

Editorial

The exceptional events of 2020-2023, including COVID-19 and tertiary education reforms have had an impact on the editors and authors of the *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations* and our planned special issues. The editors have therefore decided to combine papers from 2022 and 2023 into a bumper general issue for 47(1).

The articles in this issue cover a range of topics, from the plight of vulnerable workers to HR and ER policies and practices, and the employment relations policies of the major and minor political parties. The first two articles examine the exploitation of migrant workers and what can be done to protect these vulnerable workers. In Stringer et al.'s article, the authors present evidence to show that exploitation of temporary migrant workers continues in spite of previous efforts to control their poor treatment. In a related research note, Burmester, et al. present a convincing argument to introduce a New Zealand Modern Slavery Act. They maintain that whether imposing transparency or due diligence requirements, to be effective, a Modern Slavery Act (such as the one drafted before the 2023 election), needs to be clear about the reach of those duties with respect to companies' supply chains.

Factors that contribute to ethnic pay gaps in New Zealand is the focus of the second research note. Here Cochrane and Pacheco describe the gaps between the average (as well as median) hourly wages for the European workforce relative to Māori and Pacific workers. These are substantial and income disparities for Pacific workers relative to Europeans in the labour market have real consequences for Pacific families and future generations. Their research shows that more needs to be done to close the educational divide and improve pathways to higher occupations. They conclude that striving for fair opportunities for all, as well as inclusive and diverse workplaces, will help reduce pay gaps across ethnic groups.

Salter argues that COVID-19 has accelerated technologically driven developments such as platform work and online freelancing. His survey found uneven experiences of pandemic-related disruption, particularly for those in insecure forms of work, Māori, and frontline workers in hospitality and retail. Drawing on his survey findings, he has developed a concept of platformisation, capturing broad impacts of digital technology on workplaces, together with trends towards precarity and individual responsibility which has implications for public policy analyses of a "tight labour market".

Concluding the papers on the exploitation of workers, Salter et al.'s article highlights the impact of neoliberal reforms on Aotearoa New Zealand's tertiary education sector which in turn has led to the casualisation of academic labour and the emergence of an academic precariat. The authors argue that despite the increasing size of the academic precariat, it does not appear that their voices, concerns, or interests have been adequately represented by the national tertiary union. The contribution of this and similar studies is that employee voices are multiple, diverse, and fragmented; indicating that unions must attend to the differential experiences of people working in the tertiary sector attributable to employment practices.

Two articles are devoted to HRM practices, focusing on its intrinsic aspects, namely ethical leadership and organisational trust. In Haar et al.'s article, the authors seek to examine the links between ethical leadership and work-life balance, anxiety, and depression as well as investigating the role of organisational trust as an important links between ethical leadership and trust. Using two samples from the public sector and private sector, and applying structural equation modelling, they found consistent effects across both samples. Ethical leadership is

positively related to all outcomes, but organisational trust mediates the influence on work-life balance (fully in public sector, and partially in private sector), and fully mediates the influence towards anxiety and depression (both samples). Their findings highlight the importance of organisational trust and work-life balance for ethical leaders to better alleviate mental health issues in the workplace.

Kapoor et al. explore managers' perception of HRM's role in building organisational trust in five public sector organisations in India using exploratory multiple case studies. In implementing HRM policies and practices, the findings suggest that managers are cognisant of specific human resource practices that can be socially adapted to enhance their effectiveness and develop more enduring organisational trust. The authors maintain that study's emergent process model of human resource management together with organisational trust highlight the cross-level influences that affect India's public sector organisations' outcomes.

The dynamic nature of HR and ER are illustrated by the next two articles. Dimitrov argues in her article that some employment advocates operate below the standards expected by the courts and that the poor performance of these employment advocates has a negative impact on their employment litigants or clients. She concludes that if employment advocates are to fulfil the intentions of parliament as set out by the Employment Relations Act (2000), New Zealand's government must critically review the employment advocacy services. Moreover, Dimitrov recommends that the current operations of employment advocates undermine employment litigants' access to justice and that New Zealand's parliament needs to reconsider the role of employment advocates in employment disputes.

While Dimitrov is concerned with the with quality of advice given by employment advocates, Tretiakov et al. argue that ER and HR policies and practices in the small business sector are unique. With this in mind, they contend that Giddens' structuration theory is a useful framework to understand HR practices in small firms. A major advantage of Giddens' structuration theory compared to Labour Process Theory is that it does not privilege economic aspects and is inclusive of social factors, such as family. They conclude that employees are not purely economic agents, as the quality of work experience and family circumstances can shape behaviour more than financial compensation. It is critical that owners-managers in small firms implement HR practices in ways that treat employees as powerful actors co-creating, rather than merely being subject to, the HR practices.

Finally, in keeping with the NZJER tradition of analysing the pre-election employment relations policies of the major and minor political parties, two articles have been written that critique the different political policies and track records. The main political parties have given employment relations scant attention leading up to the October 2023 election, which is in stark contrast to previous years. In Walker et al.'s article, changes to employment relations policy and law, such as pay equity, modern slavery, and fair pay during the 2017-2023 Labour-led Government are well documented. The authors note that the National Party have indicated that they will not change current leave entitlements, while other changes may endure. With regards to the minor parties' employment relations policies, Skilling and Molineaux note that the priorities and the power of these minor parties becomes important for assessing the likely trajectory of employment relations policy in the coming three years. Indeed, recent polling suggests that minor parties will have an unusually large degree of influence. We wait in anticipation....