

Immigration attitude among students and their opinions about factors affecting immigration

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ABSTRACT

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In Iran, in the past years, the migration of human resources has become important due to the increase in the trend of specialist migration. So, this study seeks to study the attitude of immigration students, and in this regard, it examines their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes and the reasons for migration by online questionnaire. The present study is an applied research and its research method is survey. Likert scale, multiple choice questions and open questions were used to measure the variables and the variables were measured at all four levels: nominal, ordinal, interval and relative. The statistical population was university students and 760 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students in different fields were interviewed using voluntary sampling. Also, data extraction from the questionnaire was done by the researchers in SPSS software and data analysis was also done using SPSS software; in such a way that initially the frequency of each variable was examined and the Chi-square, Spearman and Pearson tests were used to show correlation. On the other hand, the findings of this study showed that the average attitude to migrate is 3.6 is between moderate to high. Only 11% of students don't like to immigrate, 15% don't know much about immigration and its processes, and 20.5% have not taken any steps to immigrate. Also, about 11 percent do not have any attitude to migrate. The present study showed that people have a proper assessment of social, political, and economic conditions. They don't have them in Iran and think they will have better conditions by emigrating. Also, 87% of women said they would change their lifestyle if they migrated.

Keywords: immigration, attitude, immigration attitude, student immigration

Introduction

Migration has been an integral part of human history, driven by the need for survival and security. However, large-scale migration has not received much attention in developed countries before the industrial revolution and in developing countries for the past half century. Today, migration has become a global phenomenon and significantly affects the distribution of human capital among countries. One of the key development issues is the optimal utilization of skilled and educated human resources. Migration is a major challenge in this regard, as it reduces the number of domestic elites, the quality of essential services, economic growth, and the return on public investment in education. As a result, a country that has invested heavily in training its human resources will face challenges in terms of innovation and economic progress when they migrate. Iran, which has a significant young population, has always faced the exodus of some of its academic elite. Over the past decades, the number of Iranian immigrants has increased sharply, from about half a million before the 1979 revolution to 3.1 million in 2019. The main destinations of Iranian immigrants include the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Recent statistics show that the rate of emigration from Iran has reached an unprecedented level of 65,000 people per year. Economic factors, governance problems, international sanctions, inflation, and currency fluctuations are among the main reasons for this trend.

Iranian student emigration has also increased significantly, with the number of Iranian students abroad increasing from 17,442 in 2000 to 66,701 in 2020. Studies show that the desire of students to return to the country has decreased, with only 10% of students wanting to return in recent years, compared to around 90% in 1979.

The economic effects of the brain drain are significant. Some estimates suggest that the migration of elites costs Iran between \$50 billion and \$150 billion a year, a figure that even exceeds Iran's oil export earnings. In addition, it is reported that 96% of patents filed by Iranian-born inventors between 2007 and 2012 were made outside of Iran. Iranian immigrants are highly educated, with a significant proportion holding undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, playing an important role in global innovation. Overall, migration trends show that a large segment of Iranian society is interested in emigration, with many professionals, entrepreneurs, and students planning to leave the country. Without appropriate policies to manage this phenomenon, Iran will face a severe decline in human capital and further development challenges.

Methodology

This study examined the tendency of Iranian students to migrate and the factors influencing it and was conducted in the form of an applied study. The research method was based on a survey and the data were collected through an online questionnaire. The theoretical foundations of the research, the extracted factors and the final theoretical model led to the design of a questionnaire that includes two main parts: measuring the factors affecting migration and identifying the underlying factors.

In this study, the variables under study were measured using the Likert scale, multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. The statistical population included students from different universities and the sampling was done voluntarily. In total, 760 students from undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees in various fields were interviewed. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. Data analysis included examining the frequency of variables and using statistical tests such as Chi-square, Spearman and Pearson to measure the correlation between variables.

Also, factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and internal correlation were used to examine the validity and reliability of the research. The results of the study showed that all the indicators examined have acceptable validity and reliability (above 50% and 70%). The findings indicate an increase in the desire of students to migrate, especially among postgraduate students. Economic, social and political factors play an important role in the formation of this desire. The results of the study highlight the importance of careful planning to manage the process of elite migration and adopt appropriate policies to reduce the outflow of human capital.

Findings

The results of this study show that the tendency to migrate among Iranian students is at a medium to high level. Out of 760 respondents, 94% were single and 6% were married. Also, the largest number of respondents were at the undergraduate level (92.5%), and a smaller percentage were at the master's (5.1%) and doctoral (2.4%) levels.

The tendency of students to migrate was examined based on three dimensions: emotional, cognitive, and behavioral. The overall average tendency to migrate was between medium and high (3.6). Among them, 30.8% of respondents had a very high tendency, 26.9% a high tendency, and 21.8% a moderate tendency to migrate. Only 11% had no tendency to migrate. A more detailed study showed that the emotional dimension of migration (4.1) had the greatest impact, followed by the cognitive (3.8) and behavioral (3.1) dimensions. Most students considering emigration are acquiring the necessary language and professional skills and have discussed the migration process with advisors, friends, and family. There are also significant differences in the propensity to migrate across different groups; women are more likely to migrate than men, singles than married people, and undergraduate and graduate students are more likely to migrate than PhD students.

96% of respondents rated the country's economic situation as inadequate. Also, 36% of people believed that jobs related to their field of study lacked sufficient job stability, and 66% believed that they did not receive adequate salaries and benefits. The statistical analysis showed that in 20% of cases, improving economic conditions reduced the propensity to migrate. 82% of students stated that society does not care about science and 74% believed that scientific innovation is not valued in the country. However, satisfaction with the university they attended was rated as fairly adequate; 30% were dissatisfied with their university, and 30% were very to very satisfied with their university. In 27% of cases, improved educational conditions had reduced the desire to emigrate.

51% of students stated that those around them encouraged them to emigrate. 42% stated that they were influenced to emigrate by friends and acquaintances who had emigrated. Only 4% were satisfied with the freedom of dress in Iran, while 65% were interested in changing their style of dress if they emigrated. Also, satisfaction with social conditions and lifestyle in Iran was reported to be low. The studies showed that in 60 percent of cases, as the social index improves, the tendency to migrate decreases.

Only 1.1 percent of respondents were satisfied with the state of the country's administration. Also, indicators related to the country's political situation showed that 34 percent of respondents would be less inclined to migrate with the improvement of political conditions.

Statistical analyses also showed that the variables of social conditions at the origin, evaluation of the country of destination of migration, and political conditions have a significant impact on the tendency to migrate and explain 47 percent of the changes in the tendency to migrate. In general, when individuals evaluate the economic and political conditions in Iran as unfavorable and, on the contrary, consider the conditions of the destination country to be suitable, the tendency to migrate among them increases.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that migration, as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, is influenced by numerous economic, social, political, and individual factors. The analyses presented in this study show that unfavorable domestic conditions, including economic weakness, social and educational instability, and the inefficiency of the political system, are considered to be the most important drivers of human resource migration, especially among students and the country's elite.

The tendency to migrate among Iranian students is at a medium to high level, and this tendency has been observed most among women, singles, and risk-taking individuals. Also, students who have had experience traveling abroad are more inclined to migrate than others. The findings of the study showed that one of the most important motivations for migration is the idea of improving the quality of life and increasing welfare facilities in the destination countries. The majority of students believe that immigration will lead to professional advancement and increased hope for the future.

On the other hand, studies have shown that the educational system, social environment, and political conditions of Iran are not very favorable from the students' perspective, and this has had an impact on the increase in the desire to emigrate. If the emigration of scientific elites and specialists is not controlled without proper planning and strategies, it can lead to a decrease in human capital, a decline in the country's scientific level, and a decrease in economic productivity.

Given that specialized human resources are considered one of the pillars of sustainable development, it is necessary to implement effective policies to reduce internal repulsions and increase hope for the future. Adopting appropriate strategies in the economic sphere, creating sustainable job opportunities, improving the quality of education, increasing social and civil liberties, and creating an atmosphere of public trust can help reduce the desire to migrate.

Finally, the present study emphasizes the importance of reforms at the micro, meso, and macro levels and states that strengthening domestic opportunities and removing social and political barriers can be effective in preventing the outflow of human capital and retaining the country's scientific elite.

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