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Article

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SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF STUDENTS MIGRATION. A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract

Albeit positive outcomes for migrants and their destination countries, there is a growing body of research claiming that migration of young skilled workforce has a significant impact on the structure of domestic labor market and productivity output of the country of origin. In this context, a significant number of researchers have focused on identifying and analyzing the determinants of labor migration. Exploring the available scientific literature, one could notice a gradual change in the interests of researchers from economic, financial and material determinants to socio-cognitive or socio-psychological factors that influence the migration decisions of individuals. Moreover, several studies have highlighted the role of education in the migration process claiming that individuals with a higher level of education tend to migrate as a consequence of an elaborate decision-making process in which socio-psychological factors play an important part. On the other hand, there is no consensus among scholars on which are the most important socio-psychological determinants or on how these factors effectively impact the intention of individuals to emigrate. In addition, there are insufficient studies and results focusing on the reasons and socio-psychological incentives which are influential on the intention to migrate of young people, in general, and Romanian young people, in particular.

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The rationale of this study lays on the assumption that, in the case of highly qualified young people, the decision to migrate is grounded on the assessment of the potential benefits of migration (potential perceived socio-psychological benefits of settling abroad) in contrast to motivation to remain (personal, professional, or social reasons not to leave the country of origin). Following this line of thinking, we conducted an empirical study based on a sample of students from economic faculties within the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, to identify the socio-psychological factors that make up to these two dimensions. By performing factor analysis, we identified two factors that account for potential benefits of emigration (perceived social performance of destination countries, social and personal integration ability) and three factors that could explain motivation to remain (trust in society from the country of origin, risk aversion, as well as family and friends). The study also reveals that the socio-psychological factors that correlate most with the intention to migrate originate in respondents' perception that they can easily integrate abroad since, in contrast with the home country, the social performance of potential destination countries is higher.

Keywords: students migration, socio-psychological factors, România

JEL Classification: F22, J61, O15

Introduction

The workforce of each country is decisively influenced by three factors: the aging population, education, and migration. Since international migration could raise several major challenges, it has become, in the recent decades, one of the topics of great interest for both scholars and policymakers. While the number of migrants increased massively, both positive and negative outcomes emerged. The total number of international migrants in the world significantly increased reaching almost 272 million in 2019 (3.4% of the global population) (United Nations, 2019). About half of the migrants live in only ten countries, and a third of them come from only ten countries of origin. The number of immigrants living in Europe is about 82 million, representing almost 30% of the world's migrant population, most of them (about 50 million) living in the EU14 + United Kingdom (United Nations, 2019).

According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Romanian diaspora is the fifth largest in the world (OECD, 2019). The emigration phenomenon did not occur during the economic recession of the 1990s, but rather after 2000, when the Romanian economy faced a growth while Europe also encountered an increase in labor demand. The Romanian emigrants' number over the last 20 years was fluctuant, with a clear upward trend in the last 6 years. This trend might be the consequence of the recovery period during '09-'11, followed by an economic growth period in '12-'14 and after that the economic growth slowed and people started to look for jobs in EU countries. However, "low wages were one of the key factors that led to massive labor migration before (and after) the crisis" (Trif, 2014). Between 2015-2016 migration was significant, as emigrants accounted for 17% of the country's total population (OECD, 2019). In the top of the Romanians favorite destination countries were: Italy, where there are over 1 million Romanian emigrants, Germany (680,000) and Spain (573,000) (OECD, 2019). In addition, while immigration increased, it is still lesser than the emigration in the case of Romania (Sandu, 2009; Roman and Voicu, 2010). People that are more inclined to look for a job in another country are between 20 and 49 years old. One could argue that this age groups comprise most of the work

force. After 2014 there was a raise in immigration for all age groups, with a significant spike for 35-39 years group. Moreover, while Romania, like most European countries, is facing a sharp demographic decline, statistics show that the young and the most educated individuals are the most mobile and prone to emigrate (Roman and Voicu, 2010). In recent years, Romanian young people and specialists' migration has increased, adding pressure not only on labor market but also on Romanian economy. Usually, migrants are looking for better living conditions and real opportunities for professional assertion.

Since "the emigration of skilled workers is usually blamed for missing the developing countries of one of their rarest sources, human capital" (Docquier, 2006) and the number of individuals that decided to leave Romania has increased significantly in recent years (OECD, 2019), the analysis of Romanian students' intentions to migrate could be helpful for a better understanding of their future interactions with the labor market and their potential migration behaviors. Therefore, our research focuses on finding the most significant socio-psychological determinants of migration, as well as the main reasons that could prevent the migration of highly qualified young people, such as students.

Although a series of studies focused on material determinants of the decision to migrate, there are still few results that deal with socio-psychological determinants that could impact the intention to emigrate in the case of young people in general, and Romanian young individuals. In this context, following the assumption that economics students studied disciplines in which they have acknowledged the effects of migration and the migrant status, our empirical analysis is directed toward this target group. An additional argument for choosing to analyze this group is grounded on the following hypothesis: economic students are highly qualified individuals and their decision to migrate could trigger real challenges in terms of economic, political, social and demographic change (Marchiori et al., 2013). In addition, the phenomenon of real migration could be better understood from the analysis of the declared intentions of highly qualified young people to leave their country of origin. Moreover, an in-depth knowledge of the socio-psychological determinants of economic students' migration could prove useful in designing appropriate retention policies that are effective for this target group.

Provided that the decision to migrate is the result of an analysis that balances the perceived benefits of emigration with the reasons to remain in the home country, the aim of the paper is to identify and analyze the influence of socio-psychological factors on the potential intention to migrate in the case of economic students. To achieve this goal, the paper was structured in three main sections followed by conclusions. The first section deals with past relevant results and studies focused on determinants of migration, particularly among highly qualified young people. The second section addresses the research methodology emphasizing the objectives, operationalization, sample and empirical analysis methods. The third section reveals the socio-psychological determinants that comprise two specific dimensions, their correlation with the potential intention to migrate and places these results in the context of previous related studies. The last section highlights our main conclusions, theoretical and practical contributions, as well as the limits of the research and potential perspectives of future studies.

1. Literature review

Following aspirations and abilities theory (de Haas, 2014), one could notice that, although local living conditions have improved significantly in the last century, people's general life aspirations have had a more accelerated trend. Education as well as increased exposure to the media, along with the return to home country of "role models" migrants exhibiting their relative wealth have contributed to the rapid growth of material and social ambitions of younger generations (de Haas, 2021). Education can also increase expectations, as it can help adolescents and young adults to presume that better material and cultural lifestyles are within their reach (Czaika and Vothknecht, 2012). International migration has become so strongly associated with material and social success that numerous young people have become increasingly attracted to the idea of leaving. This "culture of migration" has been instrumental for the swift change of the meaning of "good life" and to a growing disappointment with traditional lifestyles (de Haas, 2021).

The "pull-push" model (Lee, 1966) assumes that migration towards regions with opportunities is caused by their lack at home, thus generating waves of migration that push labor between regions. Migration emerges when both "push" and "pull" factors occur (Kline, 2003). According to this model, the "push" factors involve discontents in the country of origin, such as: poverty, unemployment, rapid population growth, political repression, low social status. In contrast, the "pull" factors are welfare, job opportunities, political freedom, education and well-being of the destination country (Dorigo and Tobler, 1983). According to Lee's theory (1966) the chief push factors are unemployment, poverty, low wages and human rights issues in the country of origin, while better circumstances in the host country, such as high life expectancy, economic stability, low birth rates and job availability are the main pull factors. Moreover, there are studies claiming that higher wages for similar jobs in destination countries are also detrimental for migration (Djafar, 2012). A number of researchers assert that, since people with higher levels of subjective well-being are less likely to migrate, subjective well-being assesses better than income the predictors of "silent" migration (Cai et al., 2014).

In the case of highly skilled migration, pull and push factors may vary, being related to diversity, openness, facilities, tolerance, culture, language as well as economic features, such as: income, career, jobs and educational opportunities (Musterd and Gritsai, 2013). Alongside economic factors, migration is strongly associated with politics, environment, culture, health, education and transportation (Zanabazar et al., 2021). Osaki (2003) claims that migration in industrialized states is caused by labor demand and individuals who, intentionally or circumstantially, leave home country to search for employments.

In addition, social networks theory emphasizes the impact of families, friends and communities on the decision to migrate. Within this framework, research is focused on the connections between potential migrants from home countries and actual migrants living in destination countries (van Meeteren and Pereira, 2016). Reviewing relevant empirical studies, Guhlich (2017) claims that family and social networks are crucial for the migration process. Moreover, social networks enhance knowledge by reducing information and communication costs, since information is exchanged through groups with high social capital (Nathan, 2014).

Kodrzycki (2001) finds strong evidence that US college graduates are more likely to migrate than those without a degree. Groen (2004) shows that the choice to study in a certain country

increases the probability of working in that country once the studies are completed. Malamud and Wozniak (2010) study how graduation in the US affects the likelihood of long-distance travel to an individual's place of birth. They find that attending college increases, by 35 percentage points, the likelihood that a person will live outside the state in which they were born. Socio-cognitive and socio-psychological research has also found that individuals who are considering migrating engage in more prospective thinking than others, nurturing "optimistic prospecting for the future" (Koikkalainen and Kyle, 2016).

A series of studies reveal that students could be a valuable resource for innovation and growth (Gaule, 2013). Usually, most of them want to migrate to richer EU Member States, therefore their migration would have significant positive impact on the competitiveness of these countries as well as on the entire European economy (Van Mol, 2016).

When it comes to the students migration determinants, a research conducted by Piguet et al. (2020) among French-speaking students in West Africa identified the following drivers: ethnicity, financial resources, past migration history and social networks. These results show that the national context together with the support of the family also plays an important role in the decision to migrate in the case of students (Piguet et al., 2020). In addition, Szigeti (2020) showed that about one in two PhD students at the University of Debrecen (Hungary) intends to settle abroad for one of the following as main reasons: challenges, better quality of life and financial issues. The same study highlights that the migration intentions of doctoral students are independent of gender, age, marital status, source of mobility capital and educational level of parents (Szigeti, 2020). Moreover, Lučanská et al. (2020), in the case of Bulgarian students, identifies the high desire for change as another determinant of migration while high levels of well-being can simultaneously prevent and encourage emigration. In the case of Eastern European students, it has been found, that the propensity to migrate is higher where family affiliation is lesser (Frieze et al., 2004). Other studies link parents' religiosity to their intention to emigrate, showing that parental religiosity has an important impact on children's social capital (Waite and Lehrer, 2003), causing them to be more attached to their local networks and less likely to migrate.

The research of Sandu et al. (2018) indicates that the main motivational factors that led over time to young Romanians migration are related to jobs and welfare. Job motivation, employment and salary level are key determinants for effective migration, return and potential migration of young Romanians (Sandu et al., 2018). The same study shows that non-immigrants in Romania are much more likely than former migrants to consider that friends and relatives are important factors in making the decision to remain at home. In addition, OECD research highlights that almost two thirds of Romanian migrants settled in other EU member states claimed the need to find a better paid job as the main reason for leaving the home country, family being the second reason (OECD, 2019).

A study focused on the intention to migrate of Romanian economics students from the universities of Iași, Cluj-Napoca and Sibiu highlighted the strong influence of the recognition of personal value on migration intentions. Other significant predictors are: parental patterns, favoritism, individual freedom and religiosity (Plopeanu et al., 2018). Another study also conducted on economics students in Romania and the Republic of Moldova shows that the most important factor that generates migration is the lack of internal development of an environment that rewards meritocracy (Plopeanu et al., 2019). The same study identifies factors that display a strong sensitivity to interaction with local institutions such as the perception that only through favoritism a better job could be acquired. Moreover, the study

reveals that cultural, identity and historical values are not entirely relevant for young people since students who place little emphasis on traditions and history are more prone to leave the home country (Plopeanu et al., 2019). Similar research carried out by Ghergeș et al. (2020) highlights that not only the migration intentions of Romanian engineering students are high, but also employment opportunities and conditions in Romania are perceived as disadvantageous, compared to those available in what is generally referred to as "the former member states of the European Union". An additional recent study (Duica et al., 2021), which analyzes the intention to migrate in the case of Romanian medical students, shows that 85% of the students from a sample of 1516 respondents would want to practice medicine abroad, even for a limited time. The results show that students from southern Romania want to migrate to France, those from the northwest and center choose to practice medicine in Germany, and students from the east would like to go to the UK. On the other hand, the research concludes that better working conditions is the main factor for leaving the country rather than higher wages (Duica et al., 2021).

To sum up, the literature review leads to a series of conclusions related to migration process among highly qualified young people. First, young people seem to have significant appetite for migration while higher education increases this interest. On the other hand, even though there are several models that attempt to explain the migration phenomenon in general, the effort to identify and analyze the determinants for migration in the case of students continues to raise interest among researchers. Although most studies identify the income gap as a determinant of migration, particularly for students in emerging countries, more recent research put more emphasis on the influence of socio-psychological factors (family, challenges, opportunities, employment conditions, quality of life, the desire for change, the social environment, the degree of development of society, individual freedom, values, traditions, etc.) on the intention to migrate.

2. Research methodology

The inquiry of the literature reveals a gradual change in the interests of researchers from financial and material determinants to socio-cognitive or socio-psychological factors that influence the decision to migrate. Moreover, multiple studies have highlighted the role of education in the migration process claiming that, in the case of individuals with a higher level of education, the choice to migrate follows an elaborate decision-making process in which socio-psychological factors play an important part. On the other hand, albeit significant number of studies, there is a lack of consensus on which are the most important socio-psychological determinants and on how they effectively influence the intention of individuals to emigrate. In addition, while most research focuses on the analysis of economic determinants, there are yet just a few studies and results that refer to the reasons and socio-psychological incentives that determine the intention to migrate as regards young people and particularly Romanian youth. In this context, the present study is an attempt to cover this knowledge gap by analyzing a series of potential socio-psychological factors that make their mark on the intention to migrate in case of Romanian economics students.

Our research is built on the assumption that the young people decision to migrate is the consequence of assessing potential perceived socio-psychological benefits of settling abroad in contrast to personal, professional, or social reasons to remain in the home country. Based on this hypothesis, the research first focuses on identifying the factors that make up the two

socio-psychological dimensions analyzed: potential benefits of migration and motivation to remain. Next, we investigate the influence of the socio-psychological factors identified within the two dimensions on the potential intention to migrate.

To capture these aspects from an empirical point of view, the analysis focuses on the following items: (1) the potential intention to migrate; (2) dimension - potential benefits of migration and (3) dimension - motivation to remain in the home country. Following previous research (Musterd and Gritsai, 2013; Koikkalainen and Kyle, 2016; Plopeanu et al., 2018), the potential benefit of migration has been operationalized through the following statements: (2.1) I feel that I could better fit into society abroad, (2.2) I feel that my skills would be better used abroad, (2.3) I feel that I would have more professional opportunities abroad, (2.4) I feel that I would have more personal opportunities abroad, (2.5) People seems to be behave more civilized abroad, (2.6) The compliance to rules is stronger abroad, (2.7) people seems to have more positive social attitudes abroad, (2.8) The society as a whole seems to be more efficient abroad. Consistent with previous studies (Frieze et al., 2004; Sandu et al., 2018), the motivation to remain in the country was operationalized through the following items: (3.1) family and relatives, (3.2) friends, (3.3)) the desire for self-fulfillment in my own country, (3.4) the opportunities I could find in my own country, (3.5) the feeling of debt to the society in which I was born, (3.6) the fear of the unknown, (3.7) distance from home. A 5-point Likert scale has been used for all statements.

To identify and analyze from an empirical standpoint the socio-psychological determinants of Romanian of young people intention to migrate, our study is built on data collected through an online survey randomly administered, during March 2020, to students from Bucharest University of Economic Studies. We choose to center our analysis on students because, on the one hand, they show a significant intention to migrate (Sandu et al., 2018; Plopeanu et al., 2018; Ghergeș et al., 2020; Serban-Oprescu et al., 2020), and on the other hand, students are highly qualified individuals whose migration causes significant economic, political, social and demographic changes (Marchiori et al., 2013). From all the potential target group, we have only focus economics students since, having in mind the nature of their studies, this category is a well-informed public that acknowledge the effects of migration, the migrant status, and challenges to adjust to a new environment (Serban-Oprescu et al., 2020). Moreover, our decision to select a sample of students from Bucharest University of Economic Studies is grounded on the relevance of this university for Romania economic higher education. Ranking in the top 501 - 600 globally and in first place in Romania, according to the Times Higher Education World University Ranking 2022 (THE, 2021) and with approximately 27,000 enrolled students, this university is one of the largest and most prestigious universities in the field of economics and business in Southeast Europe, (Piroșcă et al., 2020). Furthermore, the empirical results emerged from the analysis of this kind of sample, added to similar research focused on alternative economic universities (Plopeanu et al., 2018; Plopeanu et al., 2019) or other types of Romanian universities (Ghergeș et al., 2020), could provide a more complete understanding of the intention to migrate and its determinants for these individuals.

Within our sample (N=429), the majority of respondents (84.6%) are between 18 and 22 years old, most of them are female (67.6%), 68.3% are undergraduate students and the rest are master's students. When compared to the total population of students from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (27598) the sample is representative, at least in terms of its

size and structure by level of studies. In addition, since our analysis is rather exploratory, the selected sample could help to identify significant trends that could be further explored.

From all submitted questionnaires, 418 were validated for this analysis.

The data analysis was performed using SPSS 26 software, and the descriptive statistics of the collected data are displayed in table no. 1.

Table no. 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Std. Dev	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Potential intention to migrate (M)	2.83	3.00	1.161	1.348	-0.012	-0.766
Social integration (BM_socintegr)	3.28	3.00	1.010	1.020	-0.699	0.631
Skills (BM_skill)	3.64	4.00	0.958	0.918	-0.730	1.009
Professional opportunities (BM_profopp)	3.92	4.00	0.954	0.909	-1.037	1.513
Personal opportunities (BM_persopp)	3.71	4.00	1.076	1.158	-0.971	0.829
Social behavior (BM_socbeh)	4.04	4.00	0.932	0.932	-1.294	2.090
Social compliance (BM_soccompl)	4.11	4.00	0.890	0.792	-1.280	2.447
Social attitudes (BM_socatt)	4.02	4.00	0.899	0.808	-1.158	2.103
Efficient society (BM_effsoc)	4.12	4.00	0.818	0.670	-1.169	2.591
Family (RS_fam)	4.29	5.00	0.949	0.901	-1.447	1.786
Friends (RS_frd)	3.69	4.00	1.065	1.134	-0.466	-0.470
Self fulfilment (RS_sfull)	3.70	4.00	1.091	1.190	-0.677	-0.149
Opportunities (RS_opp)	3.10	3.00	1.099	1.208	-0.080	-0.536
Sense of duty (RS_duty)	2.95	3.00	1.211	1.466	-0.099	-0.913
Fear of unknown (RS_fear)	2.93	3.00	1.212	1.469	0.029	-0.857
Distance (RS_dist)	3.03	3.00	1.260	1.587	-0.061	-0.953

Since we are measuring perceptions, we computed Cronbach's alpha coefficients to verify the internal consistency of the scales. In the case of items which measure the potential benefits of emigration, Cronbach's alpha is 0.882, and for the variables that measure the motivation to remain Cronbach's alfa is 0.802. In both cases the coefficients are higher than 0.7, value often accepted in the literature (Christmann and Van Aelst, 2006).

To better grasp the determinants of the potential intention to migrate, the study uses a factor analysis. This method allows, on the one hand, the reduction of data since the number of variables is quite high (8 variables to describe the potential benefits of migration and 7 variables to identify the reasons to remain), and, on the other on the other hand, it provides

a clearer overview of the topic. Through factor analysis, the data set is brought in a compressed form, allowing to only highlight of the main components. To verify if the sample is adequate and the data are suitable for this type of analysis, the Kaiser - Meyer - Olkin (KMO) test and the Bartlett Sphericity Test were performed, the results of which are summarized for each dimension in table no. 2.

Table no. 2. KMO and Bartlett test

Dimension	No. items	KMO	Bartlett χ^2 , Df, p ¹
Potential benefits of migration	8	0,861	1758.395, 28, ****
Motivation to remain	7	0,742	1018.730, 21, ****

¹ - χ^2 - chi square, Df – degree of freedom, p – probability (****p < 0,001; *** p < 0,01; ** p < 0,05; * p < 0,1)

According to the results shown in table no. 2, the data are suitable for factor analysis (Beavers et al., 2013). Under these conditions, the factors for each dimension were extracted retaining only factors with Eigen value over 1. The retained factors were rotated using Kaiser-Varimax method which allows an easier interpretation of the results (Kaiser, 1958). The results in the case of the two dimensions studied is summarized in table no. 3.

Table no. 3. Factor analysis results

Dimension	No. Ext factors	% cumulative variance expl.	Factor loadings (rotated matrix)			
			Item	Factor 1 (F1.1)	Factor 2 (F1.2)	
Potential benefits of migration	2	69.58	Social integration (BM_socintegr)	0.207	0.677	
			Skills (BM_skill)	0.249	0.772	
			Professional opportunities (BM_profopp)	0.260	0.830	
			Personal opportunities (BM_persopp)	0.287	0.775	
			Social behavior (BM_socbeh)	0.820	0.269	
			Social compliance (BM_soccompl)	0.879	0.172	
			Social attitudes (BM_socatt)	0.774	0.309	
			Efficient society (BM_effsoc)	0.766	0.376	
Motivation to remain	3	77.69	Item	Factor 1 (F2.1)	Factor 2 (F2.2)	Factor 3 (F2.3)
			Family (RS_fam)	0.121	0.071	0.889
			Friends (RS_frd)	0.183	0.207	0.810
			Self fulfilment (RS_sfull)	0.786	0.088	0.353
			Opportunities (RS_opp)	0.850	0.128	0.052
			Sense of duty (RS_duty)	0.790	0.278	0.097
			Fear of unknown (RS_fear)	0.163	0.912	0.065
Distance (RS_dist)	0.212	0.855	0.235			

As displayed, in the case of potential benefits of migration the first two factors together explain 69.58% of the total variance, while in the case of motivation to remain the first three factors together explain 77.69% of the total variance of the data. Furthermore, the scores of each retained were saved in distinct variables using the regression method to allow the analysis of the correlation between factors and potential intention to migrate.

3. Results and discussions

In the case of the first analyzed dimension (i. e. *potential benefits of migration*), the first factor extracted (F1.1) is strongly positively correlated with the following items: (2.6) Compliance with norms is stronger abroad, (2.5) People seem to behave more civilized abroad, (2.7) People seem to have positive social attitudes abroad, (2.8) Society as a whole seems to be more efficient abroad. Thus, we could call the factor F 1.1 as *Perceived social performance*. On the other hand, the factor F 1.2 is strongly correlated with the following items: (2.3) I feel that I would have more professional opportunities abroad, (2.2) I feel that my skills would be better used abroad, (2.4) I feel that I would have more personal opportunities abroad, (2.1) I feel that I could fit better in the society abroad. Therefore, we could call the factor F 1.2 as *Social and personal integration*. In short, our analysis shows that there are two main types of perceived benefits that could lead to the decision to migrate: the perceived performance of society abroad and, respectively, the perceived social and personal integration abroad.

As for the second analyzed dimension (i. e. *motivation to remain in the home country*), F 2.1 factor is strongly correlated with the following items: (3.4) The opportunities I could find in my own country, (3.5) Sense of duty to the society in which I was born, (3.3) The desire for self-fulfillment in one's own country. In this context, we could call this motivating factor *Trust in one's own society*. F 2.2 is strongly positively correlated with two variables: (3.6) Fear of the unknown and (3.7) Distance from home. Thus, we could call this motivational factor *Risk aversion*. F 2.3 factor is strongly correlated with the following reasons: (3.1) Family and relatives and (3.2) Friends. We could call this last factor *Family and friends*. Our analysis, therefore, reveals that there are three types of motivational factors that could lead to the decision not to migrate and remain in the home country: self-confidence, risk aversion and family and friends.

These results support the assumption that the potential intention to migrate among students is the consequence of an analysis that weighs the benefits of migration with the motivational factors to remain. This hypothesis is schematically displayed in Figure 1

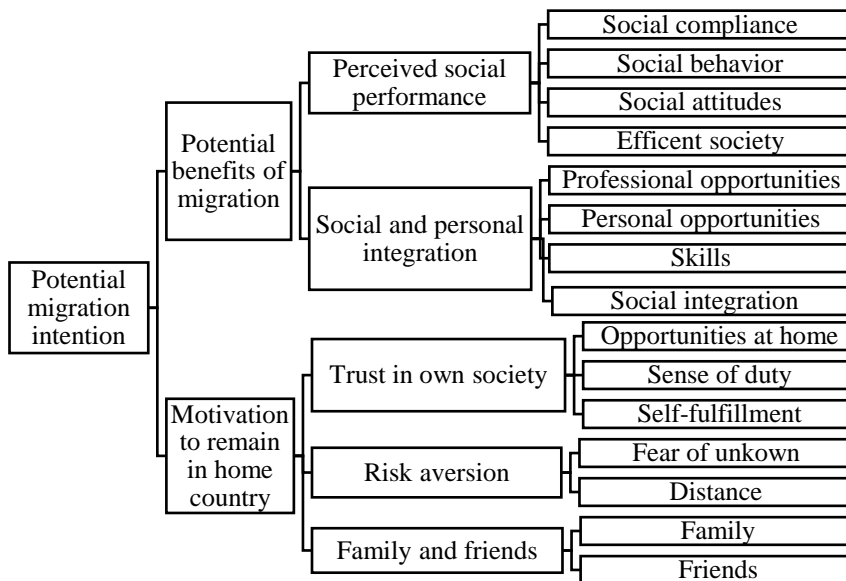


Figure no. 1. Socio-psychological dimensions and determinants of migration

In compliance with the assumption sketched in the above figure, the last step of our analysis is to explore the correlations between the *potential intention to migrate* and the identified factors for each dimension. The Pearson correlation coefficients and the results of the significance test between the potential intention to migrate and the five factors are shown in Table 4.

Table no. 4. Correlation analysis

	Perceived social performance (F 1.1)	Social and personal integration (F 1.2)	Trust in own society (F 2.1)	Risk aversion (F 2.2)	Family and friends (F 2.3)
Potential migration intention (M)	0.180***	0.405***	-0.229***	-0.064	-0.211***

Note: *** p<0.01

According to the results displayed in Table 4, except for risk aversion, all factors encompassed in the two analyzed dimensions have a significant correlation with the intention to migrate. We can easily notice that perceived ability to integrate abroad at social and personal level is strongly correlated with the intention to migrate, while trust in own society seems to be an important motivating factor for the decision to remain in the home country.

As mentioned above, our analysis revealed a statistically significant correlation between the intention to migrate and the ability for social and personal integration, which indicates that migration among economics students is the result of a rational decision-making process, strongly impacted by confidence in their ability to adapt to a new, lesser-known environment. These results are consistent with previous research (Abraham et al., 2019), claiming that, when asked about their perception of the main reasons of Romanian people to search for a job abroad, 4 out of 5 experts from public recruitment agencies and 2 experts from 5 from private recruitment agencies answered "money". However, the same study shows that, without ignoring this factor, an expert from a public agency and 3 experts from private agencies indicated opportunities for professional development as another determinant exclusively applicable to highly qualified migrants (Abraham et al., 2019). In addition, the study by Sandu et al. (2018) shows that the motivations underlying the decision to migrate in the case of young Romanians are closely related to jobs and the level of well-being. Another study focused on Romanian engineering students argues that the main factor for the migration of engineers is the gap between wages in Romania in contrast to developed Western countries (Ghergheș et al., 2020). In this case, the second important factor, at a great distance from the first, is better working conditions abroad while other identified factors are: better living conditions, lack of jobs (in Romania), career advancement opportunities, disrespect for employees or other personal reasons (Ghergheș et al., 2020).

On the other hand, our research revealed a statistically significant correlation, albeit lower than the first, between the perception of social performance and the intention to migrate. This result is consistent with the study by Fischer-Souan (2019) which shows that the desire to leave the home country may be related to the social and political dissatisfaction of an individual, claiming that in the case of Bulgarian and Romanian respondents there is a historical basis for dissatisfaction with the post-socialist transition, while other citizens of the European space mentioned certain political parties, policies and events that led to economic and political decline in a relatively short amount of time (Fisher-Souan, 2019). From our

standpoint, this result is a clear signal for society - migration can be mitigated when young people perceive a relevant change and even feel that Romanian society reaches the same standards as countries traditionally considered successful in terms of social values. Regarding the factors with the potential to reduce migration, we find that the feeling of belonging to the country of origin, as well as family and friends can contribute significantly to the decision to remain in the home country.

In the light of these results, it can be argued that one of the most powerful tools for country to keep its workforce within is real economic development and national security that could be reached via implementing and applying effective public policies and strategies. These strategies can give young people a reason to stay (or return), which is undoubtedly the most efficient policy to alleviate the loss of human capital and the safest way to increase it in the long run. Moreover, the desire to provide more attractive jobs for highly qualified employees and better working conditions should be linked to higher capital investment, research and development. Against this background, the favorable development of education is equally important since the training of the workforce begins with the national educational institutions. A system, which encourages graduates to remain, is one that does not suffer losses in terms of investment in education. Over the years, in different circumstances, it has been often emphasized that Balkan countries as well as others must keep highly qualified young people in order to enhance socio-economic development (Lazarević et al., 2017).

Conclusions

The rationale of our research is also built on the multiple concerns raised by the persistent migration trend, in the past 30 years, among highly qualified young Romanians. The economic, social and demographic implications of migration are authentic challenges for home country policymakers as they are compelled to identify the most appropriate labor policies to secure economic development. Moreover, it has been evident over time that the declared potential intention to migrate is a solid predictor for the future real decision to go abroad. Therefore, an accurate designation of determinants for potential migration could be of use to policymakers, as these factors are not only financial or material, but also socio-psychological.

Our research is consistent with a series of studies that analyze the migration of Romanians (Abraham et al., 2019; Prieto-Arranz and Iacob, 2018; Roman, 2019) claiming that economic factor is essential for migration, but also arguing that the satisfaction level of immigrants in the destination country is impacted by the welfare of the state, the quality of public services, the economic, social and educational environment. Different to these studies, our analysis focuses only on socio-psychological factors, starting from the assumption that in the case of qualified young people who benefited from higher education, socio-psychological factors are as important as those of an economic nature. In this context, our study identifies the following socio-psychological factors that may influence the decision to emigrate: the perceived social performance of the destination countries, ability to integrate abroad at social and personal level, trust in own society, risk aversion as well as family and friends. First two are stimulating factors for migration and the rest are motivating factors for staying in the country of origin. Following the correlation analysis, results show a statistically significant link between the potential intention to migrate and both stimulating factors. Regarding the motivating factors, in the case of two of them (trust in own society; family and friends) the

correlation with the intention to emigrate is statistically significant, but weaker, while the risk aversion does not correlate significantly with the intention to migrate.

According to our results, the main socio-psychological factors that impact the intention to migrate originate in respondents' perception that they can easily integrate abroad since, in contrast with the country of origin, the social performance of potential destination countries is higher. In this context, we argue that public policies should also be directed towards changing this perception. Therefore, society needs to be strengthened to provide fundamental support for law enforcement, meritocracy and a sense of national identity. In addition, our results show that a series of specific policies that could change perception and encourage qualified young people to stay in the country should be oriented towards: supporting families, providing subsidies for higher qualification, salary incentives, providing opportunities for qualified young people, encouraging a sense of duty, providing scholarships and other facilities to encourage young people to continue their studies at national level in order to further integrate into the local, regional and national economy.

Our study has several limitations, as it is based on a sample of students in economics from a single university, without considering students from other specializations or other categories of young people. However, our research offers a perspective on trends and future developments in terms of socio-psychological factors, which may influence the intention to migrate of highly qualified young Romanians. Based on these circumstances, a more complete outlook could be accomplished through future research that will address a more diverse population and will include additional socio-psychological factors, such as quality of life or expectations on development of home country society. Further research could also consider the impact of recent economic and social events (such as pandemic crisis).

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