

Research Article

# Globalization and Human Mobility: In Pursuit of Labour Improvement

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## Abstract

The objective of this article is to study the causes of human mobility in today's world, starting from the main cause which is the search for better job opportunities to increase their income and improve their welfare, as it is supported by the Neoclassical theory on migration. The questions established in this work to be answered are: What are the main causes of migrations? What have been its repercussions on global society? The study is based on the neoclassical migration theory, which main axis is that there are not only internal migrations, from rural to urban, but also to overseas, which have as their main cause job improvement and increasing their wage. Subsequently, in the topic of migration, economy and employment are the main causes of migration and what it entails are explored in depth, such as technological development in the host country and sending of remittances to the country of origin. In the figure there are five main reasons that are considered to be the most common causes of migrations, highlighting job improvement. Then, in the subtheme of globalization and migration, both phenomena are linked, stating that globalization has done a lot to rise the migration, since, with it, technology, social networks have been facilitated trade relations between countries and the fact that people have the impulse to migrate to always seek their social well-being.

## Keywords

Migration, Globalization, Economy, Job Improvement, Neoclassical Theory

## 1. Introduction

The international migratory flow is a phenomenon that progressively occupies a great importance in the study of this phenomenon and its economic and social impact, due to its great dimension. This situation is explained by the fact that many people leave their countries of origin and settle in other place in search of a better life, and thus, millions of people now live in a country different than theirs. The increase of international migrants has been constant over the last two decades, reaching 281 million people residing outside their country of origin in 2020, compared to 173 million in 2000 and 221 million in 2010. To this day, in-

ternational migrants represent about 3.6% of the world's population [1].

People are moving progressively across borders in response to the social and economic demands generated by globalization. From this scoop the question arises are: What are the main causes of migrations? What have been its repercussions on global society? To answer these questions, the present study will be guided by the Neoclassical Migration Theory.

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## 2. Hypothesis

The hypothesis is derived from the Neoclassical Migration theory, which focuses on the economic factor as the main cause of migration, which moves from areas or countries where salaries are low to areas or countries where salaries are higher. Based on this theory, the hypothesis arises that migration has grown mainly from south to north or from developing to developed countries, in search of better job opportunities with higher salaries, which implies growth in income and greater social well-being.

When people decide to move from one place to another, crossing borders, what they are looking for is a better opportunity in the work and professional field, as well as achieving both personal and family economic well-being, since, in their home countries it is very difficult to attain their expectations.

## 3. Neoclassical Migration Theory

The first scholarly contribution to migration consisted of two articles by the XIX century geographer Ravenstein [2], in which he formulated his regulations for migration. He considered migration an inseparable part of development and stated that its main causes were economic. Furthermore, it was assumed that migration patterns were influenced by factors such as distance and population density. This aspect, in which people are expected to move from low- to high-income areas, and from densely to sparsely populated areas, that is, the general notion that migratory movements tend towards a certain economic-spatial balance, it has been kept alive in the work of many demographers, geographers and economists ever since.

Low incomes cause workers to move to high income and labor shortage regions [3]. Migration will make labor less scarce in the destination and scarcer in the sending country. In a perfectly neoclassical world, this process of factor price equalization will occasionally result in increasing convergence between incomes at the sending and receiving place. In the long term, the process described would cause an elimination of incentives to emigrate [2].

At the micro level, neoclassical migration theory views migrants as individual, rational actors, who decide to move based on a cost-benefit calculation. Assuming they have free choice and full access to information, they are expected to go where they can be more productive, that is, where they can earn higher income.

Neoclassical migration theory sees rural-urban migration as a constitutive part of the entire development process, whereby surplus labor in the rural sector provides the labor force for the urban industrial economy. By positing that it is a well-known fact of economic history that material progress has generally been associated with the gradual but continuous transfer of economic agents from traditional field-based agriculture to modern industry-oriented agriculture.

The expected income in the destination area depends not only on the actual economic income in the intended place, but also on the probability of employment. The assumption is that, as long as income differences between rural and urban areas remain high enough to outweigh the risk of becoming unemployed, the appeal of relatively higher permanent stipends will continue to attract a steady flow of rural migrants. Potential gains in the form of high income should be balanced with factors such as: the opportunity costs of migration, travel costs, unemployment during the move and settling in the destination, and the psychological costs of migration.

In fact, the costs and risks associated with migration, particularly the international one, explain why it is generally not the poorest who emigrate and why social networks are so crucial in lowering the material and psychological thresholds for emigration.

Further extension of the model is possible by interpreting it within a human capital framework, in which migration is considered an investment decision. In economic theory, human capital has been increasingly recognized as a crucial factor in the process of economic development in modernizing societies. Human capital theory assumes that personal assets such as skills, education, and physical abilities are fundamental capitals that drive economic production [2].

Depending on the specific type of labor demand in migrant-receiving areas, migrants will be more likely to be selected based on their specific skills and educational background. This allows to theoretically explain why the probability of migration decreases with age and why people with higher education often show a greater propensity to emigrate. The most important analytical and methodological implication of this is that researchers must not only pay attention to the variables added to the labor market, such as divergences in both employment and income, but they must also take into account the structure internal integration and the segmentation of labor markets, as well as the relevance of individual socio-economic characteristics and capital in the decision to emigrate.

## 4. Migration, Economy and Employment

It is known that human mobility is essential for global wealth. Migrants make relevant contributions, as they are appropriately considered as vehicles of development that reinforce cooperation between countries of origin and host and contribute to development through investment and remittances.

Migration currently has mainly to do with work, with the production of goods and services in the world and, therefore, with the reproduction of capital [4], as established by neoclassical theory.

Whether or not globalization contributes to greater global expansion for a larger percentage of the world's population, the need for greater migration must be recognized and focused. This challenge is only exacerbated by the increased human

movement expected and occurring as a result of low incomes or labor shortages in their countries.

The forces driving migration are numerous and complicated, and global justifications may not apply to all individual circumstances. Hunger, poverty, wars, repression and lack of employment are among the main reasons for migration [4]; also other reasons can be the population's burden on limited natural resources, the income gap between poor and rich nations, increasing urbanization and the deficiency of human rights.

Furthermore, civil conflict can affect the displacement of people from their homes, pushing them to seek temporary protection in nearby countries. Over the past decade, the number of global refugees increased to about 18.5 million in 1990-95, but in 2005 it fell to about 13.5 million. In the future, global warming may increase migratory demands. However, contemporary international migration is often justified by growing discrepancies between nations and the absence of fair and decent employment, human security and individual freedoms in some countries [4].

Additionally, about 40 million new workers are added to the global workforce each year. The world population of 6.7 billion in 2006 has grown about 75 million each year, mainly in developing countries. In addition, global employment in 2006 was estimated at around 2.9 billion people and an estimated 195.2 million were unemployed, which represents around 6.3% of the world's active population. On the other hand, there is a projection of 7.7 billion people worldwide in 2019, also showing that the population global could increase to approximately 8.5 billion in 2030 [5].

According to some studies, almost half a billion people work fewer paid hours than they would like or have little and adequate access to paid work. Likewise, there is a disparity between the supply and demand of labor that goes beyond unemployment and reaches a broader underutilization of labor. In addition, of the global unemployment figure (188 million), 165 million people do not have sufficient paid labor and 120 million have given up actively seeking employment or, if not, lack of access to the labor market. Overall, more than 470 million people in the world are affected [6].

Farmers in developing countries have a strong economic reason to migrate. Many industrialized nations received enormous immigration in the 1950s and 1960s, and similar movements are evident today in many major source nations, such as: China, Mexico, and Turkey. In 2005, around 40% of the world's workers were hired in agriculture and in the poorest nations this productive area is often worse off than in

the urban sector [4].

Certainly, the world's urban population has expanded very rapidly (from 220 million to 2.8 billion) during the 20th century and for the coming decades there is the expectation of a scale of urban expansion, mainly in developing countries [5].

## 4.1. Migration: Reasons and Consequences

In relation to the countries of origin, the first thing that stands out are the advantages that are represented by remittances of immigrants, as well as the reduction of unemployment and poverty in their countries of origin; but this situation also leads to disadvantages, such as the loss of the young population, the productive workforce and the possibility of massive returns.

On the other hand, there is also an economic impact on the host countries, such as the immediate contribution to economic growth, the absorption of qualified labor at no cost and competitive young labor in the market. However, the biggest drawbacks are in the labor market itself when the local workforce is displaced, which increases unemployment, the pressure that the host country's social budget may receive, and possible ethnic and discriminatory conflicts.

Important points regarding migrations:

1. People migrate for many reasons, some of which include economic or political reasons, family reunification, natural disasters, or the desire to change their environment.
2. Immigration can represent an expansion of the labor supply in the host country.
3. Host countries face a variety of challenges due to immigration, including population surges, support services, employment, and national security.
4. Receiving countries can also be benefited from the skills of immigrants when they are highly qualified.
5. Reasons for emigrating may include the standard of living not being high enough, the value of income being low, as neoclassical theory asserts, a slow labor market, or a lack of educational opportunities.
6. In the long term, large amounts of emigration will weaken the country of origin by decreasing the productive population, the level of production and economic spending.
7. If it is only one member of a family who emigrate, a reason is to get a better job in the host country to send remittances to his/her family.



**Figure 1.** Percentages of the most common reasons to migrate [7].

The reasons abovementioned are powerful, thus allow to understand that ten nations in the world host a little more than 50% of the immigrants from around the world and where the United States hosts almost 20% of the total flow of 46.6 million people who have left their countries to settle in this nation for different reasons. The United States registered 23.3 million migrants in 1990, number that doubled in 2016, 46.6 million. Furthermore, at the beginning of the XXI century there were 173 million immigrants in the world, rising to 244 million in 2016, including 20 million refugees [8].

## 4.2. Brain Drain

Migrants whose abilities highly match with the requirements of the recipient country can also be crucial for their nations of origin. Thus, their emigration may generate circumstances in which the interests of both countries, of origin and destination are not lined up.

The exodus of highly qualified people from developing countries is commonly referred to as a brain drain. It is an obstacle to growth when the costs to the home country from losing a highly skilled human resource exceed the benefits from the remittances and the expertise the worker has.

The emigration of highly trained labourers is a worldwide phenomenon. It depicts at about 4% of the high-qualified people of developed member states of the OECD, faintly over 10% for middle-income nations, and roughly 20% for low-income states. High-educated are usually very demand in many receiver countries, and these expats have better job offers abroad. The emigration proportion for persons with a tertiary schooling is 7.3 times that of persons with only a primary schooling and 3.5 times that of persons with only secondary schooling. For instance, 25.6% of Cambodians (average age of 25) with post-secondary education live abroad, likened with 6.7% of those with a primary or secondary schooling [9].

The emigration figures of highly educated labors are particularly high in low-income states. In Sub-Saharan Africa and in SIDS in the Caribbean and the Pacific, the emigration figures of the highly qualified are 30 times upper than those of the less educated. More than 40% of all highly educated people born in Small Island Developing countries have emigrated to another state. In 2018, around 25,000 doctors schooled in Sub-Saharan Africa—that means, almost one-quarter of the total amount of African physicians —were working in OECD states [9].

Tertiary-educated emigration regularly emerges from the economic constrains in the home nations. Some high-qualified manpower is not hired at their complete productive capacity locally. For instance, defies in supplying basic health care services in some states emerge not only from the lack of health professionals, but also from the scarcity of supplies, medicines, and provisions in the health care system. Sometimes, the decision to migrate is related not only to the wage but also to professional advancement expectations, better provisions, and family safety.

## 5. Globalization and Migration

Migration, in a sense of transnational human mobility, is a relevant characteristic of globalization. In this sense, globalization was defined as the acceleration of political, environmental, economic, cultural and global interconnection and interdependence for decades, with different authors who place it at different starting points. In general, globalization became an inevitable process since the 1980s, and in the 1990s it penetrated the public vocabulary, at least in Western countries. While the course of globalization is unbounded by the global expansion of Western capitalism, it is driven primarily by capital's intrinsic expansionism toward new investment markets and new sources of cheap labor.

Increasingly isolated parts of the world are joining the global web of interdependence and interconnection through globalization as a repercussion of migration. Nowadays, the whole world is affected by globalization and people want to undertake the exploration of foreign lands in search of better economic opportunities, security, adventure or knowledge. More people than ever are moving, and transnational migration generally varies in a multitude of forms, including immigrants, international students, temporary migrants, asylum seekers, professional transients, temporary workers and tourists [10].

In the case where goods and capital move freely across borders – in recent decades, free trade has become the best economic practice for countries' governments, against migration; while unlimited capital flows through major global exchanges and associated financial markets control the global economy. However, the movements of people are much more contentious, and this is one of the issues disputed among developed countries.

Over the centuries, developed nations have benefited from migration in several ways. The main ways of exploiting migration for unilateral economic gain included forced labor migration, such as the slave trade, which led to millions of Africans emigrating to the United States and thousands of indentured workers to Australia and other countries. Today, the way to benefit from migration in developed countries is through the brain drain, a phenomenon explained above. It is noteworthy that one of the most famous places resulting from the brain drain is the technological center Silicon Valley in the United States.

The technological advances generated by globalization in developed countries made migrants with tertiary education the most sought after segment of the global workforce. In recent decades, the development of information and communications technologies has generated several new professions. Rapid urbanization and the expansion of tertiary education in Asian countries, such as: China and India, enabled enormous flows and "brain drain" as numerous educated Asians migrated to the West in search of economic opportunities and better jobs. Asia and the Pacific are the most notable sources of highly skilled workers migrating to the West.

Likewise, demands for greater efficiency in production in response to intense global competition have meant that workers are gradually living in an interconnected world, following greater labor mobility. Furthermore, the search for employment and economic development have been the main reasons for most human mobility in the XXI century, as explained by neoclassical migration.

The need to increase efficiency in production in response to intense global competition has meant that workers, no matter where they come from, are progressively living in an interconnected world of work, resulting in greater labor mobility [11].

This situation has been mainly due to a growing shortage of local labor available or willing to participate in low or semi-skilled jobs, such as construction, agriculture, domestic care or hospitality.

According to demographic data, Africa's working-age population is estimated to triple from 408 million in 2005 to 1.12 billion in 2050, while one study argues that the People's Republic of China and India are expected to account for 40% of the global workforce by 2030 [11].

Globally, there are individuals who face scenarios of insufficiency, impediments and exclusion, which are shown in unemployment and underemployment, mediocre, unstable and insecure jobs, low income, absence of rights at work, discrimination for gender or other reasons, scarcity of representation, and little or no social protection and security. The lack of decent work is a very relevant reason for international migration, since individuals are forced to seek better jobs and living standards in other nations. Globalization has allowed the increase in these discrepancies between nations, thus contributing to the increase in migrations.

#### *Types of Migration*

The most common types of migration according to the factors people were pushed to emigrate:

1. Labour migration. Current tendency in highly qualified migration is a result of both sides of the migration process. The emigration of highly educated people is, however, an outcome of the growing expectations among the well trained (contrary to people with less education), beside the shortage of opportunities in the nations of origin. These issues concur with structural circumstances in the host state, which pretend to fill labour scarcities in high-tech fields [12, 13].
2. Family migration, refers to the outflow of people who migrate due to new or established family links. To relocate for family motives may comprehend from the adoption of a foreign child to family members going to the migrant workers or refugees, people forming new family with host country residents. Eventually, the first form of family migration remains family reunification: when family members reunite with those who migrated anteriorly [12, 13].
3. Humanitarian migration is the emigration of people who feel in some way pressed to move. There are three forms of humanitarian migration: refugees, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking. A refugee is a person who is compelled to flee his/her country and unwilling/unable to go back because of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion [12, 13]. Refugee migrations are difficult to estimate due to the discrepancy in statistics, however, it is presumed that by 2023, refugees reached 35.3 million [14]. An asylum seeker is someone who needs international protection in a host nation, and whose application has yet to be processed. Victims of trafficking are people who have been intimidated or menaced to be transported, recruited or oppressed with intentions such as forced labour, sexual exploitation, or slavery, or traffic of organs [12, 13].
4. International students. Internationally mobile students are persons who have traversed an international frontier



between two nations with the purpose of participating in academic studies in the host state. [13, 15].

5. Irregular Migration. Forms of irregularity vary and can comprise persons who traversed a border illegally as well as visa over-stayers, migrants who gained the illegal status because of joblessness or breach with some conditions, and denied asylum seekers [13].

## 6. Conclusions

Given the multiple dimensions of migration and the complex relationship with development, it is not surprising to observe that international migration now occupies a place of increasing priority in the scope of concerns of governments, civil society and the international community in general. Many of the concerns raised are not essentially new, but have had unprecedented dissemination. This becomes more relevant when considering the scenario of globalization and regionalism, which translates into a growing division of labor, a multilateralization of trade liberalization, a revaluation of integration and a notorious boom in communications sheltered by new technologies, which generates a set of transformations that have until now been difficult to evaluate.

The prominence that is being given to the subregional processes of economic and commercial integration in Latin America and the Caribbean in the prelude to the constitution of a hemispheric free trade area, has begun to extend to its political and social expressions. Many concerns converge to highlight the importance that could be attributed to international migration. Hence, it is not surprising to note that international migration and the various forms of mobility constitute a pending issue in the context of the integration of countries, despite the recognition of their close relationships with the development and maintenance of migratory trends in various regions.

On the other hand, it can be stated that migration enriches countries at a global level, since the work carried out by the immigrant in the new country of residence not only benefits the latter by the young labor but also the nation of origin with the reduction of poverty, sending remittances to their families and if they invest the money received, they would benefit the country of origin even more with the capital generated. In addition, these migrations can lead to a rapprochement between the government of the nation of origin and the recipient, to the point of establishing economic treaties for mutual benefit.

Similarly, migrations will continue to exist as long as the world population continues increasing and the governments of the sending countries do not improve the labor supply and living conditions for their population. In addition, it is necessary for countries of origin, which are generally developing countries, to pay greater attention to their highly qualified human talent that is “absconding” because they cannot find decent work in line with their educational background. These countries must generate policies in such a way that they can

obtain greater benefit from this human resource.

Globalization leads to interconnections between different societies worldwide, and this should be leveraged by developing nations, for technological, scientific and economic benefit, since family remittances are not enough, due to most of them are destined consumption, rather than investment. If governments build networks with their emigrated population, this could stimulate investment and technological transfer to the countries of origin, generating economic development in them, which would lead to the generation of more employment, therefore, a decrease in emigrations. In other words, home countries can create policies and engage in bilateral cooperation with host countries to increment the net impact of migration on poverty decrease.

## Abbreviations

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

SIDS: Small Island Developing States

## Author Contributions

Ivonne Bonilla is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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