educational campaigns, formulates internal policies that promote cultural awareness, and facilitates the exchange of best practices among member states regarding racial inclusion. Due to its non-binding position vis-à-vis national institutions, IOM is freer to emphasise sensitive issues such as white privilege and uphold the principle of non-discrimination as a global issue. This underscores that IOM has a dual function, serving not only as a facilitator but also as an independent policy-maker promoting fair migration free from racial prejudice. In line with Clive Archer's (2001) view in his book 'International Organizations,' international Organizations act as independent actors not dependent on or bound by any party and can freely create their own policies to achieve their interest.

CONCLUSIONS

Awareness of white privilege and structural racism in Australia is very low. Special treatment of white people, racism, and overt discrimination are rare or even non-existent in Australia, but they now take other forms. These new forms are more structured, systematic, and hidden, deeply rooted in the culture, policies, and behaviour of society. This is why both the local population and migrants in Australia are unaware that the system in their country remains highly discriminatory, with white people far more advantaged in this system compared to non-white migrants. This situation is exacerbated by the influence of the concept of meritocracy, the lack of education about white privilege, and the media's rare coverage of this issue. This is clearly detrimental to migrants, the countries they come from, and Australia itself in the future due to the potential for social conflict.

Therefore, the role of the IOM is crucial in addressing the issues of white privilege and structural racism in Australia that affect migrants. First, the IOM can serve as an instrument that can be used by the countries of origin of migrants to collaborate in fulfilling the national interests of each country and work together to achieve their goals. Australia wants its country to be welcoming of diversity and human rights and to maintain peace among its people, while the countries of origin of migrants want their communities in Australia to remain safe. Second, the IOM can serve as a forum for the countries involved in this issue to discuss, negotiate, and reach agreements on the matter. Third, the IOM can act as an independent actor that can formulate its own policies to become an actor that actively campaigns against racism and discrimination, promotes racial awareness, educational programmes, cross-cultural communication, pro-government policy advice and guarantees the rights of migrants, as well as monitoring the implementation of these policies.

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