DRIVING FORCES OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR MIGRATION: A STUDY ON INDONESIAN PROSPECTIVE MIGRANT WORKERS

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ABSTRACT
International migration concerns the mobilization of individuals from one country to another. The intention of a certain group to participate in an international migration can be understood through various efforts, depending on the methods employed, frameworks used, populations observed, and variables considered. This study tried to identify various factors that influence the decision of prospective migrant workers to migrate out of Indonesia. This quantitative study used a survey method, with the approval of the Department of Manpower and Transmigration of East Java. This study involved 110 prospective migrant workers who filled out open-ended questionnaires. Descriptive analysis of the survey results was reported in the form of tabulations and percentages. The results show that demographic characteristics, such as sex, age, marital status, and destination, contribute to the decision to migrate abroad. Additionally, friends and family who were already working in the destination country were a significant influence. Conclusively, the push and pull factors have three themes, which are personal, social, and economic factors. Various combinations of these factors motivate prospective migrant workers to seek a better fate abroad. This research might help the government and non-governmental organizations to aid prospective migrant workers in managing their expectations and working to achieve their dreams through quality education and skills training for increased productivity.
Keywords: human mobilization, migration, population dynamics, push-pull factors, quality of life

ABSTRAK
Migrasi internasional dapat diartikan sebagai mobilisasi dari sejumlah individu dari satu negara ke negara lainnya. Tujuan suatu kelompok melakukan migrasi internasional dapat diungkap dengan cara yang bervariasi, tergantung dari metode yang digunakan, kerangka teori yang digunakan, populasi yang diobservasi, dan variabel yang dipertimbangkan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi berbagai faktor yang mempengaruhi keputusan dari calon pekerja migran untuk melakukan migrasi keluar Indonesia. Penelitian kuantitatif ini menggunakan metode survei yang dilakukan dengan persetujuan Dinas Tenaga Kerja dan Transmigrasi Jawa Timur. Penelitian ini melibatkan 110 calon pekerja migran yang setuju untuk mengisi kuesioner yang berisi pertanyaan terbuka. Analisis deskriptif dari hasil survei kemudian dilaporkan dalam bentuk tabulasi dan persentase. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karakteristik demografi, seperti jenis kelamin, usia, status pernikahan, dan destinasi migrasi, berkontribusi pada keputusan responden untuk bermigrasi. Kemudian, teman dan keluarga yang telah bekerja di negara tujuan masing-masing juga berpengaruh. Maka, dapat disimpulkan bahwa faktor penarik dan pendorong pada penelitian ini memiliki tiga tema, yaitu faktor personal, sosial, dan ekonomi. Berbagai kombinasi dari faktor-faktor tersebut menjadi pendorong para responden untuk mencari penghidupan yang lebih baik di luar negeri. Penelitian ini dapat digunakan guna membantu pemerintah maupun lembaga non-pemerintah untuk membantu calon pekerja migran dalam mengatur ekspektasi dan membantu mereka untuk

mencapai impian mereka melalui pendidikan yang berkualitas dan pelatihan ketrampilan kerja untuk meningkatkan produktivitas.
Kata kunci*: mobilisasi manusia, teori migrasi, dinamika populasi, faktor pendorong-penarik, kualitas hidup*

INTRODUCTION

The number of Indonesians interested in becoming migrant workers is increasing from one year to the next. According to their report, in 2016, the National Agency for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (*Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* or BNP2TKI in Indonesian) placed 135,266 Indonesian migrant workers (IMW) in several destination countries. The next year, in 2017, the number of migrant workers placed abroad increased to 150,832. The latest data in 2018 shows that 159,702 workers have departed the country (1). The agency, now called the National Agency for Migrant Workers Protection of Indonesia (*Badan Pelindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia* or BP2MI in Indonesian), reported that the number of Indonesian migrant workers went down to 113,436. Then, due to the worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers decreased again for the next period (2021), with only 72,624 recorded. Since then, however, the number climbed significantly to 200,761. The most popular destination countries of interest to Indonesian migrant workers are Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea. Indonesian migrant workers come from various provinces in Indonesia, most prominently from East Java, Central Java, West Nusa Tenggara, North Sumatra, and Lampung. The fluctuation in the number of Indonesian migrant workers between 2016 and 2021 can be attributed to several interconnected factors, both structural and situational. Despite some existing challenges, such as COVID-19, policy changes, and labor recruitment issues, there is a sustained interest in migrant workers in those popular destinations (2–4).

Difficulties in accessing employment opportunities in their own country cause Indonesian workers to migrate to other countries that are considered to have greater job-creating opportunities. The process of globalization increases the movement of people from one country to another (5,6). The majority of the Indonesian workforce is only able to fill low-wage labor market segments, most of which are in the informal sector. Examples include housekeepers, construction workers, and plantation workers. Therefore, migration is especially attractive for those who do not possess special skills (7,8). Prior research also confirmed the aforementioned narrative that most people, including Indonesians, partake in international labor migration due to economic factors (6,9).

Unfavorable conditions often surround the fate of Indonesian labor migrants, ranging from those deceived by labor recruitment companies to those threatened with capital punishment in other countries (10–12). Even after they got the job they initially wanted, many of them have to endure verbal abuse, violence, strict rules from their employer, and many more, which contributes to their psychological stress. They often felt powerless and lonely at times, making them accept their fate in silence. However, these risks do not discourage them from continuing to make a living abroad as migrant workers (13–16). This narrative is supported by Menjívar's ethnographic work, in which they highlighted how social networks both encourage and complicate risk-taking behaviors in migration, showing that decisions are rarely made individually and are influenced by cultural expectations, gender roles, and economic need (17).

One of the best-known theoretical concepts in migration research is the push-pull model to explain the causes of migration (18,19). Simply put, the push-pull model consists of several push factors in the

place of origin that cause people to migrate, and pull factors consist of the factors that attract migrants to the recipient country. Both factors were affected by many aspects of human life, including social, economic, political, ecological, and many other variables. People in rural areas of a developing country, like Indonesia or Malaysia, might identify difficulties in accessing proper education, poor healthcare and sanitation, and limited job opportunities as push factors. Meanwhile, from their perspective, the pull factors include diverse job vacancies, better healthcare services, and quality education (7,20).

Despite the criticism, the push-pull model is still relevant in many cases (9,21–23). Albeit, this study adapted the framework to further acknowledge several themes on the push-pull spectrum that caused them to migrate instead of focusing on the push-pull dichotomy. This kind of analysis was conducted to provide a holistic explanation of the complex driving forces of migration rather than following the simplistic and dichotomous push-pull theory (24–26). This condition can be exemplified by the abundance of Indonesian migrant workers who still view overseas labor as a calculated risk that is driven by economic urgency, supported by social networks, and justified by cultural or religious duties despite the risks of abuse, legal insecurity, and mental strain (8,20,27).

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that encourage a person to become an Indonesian migrant worker and the demographic factors that contribute to someone's decision to migrate abroad. Push factors are important to identify why someone chooses to migrate rather than to survive in their home country. Moreover, this study was done to support the readiness of prospective migrants to go abroad, so the focus is not only on the mastery of language skills but also on the mental readiness that one must have as they leave their families in their home country. The readiness of Indonesian workers is also important to reduce the risk factors of social problems

due to migration, such as human trafficking (28–30).

The novel contribution of this research is its culturally grounded expansion of the push-pull migration theory. This study offers a new perspective in regard to the crucial role of personal motivations, the integration of sociocultural values, as well as the consideration of sociodemographic aspects. The findings of this study can and will be used to recommend targeted interventions by the National Agency for Migrant Workers Protection of Indonesia and other agencies at both national and regional levels, especially the Department of Manpower and Transmigration of East Java, which supported this study since its initiation.

METHODS

This study employed the quantitative method with a descriptive approach. The data was collected through a survey that had been conducted at the Department of Manpower and Transmigration, East Java Province. Survey research is research that takes samples from one population and uses questionnaires as a primary data collection instrument. The survey method was selected due to its efficiency in gathering large amounts of data from a broad audience. It allows for standardized responses, ensuring consistency and comparability across respondents. The respondents completed the forms on-site with assistance from the Department officers, who helped facilitate the process and ensured that respondents clearly understood the questions. This setting provided a controlled and supportive environment for reliable data gathering.

The questionnaire used in this study was left open-ended in order to elicit as many diverse responses from respondents as possible. Before the questionnaire was distributed, it underwent a validation process to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions. A pilot test was conducted on a small group of

prospective migrant workers to evaluate the effectiveness of the instrument and make necessary adjustments based on their feedback. This step helped refine the questionnaire for broader distribution and improved the reliability of the collected data (31).

The population identified in this study is prospective international migrant workers from Indonesia. The samples purposively selected were 110 prospective migrant workers from various origins in Indonesia. Additional selection criteria for the respondents are those who would then immediately depart to work in several countries—immediate, meaning in less than a year. Their demographic characteristics, such as their age, sex, marital status, areas of origin, and destination, were recorded as instruments in interpreting the main questionnaire.

The data were analyzed thematically based on the survey results to interpret the open-ended survey responses of the respondents. The process began with manual coding of the respondents' answers by identifying recurring words, phrases, and ideas that reflected the motivations and intentions behind their decision to migrate. Initial codes were grouped based on semantic similarity and conceptual relevance. As patterns emerged across the dataset, these individual codes were refined, consolidated, and categorized into three dominant themes: personal, economic, and social factors. These themes were selected based on the frequency of responses, their interpretive coherence, and alignment with existing migration literature. The process was iterative and interpretive, with codes repeatedly reviewed to ensure that each theme was distinct yet comprehensive in capturing the complex motivations of the respondents (32).

The data was then reported in the form of tabulations and percentages. Then, the data was compared with several pieces of literature obtained mainly through the researcher's institution's library. Comparisons, confirmations, and contradictions based on the literature review were made to further elaborate, evaluate, and deepen the results of this study (33).

This research was conducted with the approval of the Head of the Manpower and Transmigration Office of East Java Province, Indonesia. Initially, the researchers asked the respondents to fill out an informed consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the study. The researchers also explained in advance the benefits they would receive and the efforts of the researchers to minimize incidents to ensure minimal discomfort during the data collection process. The researchers also explained the risks of participating in this research and the best practices to prevent the said risks. Thereafter, the respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire, and they were allowed to ask if they were unsure of a particular question. When certain queries or concerns were raised, individual assistance was provided. Researchers maintained confidentiality in the use of the data, and all questionnaires were kept anonymous. The researchers further ensured that no personal and identifying information of the respondents appeared in the study. This study has received formal ethical approval from the Ethical Commission for Health Research of Universitas Airlangga's Faculty of Nursing (No. 1857-KEPK 2019).

RESULTS

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the demographic characteristics of migrant workers. This study focused on a sample of 110 prospective migrant workers who were predominantly from East Java—one of the main sending regions for Indonesian labor migration. It is important to note that while the sample may not represent all prospective migrant workers across Indonesia, it provides a relevant and illustrative case for understanding the migration drivers among high-sending regions with similar demographic and socioeconomic profiles.

Sex-wise, females dominate the number of workers going overseas. This finding reflects national trends showing the feminization of migrant labor, especially in the domestic and caregiving sectors. Females are often associated with the patriarchal view of demureness, femininity, and womanhood, and are expected to be timider and easier to manage compared to men or what is considered "men's characters" or "masculine traits", hence their high demand in the migrant worker market.

Age-wise, most of the respondents are between the ages of 16 to 25 years old, when their stamina is at its peak with minimum distraction from their personal, domestic lives. Fewer respondents are found within the older age group, probably owing to their relatively lower stamina or increased need to provide for their family. After controlling for their sex and age, younger females are generally preferable because they are considered mature, but still very much productive—possessing the stamina to work hard (34–37).

The city of Kediri has the greatest number of prospective migrants. This is an area affected by volcanic eruptions from time to time, with the most recent being the Kelud Mountain eruption in 2014. Therefore, it is perceived as a not-so-promising place in terms of food and financial security, making natural resources the main pushing factor for prospective migrant workers from Kediri. Albeit, this became a consideration for migrant worker recruiters, who targeted them as a promising area of origin (38–40).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

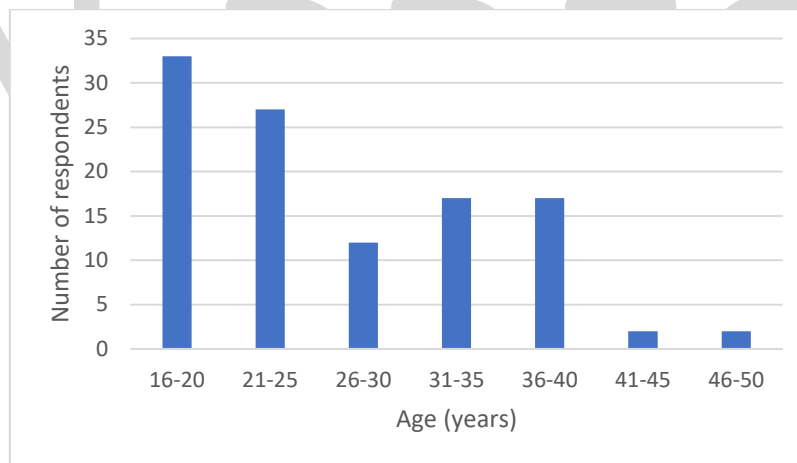| Characteristics	f	%
Sex		
Female	79	71.82
Male	31	28.18
Marital Status		
Married	51	46.36
Unmarried	55	50.00
Widowed or Divorced	4	3.64
Area of Origin		
East Java	98	89.1
Other areas in Java	8	7.3
Other islands	3	3.6
Destination		
Malaysia	46	41.81
Taiwan	36	32.73
Hong Kong	26	23.64
Singapore	1	0.91
Brunei Darussalam	1	0.91

Source: The Authors' Primary Data, 2024

Figure 1. The Respondents' Age Distribution (Source: The Authors' Primary Data, 2024)

Table 2 summarizes the push factors that caused them to become migrant workers. Due to the respondents' diverse responses, their responses were categorized into three segments of push factors: personal, economic, and social factors. This study's initial hypothesis and literature review led the researchers to believe that economic factors were the main driving force behind the motivation to work overseas. Based on the results gathered, this study revealed that there were more variations in the personal and social factors that led them to seek jobs overseas, in contrast to the economic factors.

Interestingly, family-centric values are some of the most popular responses, as shown by 40.00% of respondents saying that they decided to work as migrant workers to support their parents. However, the second most popular response is very personal, which is "to be a successful person" (30.00%). The social factors also show that the respondents migrate to meet their children's needs (21.82%) and to help their family's economy (20.00%). The most popular response in terms of economic factors is "to collect money as capital for business" (13.64%).

Table 2. Push-Pull Factors of Prospective Migrant Workers

No.	Themes	Responses	n	%
1	Personal factors	To be independent	9	8.18
		To achieve personal aspirations and expectations	11	10.00
		To be a successful person	33	30.00
		To have experience	10	9.09
		To support parents	44	40.00
		To be a good husband/wife and father/mother to the family	2	1.82
		To have patience, be themselves, and not be easily influenced by others	1	0.91
		To get foreign exchange for the home country	1	0.91
		To obtain more knowledge on the language/customs of other countries	1	0.91
		As the family's breadwinner	3	2.73
2	Economic factors	To have a big income	5	4.55
		To collect money for use in Indonesia	6	5.45

		To collect money as capital for business when returning to Indonesia	15	13.64
3	Social factors	To help the family's economy	22	20.00
		To raise the socioeconomic status of the family	4	3.64
		To allow better education for the children to get a better future	17	15.45
		To meet children's needs	24	21.82
		To pay off all debts	1	0.91
		To build your own house	4	3.64
		To buy livestock and rice fields	2	1.82
		To make the parents happy by supporting them to go to the Holy Land	1	0.91

Source: The Authors' Primary Data, 2024

DISCUSSION
Migration and Push-Pull Factors

Migration is the temporary or permanent transfer of individuals or groups of people from one geographical location to another due to various reasons, such as finding better job opportunities or wanting more independence (24). Migration theories can be classified according to the level of focus. The micro-level causes of migration are seen based on individual values, expectations, and desires. The meso-level views the causes of migration as social networks or collective behavior patterns. The macro-level sees the urge to migrate based on greater opportunities, for example, certain economic structures and supporting policies. Because the focus of this study was on individual expectations and perceived incentives, analysis at the micro-level was used (24).

Everett Lee, in his 1966 study, was the first person to formulate the theoretical foundation behind human migration in a push-pull framework at the individual level by observing migration supply and demand (18). This framework observed positive and negative factors in both the place of origin and destination that could encourage someone to migrate. Using this framework, Lee predicted that there would be more people migrating. The biggest criticism of the push-pull formulation is that it only classifies the factors that influence migration without appropriately considering the mechanism of causation (19,26).

Humans are complex beings; hence, in reality, decisions made by individuals to leave their homeland and migrate to other places are based on a number of factors. Oftentimes, the drivers of human migration factors in political, economic, social, and environmental considerations. Personal or individual should also be considered since every individual uniquely processes the aforesaid factors in their own manners and perspective. Previous literature supported the prior narrative, stating that many people migrate in response to a combination of these factors in order to survive and take care of the safety, dignity, and well-being of themselves and their families. Therefore, despite the drive, whether it be economic or social factors, personal choices made by the individual should also be taken into account (22,24,41).

According to their paper that was published in 2019, Jeffrey C. Alexander stated that "there is an inner, invisible dimension of social life that fundamentally patterns social action and collective order", meaning that there must be underlying causes for their migration (42). Based on this investigation, several important factors can motivate an individual to migrate, which can be classified into economic, demographic, and sociocultural factors. This study showed that economic factors

emerged as one of the categories of the subjects' responses, such as wanting to earn more income by working abroad. Sociocultural factors are broadly represented by the desire of migrant workers to improve family living standards and their status in the community (43).

This study yielded a new finding, namely the acknowledgment of personal factors, such as the desire to be independent, achieve personal aspirations and hopes for success, gain new experiences and insights, and act as a form of personal responsibility as a person relied on by the family. Human behavior is influenced by personal needs, resources, and specific perceptions of a stimulus. A view based on personal needs certainly produces different explanations than a view based on household or family needs (24). Even though the family is an important and meaningful group for a person and is the closest source of social capital, the motivation of individuals in one family can be different (44).

The Role of Demographic Factors

The demographic data showed that Indonesian prospective migrant workers consist of more women (71.82%) than men (28.18%). Supporting the result of this study, the 2021 data showed that out of 72,624 migrant workers, 63,855 were women, while the men were represented by a minority of only 8,769 people (4). Confirming this study's findings, this showed that Indonesian migrant workers are dominated by women.

Reviewing the placement of Indonesian workers based on employment, it appears that in the year 2021, the domestic worker was ranked third on the list of jobs with the highest number of applicants, succeeding housemaid and caregiver as the first and second, respectively. Referring to their formal definition, being a housemaid and caregiver can be considered domestic work, and it is highly associated with women. In this case, women are employed as domestic workers

simply because of a social construct that sees women as only able to carry out domestic roles. This condition is inseparable from the existence of the patriarchal culture that has limited the space, ambitions, and ideals of women. Regardless of how far a woman goes or how high she aspires, cultural convention only recognizes women as domestic beings. Therefore, the willingness to accept women to work abroad as laborers comes from the view that women are objects whose energy is needed only for domestic tasks (34,45–47).

The findings of this study reveal that women's decisions to become migrant workers are primarily driven by economic motivations, particularly the desire to improve their financial circumstances and contribute to household income. Many female respondents expressed goals such as earning a higher salary, saving money for future investments, and supporting their children's education—demonstrating how economic hardship acts as a significant push factor. However, beyond material needs, women also seek social recognition and empowerment, using migration as a means to elevate their status within the family and community. This reflects broader patterns observed in prior studies that highlight how female migrants often carry the dual burden of economic provider and caregiver, embodying resilience in both domestic and public spheres (34,35). In the context of family resilience, women are positioned not as passive victims of circumstance, but as active agents navigating migration to fulfill multiple roles—as mothers, breadwinners, and role models. These dual roles challenge traditional gender norms while simultaneously reinforcing their importance within the family structure (46,47).

Another demographic factor that can be reviewed is the respondents' age. It appears that most prospective migrants were of productive age and had been able to work efficiently. A relatively fresh, young worker is deemed more desirable in

comparison to the aging workers. This is because, generally speaking, biological aging slowly deteriorates an individual's physical and mental health, which prevents one from reaching a certain expectation of productivity. However, it is important to note that that is not always the case—many aging individuals are as capable, perhaps in the same or many different ways, in comparison to the so-called "young and fresh". Moreover, the mechanisms of aging and how it affects people are different, depending on genetics, environment, stress level, and even ethnicity (48–51).

The preconceived notion of weakness associated with age has something to do with ageism. Simply put, ageism is a form of socially constructed discrimination based on someone's age, where their age overshadows their capabilities and experience. Therefore, society tends to see elderly people, especially those from lower socioeconomic status, as a social burden. The construct has led to the situations and challenges faced in the current society, where prejudice against aged people is the mainstream culture, and the association between senescence and weakness is prevalent. This unfortunate reality often results in stereotypes and stigmatizations against older people, including in the recruitment process of international migrant workers (52–54).

The marital status of the respondents is more varied than their age. According to the data presented in this study, 50% of the respondents are unwed, 46.36% are married, and only 3.64% are widowed or divorced. Most of the married, widowed, and divorced respondents decided to migrate as laborer because they were eager to have a higher income so they could prepare for the future of their families and their children. Meanwhile, respondents with unmarried status wanted a better life for themselves and their families. Each one of the respondents, regardless of their marital status, shares several social factors that motivate them to migrate. Such an urge came from basic human needs and the desire to achieve a better quality of life. Migrants often move to ensure better opportunities for themselves or their families, such as being able to send their children to safer schools of a higher standard or looking for jobs that not only have sufficient salaries but can provide prospective career growth (55–57).

Malaysia is the most desirable country for prospective migrant workers, as shown in this study (41.81%). Interestingly, many reports also mentioned how Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia are often faced with neglect, discomfort, and even abuse from their employers or handlers. Despite the negative publicity related to migrants in the said country, Malaysia remains the top choice for Indonesians to work. One of the main factors that pushes these workers to desire to work in Malaysia is recommendations received from family members or friends who already work in the country. Furthermore, many job advertisements in Malaysia often offer higher salaries, free lodging, and bonuses that exceed the basic salary in Indonesia (7,20). Not to mention that Malaysia's geographical proximity and sociocultural similarity to Indonesia might be associated with easier cultural adaptation and cheaper plane tickets, all credit to human nature to maximize the most comfort during challenging times (58).

Religious Motivation as a Push Factor

An interesting response was received, as seen in Table 2, which is the motivation to make their parents happy by financially supporting them to visit the Holy Land. The Holy Land in question usually refers to Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, two of the largest pilgrimage sites for Muslims across the globe. The activity of visiting the Holy Land is called *Hajj* and it is mandatory according to the Quran. Meanwhile, *Umrah* is not a responsibility, but a tradition instead, meaning that an individual would not be considered sinful if they do not wish to do it. However, due to the great geographical distance, physical health and

well-being, and large expenses needed to perform the religious duty, it is not mandatory for those who do not possess the financial, mental, and physical capability to go there. However, no matter their socioeconomic status, it is still considered a lifelong, once-in-a-lifetime purpose to a large population of Muslims (59–61). Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population, and hence, the ideation of going to *Hajj* and *Umrah* is constructed into many Indonesian cultures and subcultures (62–65). Many children want to respect their parents by working hard and financially supporting their parents' lifelong purpose as Muslims, even if they have to sacrifice their own comfort and happiness at times (27).

Beyond personal fulfillment and filial piety, this act carries significant social capital. Many Indonesian communities consider the sacrifice to send their parents to *Hajj* to enhance the family's social status and is perceived as a sign of dignity, prosperity, and moral character. Those who achieve this are often held in high esteem by neighbors and extended kin, and the family may receive honorary titles such as "*Haji*" or "*Hajjah*", which command respect in everyday life. This reinforces the motivation among labor migrants to make sacrifices abroad for the sake of their family's religious and social standing back home. The deep integration of the Islamic faith with local cultural norms makes *Hajj* not only a religious goal but also a collective marker of familial and community pride (61,62).

Religious pilgrimage is highly relevant in Abrahamic religions, namely Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Visiting the Holy Land, wherever the Land may be, is seen as a form of piety to their religious beliefs. The Muslims considered Mecca and Medina holy due to their history with the Prophets Abraham and Muhammad (59,61). Meanwhile, the Christians believe that Jerusalem and the Levant are their holiest site because many biblical stories were set there, particularly the birth, death,

and resurrection of Jesus Christ (66). The Mormons, on the other hand, considered the state of Utah, especially Salt Lake City, as a pilgrimage destination due to the rapid growth of Mormonism and its massive following in the area (67). However, minimal research revealed who sponsored these people's pilgrimage and what it took to earn sufficient financial security to sponsor their closest relatives. Thus far, similar patterns have only been observed in Malaysia, where the children often sponsored their parents' trip to the Holy Land through multiple sacrifices, such as working double jobs (27).

Other than religious pilgrimage, conflicts in one's homeland often force a group of individuals to migrate and seek security in a new land. One of the contributing factors to the Bangladeshi migration to West Bengal, for example, is religious discrimination. A previous study mentioned that several Hindu Bangladeshis feel some array of discomfort, as Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority country. Hence, they migrated to West Bengal, India, to feel secure in living their daily lives and practicing their Hinduism without any prejudice (68). A similar thing also occurred in Indonesia, where the Buginese merchants in Ambon, Dili, and Kupang were forced to re-migrate due to ethnic and religious conflicts. The three places are predominantly Christian, from both Protestant (Ambon) and Catholic (Dili and Kupang), and the Buginese Muslims are perceived as a bad influence on their religiosity because they started to take control of the existing bureaucracy and build mosques in the Protestant or Catholic neighborhoods. Conflicts erupted, and the migrants were forced to return to their homeland in South Sulawesi or migrate somewhere else, such as Kalimantan or Jakarta (69).

Many people who belong to several religious groups also migrate to other countries as a means of evangelization. The population of New England during the 17th century, for example, migrated to the New

World to spread Christianity and created their vision of a new Heaven, new Earth, new Churches, and new Commonwealth (70). These migrants, also referred to as missionaries and evangelists, have always been an integral part of Christianity worldwide, including in Indonesia. Some missionaries are even beatified or canonized as Saints by the Holy See for their *Missio Dei*, namely the missions of Saint Louis Bertrand in South America and Saint Francis Xavier in Asia (71–74).

According to the works of literature reviewed, migration and religion have been interlinked for centuries. A unique variation of religion as a driving force of migration is found in this study. Typically, previous works of study only investigated the role of religion and religious conflicts in migration, while this study also revealed that some individuals even have to sacrifice leaving their homeland in order to achieve religious goals (27,70,75). Moreover, this study displayed such a sacrifice due to the love they have for their parents. Such a familial and religiously motivated answer might not be relevant in other populations, hence the researcher's argument that it is something that makes the Muslim Indonesian population unique from other previous research worldwide.
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CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
Conclusion

Based on the survey, it can be concluded that the reason workers go overseas is not merely due to economic factors, but also personal and social considerations as well. The majority of the workers already had friends and family who worked in the destination country and recommended that they follow. Furthermore, other factors, such as sex, age, marital status, and destination country, contribute equally to the decisions of individuals migrating abroad. High salaries, free lodging, and bonuses offered exceeding the basic Indonesian salary also contribute to triggering the motivation to work overseas. Those salaries are then used

for various needs when they return to their country of origin. Cultural factors also play a huge part in motivating prospective migrant workers to go abroad, mainly related to the fulfillment of their family (20.00%) and their children's needs (21.82%), social status (3.94%), as well as religion (0.91%). Another contributor to the driving force of migration is personal or individual factors, such as one's need to gain more cultural knowledge (0.91%), independence (8.18%), and overall success (30.00%).

While most migration studies emphasize economic motives within the classic push-pull framework, this study introduces and highlights personal factors as a separate thematic driver—such as aspiration for independence and success, personal responsibility and experience-seeking, desire to make parents proud, especially through religious goals, such as *Hajj* funding. This tripartite categorization (personal, social, and economic) enriches the understanding of migration motives beyond the typical binary model. The novel contribution of this research is its culturally grounded expansion of migration theory, particularly the formal recognition of personal motivations as a primary driver, the integration of religious and familial values, and the intersectional discussion of gender, age, and socioeconomic context in shaping migration decisions. These elements contribute both conceptually and practically to the literature on labor migration, particularly within Southeast Asian and Islamic cultural frameworks.

Suggestion

The results of this study can also be used as a basis for designing integrated training for prospective migrants who will work abroad. Migrating to another country and adapting to its culture is not an easy task; thus, there is an urgency to prepare the prospective migrants with psychological, physical, and skills training. Many migrant worker agencies, such as the National Agency for Migrant Workers Protection of

Indonesia and Regional Offices of the Department of Manpower and Transmigration, might find this study useful to design a more targeted intervention for prospective migrant workers.

Future research could adopt an in-depth qualitative approach to explore the personal narratives and lived experiences of prospective migrant workers, particularly focusing on how they construct meaning around migration, sacrifice, and aspirations. Such a study could reveal how motivations—such as sending parents on *Hajj*, gaining independence, or restoring family honor—are shaped by individual values, religious beliefs, and community expectations. Additionally, a comparative study between high-sending regions like East Java and Central Java could highlight how local cultural norms, gender roles, and social support networks influence migration decisions differently across regions. This deeper understanding would provide a more nuanced foundation for designing targeted support programs and culturally sensitive pre-departure training.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

IH designed the study, collected the data, analyzed the data, drafted the manuscript, and proofread the article; MDA supervised the study, analyzed the data, drafted the manuscript, revised the manuscript, and proofread the article; SMA analyzed the data, drafted the manuscript, revised the mannuscript, and proofread the article; and MWS supervised the study, drafted the manuscript, and proofread the article.

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