

Motivations for Migration of Skilled Migrants – The Case of Bangladeshi Migrants to Australia

Salma Bint Shafiq

Department of History, University of Chittagong
Chittagong – 4331, Bangladesh
E-mail: salma_ctgu@yahoo.com

(Received: 20-11-16 / Accepted: 24-1-17)

Abstract

Unlike the existing migration literature this study argues that economic factors may not be the main reasons for skilled people's migration decision. To examine this assertion the study focuses on Bangladeshi skilled migrants to Australia. Both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected through a survey and interviews conducted on Bangladeshi migrants living in the three major states of Australia. The findings reveal that social and political instability in Bangladesh has been the major determinant in decision to migrate. In spite of maintaining a relatively high living standard in the home country, skilled Bangladeshis are migrating to the West to avoid these circumstances and ensure a better future for their children. Socio-cultural factors of Bangladesh can also be held responsible to some extent. Some people who temporarily emigrated (for example, students and their spouses) reveal that they found it hard to adjust in the workplace or in the broader society upon their return. This forced them to emigrate permanently. The study further documents that women's decision to migration is not always tied or associational to their male partners. Thus, contrary to the common assertion skilled people's migration decision is much more complex.

Keywords: Skilled migrants, migration motivation, Bangladeshi migrants.

1. Introduction

International migration of skilled persons particularly from developing to developed countries is a common phenomenon in the present world. The developed countries welcome skilled migrants for obvious reason - to mitigate the shortage of domestic skills (Bauer & Kunze 2004). However, for developing countries this large scale skill transfer, commonly known as 'brain drain', has negative consequences such as reduced economic growth or development (Lowel & Findlay 2001).¹ Consequently, the question as to why so many skilled people are leaving their home country still remains to be an interesting one.

According to the literature, migration, in general, results from the interplay of various 'push and pull factors' (see Lee 1966). As far as skilled migrants are concerned, literature suggests that economic factors are the primary motivation for migration (see Hunter 2012; Cornelius &

¹ Although, there may be some benefits of brain drain for the developing countries (through remittance, for example) it is the developed countries who are largely the beneficiary of such brain drain (see Lowel & Findlay 2001).

Tsuda 2004; Jordan & Duvell 2003; Cornelius, Martin & Hollifield 1992). That is, the search for a better economic position in the host country inspires skilled people to migrate.

However, it can be assumed that the skilled people are likely to be engaged in descent economic activities in their home country based upon their educational qualifications and skills. Thus, economic causes may not be the most important factors for their migration decision. There are good reasons to believe that skilled people's emigration decision is much more complex and diverse. The main objective of this research is, therefore, to examine in a greater detail the reasons that motivate skilled people to emigrate. The study does so by focusing on the Bangladeshi skilled migrants living in Australia.

Historically, Australia is a high-migration country. The complete abolition of the White Australia policy² in the early 1970s and the subsequent immigrant-friendly policies of the Federal Government have made Australia a truly multicultural nation. More recently, the country focuses on mainly skilled migration which is again dominated by the people from Asian countries.³ For example, eight out of the top 10 source countries for General Skilled Migration (GSM) places are from Asia and five of them are South Asian countries (DIAC 2014).

In recent decades, Bangladesh has become a new source country of skilled immigrants to Australia.⁴ The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC 2014) of Australia reveals that Bangladesh was one of the top 10 source countries for the General Skilled Migration (GSM) program from 2006 to 2011. According to the latest available census data (ABS 2011) nearly 28,000 Bangladeshi people live in Australia, with an average growth rate of 18.5% per annum since the 1990s. This makes Bangladeshi migrants one of the fastest-growing communities in Australia. It is noted that Bangladeshi people living in Australia are mostly originated from good educational and socio-economic backgrounds (Khan & Richardson 2013; Munib 2006). They are mostly highly educated and skilled and migrating to Australia through skilled migration scheme (ABS 2015).

Meanwhile, research on skilled migration mainly focuses on the outcome or consequences of migration and settlement experience of the skilled migrants (see Clemens 2013; Lowell & Findlay 2001). However, empirical studies examining the motivation of migration of skilled people still remain scant. Knowledge of this issue is important because it can be helpful for developing countries to better accommodate their own skilled people. Further, literature stresses that reasons behind migration play a significant role in shaping the settlement experience of migrants in the host country (Ghosh 2007). Therefore, motivation of skilled people's emigration requires scholarly attention.

On the other hand, there is a dearth of comprehensive work examining the motivation behind migration of Bangladeshi skilled people. Therefore, a study on the motivation for migration of skilled people from Bangladesh to Australia is a timely one. Consequently, this paper seeks to identify the factors motivating Bangladeshi skilled people to migrate, particularly to Australia. This study also focuses on the spouses of the skilled migrants who are mainly

² The Immigration Restriction Act, 1901, underpinned the White Australia policy

³ Like other developed countries in Europe, North America and Oceania, Australia's long term or permanent immigration program has three broad components – family reunion, skilled migration and humanitarian concern (Piper 2008). However, the Australian immigration program in recent decades has been dominated by the skilled stream as opposed to the humanitarian and family streams. Thus, "The 2010–11 skill stream outcome of 113 725 places accounted for 67 per cent of the total Migration Programme. The planning level for the skill stream of the 2011–12 Migration Programme was set at 125 850 or 68 per cent of the total Migration Programme. The planning level for the skill stream of the 2012-13 Migration Programme is 129 250 places, which also represents 68 per cent of the total Migration Programme" (DIBP 2014).

⁴ Other countries are China, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

women. This is particularly important since women's migration decisions are considered tied or associational to their male partners and thus, largely ignored in the literature. This research which asks the actual migrants about their reasons for moving thus, improves our understanding in regards to the motivation behind skilled migration.

The study uses primary data collected from a survey conducted on a sample of 210 Bangladeshi skilled migrants and their spouses living in three major states such as New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland in Australia. This information was supplemented by interviews conducted on a sample of 52 people. The study, then, uses a *mixed method* (both quantitative and qualitative analysis) to investigate the motivation of Bangladeshi people's migration decision.

This study reveals that despite working in their preferred occupations, many educated and skilled people from Bangladesh are immigrating to the developed countries. Economic factors are not the main contributor to their immigration decision. Rather, lack of security in social life, improper law and order situation, and political instability in Bangladesh appear to be the major causes for their emigration decision. Prospect for a better standard of living in the western countries, particularly a better future for children, and influence of friends or relatives also worked as motivation behind migration of Bangladeshi skilled people. One interesting finding in this research is that Bangladeshi women play a significant role in migration decision, while literature (e.g. Ho 2006; Jolly & Reeves 2005; Altamirano 1997) generally shows that women's role in decision to migration is largely passive.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section two discusses the relevant literature regarding motivation for migration. Section three outlines the methodological approaches employed in this research. Findings of the study are discussed and interpreted in section four. The final section summarises the paper.

2. Literature Review

The reasons behind migration have generally been explained in dual terms of push and pull factors in migration literature (see Lee 1966). Push factors, as the term suggests, are those factors that persuade people to emigrate from their home country. Pull factors, on the other hand, are factors associated with the host country or destination country. Rubenstein (2014, p. 81) notes that "both push and pull factors typically play a role. To migrate, people view their current place of residence so negatively that they feel pushed away, and they view another place so attractively that they feel pulled toward it". Rubenstein (2014) categorises the push-pull factors into three groups; economic, cultural and environmental. In this classification economic factors include fewer job opportunities in the home country and better job prospects in the destination country. Factors like slavery and political instability resulting from cultural diversity (such as race or ethnicity) are categorised as cultural push-pull factors. People are 'pulled toward physically attractive regions and pushed from hazardous ones' which are categorised as Environmental factors by Rubenstein (2014). This latter group also include different kinds of environmental threats, such as low or heavy rainfall, and cyclone.

Nann (1982) also highlights both push and pull factors as reasons behind migration. Better income, better education and future for the children, better health care, as a whole an expectation for a better life compared to the country of origin are considered as pull factors which allure people to migrate. On the other hand, absence of the above mentioned amenities in the home country, at the same time existing problems and limitations in social, economic, and political arena compel many people to emigrate, which can be outlined as push factors. Thus, Nann (1982, p. 1) summarises, 'the reasons for migration are many and diverse, including war, natural calamities, industrialization and urbanisation, persecution, and

discrimination, economic insecurity, professional ambition, and in the case of some individuals, just plain restlessness’.

Lee (1966) stresses that migration decision is related to different factors associated with country of origin, country of destination, and individual life. Reasons behind migration are also associated with the differences in socio-economic condition of the two countries (host and home) (Luthra, Platt & Salamońska 2014). Furthermore, Cabassa (2003) maintains that political, economic, and social contexts in the country of origin are indicators of why people emigrate. However, economic factors are commonly believed to be as primary motivation toward migration in modern times (Hunter 2012; Cornelius & Tsuda 2004; Jordan & Duvell 2003; Cornelius, Martin & Hollifield 1992). That is, the search for a better economic position in the host country inspires people to migrate. Hunter (2012) observes that in spite of doing the same kind of work, people’s earning may differ in various parts of the world: that is, there are wage differences between countries. Awareness of this draws people to migrate to a country where jobs in their fields pay better (Glennie & Chappelle 2010). This is why people from poor or developing countries migrate to developed countries. Moreover, fear of negative consequences due to environmental alteration in their home country, such as climate change, also induces people to migrate (McAdam & Saul 2010).

Glennie and Chappelle (2010) reveal five factors that induce skilled people to migrate; wages, employment, professional development, networks, and socioeconomic and political conditions. They also observe that motivation to migration may vary across different contexts and groups of migrants. For example, a potential migrant fresh out of university will be more willing to migrate for a reason that is less important to a potential migrant who is midway through his career. Some literature also points to the role of network in migration decision (Tilly 1990; Vertovec 2002).

On the empirical front, a few studies examine the motivation of skill people’s migration decision. For example, Ip, Wu and Inglis (1998) focus on Taiwanese business migrants to Australia. This study finds that economic factors are not the major cause for emigration of the Taiwanese. Favourable physical environment of Australia, better education opportunities for their children, better quality of life, a fair and equal society, modern attributes, and a relaxed lifestyle and friendly people are the most common factors that induce them to make Australia their home. Similarly, Richardson et al. (2002) observe that neither adverse social, political and economic conditions nor employment in the former home countries were important reasons for migrating to Australia. Rather, the context of people’s lives such as the climate, the pollution and overcrowding in the home countries induced them to migrate.

3. Methods

This empirical study is based on primary data. Data were collected from the Bangladeshi community living in three Australian states: New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (VIC), and Queensland (QLD), where, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2011), more than 89 per cent of Bangladeshi migrants are concentrated. Included in this study sample are individuals above 18 years of age (both male and female) born in Bangladesh, and living in NSW, VIC or QLD as Australian permanent residents or citizens.⁵

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The participants were recruited using a range of networks such as community organizations, community businesses (ethnic grocery shops, and restaurants), and family and friends. Hard-copy questionnaires were distributed to respondents, with prepaid self-addressed envelopes included. About 650 hard copies of the survey questionnaire, together with the self addressed pre-paid envelopes, were circulated. At

⁵ Data for this study were collected during 2012 and 2013 while the author was conducting PhD research in Australia.

the same time about 100 soft copies were sent out by e-mail. At the end 210 questionnaires were returned by the respondents. Of the respondents 56% were male and the remaining 44% were female. Furthermore, qualitative data from 52 respondents were collected through in-depth interviews. For this purpose a semi-structured questionnaire was used.

In order to reveal the motivations of migration the questionnaire first incorporated the demographic profile and pre-migration experiences of the respondents. The questionnaire particularly included questions on pre-arrival characteristics such as age at arrival, gender, religion, visa status, education, employment and living standards before coming to Australia. At the same time the respondents were asked particularly why they left Bangladesh and migrated to Australia. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative method (a mixed method) to analyse the data.

4. Findings and Discussions

This section presents quantitative information about pre-migration characteristics (educational levels and occupation before migration) of respondents to the survey. Then, based on both quantitative and qualitative information, it elaborates the reasons that induce Bangladeshi skilled people to migrate to Australia.

4.1 Pre-migration Characteristics of the Respondents

The data obtained from the survey reveal that 85% of the respondents have some form of university degree (Bachelor, Masters or PhD). A higher percentage of male respondents have university degrees than females. The percentages of males and females with university degrees are 91% and 78%, respectively. These statistics corroborate ABS (2011) data that Bangladeshis in Australia are among the most highly qualified migrants in terms of their educational levels. Regarding pre-migration occupation, about 12% of the total respondents were working in managerial jobs. About 67% were working in professional jobs, such as teachers, information technology (IT) professionals, doctors or engineers. Others were working as clerks, businessmen or in other occupations. Therefore, most of the respondents were working at the upper end of the occupational ladder before migration. However, there are significant differences between male and female respondents in terms of their pre-migration occupation in that males tended to be more skilled than females. Thus, 74% of men were working as either managers or professionals. For women the corresponding percentage was 50%.

4.2 Reasons behind Migration – Quantitative Information

The pre-migration status of the respondents confirms that most Bangladeshi migrants in Australia are highly educated and hail from relatively well-off socio-economic backgrounds. Despite the fact that most of them had decent jobs and social status in their homeland, they migrated. This section now investigates their reasons for doing so by using quantitative information presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Reasons for migration to Australia

Reasons for migration	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
To avoid social/political unrest in Bangladesh	55.0	62.0	45.0
Better education/future for children	40.0	45.0	33.0
For better economic position	25.0	24.0	25.0
For a secure life in Australia	42.0	48.0	34.0
To better utilise my skills in Australia	14.0	20.0	5.0
Spouse took the decision/influenced me	19.0	2.0	44.0
Others	18.0	11.0	28.0
N	210	118	92

Note: Respondents were allowed to choose multiple answers

It can be seen from the table that the highest proportion of respondents (55% of total participants) migrated to Australia because they were not happy with the existing socio-political situation in Bangladesh (a push factor). Some 62% of males and 45% of females report that they emigrated to avoid the social and political unrest in their homeland. The second major reason for migrating to this country was to ‘ensure a secure life in Australia’ which is apparently a pull factor. About 42% of all respondents point to this as a factor in the decision to migrate. This is followed by another pull factor: ‘better education and better future for children’, highlighted by nearly 40% of respondents. On the other hand, only 25% assert that they moved to Australia for a ‘better economic position’. Furthermore, 19% note that their spouses took the decision to migrate and they had no alternative but to follow. Interestingly, this reason is mainly given by women. The table shows that 44% of female respondents choose this option but only 2% of males. This information again reinforces the observation that Bangladeshi women’s migration decisions are largely associational. About 18% of respondents identified other migration motives: these include socio-cultural factors, family reunion, and the influence of friends or relatives.

Therefore, it is apparent from the table that economic factors do not form the primary reason why Bangladeshis migrate to Australia. This finding replicates Ip, Wu and Inglis (1998) who examined the motivations of Taiwanese skilled migrants to Australia. However, in sharp contrast to the findings of Ip, Wu and Inglis (1998), Bangladeshi migrants are largely influenced by dissatisfaction with the poor socio-political situation in their home country. This finding also differs from Richardson et al. (2002, p. 13) who found that push factors such as ‘negative aspects of life in the former home country in respect to the social, political and economic conditions, as well as employment’ were not among the main reasons for migrating to Australia.

4.3 Reasons behind Migration – Qualitative Information

Based on the responses of interview participants, this section further uncovers the reasons why Bangladeshis migrate to Australia. Most interviewees maintain that they left Bangladesh to avoid political and social unrest. This reasoning extends to a lack of security in social life, concerns about poor law and order, and corruption. Furthermore, ‘to ensure a secure life in Australia’ is identified as a reason for migration by a significant number of respondents. Better education and future for the children also work as motivation behind migration of Bangladeshi people.

According to most of the interview participants, a lack of security is currently the most common concern about Bangladesh, and they wanted to change that situation for themselves and their loved ones. In contrast, Australia is seen as one of the most secure places in the world. Australia is viewed as ‘a lucky country’ and ‘land of opportunity’ for immigrants

(Hinsliff 2004) because of its excellent law-and-order situation, as well as its economic and environmental standards. Moreover, the Australian Government offers social welfare benefits (Centrelink and Medicare, for example) to migrants, which is very appreciative. Interviewees referred to the availability of these supports from government as one of the reasons why they wanted to migrate to Australia.

This section now highlights the most common concerns about Bangladesh's socio-political situation, concerns strong enough to have induced participants to emigrate.

4.3.1 Socio-Political Instability

Remarks by interviewees portray socio-political instability, including bias and hostility, encountered in Bangladesh. According to the interviewees, they were often haunted by insecurity and uncertainty. *Mahmood*⁶ explains:

Lack of security has been the main issue in Bangladesh. Law-and-order situation is deteriorating day by day. I was so much worried about the safety of my family. That is why I decided to migrate.

Mahmood's comment has been echoed by a number of respondents. It is also revealed that political unrest forced many people to move overseas even though they were enjoying a decent socio-economic status in Bangladesh. *Shovon's* remark sums up the whole situation:

I had a good job, big house and social status back in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, I left my country because of social and political unrest. The worst thing is *hartal*.⁷ Opposition political parties, whoever they are, often call on *hartal* and make people's life practically miserable. I wish my country would have got rid of this political culture. But, I saved my family in the first instance.

A number of respondents also voiced concern about the frequency of power (electricity, water and gas) shortages or *load shedding*⁸ and traffic congestion. Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, is one of the world's fastest-growing mega-cities, and one of its most densely populated (Corner & Dewan 2014). Other cities are also growing faster than previously due to urbanisation. The pressure of a huge population results in numerous problems, such as traffic congestion, road accidents, air pollution, and poor law and order (World Bank 2007), which causes immense misery in people's lives directly or indirectly. *Shamim* stresses the intensity of these challenges:

Traffic jam has been increasing day by day. For example, some 10 to 15 years ago you might need half an hour to get to your workplace, while now you need two hours or even more. The long traffic [queues] could make you delay to work, children to schools or exams and, worst of all, patients to hospitals.

⁶ For the sake of confidentiality, pseudonyms of the interviewees have been used throughout the paper.

⁷ *Hartal* is a Gujarati word, synonymous with 'strike'. It originally meant political protest or non-cooperation with the government by closure of offices or shops. In Bangladesh *hartal* is extensively used by political parties to protest against government. However, quite often *hartal* turns into violent actions in which offices, banks, transport and schools or colleges are forced to close. *Hartal* often results in massive loss of public and private property, and loss of human life (see Islam 2005).

⁸ *Load shedding*, which stems from shortages of power generation, is an everyday occurrence in Bangladesh. It is a serious blight on the everyday life of Bangladesh's people and economy alike.

4.3.2 Better Education and Future for Children

The Bangladeshis consider migration a good means of ensuring a better education and future for their children. This opinion is correlated with their perception of insecurity on home soil, because political instability often has ramifications for educational institutions. *Mahmood's* explanation below encapsulates this point:

When *hartal* is called by the opposition party, people are basically stranded inside the house. It's not safe to go to work or take children to school. In these days, it's very usual that children would miss at least one fourth of the classes because of *hartal*. I didn't see this problem would ever be solved. So, I decided to take my children to a better place where I could ensure them safety as well as better education and better future.

Many interviewees echoed *Mahmood's* concerns. A number of parents were frightened to send their children to school during strikes, political processions or any other public demonstrations. They were afraid of the danger since no one's life is safe in such circumstances. They were also concerned about 'student politics' and campus violence in connection to tertiary level of education.⁹

4.3.3 Widespread Corruption

Corruption and 'standover' tactics are increasing at an alarming rate, as indicated by a significant number of interviewees. Many respondents also displayed dissatisfaction with unfair recruitment practices in both public and private sectors. It has been observed that quite often recruitment in Bangladesh is fraught with bribery, nepotism and political influence (see Wickberg 2012). As a result many qualified people are unable to obtain suitable jobs, which make them depressed and induce them to emigrate. For example, *Abedin*, a highly qualified engineer, expressed his utmost dissatisfaction with the condition of job recruitment in Bangladesh:

Despite my overseas degrees and work experiences, I couldn't get my desired job since I didn't have powerful relatives or strong political networks. I had been so much disappointed that I decided to migrate.

Another interviewee, *Asad*, maintains

Most employers are biased. Instead of qualifications and experiences they prefer connection and bribe. Less qualified candidates could be recruited for their strong networking.

The above remarks exemplify that qualifications are not always recognised in the Bangladeshi employment sector. Rather, employers are often keen to recruit relatives, friends, or someone who has references from powerful people, including political leaders. As a result, qualified

⁹ In Bangladesh, every major political party has a student wing. Ideally, student politics should be geared to the interest of students. However, national political parties use the students for their own interest. The current practice of student politics in Bangladesh amounts to a serious menace to the nation. Students affiliated to various political parties often engage in violent confrontations that result in injury and death of not only political activists but students watching on, with education grinding to a halt. Although only a fraction of all students are engaged in student politics, every student suffers the consequences of such activism (The Daily Star, 27 November 2014).

applicants are likely to be victimised. Interviewees also point to the widespread corruption in all sectors of the economy.¹⁰

4.3.4 Dream to Settle in the West

A 'dream to settle in the West' motivated many Bangladeshi people to migrate. In South Asian culture, people living in Western countries are often seen as wealthy, happy and praiseworthy (Vahed 2007; Siddiqui 2004). This fact significantly inspires Bangladeshi people, as revealed in these interviews. A significant number of participants said they had a dream to settle in the West that kept them motivated. For example, *Tomal* asserts that he had been dreaming to settle overseas since he was a child. Lifestyle of his relatives who lived in western countries allured him significantly. As *Tomal* puts in:

When I was a kid, I saw some of my relatives who were living in the Western countries. Some of them used to visit home every three or four years. They used to bring us expensive presents. They looked so beautiful, happy and proud as if they came from any heavenly place. So, I started to dream to have similar lifestyle. I realised that I wouldn't maintain this standard if I stayed in Bangladesh. I never saw people living in Bangladesh were so happy.

Tomal's statement illustrates his eagerness to 'go West'. Therefore, he was ready to migrate to any developed country in the West. However, he found Australia's immigration policies more welcoming, which induced him to migrate to these shores. There were quite a number of interviewees who affirmed that they had been impressed by the Western way of life, its openness and freedom, opportunity, and social equality. So the evidence proves beyond doubt that this 'dream of the West' is an influential factor in Bangladeshis' desire to emigrate.

4.3.5 Influence of Friends and Relatives

Findings also indicate that friends and relatives significantly influence the decisions of Bangladeshis to live abroad, a phenomenon, often classified in the literature as 'chain migration' (Johnston et al. 2006). Interviewees attest that friends and/or relatives already residing in Australia encouraged them to migrate. For example, *Rana* said,

A number of my relatives and friends have been to Australia for many years. They often encouraged me to migrate. I got a good job in Bangladesh, yet I applied for immigration, because I had been convinced. That was like a craze to settling overseas, especially in a peaceful country like Australia was like a dream of most young person in our time.

So, we see, friends and relatives have played a very influential role in the migration of Bangladeshis to Australia.

4.3.6 Economic Motivation

Respondents' pre-migration employment and economic status indicates that economic motivation was not a major spur to Australia-bound migration. Yet, some interviewees

¹⁰ Wickberg (2012) observes that corruption in different forms such as intimidation, bribery and extortion is widespread in Bangladesh; the Government, public administration, the judiciary and police are highly corrupt instrumentalities, Over and above this, corruption extends to the education and health sectors as well as every other social service. There barely exists a sector that is free of corruption.

mentioned economic aspirations as a factor. The following statements highlight the importance of economic considerations. *Rafiq* had this to say:

I had my own business back in Bangladesh. I was working hard, but not satisfied with the work environment and the outcome. So I wanted to try my luck, to see if I can earn higher income and maintain higher standard of living by migrating to a developed country. I wanted suggestion from some of my friends already settled in Australia. They encouraged me to come here, and I so did.

Rafiq's comment shows he was longing to improve his economic standing by living abroad, and was significantly influenced by friends living in Australia. Similarly, *Saidul* maintains:

My wife and I were schoolteachers. Teaching is not well paid job back in Bangladesh, you know. So we decided to migrate to Australia to have a better economic position.

These comments by *Rafiq* and *Saidul* hint that the search for greater affluence motivates some Bangladeshi people when weighing up whether to migrate to Australia.

4.3.7 Role of Socio-Cultural Factors

Other motivating factors which have led Bangladeshis to emigrate are related to socio-cultural conditions in their homeland. For example, a desire to avoid the complications of extended family life appears to be one such factor.

The extended family is a persistent presence in Bangladesh (see Chowdhury 1995; Rozario 2007), though not very common in recent times. Living in an extended family prompts mutual support in time of need but can also be, troublesome, since family members, especially daughters-in-law, often find themselves required to adjust and compromise (Rahim 1988). It is likely that they will have to subordinate their own will and desire to the common interest. To rid themselves of stress and complexities, this paper has discovered, many people decide to move far away where they can live on their own. Interestingly, family complications are more often singled out as a reason women use as an argument for migrating. In this context, *Maloti's* viewpoint is typical:

I used to live in an extended family, where I had so many responsibilities. I had to do household chores all the time, yet no one was happy. In-laws were looking for my fault, and accusing me. It was humiliating and disappointing. I made my husband realise that going overseas was the only option to get rid of these complications. Although initially he did not agree, complicated situation made him understand and finally we applied for immigration.

It is worth noting that *Maloti* was not very well educated and did not have a paid job back in Bangladesh. Therefore, it can be argued that she was undertaking the duties of a traditional Bangladeshi housewife. But the experience of some educated and working women is not unlike hers. In this regard a highly educated woman, *Bithi* recounted:

I couldn't do anything on my own back in Bangladesh. Whenever I wanted to go out for shopping or any other work, I had to seek permission from my in-laws. I had to answer to lot of questions, what I was going for, who would I go with, when I was coming back ... and so on. Being an educated and working woman it had been embarrassing, at the same time humiliating. The only solution I found out to get rid of this was to go far away from that setting.

Bithi's statement shows that the stress and complications of living with two families under one roof compelled her to emigrate. Education and employment alone do not always alter women's status within an extended family. Migration is thus perceived as a way to escape the pressures of extended-family life.

Intriguingly, about half the women who participated in this research hold similar opinions about the vexed situation of living in an extended family. It is, therefore, notable that while most of the men surveyed and interviewed referred to hopes of a better environment, a better economic disposition, a better life overall, and a better future for their children, women emphasised personal freedom, happiness, and their own family's well-being as the most significant drivers of their family's decision to migrate.

Apart from this, the research findings suggest that the consequences of mixed-faith marriage forced some Bangladeshi couples to migrate. It should be noted that such unions are not widely accepted in the socio-cultural context of Bangladesh, though they are not illegal (Uddin 2008). Parents are often ashamed when children of theirs choose a life partner from another religion. What is more, relatives and neighbours often treat these couples with disdain. To avoid this predicament, those with partners from other faiths regard emigration as a solution. For example, *Dipti*, a Hindu woman, affirms,

I was in love with a Muslim man whom I married without my parents' consent. Naturally, my parents were not happy with my marriage. They said they wouldn't see me ever again, because I married a Muslim man. I couldn't find a way to make them happy, so better [to get] far away.

The experience of *Hasan* (a Muslim man) is slightly different, in that his parents were not as strict as *Dipti's*. They accepted his Hindu wife. However, members of the extended family and other relatives did not conceal their discomfort when talking with a daughter-in-law from a Hindu family. *Hasan* disclosed that his wife and he had been worried about their child's identity and future, and this persuaded them to migrate. As Uddin (2008) asserts, partners in mixed marriages that take place in Bangladesh are likely to face negative consequences due to society's disapproval, and this expectation has been fulfilled as we learn from *Dipti's* and *Hasan's* recollections.

4.3.8 Influence of Spouse

A number of respondents assert that they migrated to Australia because they had to do it 'for the family's sake'. As with family reunion, this is particularly true of women migrants. According to them their husbands took the decision based on their own dream and career prospects. In such cases, women had little or no say, and had to sacrifice their own desires and career dreams. It is notable that highly educated and professional women particularly belong to this cohort. Interviews confirmed that to keep the whole family together women gave up their own interests. *Sadia* fell into this category:

My husband was not happy with his work in Bangladesh. He used to believe and dream that going overseas would bring him something better. Although I was doing my dream job, I couldn't stop him; I had to migrate to accompany my husband and children.

Consider the case of *Suborna*, who had been a bright student about to finish her Master's at a leading university in Bangladesh:

I was just a few months away to appear the final exam, but neither my husband nor my parents supported me to make the degree. Everyone was saying my husband's

work was more important, so I should go with him, and I could get the degree once I would be in Australia. But the reality is that I couldn't do that.

Although *Suborna* later pronounced herself quite satisfied with her lifestyle in Australia, especially with the better prospects for her children, she sometimes feels a sense of failure. For the sake of her husband's career she had to give up her academic endeavour. All this suggests that the migration of Bangladeshi women to Australia is largely associational, a conclusion in close accord with Thapan (2005) and Altamirano (1997).

On the other hand, there is also evidence that women had a voice in taking migration decision. For example, *Imran*, a university lecturer in Bangladesh, first came to Australia as a PhD student, and was later joined by his wife and children. He was supposed to go back to Bangladesh to continue his work, but his wife strongly protested against his plans. According to *Imran*,

My wife said no matter what happened she wouldn't go back. She would rather starve here in Australia than return to the *Khancha*¹¹ again... Children also liked it here in Australia. So I had to agree with them.

Imran elaborated on the opinion of his wife, who relished the freedom and openness of life in Australia, which she lacked in Bangladesh. She was overwhelmed by the opportunities their children enjoyed here. During their argument over migration his wife constantly contrasted conditions in Bangladesh with better prospects in Australia. In the end, *Imran* yielded to his wife and worked out a migration plan. His family eventually gained permanent residency and took out citizenship.

4.3.9 Motivation of Returned Migrants

This study further reveals a cohort among the Bangladeshi in Australia, who returned to Bangladesh after living in Australia for a certain period of time and then migrated to Australia. At first they mostly came as students and after completion of the study went back to Bangladesh. However, situation in the home country, change in lifestyle and attitude of colleagues, friends and relatives made them leave the country again.

A number of interviewees pointed to professional jealousy among co-workers. Co-workers who used to be friendly and co-operative stopped being so; instead they showed extreme unfriendliness to the returnees. As well, they point to the significant gap between them and relatives or friends. Just as they had in respect of their workmates, a number of respondents spoke of relatives and friends who were openly hostile to those who returned home after studying overseas.

They also refer to adjustment problems faced by their children in Bangladesh after having lived for years outside the country. Children found schools much more stressful, as those in the West are more informal than the ones in Bangladesh. *Fahmida's* statement summarises the point:

We lived in Australia for four years to pursue higher education. My children loved schools and other amenities. So after we went back to Bangladesh they were shocked to see lots of pressure in schools. They had to carry bags full of books and loads of homework, notebooks which were way too heavy for them. Moreover school

¹¹ *Khancha* means cage. *Imran's* wife was alluding to the limited freedom of her life in Bangladesh.

activities were tight, with only academic goals: there was no fun at schools, which is why they became too depressed that we could not bear. Therefore, we applied for permanent residency, and eventually migrated to Australia.

Therefore, data suggest that those who had first come to Australia as students, or as the spouse of a student, found adjusting to life back in Bangladesh particularly stressful. And for many respondents this became a key motivator for wanting to migrate to Australia permanently. This inserts a distinct dimension in literature in regards to the motivation behind migration.

5. Conclusion

This study has investigated the skilled migrants' motives of migration. In so doing, the paper has focused on Bangladeshi skilled migrants living in Australia. The study has used primary data collected through a structured questionnaire from 210 Bangladeshi migrants both male and female. Data obtained from in-depth interviews conducted on 52 migrants have also been used.

The research has documented that the typical Bangladeshi migrant to Australia is relatively young, highly educated and generally skilled. Most of them held down jobs before they migrated, and many were satisfied with those jobs. Both quantitative and qualitative data reveal that economic factors are not the main consideration for those thinking of emigrating. Rather, the social and political circumstances of Bangladesh largely influence the decision to move abroad. This finding thus contradicts the popular belief that skilled people migrate mainly for economic reasons.

The study further reveals that to some extent, socio-cultural factors play a significant part in migration decision making. These factors include, but are not limited to, dream to settle in the West, influence of friends and relatives, complications arising from living in extended families, and mixed faith marriage. The study also shows that some returned migrants opted to emigrate permanently as they found it difficult to adjust to life back in Bangladesh. Generally, those contemplating migration are willing to consider any developed country that can offer better security, better education for their children, better health care, and overall a better standard of living.

Similar to the existing literature, this study also supports that women's migration is mostly associational. That is, they simply accompany their male partners to the host country. In so doing many educated and skilled women sacrifice their own career. Nonetheless, women's role in decision making is not always insignificant. Overwhelmed by the freedom and openness of life in Australia, which they lacked in Bangladesh, many women influence their spouses to live in Australia. This finding is visibly different from most of the existing literature where women's role in migration decision is considered as passive and as such, largely ignored.

Overall, Bangladeshi migrants are more influenced by push factors: they are particularly sceptical about their future prospects if they had chosen to remain in their homeland. This scepticism arises mainly from political disorder and social insecurity which overshadowed other negative aspects. At the same time, pull factors such as the better life on offer in Australia were influential in confirming for many Bangladeshi immigrants' preference.

References

- [1] ABS 2011, Census of population and housing, *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, (2011), Canberra.
- [2] ABS 2015, Gender indicators – Australia, *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, Canberra [http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4125.0~August%202014~Media%20Release~Women's%20participation%20in%20paid%20work%20lower%20than%20men's%20\(Media%20Release\)~10008](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4125.0~August%202014~Media%20Release~Women's%20participation%20in%20paid%20work%20lower%20than%20men's%20(Media%20Release)~10008).
- [3] A. Altamirano, Feminist theories and migration research-making sense in the data feast? *The Refugee*, 16(4) (1997), 4-7.
- [4] T. Bauer and A. Kunze, The demand for high-skilled workers and immigration policy, *Discussion Paper No. 999*, (2004), The Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA), Bonn.
- [5] L. Cabassa, Measuring acculturation: Where we are and where we need to go, *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25(2) (2003), 127-146.
- [6] A. Chowdhury, Families in Bangladesh, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 26(1) (1995), 27-41.
- [7] M. Clemens, What do we know about skilled migration and development? *Migration Policy Institute*, 3(September) (2013), 1-11.
- [8] W. Cornelius, P. Martin and J. Hollifield, Introduction: The ambivalent quest for immigration control, In: W. Cornelius, P. Martin and J. Hollifield (eds.), *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, (1992), Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.
- [9] W. Cornelius and T. Tsuda, Controlling immigration: The limits of government intervention, In: W. Cornelius (ed.), *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, (2004), Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.
- [10] R. Corner and A. Dewan, Introduction, In: R. Corner and A. Dewan (eds.), *Dhaka Megacity: Geospatial Perspectives on Urbanisation, Environment and Health*, (2014), Springer Geography, New York, NY.
- [11] Daily Star, The Student Politics in Bangladesh, 27 November (2014), Retrieved from <http://www.thedailystar.net/student-politics-in-bangladesh-52187>.
- [12] DIAC, Australia's migration trends 2012-13, Economic analysis unit, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, (2014), Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- [13] DIBP, Fact Sheet 24 – Overview of skilled migration to Australia, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, (2014), Australian Government, Canberra.
- [14] A. Glennie and L. Chappelle, Show me the money (and opportunity): Why skilled people leave home — and why they sometimes return, (2010), Retrieved from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/show-me-money-and-opportunity-why-skilled-people-leave-home-%E2%80%94-and-why-they-sometimes-return>.
- [15] S. Ghosh, Transnational ties and intra-immigrant group settlement experiences: A case of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto, *Geo Journal*, 68(2007), 223-242.
- [16] J. Hinsliff, Who lucks out in the lucky country: Early settlement indicators of recent arrivals in Australia, *Paper Prepared for the 12th Biennial Conference of the Australian Population Association*, 15-17 September (2004), Canberra.
- [17] C. Ho, Migration as feminisation? Chinese women's experiences of work and family in Australia, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32(3) (2006), 497-514.
- [18] N. Hunter, (*Hot Topics*) *Immigration*, (2012), Raintree Publishers, London.
- [19] D. Ip, C. Wu and C. Inglis, Settlement experiences of Taiwanese immigrants in Australia, *Asian Studies Review*, 22(1) (1998), 79-97.
- [20] S. Islam, The history of Hartals, In: Beyond Hartal towards democratic dialogue in Bangladesh, *Report submitted to UNDP*, (2005), United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, Dhaka.

- [21] R. Johnston, A. Trlin, A. Henderson and N. North, Sustaining and creating migration chains among skilled immigrant groups: Chinese, Indians and South Africans in New Zealand, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32(7) (2006), 1227-1250.
- [22] S. Jolly and H. Reeves, *Gender and Migration: Overview Report*, (2005), Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, U.K.
- [23] B. Jordan and F. Duvell, *Migration*, (2003), Polity Press, Cambridge, the United Kingdom.
- [24] M. Khan and J. Richardson, Health and quality of life of Bangladeshi migrants in Melbourne — An analysis with four multi-attribute utility and three subjective wellbeing instruments, *Journal of Management and Sustainability*, 3(4) (2013), 53-66.
- [25] E. Lee, A theory of migration, *Demography*, 3(1) (1966), 47-57.
- [26] B. Lowell and A. Findlay, Migration of highly skilled persons from developing countries: Impact and policy responses, *International Migration Papers*, 44(2001), International Labour office, DFID, Geneva.
- [27] R. Luthra, L. Platt and J. Salamońska, Migrant diversity, migration motivations and early integration: The case of poles in Germany, the Netherlands, London and Dublin, *LSE Discussion Paper Series*, 74(April) (2014), London School of Economics and Political Sciences.
- [28] J. McAdam and B. Saul, Displacement with dignity: International law and policy responses to climate change, migration and security in Bangladesh, *Legal Studies Research Paper No. 10/113*, (2010), Sydney Law School, The University of Sydney.
- [29] A. Munib, The effects of immigration and resettlement on the mental health of South Asian Communities in Melbourne, *PhD Thesis*, (2006), Department of Psychiatry, University of Melbourne.
- [30] R. Nann, Uprooting and surviving- An overview, In: R. Nann (ed.), *Uprooting and Surviving: Adaptation and Resettlement of Migrant Families and Children*, (1982), D. Reidel Publishing Co., Dordrecht, Netherlands.
- [31] N. Piper, International migration and gendered axes of stratification: Introduction, In: N. Piper (ed.), *New Perspective of Gender and Migration, Livelihoods, Rights and Entitlements*, (2008), Routledge, New York, NY.
- [32] E. Rahim, The society and its environment: Bangladesh, In: J. Heitzman and R. Worden (eds.), *A Country Study: Area Handbook Series*, (1988), Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
- [33] S. Richardson, L. Miller-Lewis, P. Ngo and D. Ilsley, The settlement experiences of new migrants: A comparison of wave one of LSIA 1 and LSIA 2, *Report prepared for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs*, (2002), National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia.
- [34] S. Rozario, Outside the moral economy? Single female migrants and the changing Bangladeshi family, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 18(2) (2007), 154-171.
- [35] J. Rubenstein, *The Cultural Landscape – An Introduction to Human Geography (11th Edition)*, (2014), Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- [36] T. Siddiqui, *Institutionalising Diaspora Linkage: The emigrant Bangladeshis in UK and USA*, (2004), International Organisation for Migration, Dhaka.
- [37] M. Thapan, Introduction: Making incomplete: Identity, woman and the state, In: M. Thapan (ed.), *Transnational Migration and the Politics of Identity*, (2005), 23-61, Sage Publications, New Delhi.
- [38] C. Tilly, Transplanted networks, In: V. Yans-MacLoughlin (ed.), *Immigration Reconsidered*, (1990), 79-95, New York: Oxford University Press.
- [39] M. Uddin, Inter-religious marriage in Bangladesh: An analysis of the existing legal framework, *The Chittagong University Journal of Law*, 13(2008), 117-139.
- [40] G. Vahed, Adaptation and integration of Indian migrants in Brisbane, Australia, *Anthropologist*, 2(Special issue) (2007), 37-51.
- [41] S. Vertovec, Super-diversity and its implications, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6) (November) (2007), 1024-1054.

- [42] S. Wickberg, Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Bangladesh, *U4 Expert Answer, Transparency International*, (2012), Accessed 1 March, (2015), http://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/353_Overview_of_Corruption_in_Bangladesh.pdf.
- [43] World Bank, Dhaka: Improving living conditions for the urban poor, *Bangladesh Development Series No. 17*, (2007), The World Bank Office, Dhaka.