Analysis of the Characteristics of Circular Migration: The Case of Female Domestic Workers from Rural Indonesia

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Abstract

The high demand for domestic workers, especially women, in developed and Middle Eastern countries and the abundant labor supply in developing countries have spurred labor migration among them. This demand–supply relation and the migration policies of sending and receiving countries have sustained continued flows of migration. Many individuals migrate more than once, which constitutes circular migration. The factors explaining circular migration should be assessed not only at the macro level but also at the micro level because from the policy perspective, it is important to understand migration decisions. This paper examines the situation and determinants of female labor circular migration from Indonesia, one of the major sources of female domestic workers. This study analyzes the characteristics of circular migration, focusing on the migrants' human capital, migration experience, and remittance behavior and on an institutional aspect, namely, the role of local middlemen in migration. Using survey data on female return migrants who departed from Indramayu Regency from 1994 to 2012, we find that a circular migrant tends to be a return migrant who has a low level of education, is a Middle East returnee, and was supported by a middleman to arrange the first migration.

Keywords: circular migration, domestic worker, determinant of migration, gender

1. Introduction

Labor movement across borders has increased due to the progress of globalization. International labor migration accounted for almost 65% of total migration in 2013 (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2015). Among these, not a small number of labor migrants travel back and forth between their country of origin and their destination country; that is, they are circular migrants. In 2016, the United Nations set a standard definition of circular migration: a circular migrant is a person who crosses the national borders of the reporting country at least three times over a 10-year period, each time with the duration of stay (abroad or in the country) of at least 90 days (UNECE, 2016). Due to the lack of a standardized definition until 2016, no data, such as the numbers of circular migrants, are available. However, some literature has indicated a significant prevalence of circular migration. Constant and Zimmermann (2011) showed that more than 60% of migrants surveyed in Germany were circular migrants. Another study on the circular migration of Indonesian low-skilled workers to Malaysia revealed that about 33% of the migrants repeated migration (Balakrishnan, 2013). In the case of the Philippines, 66.3% of the workers who left the country in 2015 had re-hire status (POEA, 2018).

Circular migration is expected to contribute to development. Under the assumption of triple wins, destination

countries, communities of origin, and migrants all benefit from circular migration (Agunias & Newland, 2007; EMN, 2011). Destination countries can resolve specific labor shortages while avoiding migrants becoming permanent residents. In sending countries, circular migration reduces unemployment problems and increases remittance inflows. The new skills and knowledge acquired by return migrants might help national development. For migrants, circular migration provides overseas job opportunities, which usually pay better. Remittances from migrants help their families have better lives. However, there is also a view that only destination countries benefit from circular migration, while migrants are exploited and do not bring any benefits to their countries of origin or their families (Wickramasekara, 2011; Castles & Ozkul, 2014).

Previous studies on circular migration have mostly examined the concept, its general causes, its advantages and disadvantages, and the corresponding policy recommendations. Although these are certainly necessary to understand circular migration, it is also equally important from the policy perspective to analyze the characteristics of circular migration and decisions to migrate. An examination of circular migration on the individual and household levels is needed. The new economics of labor migration suggests that migration is among the household strategies for betterment, and decisions to migrate are made not only by individuals but also by households to maximize the outcomes of migration. Understanding circular migration at the micro level could provide essential information for the development of migration policy in both origin and destination countries.

Several existing studies have examined circular migration at the individual and household levels. Empirical studies assessing circular migration from EaP (Eastern Partnership)[1] countries have shown that the typical circular migrant was a man in his most productive years with a secondary education (Bartolomeo, Makaryan, Mananashvili, & Weinar, 2012). Another analysis on the specific Indonesia–Malaysia migration corridor indicated that the circular migrants tended to be undocumented, male, and single, to have undertaken their initial migration at a younger age, and to have been employed in the plantation sector. In Germany, migrants who were from European Union (EU) member countries, did not own homes in Germany, and were younger or older (excluding the middle-aged) were significantly more likely to engage in circular migration. A study in Albania showed that circular migrants were likely to be male, have a primary education, and come from rural, less developed areas. Constant et al., found that circular migration was most prevalent among young, single men, attachment to the host country reduced the likelihood of circular migration, and acquisition of citizenship in the host country fostered circularity. Unfortunately, there are a very few studies regarding circular migration in Indonesia, and so far, there have been no studies focused on female circular labor migration. Consequently, a gender perspective is missing from existing studies even though women account for a significant number of total labor migrants, especially in Indonesia. In our study, therefore, we analyze female circular migrants, the majority of whom are employed as domestic workers.

Currently, the demand for domestic workers and care workers in the global labor market has been growing due to the increasing aging populations, declining younger generations and multigenerational households, and women's increasing labor participation in developed countries. Migrant workers in importing countries provide flexibility and fill the need for domestic and care workers, whose duties are mostly performed by women. The ILO reported that about 8.5 million (73.4%) domestic workers and 66.6 million (44.3%) migrant workers were women in 2013.

Indonesia has a long history as a major migrant-sending country in Southeast Asia. In the 1970s, growing demand for labor in Middle Eastern countries resulted in large-scale Asian labor migration, including from Indonesia. The need for women to serve as domestic workers also increased with the development of Middle Eastern countries, which led to the feminization of labor migration in the 1980s. In the next development, some East and Southeast Asian countries, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, became other important destinations. Within ten years, from 2008 to 2017, the number of the migrants rose to more than 4.6 million; of these, 67.75% were women.

No data on the prevalence of circular migration in Indonesia exist. However, the field survey in Indramayu Regency presented in this paper revealed that more than 70% of the sample had two or more migration experiences.

This study is aimed at examining the current situation and characteristics of circular labor migrants based on the field survey in Indramayu Regency, Indonesia. Specifically, we analyze those who work as domestic workers. We seek to understand the characteristics influencing migration decisions by looking at migrants' human capital, migration experience, and remittance behavior and the role of middlemen in the migration process. Placement companies that employ middlemen are important institutions in promoting and sustaining the international movement of workers. Due to their involvement, the flow of migrants has become increasingly institutionalized and independent of the factors that originally caused it.

This paper is organized as follows. Section Ⅱ discusses migration in the Indonesian context. Section Ⅲ describes the data collection and the sample migrants' profiles. Section Ⅳ explains the estimation method and variables used in the empirical analysis. Section Ⅴ presents the empirical results, followed by a discussion in Section Ⅵ. The final section concludes.

2. The Overview and Mechanism of Migration in the Indonesian Context

Modern international labor migration from Indonesia officially began in 1970, when the national government issued the Regulation of Ministry of Manpower No. 4 regulating overseas labor recruitment. Nine years later, the government started actively sending workers abroad. The government specified a targeted number of overseas migrants in its five-year development plan (Kaur A., 2004; Cremer, 1988). The export of labor has become a strategy of the Indonesia government to address poverty, ease domestic unemployment pressures, generate foreign exchange, and foster growth. Figure 1 shows the trends of documented migration from Indonesia based on gender from 2008 to 2017. After exceeding 600,000 in 2008, the number of migrants from Indonesia has declined due to the migration
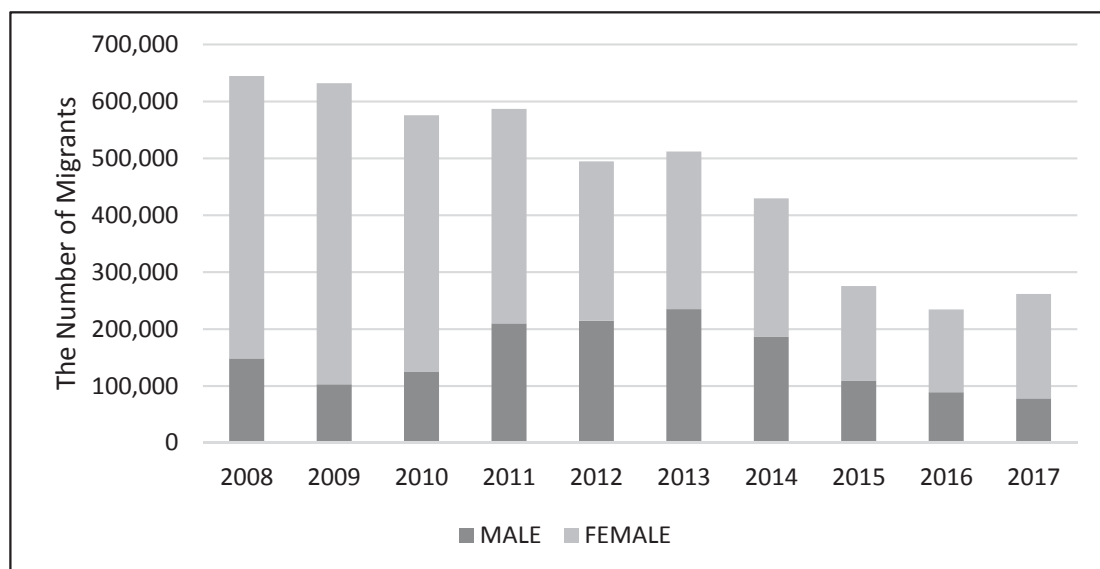

Figure 1. Trend of International Migration from Indonesia Based on Gender

Source: BNP2TKI[1] , 2015–2018

[1] BNP2TKI (*Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* / National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers) is the body under the President whose task is to coordinate and integrate the policy implementation in the placement and protection of the overseas workers

moratorium some Middle Eastern countries imposed in 2009 and the termination of labor migration to 19 Middle Eastern countries in 2015. Figure 1 also shows that female workers constitute a substantial portion of total migrants. There are a number of undocumented migrants who are not included in the official figures. The scope of this study is limited to documented migration through official channels.

Improving one's economic conditions and getting out of poverty are the main reasons for labor migration. The majority of migrants come from the poor, rural areas but are not from the poorest category because they have to pay considerable amounts of money to cover the costs of migration (Kaur A., 2004). They tend to have low education levels; almost 70% are elementary- or secondary-school graduates. Consequently, it might be difficult for them to become the agents of change able to modernize their villages. The skills and knowledge gained from previous migration hardly make them innovative and economically independent. Remittances from migrants are the main income source for families' daily expenditures, with barely any left for savings or investment (Dungo et al., 2013). Migrant-sending families' inability to be self-reliant and dependence on remittances increases demand for circular migration.

Replacing Law No. 39 of 2004, Law No. 18 of 2017 is the main source of regulations regarding international labor migration in Indonesia. The law stipulates that migrants, except for individual migrants, may work only in countries with which the Indonesian government has already signed agreements. According to the law, the government cooperates with placement companies (recruitment agencies) that recruit Indonesian migrant workers *(Perusahaan penempatan pekerja migran Indonesia)*,[2] which need to obtain written permission from the Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia to recruit of workers. These companies are in charge of searching job opportunities, assigning migrants, and solving problems encountered by the migrants they assign. In the destination country, the government authorizes a legal agency or a business entity called a business partner (*mitra usaha*), which is responsible for assigning Indonesian migrant workers to employers.

Indonesian migrant workers (*pekerja migran Indonesia*)[3] must be at least 18 years old (according to Law No. 39/2004, the minimum age is 21 for those who work for an individual employer), have competencies, be physically and mentally healthy, hold social insurance membership, and have all the required documents. Placement companies, business partners or employers, and migrants sign agreements stating the rights and obligations of each party. In the past, placement companies were also responsible for training migrants, but the new law shifts this obligation to government-owned or private, accredited training institutions. Figure 2 presents the relationships among stakeholders in the Indonesian process of labor migration.

Placement companies play very important roles because recruitment of Indonesian migrant workers should be done through them. However, recruitments are highly dependent on middlemen who are contracted by placement companies. Placement companies call them *petugas lapangan* (PL) or field agents, while society frequently call them *calo* or *sponsors*. Middlemen visit cities and villages and recruit migrants. They do not have formal contracts with the placement companies for which they work but are paid for each recruit they deliver.

In the process of migration, middlemen help their clients. The migration procedure is complicated, so migrants rely on middlemen's support. Middlemen sometimes bribe government officials to facilitate the process. Moreover, migrants' educational background makes it rather difficult for them to deal with the complicated migration process. Middlemen recruit both the first-time migrants and return migrants. Return migrants might be easier to be convinced because they already have migration experiences. Their high possibility of repeating migration contributes to increased circular migration.
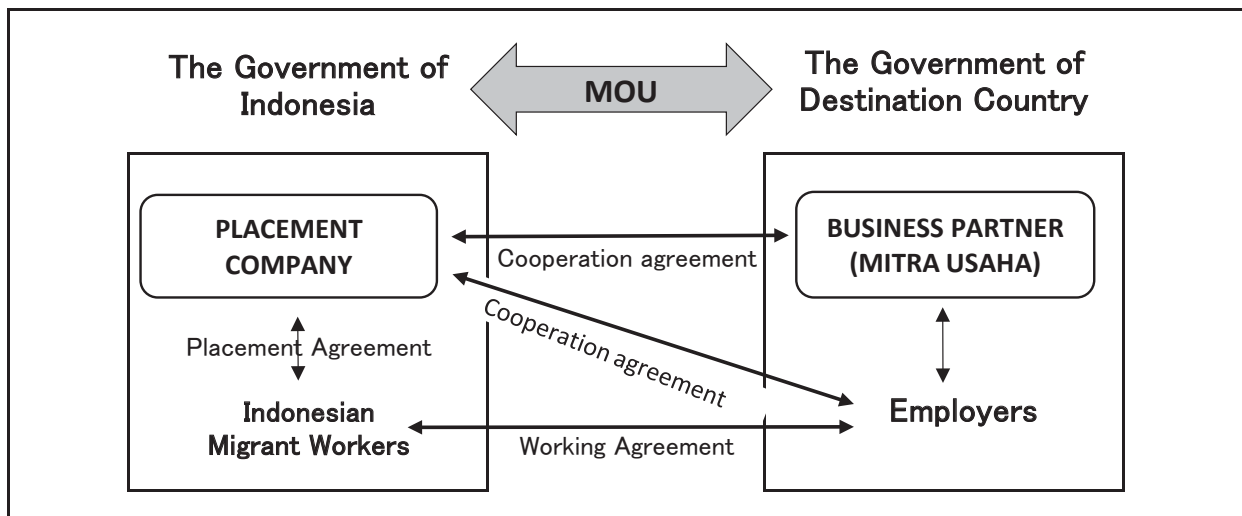
Figure 2. Relationships among Stakeholders in Labor Migration under Law No. 18 of 2017
Source: Law No. 18 of 2017

3. Data and Profiles of Migrants

A field survey was conducted in Indramayu Regency, West Java, Indonesia, in August and September 2016. Indramayu Regency is one of the regions with a very high number of international female labor migrants. Five different sub-districts were chosen as the sample: Juntinyuat, Cantigi, Losarang, Sukagumiwang, and Anjatan. The five sub-districts were selected based on their geographical location, poverty level, and prevalence of labor migration, so the sample represented all these characteristics at the regency level. One village was chosen from each sub-district. Then, one local neighborhood unit called a rukun tetangga (RT)[4] was chosen randomly from each village. Hence, there were five RTs employed as the source of data. The total number of households surveyed were 486. Out of these households, all of the qualified female return migrants at the RTs were used as the sample. Questionnaires were used to obtain household-and individual-level data. The questionnaires were given to heads of households, and the interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews. The interviewers called *Mitra BPS* are personnel commonly hired by Statistics Indonesia[5] to perform surveys. They periodically receive training and attend workshops on how to do interviews and surveys organized by Statistics Indonesia.

The selected sample for the survey consisted of 98 female return migrants who departed for the first time from 1994 to 2012. Contracts usually last for two or three years, so migrants who departed in 2012 would return in 2014 or 2015. The timing of the survey gave thus those who came back in 2015 at least seven months to decide whether to repeat migration or stay in the village. The size of the sample may not be large enough, but it is sufficient for inferential purposes. Given that the samples were obtained from an area that is the main source of female labor migrants in Indonesia and that the 98 return female migrants were derived from 486 households, it can be considered that the sample represents Indonesian female return migrants.

The percentage of return migrants who had migrated at least twice was more than 70%. Over one-third of the migrants had more than three migration experiences. We categorized migrants into two groups: migrants who only migrated once and migrants who migrated two or more times. The latter are defined as circular migrants based on the UN criterion. Table 1 shows the distribution of the number of migration experiences in the sample.

Table 1. The Number of Migration

Number of migration (times)	Freq.	Percentage
1	28	28.6
2	35	35.7
3	23	23.5
4	11	11.2
5	1	1.0
Total	98	100

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 2 presents the marital status of the sample migrants. It shows a high prevalence of women who were married at the time of their first migration (66.3%). The data also reveal a tendency for divorced women or widows to be circular migrants, although the sample size is very small. It is shown that seven of the eight divorced women and widows had more than one migration experience. The rate of circular migration was 70.8% among married women and 68.0% among single women. The change in marital status between the first and the second migration among single women shows that 14 of 17 migrants (82.3%) remained single at their second migration.

Table 2. Migrants' Marital Status

Marital status of 1st migration	One time migration	Marital status of 2nd migration			Total
		Unmarried	Married	Divorced/Widow	
Unmarried	8	14	3	0	25
Married	19	0	42	4	65
Divorced/Widow	1	0	1	6	8
Total	28	14	46	10	98

Source: Author's calculations

Table 3 displays the destination of the first and the second migration. Middle Eastern countries were the primary destinations for both one-time migrants and circular migrants. Almost 80% of the returnees from Middle Eastern countries were circular migrants, and most (64.5%) returned to their previous destination for the second migration. In contrast, the returnees from East Asian and Southeast Asian countries had lower levels of circular migration, at 41.7% and 28.6%, respectively. Large-scale migration to Middle Eastern countries started in the late 1970s and to Asian countries in the 1980s (Raharto et al., 2013). The gap in time might have allowed more opportunities for circular migration among returnees from Middle Eastern countries. The data also indicate that all of the returnees tended to choose the same destination for the second migration. None of the returnees from East Asian and Southeast Asian countries chose Middle Eastern countries as their next destination.

Table 3. Migrants' Destinations for Their First and Second Migration

Destination of first migration	One time migration	Destination of second migration			Total
		Middle Eastern countries	East Asian countries	South East Asian countries	
Middle Eastern countries	16	51	7	5	79
East Asian countries	7	0	5	0	12
South East Asian countries	5	0	0	2	7
Total	28	51	12	7	98

Source: Author's calculations

Migrants' education levels by destination are shown in Table 4. It indicates that migrants to the Middle East had low levels of education. Six migrants had no education at all, and 41.8% were primary-school graduates. In a detailed examination, migrants with a primary-level education chose Malaysia as their destination. In contrast, East Asian returnees were more educated. About two thirds were secondary-school graduates, and one quarter were high-school graduates.

Table 4. Migrants' Education Level by Destination

Destination Country	No-education	Primary School	Secondary School	High School	Total
Middle Eastern Countries	6	36	31	6	79
East Asian Countries	0	1	8	3	12
South East Asian Countries	0	4	2	1	7
Total	6	41	41	10	98

Source: Author's calculations

All but one of the 98 sample migrants had employment as domestic workers, such as housemaids, babysitters, or caregivers for the elderly. The one exception was an equipment caretaker. The Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) defines domestic workers as employed by and providing services for private households. This type of job is mostly categorized as informal employment.[6] The high prevalence of informal employment may increase labor migrants' risk of harassment and exploitation in destination countries.

4. Estimation Method and Variables

The empirical analysis was conducted by using a logistic regression model. The following model estimated the relationship between migration behaviors that had two possibilities—whether migration was circular or not circular—and the explanatory variables, divided into four groups: individual characteristics, migration experience, remittance behavior, and an institutional aspect.

$$g(M_i) = ln\left(\frac{M_i}{1 - M_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \boldsymbol{\beta}_1\boldsymbol{I}_i + \boldsymbol{\beta}_2\boldsymbol{E}_i + \boldsymbol{\beta}_3\boldsymbol{R}_i + \boldsymbol{\beta}_4S_i + e_i$$

where $g(.)$ refers to the logit function; M_i is the probability of circular migration for return migrant i; β_0 is the constant; $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ is the coefficient for the corresponding explanatory variables; $\boldsymbol{I}_i$ is a vector of the individual characteristic variables; $\boldsymbol{E}_i$ is a vector of the migration experience variables; $\boldsymbol{R}_i$ is a vector of the remittance behavior variables; S_i is a variable representing an institutional aspect; and e_i is an error term.

The individual characteristics included in the analysis were age, education level, and marital status at migrants' first departure. The current household size was used as the proxy for the household size at the time of migration. The migration experience variables consisted of the year of the first migration, contract status, and destination country of the first migration. The year of the first-time migration measured the chance of circular migration. The contract status was a dummy variable and showed whether migrants completed their contract. Completion of a contract indicated that migration was successful. The destination countries were divided into three groups: Middle Eastern countries, East Asian countries, and Southeast Asian countries.

Next, the remittance variables were dummy variables indicating whether remittances were sent regularly and whether there was a gap between what the migrant expected and actually earned. In rural societies, remittances are

a main income source for daily expenditure. There is a relationship between remitting patterns and migration decisions (Collier et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2011). The regularity of remittances received by the families left behind might influence decisions to repeat migration. Regarding gaps in the amount of remittance, Vadean and Piracha and Naiditch et al., argued that decisions whether to repeat migration are most likely determined by fulfillment of the earning targets. A migrant not able to achieve the earning target might intend to repeat migration to fill that gap.

The institutional variable represented whether middlemen were involved in the process of migration. It was hypothesized that middlemen influence migration decisions. Table 5 shows the summary statistics of the explanatory variables.

Table 5. Summary Statistics of the Explanatory Variables

Variables	Mean	Variable Description
Age	27.857 (7.272)	The age at first departure
Migrant education level		
No-education	0.612	=1 if the migrant has no-education; =0 otherwise
Primary school	0.418	=1 if the migrant is primary school graduate; =0 otherwise
Secondary school	0.418	=1 if the migrant is secondary school graduate; =0 otherwise
High school	0.102	=1 if the migrant is high school graduate; =0 otherwise
Migrant marital status		
Unmarried	0.255	=1 if the migrant is unmarried; =0 otherwise
Married	0.663	=1 if the migrant is married; =0 otherwise
Divorced/widow	0.082	=1 if the migrant is divorced/widow; =0 otherwise
Household size	3.520 (1.114)	The number of household member
Year	2005.071 (5.053)	The year of first time migration
Completed contract	95.920	=1 if the answer is yes; =0 otherwise
Destination country		
Middle East countries	0.806	=1 if the migrant departed to Middle Eastern countries at the first departure; =0 otherwise
East Asian countries	0.122	=1 if the migrant departed to East Asian countries at the first departure; =0 otherwise
Southeast Asian countries	0.071	=1 if the migrant departed to Southeast Asian countries at the first departure; =0 otherwise
Regular remittance	0.245	=1 if the answer is yes; =0 otherwise
Gap in remittance	0.449	=1 if the answer is yes; =0 otherwise
Middleman support	0.806	=1 if the answer is yes; =0 otherwise

N = 98; Standard deviation is in parenthesis for continuous variables
Source: Author's calculations

5. Empirical Results

Table 6 presents the results of the logistic regression analysis. It shows the estimated coefficients and odds ratios of the independent variables.

Table 6. Logistic Regression Results

Independents Variables	Coefficients		Odds Ratios
Age	-0.080		0.923
	(0.074)		
Migrant education level (Base category= No education)			
Primary school	2.737	**	15.438
	(1.225)		
Secondary school	3.243	**	25.617
	(1.556)		
High school	2.675		14.510
	(1.905)		
Migrant marital status (Base category=single)			
Married	1.512		4.536
	(1.006)		
Divorced/widow	2.292		9.894
	(1.783)		
Household size	-0.113		0.893
	(0.299)		
Year of first time migration	0.041		1.042
	(0.075)		
Contract status (Base category= Uncompleted contract)	2.469		11.815
	(1.537)		
Destination countries (Base category= Middle Eastern Countries)			
East Asian countries	-2.786	***	0.062
	(0.965)		
Southeast Asian countries	-2.848	**	0.058
	(1.166)		
Remitting pattern (Base category= Irregular remitting pattern)	1.054		2.868
	(0.975)		
Gap in remittance (Base category= No gap of remittance)	0.210		1.234
	(0.758)		
Middleman support (Base category= Without middleman support)	2.687	***	14.685
	(0.973)		
Intercept	-85.873		5.08E-38
	(148.175)		
Pseudo R2	0.404		
LR chi2(13)	47.40		
Prob > chi2	0.000		
N	98		

Source: Author's estimates

Notes: ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1 %, 5%, and 10% level, respectively. The standard error appears in parenthesis.

Migrants' education level significantly influenced the likelihood of repeating migration. Migrants who graduated from primary and secondary school were more likely to have at least two or more migration experiences than those without education, while high-school education had no impact on circular migration decisions. Age, marital status and household size did not significantly influence decisions to repeat migration[7].

Among the variables considering migration experience, it seems that the destination country of the first departure mattered. Migrants to East and Southeast Asian countries were less likely to repeat migration than those who migrated to Middle Eastern countries. This was probably due to the longer history of migration to the Middle East and greater job availability in that region. Other variables, such as the completion status of working contract and the year of the first migration, were not statistically significant. The variables related to remittances also did not have significant impacts on the re-migration decision. Finally, we found that middlemen played a significant role in influencing the decision to repeat migrate. As described, middlemen were one of the key figures in the migration process in Indonesia. We discuss this in more detail in the next section.

6. Discussions

This section presents a more detailed discussion of some empirical results. Education is a key factor that influences migration decisions. Existing studies have shown that higher levels of education make it easier for migrants to find jobs in destination countries (for example, Schwartz, 1976). In our context, education is important for circular migration. Educated migrants are preferred over migrants without education. The minimum level of education required for migrants by the Indonesian government and some recipient countries prevents return migrants without education from repeating migration. Informal employment, such as domestic work, requires at least an elementary education, while formal employment demands higher education levels (ILO, 2016). These results are consistent with previous research showing that education has a positive and significant association with the decision to migrate overseas in the Indonesian context.

The empirical results also show that higher levels of education do not influence the rate of circular migration. One possible explanation is that migrants with higher education might use remittances and experiences to start new businesses or simply work in the formal sector after their return and thus stop migrating. The result is consistent with Vadean and Piracha (2009), who found that less-educated migrants were more likely to be circular migrants than those with higher education. This also supports the argument that less-educated migrants find it difficult to be economically independent in their villages and tend to rely on migration.

A couple of reasons motivate migrants to choose Middle Eastern countries as their re-migration destinations. Farbenblum et al., revealed that the pre-departure procedure to Middle Eastern countries is faster, easier, and cheaper than for East and Southeast Asian countries. Also, it shows that the education requirement is lower than for other destination countries. Law No. 39 of 2004 stipulated that migrants should be at least secondary-school graduates, but in 2006, APJATI[8] submitted a request for the Constitutional Court to examine the educational requirement for migrants. The court found that the requirement violated a constitutional right to work and life, and nullified it. Consequently, employers can determine the educational requirement of migrants themselves. Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore require higher education levels for migrants, but employers in Middle Eastern countries accept those with low education levels, such as migrants who have completed only primary school. The survey data on migrants' education by destination (Table 4) support this argument. Other factors such as the culture and spiritual values of destination countries are very important for Muslim migrants. There is always a hope to have the opportunity to complete a pilgrimage to Mecca, which is an obligation for Muslims.

In addition, there are some financial advantages for migrants who choose to work in Middle Eastern countries. Kuncoro et al., noted two types of benefits. First, migrants to Middle Eastern countries do not pay the cost of migration from their monthly salary, whereas migrants to East Asian countries and Southeast Asian countries have to. The deduction period ranges from five to 18 months depending on the destination country. In the case of Middle Eastern countries, the employer traditionally bears the whole cost of recruitment and migration, including fees and air tickets, but in East and Southeast Asian countries, placement companies usually bear these costs of migration at first and then later charge them to migrants, who must pay them back with interests.

Second, placement companies benefit because sending migrants to the Middle Eastern countries is more lucrative than sending them elsewhere. The recruitment of migrants to Middle Eastern countries is based on orders from the destination country. These orders include fees for recruitment, training, flight tickets, administrative processes, and pocket money or bonuses for migrants, as stated. According to Cremer, in the early 1980s, the Indonesian government charged considerably higher recruitment fees for women than to men to employers in the Middle East. Consequently, placement companies profited by recruiting women, driving increased female migration.

The empirical results confirm the hypothesis that middlemen's support is a crucial factor in circular migration. The intended function of placement companies to facilitate the migration process cannot be separated from the middlemen's activities in the field. They are determined to get as many clients, that is, migrants, as possible because their earnings depend on the number of recruitments. Middlemen persuade both first-time and return migrants. Migrants who use middlemen for their first migration can be easily approached by middlemen again after their return, leading to circular migration.

Middlemen not only support migrants before departure but also accompany and assist them until the end of the migration journey. A study in West Nusa Tenggara found that middlemen not only do paperwork and bureaucratic procedures for clients during preparation for migration but also handle remittances after the migrants arrive in their destinations. Migrants even use middlemen's bank accounts to send remittances to their families, so they do not need to pay monthly administration fees to banks. Middlemen usually come from neighborhoods or are respected community leaders who can easily persuade migrants and their families. It is common for families to contact middlemen if they lose contact with their migrant member overseas or are dealing with other problems.

While middlemen help migrants travel smoothly and take care of them even after they leave the home country, there are some problems associated with middlemen. In some cases, deceitful middlemen have cheated migrants. Not all the middlemen are genuine; some are fake and rip off those who wish to migrate. Some middlemen are involved in human trafficking, and in this case, the worst scenario can occur (Farbenblum et al., 2013). Consequently, middlemen are frequently demonized by academic researchers, non-governmental organizations, and policymakers in discussions on international migration regulation (Lindquist et al., 2012).

Aware of these incidents, the Indonesian government in 2012 requested BNP2TKI and APJATI, to launch a licensing system requiring middlemen to registering with a database. Additionally, in 2015, BNP2TKI ordered placement companies to register all the middlemen they employ online and verify them with local authorities (Letter No. B.20/KA/I/2015, January 22, 2015). Only registered middlemen may engage in recruiting migrants. These measures have been only recently started, so we need to see how such measures work and protect migrants from malicious middlemen.

The marital status comes up as an insignificant factor in circular migration. The single female tends to be more mobile. However, our result does not support this. Since the duration of migration is usually two or three years, which is considered to be a relatively short period, the migrant mother can easily find someone such as her parents, relatives, and friends in the village who can take care of her family members while she is away. The social ties are

still close in the rural society. This may be particularly so in the area where many females migrate, and the village members support each other. This may explain why the migrant mother is as mobile as the singles.

The relationship among remittance behaviors and circular migration is not observed. The remitting pattern, whether it is regular or not, is not a significant factor because the pattern is not important as long as they send the remittance home. Further, the inability to achieve the target of migration, which is considered as a factor influencing the decision to repeat migration, is also unverified. Our study did not confirm what past studies have shown (Vadean & Piracha, 2009; Collier et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2011; Naiditich et al., 2015). A possible explanation is that unsuccessful migrants are motivated to repeat migration to fulfill the target, while the successful ones are inspired to replicate the previous achievement. There is always hope that the next migration will be better.

7. Conclusion

The study has analyzed the factors influencing female circular migration from Indonesia based on a survey conducted in Indramayu regency. The survey showed that almost all the sample female migrants have employment as domestic workers, and more than 70% of migrants are circular migrants. The background for these findings is the high demand for domestic workers, mostly women, in Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Circular migrants tend to be either primary- and secondary-school graduates, and most re-migrate to the Middle East. They are recruited and supported by local middlemen who work for placement companies.

Migrants with at least primary-school education can find jobs more easily than those without education, and they also satisfy the minimum level of education set by the recipient countries. Migration to Middle Eastern countries is easier than migration to Asian countries, so the former is the preferred destination. It is also shown that when re-migrating, migrants tend to choose the same country where they migrated the first time. This is simply because migrants feel easy and comfortable returning to a place they know. The study highlights the important role of middlemen in migration. They are essential in assisting migrants, from preparation for migration until after the return home. Middlemen's active recruitment practices are one factor that has caused circular migration.

Circular migration brings a prospective contribution to development. At the macro level, the country can ease domestic unemployment pressure and expect foreign remittances from migrants, which increase the nation's foreign reserves. At the micro level, sending households receive remittances from migrants and use them for daily expenses, children's education, and other matters. Poor, rural households especially benefit from remittances. Repeating migration thus can be a national as well as a household strategy to improve economic conditions. Due to the declining trend of migration to Middle Eastern countries since 2015, because of the termination of labor migration to those countries, and increasing migrants to East Asian countries in recent years, migrants' major destinations will be shifted to East Asia in the near future. For the migration to Middle Eastern countries, migrant management and protection, which are the main issues of labor migration to these countries, should be improved.

The survey has also found a relatively high incidence of circular migration among women, which may have undesirable impacts on family members who remain in their villages. During migration, women are unable to care for their family members, including parents and children. The migration of mothers certainly influences the children left behind. Several studies have pointed out this. They show that children whose parents migrate tend to be more vulnerable compared to children of the same age living with parents. The position and function of mothers in their families is irreplaceable. The government should be aware of and address these negative impacts on children from migration.

Several cases of mistreatment of female workers have been reported (BNP2TKI, 2018). For women to work in a

safe environment, the Indonesian government should collaborate with the governments of receiving countries to protect migrant workers and improve their working conditions. The migration of workers, of which females constitute the majority, is a top concern for Indonesia, so the government should be more involved in formalizing the process of migration and ensuring migrants' safety.

Notes

[1] According to European Commission, the EaP is a joint policy initiative aimed at deepening and strengthening relations among EU member states, and its six eastern neighbors: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

[2] *Perusahaan penempatan pekerja migran Indonesia* (Indonesian migrant-worker placement company) is the new term used in Law No. 18/2017 to refer to private migrant-sending firms. The phrase used in Law No. 39/2004 was *pelaksana penempatan tenaga kerja Indonesia swasta*, also commonly called *perusahaan jasa tenaga kerja Indonesia*.

[3] *Pekerja migran Indonesia* (Indonesian migrant workers) is the new term used in Law No. 18/2017 to refer to Indonesian citizens who are currently or are returning from working for wages outside Indonesia's territory. The phrase used in Law No. 39/2004 was *tenaga kerja Indonesia* (Indonesian labor), which is more familiar and commonly used.

[4] An RT is the smallest territorial division in Indonesia. It is not categorized as part of formal government administration institutions. The election of chairperson was based on consensus among the households within its territory. In the Indramayu Regency, an RT consists of 100 households on average.

[5] Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, BPS, The Central Agency on Statistics) is a non-departmental government institution responsible for conducting statistical surveys.

[6] According to the ILO, wage workers are considered to be informal workers if their employment in law or practice meets one of the following criteria: not regulated by national labor legislation, not covered by social security, not subject to income taxation, or no access to certain employment benefits.

[7] The regression results did not change with or without household size variable.

[8] APJATI (*Asosiasi Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*/ Association of Indonesian manpower service companies), the organization of authorized placement companies.

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