Migration Between Achieving Material Goals And Social Failure: A Sociodemographic Study On Migrants From Algeria To The West

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Abstract:

Migration is one of the factors that affect population movement, producing effects on both the population-expelling and receiving countries. For societies, this is a matter of consideration, whereas for individuals, migration often involves personal goals they aim to achieve, unless forced, as in cases of war, for example.
This paper highlights the experiences of individuals migrating in pursuit of their aspirations versus the negative realities they encountered, which were not anticipated until faced in reality. This is through the testimonies of two individuals who have been living abroad for years, with whom several interviews were conducted.
The study found that despite the material gains migrants achieve, they suffer from difficulties in social and cultural integration in their host societies.

Keywords: Migration, Material Goals, Sociodemographic.

1. Introduction:

The topic of migration can be approached from various demographic, economic, social, cultural, or even political angles. By distinguishing between population-expelling and attracting countries, these domains may either attract or repel population. Migrants may also impact the social, economic, and cultural composition of the destination country.
Migrants themselves are influenced by the characteristics of the country they arrive in. On the other hand, individuals may migrate voluntarily or involuntarily, for academic or practical goals for themselves and their families, or due to forced circumstances such as war or political issues. Many find conditions in the attracting country that they believe can lead to positive outcomes for themselves and their families.
However, not everything an individual strives for can be achieved. Apart from whether a person achieves their initial goals upon migrating, there are numerous instances of unsuccessful migrations, even though some may attain their desires but at the cost of facing unexpected realities.
Thus, the study attempts to answer the following questions:
- Does the decision to migrate require first understanding its positives or negatives?
- Can we predict what we will experience in the host country before migrating?

2. Study Concepts:

2.1 Migration:
➢ **Linguistically:**
Derived from the trilateral root "hajara," meaning to leave a place or abandon something (Sawsan, 2023, p. 1212).

➢ **Conceptually**:
Definitions of migration vary and diversify depending on the perspective of each field concerned with this term, from demographers to sociologists, etc. However, they generally agree that migration is derived from the act of leaving - as mentioned in the linguistic definition - and migration is the opposite of connecting. Al-Zubaidi defines leaving as migrating, with "hijra" (migration) by opening and "hijran" (abandonment) by breaking.
The migration of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) is among the most famous migrations in history. Feeling threatened by rulers and assassination attempts, he decided to migrate with those who believed in his message from the land of "Ur"

to the Levant, and then to Egypt due to drought and famine, where he was gifted a servant named "Hagar" (Al-Abideen, 2017, p 72). The rest of Prophet Ibrahim's story is well-known to Muslims.

From a sociodemographic perspective, migration, according to Gonnard's definition, is "leaving one country to join another, whether from birth or after a long period, with the intention of permanent residence, often with the aim of improving one's situation through work" and is one of the most significant factors and reasons leading to migration (Al-Abideen, 2017, p 72) (as we will mention later (see page 10)).

It's important to note here that migration is of two types: voluntary migration, where the individual decides to migrate of their own free will, and forced migration, which compels an individual or group to leave their country or the area they reside in due to being a danger. Generally, whether we talk about migration, displacement, exile, or eviction, they all have the same meaning.

When an Algerian is told they are a migrant, displaced, or exiled, it reflects the Arabic saying "A coerced brother is no hero," indicating that some migrants were forcibly relocated, and there are those who chose migration reluctantly, thus called voluntary migrants. There are also those who were moved on ships under different conditions and migrated out of the country, thus also called migrants (Fatima, 2017, p 124).

Naturally, everyone forced to migrate is compelled, as even those who chose to migrate to improve their conditions that were not favorable in their country are also compelled to migrate. If conditions were favorable and good, they would not have migrated. Therefore, it's also appropriate to consider them among the migrants forced to do so from a social perspective, Allah knows best.

Regardless of whether migration is voluntary or coerced, such a migrant will live in estrangement or alienation, as it is said. Here, the term alienation is not meant in the economic sense used by Karl Marx[*] in his critique of capitalism but means living as a stranger in an unfamiliar society. Alienation, as seen by the social specialist **Abdelmajid Al-Basir**, means "moving away from a familiar place and its absence and distancing from it, as well as the estrangement and distance from the familiar, meaning that the word 'estrangement' is the opposite of the familiar" (Al-Basir, 2010, page 68).

This is the issue that led us to delve into this topic in terms of the success or failure of migration goals and attempting to reveal its harshness and the negative aspects that may be hidden from many. This will be the focus of Section 6, "**The Social Implications of Migration on Migrants**" (starting from page 9).

2.2 Material Goals:
The researcher refers to material goals as those objectives related to the material aspect that the migrating person wishes to achieve, such as earning wealth, improving their monthly salary, or acquiring a house and car, etc.

2.3 Sociodemographic Characteristics:
The researcher refers to sociodemographic characteristics as dual-relationship variables in terms of impact and influence by demographic and social factors. Often, phenomena intersect with others, such as migration - our main variable of study - which significantly affects population movement (increase and decrease) and also affects those moving to other countries or regions socially, as do the societies that receive migrants in terms of societal composition and change.

3. Method and Tools:

3. 1 Methodology:
The methodology, as defined by the philosophical lexicon, is "a specific means to achieve a particular end" (Philosophical, p 195).

Bittle generally defines a method as "the correct arrangement of mental operations that we perform in the process of discovering the truth and demonstrating it" (Bittle, p 270).

The choice of methodology may vary depending on the nature of the phenomenon being studied and the objective of the study.

This research paper, aiming to study the phenomenon of migration and its outcomes on migrants, is primarily a demographic study with social and economic dimensions. We have chosen the descriptive method, through which we analyze the data and information obtained and then derive the conclusions.

2.3. Tool:
The tools used in any research vary depending on its sample characteristics, and the nature of our research "Migration Between Achieving Material Goals and Social Failure" required us to use interviews.

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[*]**Karl Marx (1818-1883)**: A German economist and social theorist, he defined alienation as living in a class society where one is estranged from their humanity due to not being economically and socially independent, being considered property by the bourgeoisie who own the means of production, thus criticizing capitalism.

The interview technique allows the researcher to gain depth in understanding the characteristics of their sample, making the obtained information live and profound. "It involves face-to-face interaction, where the researcher can intervene during the interrogation to clarify a word or idea serving their research, thus allowing for precise and comprehensive information on a specific issue" (Ibrahim, 2014, p 28).

For this research paper, we conducted several interviews with two Algerian migrants who are currently living abroad. One of them migrated after their immigration request to Canada was accepted, and the other migrated illegally. The objectives that led them to migrate were similar, involving improving their living conditions and building a better future.

It is worth mentioning that we conducted several interviews with them using internet communication techniques due to the distance, without relying on an interview guide. All questions posed were derived from reality, considering they are relatives and the discussions were like those between friends.

Due to this friendship and familial connection, we obtained deep information reflecting their particular struggles, beyond the positive outcomes known to everyone. What was of interest in these dialogues is the harsh reality they may not share with anyone other than close relatives, which will be the focus of this work, God willing.

4. Types of Migration and Their Causes:

Migration has many types and classifications. If classified geographically, it can be divided into internal migration and external migration. If classified by desire, it can be split into forced migration and voluntary migration, as well as into immigration and emigration.

Other classifications include permanent versus temporary migration based on time, or individual versus mass migration based on numbers.

4. 1 Types of Migration by Geographic Region:

➤ **Internal Migration:**

Internal migration refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one area to another within the same country, whether from a village to a city, city to city, etc., for various reasons such as seeking livelihood or achieving a desired living standard not available in their original location, or the absence of various social amenities related to education, healthcare, transportation, or other public services.

This type of migration can cause an imbalance in population density, decreasing in the area of origin and becoming dense or overcrowded in the destination areas, often leading to the movement of people from rural agricultural areas to cities where factories are located, within the same country.

Motivations for this include material reasons (such as poor living conditions and seeking employment opportunities), population density (which may force the state or individuals themselves to redistribute), climatic motivations (preferring places with moderate weather), or civilizational motivations (due to the presence of advanced facilities and services in the destination regions) (Ismail, 2019, p 124). (For more explanation on the causes of migration, see the section on migration causes and outcomes starting from the end of this page 07).

➤ **External Migration:**

External migration is the second type of migration, meaning crossing from one region or country to another, usually for a year or more according to demographic and social definitions. It can occur legally or illegally. The interviews we conducted with the two cases we focused on in this work serve as a live example of this type of migration.

In the first case, the individual migrated legally after their immigration request was accepted and then moved to Canada. In the second case, due to the difficulties of migration in the 1990s and the challenges in achieving the goals set, the decision was made to head towards England illegally.

The reasons for this type of migration (external migration) were similar for both cases, revolving around improving the standard of living, seeking a better life, and better employment opportunities.

4. 2 Causes of Migration and Its Outcomes:

Migration has various causes, though they may be similar, whether it concerns long or short distances, or a large or small number of migrants. Ultimately, the important factor is the change of original domicile. These reasons can be psychological, social, economic, ideological, among others, as mentioned in the example of external migration.

It's important to note that these factors are not constant; they change according to circumstances, and social studies and research identify new driving or attracting factors for migration every day.

Internal migration differs from external migration for five reasons:

✓ The cost of internal migration is less than external migration due to the shorter distance.
✓ Those undertaking it do not face visa acquisition problems compared to external migration.
✓ The language problem generally does not exist in the case of internal migration.
✓ The psychological readiness of the internal migrant is more comfortable compared to migrating abroad.

✓ There are reverse flows and trends for internal migration through the arrival of new people to those expelling areas from other regions within the country (Ismail, 2019, p 124).

Just as there are causes for migration, there are also general outcomes, perhaps more specific than the causes, which can be summarized as follows:

− An increase in population in the host countries, leading to increased unemployment and urban development, as well as contributing to the inflow of foreign currencies and, conversely, relieving population pressure and its consequences from the countries of origin.
− When a country receives many migrants, especially if forced under unstable political conditions, it means competition for the native population over job opportunities, even at low prices. For economic reasons, this means that business owners and institutions prefer low-cost labor over native workers.
− On the other hand, these migrants, unable to secure suitable housing, contribute to the creation of slums that mar urban landscapes, among other negative impacts of migration on the host country. A prime example of this issue is the political conflicts in neighboring Niger, which is certainly not in Algeria's interest, as deterioration there means the displacement of thousands or millions of people to Algeria, leading to the negative issues discussed.
− An increase in the male population over females in the host country, especially since many conditions hinder female migration.
− Generally, an inability to adapt to the new environment or loss of psychological, health, and security comfort, making the achievement of migration goals and the migrant's ambitions tasteless, as stated by one of our interviewees, even forcing migrants to return to their original homeland, even if it means on a stretcher.
− The mixing of population elements with each other, creating new customs, relationships, and social systems where the dominated are keen to follow the dominant, according to the founder of sociology, Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun[*].
− The acquisition of new labor, qualified or otherwise, which contributes to doubling production and increasing the national output of the host countries.
− Demands for minority rights and integration into civil societies to gain some rights.

Overall, migration has social, economic, cultural, and political outcomes, among others, that may be beneficial or detrimental to the host countries.

More specifically, internal migration results in the following:
- Internal migration serves as a means to balance population numbers and natural resources of wealth, in addition to maximizing the use of human forces.
- It is one of the ways individuals try to find more alignment with the prevailing economic and social system in society.
- The migration of many workers from rural areas to cities and their engagement in the industrial sector, such as laborers, leads to a numerical surplus in this sector, causing an imbalance with other sectors and thus a decline in wages for this labor, resulting in a decrease in the living standards of these individuals to subsistence levels[†], causing misery for these workers.
- The emergence of many problems in cities due to these migrations, such as housing, transportation, public health, leisure, and public service institutions.
- A significant spread of deviant behavior in cities due to migrations and an increase in crime rates of various kinds due to population growth.
- Internal migrations, especially from rural to urban areas, lead to the weakening and disintegration of social bonds among individuals and groups, such as extended families.
- Due to these internal migrations, especially towards cities, there is increased attention to developing and improving cities and their inhabitants at the expense of many other regions, especially rural areas, thus widening the gap between urban and rural areas, leading to the emergence of dual regionalism.
- Internal migrations lead to an imbalance in the social structure and in marriage rates and opportunities due to the differing male-to-female ratios in urban and rural areas (Ismail, 2019, p 124).

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[*]**Ibn Khaldun** (1332-1406): A Muslim Arab scholar, proficient in sociology, philosophy, economics, urban planning, and history, a polymath with expertise in several sciences. Among his most famous works is the Kitab al-'Ibar and the Diwan al-Mubtada wa al-Khabar in the history of Arabs, Persians, and Berbers, and those contemporaneous with them.
[†] **Subsistence Level**: The minimum level of income deemed adequate for living, covering basic needs such as food, drink, clothing, and shelter, without any form of luxury.

Overall, all these outcomes highlighted here relate to countries and societies, whether positive or negative. However, what we will focus on in this work is the impact of migration on individuals, especially concerning negative outcomes, as the positive outcomes may already be known to migrants; if they did not see effectiveness in moving to another country, they would not have migrated in the first place. (This will be the focus starting from page 10).

5. Social Implications of Migration for Migrants:

Before delving into this section, it's important to note that everything discussed here is based on the declarations of two individuals who migrated to different countries with similar objectives. We will summarize what these two expatriates perceive as the reality of living in other countries.

5.1 Positives:
As long as a migrant has chosen a specific country, they perceive positives in that country. They aspire to achieve goals through reaching and living there. Generally, the gains obtained in the host country are mostly material, and can generally be summarized in the following points:
- The two most attractive positives relate to work and education. In terms of education, the level an individual can reach there is high, thereby fulfilling their academic aspirations.
- Regarding work, the job market always requires workers of various specialties, and this varies from country to country. For instance, concerning the two cases interviewed for this study, the first case, who migrated to Canada, encountered no issue in securing employment, nor in transitioning from one job to another, unlike the second case, which headed to England, where job opportunities were scarcer, especially in recent years according to them, making it difficult to find employment.

Another factor between the two cases might be the ease or difficulty of integrating into the job market, given that the first case migrated legally after receiving immigration approval, whereas the second case migrated illegally - as mentioned in the section on external migration in previous research pages - making their primary goal in the initial years to legalize their status first, then to obtain some rights they needed.
- As mentioned, Canada's job market constantly needs foreign migrants - as one of the cases stated - unlike England and other European countries, which have become stricter in providing migration opportunities - as seen by the second interviewed individual.
- Some material dreams that individuals might aspire to in their homeland and search for years are easily attainable in these countries, such as owning a car or a house, or traveling between countries for leisure. In poor countries, these are dreams, while in developed countries, they are almost guaranteed rights by the state for its citizens.
- Regarding raising children and caring for them by providing education, food, health, etc., these aspects are almost guaranteed, especially after the migrant obtains citizenship or if their children are born there in the host country, meaning the provision of a grant that could afford them an easy material life.
- Generally, the term material welfare is easily accessible in these countries, especially if the goal of migration is material sufficiency.

5.2 Negatives:
Like any action or decision one makes in life, migration has its negatives, as well as its positives. However, after extensive discussions with the two cases we focused on in this study, it appears that migration has negative points that only become apparent to those who have lived many years in exile or estrangement. Generally, the negative points of migration (all taken from interviews with the two cases) can be summarized as follows:
- Before deciding to migrate, like any migrant, the hope was to simply live a better life, relating to good upbringing, personal advancement, and forming a family under better material, social, religious, and cultural conditions. However, after successive years, the flaws of the decision to migrate and leave the homeland and family began to emerge, mostly characterized by social, religious, and cultural aspects beyond pragmatic material matters.
- On a personal level, after distancing from one's homeland, one discovers year after year that they will live a non-social life unlike what they were used to in their country. They will not experience the celebrations and holidays they were accustomed to with their family and neighbors. Certainly, they will not wake up on the morning of a holiday and find what they do in their home is the same as what all neighbors, in fact, all the country's citizens, do in terms of holiday celebrations, that is if their employer, who might be non-Muslim or even Muslim, allows them a holiday leave.
- On the other hand, they will not find those social bonds between neighbors that appear in times of joy and sorrow; they will not find themselves surrounded by family and neighbors who inquire about or help them during illness.
- An important matter is the lack of a fundamental factor in life: friends. All relationships in Western countries are built on pragmatic bases without any affection. You might discover after deciding to migrate that you will build relationships

based on interests only, even childhood friends from the country you migrated from will be lost, or you might only talk to them occasionally about topics of need.

- After years, you only hear from them asking for help to migrate or bring something they need when you return to your country, as one of the cases mentioned.
- Even meeting loved ones becomes rare, except for verbal communication by phone, which makes relationships cold even with the closest friends and relatives. They will only inquire about you in their free time.
- Being away from the homeland means missing occasions and events that you should have experienced. What you used to attend physically and emotionally, you now hear about as mere news, like TV news - sadly - such as cases of death, illness, marriage, or any other social event. "May God have mercy on my dear mother," who was ill for years and then passed away while I was just like those who only offer condolences.

This is the declaration of the first case (death of the mother), while the second individual left a wife and children in Algeria, migrating to build a better life for them, as he said. However, years after migrating, he separated from his wife, and his youngest daughter (six years old) was diagnosed with diabetes.

The 14-year-old child, once a top student, became one of those who dropped out, not wanting to continue his education, despite his and his father's hopes for him to become successful in the future. Success abroad and the family turned out like this!!

As for life in the host country for migrants, it is, beyond materialism, a social and psychological ruin. Having heard about the high suicide rates in these countries, which have been the subject of books, like the study by the social scientist **Émile Durkheim**[*], we understood the reason years later (both cases provided similar answers).

When you interact with them, you find they may bond with a dog but not a human. Signs of humanity are almost nonexistent in their societies. After a certain age, a person's connection with their parents and siblings almost entirely ceases, as the phenomenon of **individualism**[†] has grown among them.

If you sit in a public place, you find many who wish to approach someone and confide in them about their problems, goals, and repressions. Nowadays, we hear about suicide cases almost daily; it has become a routine and taken for granted in their society.

Thus, individuals lose their social nature, as described by the sociologist **Ibn Khaldun** when he said, "Humans are social by nature."

As for the family, which one hopes through migration to be happier, more patriotic, and Islamic, being in a society different from what we are accustomed to can complicate achieving family goals:

- All factors of religious education needed for their religious and cultural formation might be missing in non-Muslim host countries. You won't find the Quranic schools that fill every neighborhood, and mosques are few and far between. Even living outside the home there is far from what we hope to teach our children, at least in terms of dress and individual transactions, let alone educational programs that lack our social and religious customs and traditions.
- Even if adapted for Arab and Muslim expatriates in private schools, customs and traditions need to be lived, not taught verbally.
- Once children grow up there, their connection with the homeland begins to wane in favor of the host country, which has provided them materially what they need. You might lose the ability to convince them to return to the homeland in the future, as they might not understand what you say about loving the homeland...
- Legally, a father cannot impose anything on his child that the child does not want after reaching a certain age, unfortunately, in the worst-case scenario, not out of pessimism.
- Regarding laws, raising children is not required nor mandated of parents after a certain age, where a girl, for example, becomes her own mother and father, and your orders are merely advice, not mandates.

6. Conclusion:

Moving to and settling in an unfamiliar place is one of the most crucial decisions an individual must carefully consider, as it can change their life's trajectory. Therefore, before deciding to migrate and leave the country, we must carefully consider the outcomes and goals. Surely, the chance of achieving what a migrant aspires to from their country might be significant in reaching it, as they have earnestly studied the positive aspects of the target country.

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[*] **Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)**: A French sociologist and one of the founding fathers of sociology. His study on the causes of suicide in 1897 concluded that despite appearing as an individual phenomenon based on personal choice and decision, the social world surrounding the individual influences this decision, necessitating a sociological interpretation.
[†] **Individualism**: An ethical stance that advocates for minimal intervention by society, the state, or even close individuals in one's desires, focusing on self-reliance in achieving one's aspirations with complete freedom.

However, they will undoubtedly face realities for which they and their families were not prepared. Not everything an individual desires can be achieved, and not everything they encounter was planned for in advance. There must be sacrifices for a migrant in another country, and the problem for many of us is that we focus on what we will gain by moving to another place and forget what we will sacrifice and miss, especially in a society that is culturally, socially, and religiously strange to us.

In general, we will not insert our opinion here regarding the decision to migrate, whether to support or oppose it. However, we will conclude with the statement of the second case, who repeated the Western proverbs several times, "**home is home**" or "**east or west, my home is best**." Migration may provide a life, but it certainly won't provide family and relatives, and of course, there is no life without a family. He concluded by saying that he arrived in England young but did not experience youth; instead, he knew old age at 24.

As for the first case, his last advice for anyone considering migration was to stay in their homeland and try to build themselves there.

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