

Youth Migration: *The Role of Family*

Prof. Asoc. Dr. Nevila Furxhi¹ PhD. (c) Asunta Toromëni²

Department of Social Work and Social Policy

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania

E-mail: nkocollari@gmail.com¹ toromani.asunta2@gmail.com²

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Abstract: *OECD figures (2022) indicate that more than half of Albania's population today lives outside the country. It is worrisome that 71% of young people in the Western Balkan countries consider moving abroad... (SCiDEV, 2023). This paper explores the role of family in youths' migration decisions or decision making processes. The research aims to understand and examine how family relationships, dynamics and expectations shape youths' decisions or decision-making processes to migrate. The main research questions are: What are the main theories that explain the influence of the family on youths' migration decisions or decision-making processes? What are the opinions of young individuals regarding the role of the family in potential or real decision-making processes or decisions to migrate? Does the family serve as a motivator or a barrier in youths' decisions or decision-making processes to migrate? The paper takes a qualitative approach, using focus groups as a qualitative research instrument, to emphasize the intricate interplay between family dynamics and youths' migration decisions or decision-making processes. Key findings indicate that families have been impacted by Albanians' migratory history, which has influenced families to push young individuals to pursue professional opportunities in their home country and obtain a solid education. According to the young individuals who participated in the study, migrating from their family is viewed as the 'final opportunity' if their life in their home country fails to match their expectations. Strong family relationships impact their migration decisions, and in the gender context, a young and unmarried girl is considered inappropriate to migrate unless it is for temporary or transitory academic or cultural mobility purposes.*

Keywords: youth migration, family, decisions

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a complex issue that affects individuals, families, and civilizations. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in understanding how family influences migration decisions, particularly among young people. Young people frequently navigate difficult familial connections while considering

transferring to other locations in search of better prospects, education, or a different way of life. The impact of family on young migrants is a critical issue that deserves further investigation.

This qualitative study intends to investigate how family influences young people's migration decisions. By conducting focus groups, we hope to capture the different viewpoints and experiences of young people who are considering migrating or have firsthand knowledge of youth migration. Through in-depth discussions, we attempt to identify how familial relationships, expectations, and support systems influence adolescent migration decision-making processes or decisions.

Theoretical background

The main theories are based on the review of the respective literature, related to the migration of young individuals and the role of the family in decision-making processes or decisions for migration:

Theories	Where it consists?	Youth migration context
Social capital theory (First defined by Bourdieu, 1985)	The value of networks and contacts in creating opportunities. It contends that individuals gain from their social networks, relationships, and connections in reaching their objectives and aspirations.	Family: a primary source of social capital, providing young individuals with support, information, resources and opportunities. Portes (1998) and Granovetter (1973): Family networks play an important role in helping young individual access migratory paths and handle problems in new contexts. . Young individuals from families with strong social networks may find it simpler to migrate since they have connections that can help them find work, housing, and integrate into a new society.
Family systems theory (First defined by Bowen, 1966)	The interconnectedness and dynamics of family connections, which see families as complex systems with interrelated pieces.	Parental expectations, sibling relationships, and the overall family environment can all impact a young person's decision to migrate. Lee (2016) points out that families frequently debate migration decisions together, assessing the potential benefits and risks.
Transnationalism theory (First defined by Glick Schiller et al., 1994)	The fluidity of social, economic, and cultural links across borders, emphasizing how migrants keep ties to their	Transnational families have an important role in preserving transnational customs, identities, and relationships.

	home nations while participating in host societies.	Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) and Baldassar (2008) explored how young migrants handle transnational familial duties, emotional bonds, and cultural identities in the context of migration processes.
Life Course Perspective (First defined by Elder, 1994)	Interconnected events, transitions, and experiences impact individuals' life paths over time.	Family interactions and early life experiences impact migration decisions. Elder (1998) and Shanahan (2000) investigated the influence of family support, transitions, and life events in altering young individuals' mobility patterns and paths during the migrating process.
Push-Pull Theory (First defined by Lee, 1966)	Migration is stimulated by forces that push people out from their home environment and toward a destination. Poverty, a lack of prospects, or family conflicts are common push causes, but pull factors frequently include the promise of improved economic conditions, education, or family reunification.	Families often play a crucial role in shaping these factors. For example, if parents see greater prospects abroad, they may encourage their children to migrate.
Family Migration Theory (First defined by Boyd, 1989)	Family relations have a considerable influence on migration decisions. Families may elect to relocate together or send some members, such as children, to seek better prospects.	Parents may send their children in other countries for study or employment, believing that the family would benefit in the long run.

While family dynamics can make movement easier, migrating youth frequently confront major obstacles. However, there are also obstacles for the families of young migrants.

Family

Dynamics

According to studies, family discussions typically have an important impact in young individuals' migration decisions. Carling (2008) found that families discuss migration, evaluating the potential benefits against the hazards. These discussions frequently involve elder family members who offer advice and support, supporting the idea that relocation is a legitimate option for young individuals.

Economical Motivations

Financial Support and Expectations

Economic motivations are a major driver of migration. Families frequently see relocation as a means to improve their financial status. According to a research by De Jong et al. (2000), families may urge their children to move in order to secure remittances, which can greatly benefit the household economics. This expectation instills a sense of obligation in the kids to achieve family objectives, which leads them to seek migration.

Educational and Employment Opportunities

Many families encourage their children to relocate in quest of better educational and employment possibilities. Studies show that families prioritize the educational advancement of their children, often perceiving migration as a pathway to higher education and better job prospects (Zachary et al., 2017). This aspiration is particularly evident in regions where local educational resources are limited.

Intergenerational perspectives

It reveals important insights into how family dynamics influence migratory patterns throughout time. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) found that one generation's migratory experiences can impact succeeding generations' actions and goals. Families with a history of migration may cultivate a culture of mobility, encouraging young individuals to seek opportunities overseas. Mazzucato and Schans (2018) found that intergenerational interactions shape young individual's aspirations, values, and priorities regarding migration. Conflicts and negotiations between parents and children about educational and job options can influence young individuals' willingness to migrate for better possibilities. Cultural norms and expectations within families might present opportunities and problems for young individuals considering migration.

Familial expectations about marriage, filial responsibilities, and social prestige can clash with migratory objectives, resulting in difficult talks within family units. Conflicts within families can provide challenges for young migrants, compromising their well-being and ability to integrate into new environments. Erdal and Oeppen (2018) studied how conflict resolution strategies, resilience, and coping mechanisms affect family dynamics during migration transitions. Understanding how young individuals settle conflicts with family members and develop resilience might provide insight into the complexities of familial influences on migration decisions.

Social Networking and Migration Family as Social Capital

Families act as essential social networks, facilitating migration. According to Portes (1995), family members who have previously migrated can contribute valuable information and resources, lowering the uncertainties associated with moving. This social capital includes knowledge about career possibilities, housing, and cultural adaptability, all of which can help young migrants transfer more smoothly.

Transnational Family Networks

Transnationalism has altered the dynamics of familial connections in the context of migration. Faist (2000) found that families keep links across borders, allowing for continued support and communication. These transnational links might impact migration decisions, as young individuals may feel a feeling of belonging and obligation to family members in their target countries.

The impact of migration on family structures Changing Family Roles

Youth migration frequently causes shifts in family responsibilities and dynamics. According to Mazzucato's (2008) research, when young individuals migrate, family structures might evolve, with remaining family members taking on new roles. This can lead to a restructuring of familial roles, with elder siblings or parents taking on more duties in the absence of the juvenile migrant.

Gender relations

Gender relations within families have a considerable influence on youth mobility trends. According to studies, young women may encounter different expectations and hurdles than men. According to Kofman (2004), young women frequently relocate to join family members, but they may face cultural norms and gender roles that limit their options.

Emotional and Psychological Impacts

According to literature, when young individuals migrate, their families feel a sense of loss and separation. This might cause mental pain and difficulties in sustaining family togetherness. The psychological burden frequently falls on both the migrant and the family members who remain behind, necessitating the establishment of support services to address these concerns. According to studies, migrant kids frequently feel isolated, lost, and anxious as they navigate unfamiliar situations without the assistance of their families (Mazzucato, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methods equip us in studying complex phenomena. Qualitative research methods provide scientific tools for exploring and identifying the numerous contributing factors to an occurrence (Bhangu, Sh., Provost, F. & Caduff, C., 2023).

Based on the main purpose of the study, the qualitative method turns out to be more suitable to be applied in its fulfillment. Also, referring to the main research questions, it offers an in-depth exploration of opinions and experiences, complex factors and relationships, the multidimensionality of family influence, cultural elements and social norms.

Focus groups can be used to gather rich, detailed descriptions of shared individual experiences and beliefs. Group process enhances the richness of the data obtained via this method (Beedy – D M., Arsenault – D Cote & Feinstein, N F., 2001).

The focus group was chosen as the appropriate instrument for use in this study using qualitative research methods because it provides the type of data that our research requires.

Referring to Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. & Elam, G., (2003): in the purposive sampling approach, the selection of participants, settings or other sampling units is criterion based or purposive (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002). The sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study. These may be socio-demographic characteristics, or may relate to specific experiences, behaviours, roles, etc. Burgess (1984) and Honigmann (1982) call this judgement sampling. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) maintain that criterion based is a more appropriate term than purposive because all sampling is purposive, but purposive is the term most commonly used in the literature.

Taking into account the factors in the literature about sample selection, a purposive sample was selected for two focus groups, each with six participants. The criteria for each focus group were as follows: three young females and three young males, students in the Faculty of Social Sciences (knowledge of migration phenomena and different perspectives of studies: psychology, sociology, philosophy, social work, political sciences, administration and social policy), University of Tirana/third year, close experiences with youth migration, potential or real decision/decision-making process to migrate.

RESULTS

Family Role on Youths' decisions or decision-making processes to migrate

According to the participants, the family plays a significant role in the decisions that young individuals make, both individually and socially. During the talk, they express that they regard the parents' desire to stay as selfish. Half of the participants state that Albanians' migration history has been challenging, and as a result, some connotations about their parents have remained intact over time.

A.1: My family believes migration is something that happens to others but not to them and not to our family...

K.2:...Sometimes I think they perceive it selfishly; they believe that having their children near them is important, and that if we migrate, it will be as a family...

The male participants were most open to the influence of family on migrating decisions. According to their personal experiences, their friends had attempted to move at least once, and they had the option to do so as well, but they did not since their family knew this information and stopped them.

R.1: This is important. Because, especially in Albania, we are deeply tied to our families. Not just the decision to migrate, but everything else...

A.2: Just as essential as when I had the possibility, because my friend tried to migrate, I didn't go, because of my family....

Some participants report that their families view migration as transitory movement for academic, cultural, or regular job, with the expectation that they will return. Some of the participating student ladies indicate that their families would not welcome or allow migration if they fled alone, but only if they married or began their own families.

E.2: My family considers just moving temporarily, for a period of time, such as for a job or school, but always having a date to return... If I migrate, it can only be when I will married or with my own family...

S.1: It's about respect rather than stopping or applying pressure...

Economic Factors

The participants stated that education has been the focus of parenting in their families, and that as students, they hope to work in the profession after graduation. Migration, as reported in the media, is viewed negatively by their families. They frequently link it with a fast and undignified source of cash.

Their families provide them the opportunity to live in the country while attempting to be professionally satisfied, stating that the hardships of living in the host country may be even higher.

E.1: My family has always taught me that a well education is everything... To obtain an education and find a career in the field. They were more concerned with how accomplished they were than with "how rich you will be." I believe the family's income is comparable to that of a typical Albanian family, but they wanted to develop their own stuff here... Not to try for much more...
S.2: They say I should be professionally better than them and live a better life than theirs. If I do not find myself here, moving is an option...

Emotional and Social Factors

Some participants say they understand why parents are concerned about the emotional implications of their children's relocation, and that it makes it more difficult for them.
Some see it as a challenge or impediment to migration decision-making.

I.1: It might be far away, without friends or family members, a different way of living... They often say it will be difficult for us, but I believe it is more difficult for them because they do not want us to leave.
E.2: I think about it often, and more than finding a job, or other reasons, this is the most difficult thing. What will it be like to be alone? Would I handle it emotionally...

Participating student males describe migration as tangible in their societies. Some of these include the calculation of lost opportunities against better opportunities.
K.2: Almost all of my friends have left, or will... They want to, you know? Some of them are not university graduates. I think it's important...I believe that everyone calculates regarding their own circumstances.
So: What do I have, what do I lose?...

Cultural Values And Beliefs

In this section of the discussion, participants were asked to write words connected to the migration perspective that they had heard or believed more from their family members.
Among the scrawled words are: hardship, separation, abandonment, opportunity, better life, always a stranger...

Some interviewees believe that their families have altered as a result of migration. Parents are left alone, families are separated, and in some cases, abandoned. They believe you would always feel foreign and without a sense of belonging in the host nation, despite the fact that the majority of the participants' parents have no migration experience. Some of them saw it as a search for possibilities and a better life, and that their family would welcome their success regardless of where they lived.

D.1: My mother develops a variety of scenarios. For example, if you leave, you will forget us and be lost... I believe that migration has taken on new forms that were not prevalent at the time.
O.2: They would be fine regardless if I had a good life. If I don't have it, they won't be happy either.

Almost throughout the talk, participants mentioned the age divide, the many ways their parents observed young individuals' migration, and how they see it. They frequently regarded traditional media as a source

of information that does not capture all of the experiences of young migrants, but which their parents value highly. They believe they should be more open to new opportunities and better comprehend their own perspective.

V.2: No matter how much I tell them about my own desires, perspectives... they don't get it. They compare and discuss stories they remember from 20 years ago...

M.1: They are a different generation, they grow up differently and think differently. I don't judge them, but I think I would try to understand my children if I were in their position...Their support is essential...

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of focus groups conversations yielded numerous major topics concerning the role of family in young migration. Albanians' migratory history has had an impact on families, encouraging young individuals to pursue professional chances in their native country and earn a decent education. Strong family bonds influence their migration decisions, and in the gender context, a young and unmarried female is deemed improper to travel unless for transient or transitory academic or cultural mobility reasons.

Participants emphasized the necessity of family support. Family expectations, concerns about safety and well-being, and emotional attachments were identified as key influences on young individuals' migration decisions.

Furthermore, conflicts within families, age disparities, and cultural standards have been noted as barriers that young individuals confront when navigating familial dynamics. Despite these challenges, many participants thanked their families for their support and counsel throughout the decision-making process.

Overall, the findings highlight the complex interplay between family dynamics and youth migration, underlining the importance of a comprehensive awareness of the familial environment in youth's perspectives on migration decisions or decision-making processes.

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