

Empirical Evidence on Albanian Youth Migration

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Abstract The migration phenomenon has already become a global trend affecting all countries worldwide. The dimensions that emigration has taken nowadays affect both the individual as well as the general social aspect. Almost 30 years after the demise of the communist regime, a vast number of Albanian people are still immigrating to other more developed countries. This group choosing to emigrate is dominated by youth.

Most young people face difficulties in the labor market because lacking job experience, scarce or no income, and low wages. All of these have a negative impact on their economic and social aspects. The reasons behind migration vary from personal reasons for young people to the country's socioeconomic conditions. This article is based on the literature review and previous studies done for our country regarding the factors that influence the tendency of young people to emigrate.

Our study aims to analyze some of the push factors, in their perception, make young Albanian people emigrate. After processing the data collected through the questionnaires, we analyzed them to reach some conclusions. The SPSS V.21 Software was used to process the data and test the logistic model of this study.

Keywords: Youth Migration, Albania, Labor Market, Intention, Socio-economic Environment.

JEL Classification:G0, G28, F20,F22.

1. Introduction

Ever since the social and economic opening of the country in the '90s and onwards, Albania continues to have high emigration rate. According to the study by Gëdeshi

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and King (2018)), emigration had increased from 44 percent in 2007 to 52 percent in 2018. The intention of young people to emigrate has been even more concerning over the recent years. In their perception, emigration seems to be the best solution for them to satisfy their needs and fulfil their aspirations for the future. A 2018 survey on Youth in South-eastern Europe found that more than 40 percent of young people in Albania have a strong desire to move abroad, and most of them do not want to return to Albania again (IDI, 2019). The departure of young people, most of whom have a professional degree, a university degree, or postgraduate degree, harms the country's entire economy as young people are the most active part of the population and the most productive in the country. It seems that it was not for the global spread of Covid-19 in 2020 that youth mobility could have continued to follow the same global expansion and diversification trend, spreading to various forms of education, employment, and training (Cairns et al., 2021.).

However, what are the main reasons "pushing" young people to leave their country? To analyze this phenomenon, we conducted a survey with young people from 18 to 35 years old in Tirana, Durrës, and Shkodra. The data collected through the survey were used to analyze *the intention of Albanian youth to emigrate and the factors that most likely* make this number increase.

2. Literature review

Migration is the movement of a person or a group of persons either within a state or across an international border IOM (2004). The movement of persons abroad is considered as emigration, which can be long-term, short-term, domestic or international emigration. Migration occurs for various reasons, including political instability, poverty, conflict, environmental degradation, and natural disasters (Mema et al., 2019).

Based on the neoclassical theory of migration, differences in economic opportunities, in particular employment and wage differences, are the main push factors of the migration movements, according to Harris and Todar (1970). De Haas (2010) also gave a first global assessment of the connection between development and emigration. The main reasons pushing emigration are economic and human development in low-income societies toward more developed countries. However, even in rapid economic development conditions, we can expect an increase in emigration for as long as their demands grow faster than the opportunities a country can offer, says De Haas (2003). Economic and human development in low-income societies is more likely to increase migration because it increases 'people's abilities and aspirations to migrate. Referring to the labor market theory, Schaeffer (1999) argues that migration results from labor market demand in industrialized countries. In their study, De Haas et al., 2019 conclude that labor market segmentation and work specialization encourage people to migrate to secure a job, quality education, and family prospects.

In an analysis of international migration, Borjas (1987) assessed the levels of migration in the United States as a function of economic conditions in different countries of origin. Due to the systematic shortage of low-educated workers willing to take jobs in the secondary sector, advanced industrialized economies constantly demand migrants who prefer these jobs over those available in their countries of origin (Taylor, 1992). Of course, job demand in destination countries is the most crucial driving force pushing international migration, particularly when we consider that family migration is, more often than not, the indirect consequence of labor migration. The statistical evidence shows that emigration levels tend to be closely linked with business cycles and job opportunities in the destination countries, especially those implementing a liberal migration regime (Czaika and de Haas, 2014). Kuba (2019) also analyzed that Ghanaian migration to the USA is caused by poverty, political instability, and the desire to improve their economic and social status.

The existence of wage differences pushes migration from low-wage countries to higher-wage countries because the people seek to maximize their income (Ravenstein, 1889). Referring to Grogger and Hanson (2011), individual work can directly affect the chances of migration through the effect of current or expected income. The workers earning lower wages in their country of origin or who can expect to earn higher wages in another country for the same job will be further encouraged to emigrate. In analyzing emigration theories, Massey et al., (1993) noticed that low wages, unemployment, and low level of education are the pushing factors that increase the migration rate. According to Makhetha-Kosi et al. (2017) emigration has long been considered a livelihood strategy in developing and middle-income countries. Referring to the social and economic level of the family, many people want to emigrate, work, and secure a future for their whole family.

Rajović (2014) extensively analyzes emigrants from Serbia and Montenegro in Denmark from the mid-'60s to 2006, focusing on the causes of migration, and employment opportunities, and effects of migration. He observed how emigrants integrate, generation after generation, in the destination country. So, the integration could be difficult to achieve for the first-generation emigrants from Serbia and Montenegro. The second generation is confronted with two cultures, increasingly adopting the language and value system of the country where they live (Denmark). The second and third-generation migrants from Serbia and Montenegro, significantly different from the first generation, are more integrated into Danish society than the others.

All the mentioned reasons are exactly what affect individuals' migration from one area to another or from one country to another. In this study, we analyze the phenomenon of youth emigration in Albania.

3. Methodology

This paper analyses the data collected from a survey conducted to find out the *intentions of Albanian youth to emigrate and the factors that highly increase the likelihood* that such a number increases compared to young people wanting to stay in the country. The sample

selected included young people of 18-35 years old from Tirana, Durrës and Shkodra. Additionally, this paper tries to understand the likelihood of young people emigrating or not and how are the statistically significant factors distributed in the model.

Based on the respondents' replies, we constructed a logistic regression model. The intention of young people to emigrate is used as a dependent variable. Its odd ratios are the probability ratio p for a young person to emigrate with a probability $1-p$ not to emigrate in the future. By "*intentions*," we mean wishes, desires, or plans of young people to emigrate, but not necessarily will such intentions materialize in future actions (King and Williams, 2017).

The *dependent variable* is dichotomous and takes the value of 1 for young people intending to emigrate and 0 for those wanting to stay on the contrary, while the *independent variables* are ordinal. We used the Likert Scale with values from 1 to 5, according to the level of negation/affirmation, to measure the independent variables. The intention of young people to emigrate is motivated by several factors that have a different impact on different circumstances, periods, and individuals (Lee, 1966; Castelli, 2018). The factors analyzed in the study in Albania are taken referring to the scientific articles on the country (Gëdeshi and King, 2018; Danaj, 2019; Göler, 2017; Beine, 2020).

The *Forward Conditional* method was used to test the model. This method includes statistically significant variables in the model and excludes other variables from the model. Additionally, elements of descriptive statistics were also used to reach a conclusion on the nature of the interquartile distribution of the factors. This is achieved by interpreting the graphical presentation of box-plots produced using the SPSS V.21 software.

4. Results and discussions

In addition to modernization, the process of migration can be considered among the only phenomena that have consistently dominated societies for more than a century (Boswell and Crisp, 2004). Emigration and its push factors are mostly studied and analyzed by many researchers. Emigration in Albania continues to be high, never stopping after the 90s, except for various ups and downs in different periods. A more in-depth analysis of what motivates Albanian youth to leave the country is the novelty of this paper. This group of society is a vital force for the social and economic development of the country.

Therefore, the results of this paper can be used as a baseline for future studies and governmental policies in the country. The analysis of data is divided into two parts:

- i. building a logistic regression model, where the factors pushing young people to emigrate are taken as independent variables;
- ii. interpretation of statistically significant variables through box-plots in the model.
- iii. the factors that push young people to emigrate are analyzed with a logistical regression model, while the statistically significant variables are interpreted through box-plots for these factors.

4.1 Logistic regression and the factors determining the intention of young people to leave Albania

The econometric equation presents a logistical regression of the relationship between the logarithmic likelihood of the phenomenon in concern (the intention of young people to leave the country) and the independent factors involved in the study. Referring to the econometric equation below, we noted that not all independent variables provide sufficient statistical significance, but only 4 of them are included in the econometric equation.

$$\ln\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = -2.27 + 0.66(\text{Future in the country}) + 0.41(\text{Better job}) - 0.49(\text{Mig.Law Pack.}) + 0.52(\text{foreign language}) + \varepsilon$$

According to the equation above, the factor *Future in the country* increases the likelihood of young people leaving the country. Looking at the positive coefficient of this factor and its exponential value ($\exp. 0.66 = 1.9$), we have a result of 95% certain (referring to Table No. 1). Here we see that the likelihood of intention to leave the country dominates almost twice as much as the thought of staying in the country. According to the study of MWL (2019), about 80% of respondents perceive the country's social, economic, and political developments as weak and very weak.

Table 1. Factors determining the intention of young people to leave Albania

Variables in the Equation		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for	
								EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper				
Step 4 ^d	Future in the country	.663	.144	21.312	1	.000	1.941	1.465	2.572
	Better job	.408	.164	6.193	1	.013	1.503	1.090	2.072
	Migration Law Pack.	-.496	.190	6.830	1	.009	.609	.419	.883
	Foreign language	.521	.188	7.702	1	.006	1.683	1.165	2.431
	Constant	-2.272	.861	6.967	1	.008	.103		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Future in the country

b. Variable(s) entered on step 2: Foreign language

c. Variable(s) entered on step 3: Migration Law Package

d. Variable(s) entered on step 4: Better job

Source: Data processing by authors.

Regarding the factor *A better job*, the econometric equation shows that this factor increases young people's likelihood of thinking (intend) to leave the country for a better job. The exponential value of the regression coefficient [exp. (+ 0.41) = 1.5] shows that the likelihood of young Albanians hoping to find a better job abroad increases by 1.5 times compared to the thought of finding it in the country if the other factors included in the econometric equation are constant. Finding a better job and the low wages, for a certain level of education are the factors pushing people to emigrate (Cattaneo, 2006).

The factor *Migration Law Package* appears as a factor decreasing the logarithmic likelihood of young people's intention to leave the country. The exponential of its regression coefficient is negative [exp. (- 0.49) = 0.6]; consequently, it reduces by 0.6 times the likelihood of young people's intention to emigrate. Our study is focused only on the legal aspect and its applicability as a regulator of all areas of life. It is mostly understood as the possibility to find legal employment in destination countries. Albania does not yet have agreements with other countries for legal employment abroad.

The factor *Foreign language* encourages Albanian youth to think of leaving the country, thus reflecting a positive likelihood equal to 1.7 units [exp. (+ 0.52) = 1.7]. According to Palmer and Pytliková (2015), language serves as an information channel to learn about other determinants of migration and institutions, such as formal access to the labor market and the rights of migrants.

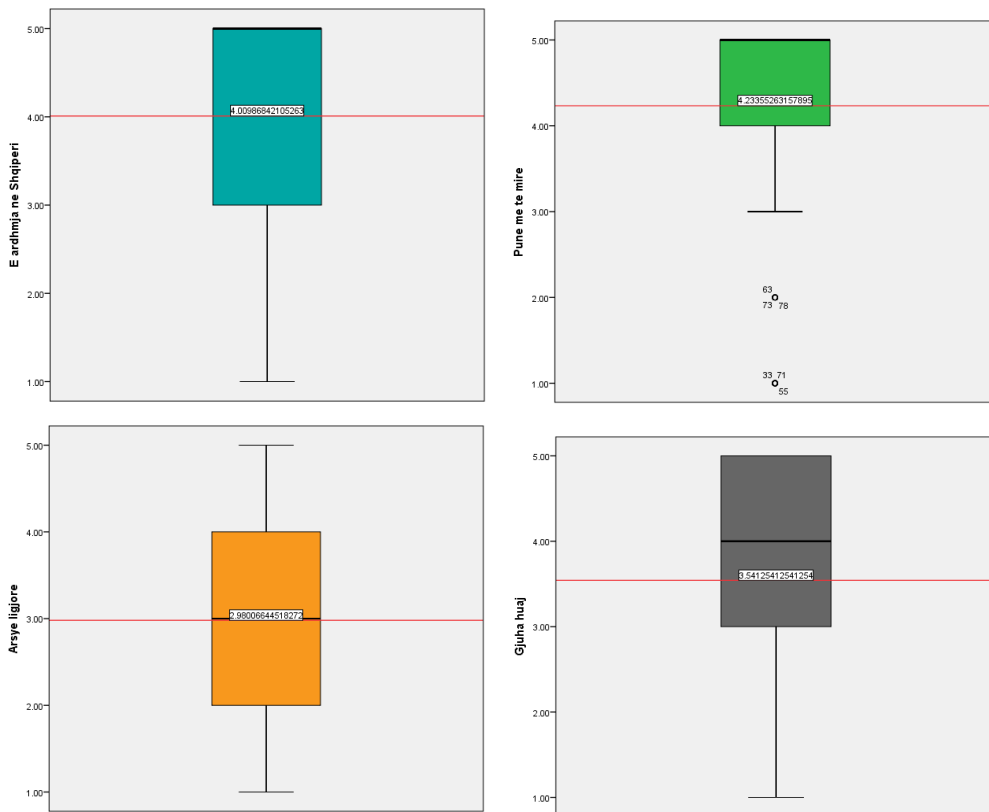
The negative *constant* gives an exponential coefficient equal to 0.1 [exp. (-2.272) = 0.103], shows that the likelihood of thinking about staying in the country compared to leaving the country is insignificant, almost 0, when all the factors included in the econometric model remain constant.

4.2 Interpretation of statistically significant variables through box-plots

Young people are most likely thinking of emigrating if their perceptions about the future in the country are not optimistic, if they seek better opportunities in the labor market, or if they have a good knowledge of a foreign language. A significant explanatory variable in the equation that decreases the likelihood of migration is their perception of the country's legislation, which despite being an essential factor in deciding to emigrate, is at the same time an obstacle to migration.

In descriptive statistics, the box-plot graphs present the distribution of numerical data in quartiles.

Graph1. Box-Plot Illustration



Source: Data processing by authors.

The interquartile distribution of the factor *Future in the country* shows that this is a decisive reason for 75% of respondents to leave Albania. Only 25% of respondents do not see the future in the country as a reason to emigrate. The average perception of the respondents for this factor is 4, which corresponds to the perception that the future in the country is precisely the reason to emigrate.

While, regarding emigration to find “a better job,” 100% of respondents are indifferent. Only 2% of respondents do not consider quality employment as a reason to leave Albania. The average perception is approximately 4.23, meaning that its trend is towards the maximum values of defining this factor as a strong reason to emigrate.

Here, we have a normal distribution of perception among respondents. 25% of respondents consider *Legal framework* as a reason to stay in Albania, and the same percentage considers it as a strong reason to leave the country. 50% of respondents, which corresponds to the interquartile spread, are indifferent to the idea that the law is a reason to leave Albania.

The interquartile distribution of the factor *Foreign language* shows that 75% of

respondents perceive having a good knowledge of a foreign language as a strong factor motivating young persons to leave the country. The average perception in relation to this factor is 4, which corresponds to the perception that knowing a foreign language is a strong asset in helping people in the destination country.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Emigration phenomena are still a current concern in Albania, despite three decades after the collapse of the communist system. To prevent the migration process, we need to understand the reasons and push factors that make a person want to migrate. The decision to emigrate is a crucial step in an individual's life, as the difficulties begin in choosing the destination as well as with the integration process. Over the recent years, this phenomenon is becoming a severe problem, as most young people, who are the future labor force and the direct contributors to the local economy, want to leave the country. Youth emigration is a warning signal for society's health because a society without youth is a society without a future.

When we see the main reasons for youth emigration, they range from personal reasons to the country's socioeconomic conditions. To understand the *intention of Albanian youth to emigrate, we conducted a survey*. The results of this survey revealed that an uncertain future pushes emigration in the country. Albanian youth is looking for a certain and secure future, and this encourages them to leave the country as, in their perception, this is a decisive factor. Immediately after graduation, young people face employment, health, justice, income, family issues, and so forth. The difficulties this group faces make them distrustful of their employment in Albania in the future and they see emigration to a developed country as the solution. Frequent and unclear changes in the legislation and their implementation in Albania increase young people's likelihood of emigrating. Albania is a non-EU country, and it does not have legal agreements with the EU Member States, including UK and USA, for the legal employment of its citizens, except for Germany. Recently Germany has participated in several employment programs for Albanian youth specializing mainly in the field of medicine. Therefore, we think that the lack of such a legal package for migration makes *Migration Law Package* a deterrent factor for the emigration of Albanian youth. Here, we can mention the constant changes to the laws in education, health, employment, the justice sector, and so on. Our study is focused only on the legal aspect and its applicability as a regulator of all areas of life.

The globalization of social and economic spheres has made it necessary to know a foreign language. The majority of young Albanians speak fluently different languages, such as English, German, Italian, and others, thanks to the opportunities offered by the Albanian education system. In our curricula, children start learning a foreign language at Class III in public primary schools. Knowing a foreign language is seen as a facilitating factor and motivates young people to emigrate.

The main effects of constant emigration of Albanian people are: the depopulation of many rural regions, young people and the most vital part of society and qualified people or the “brain” of society is drained. To prevent the phenomenon of youth emigration, and not only policymakers and society, in general, should consider this problem carefully. According to Biondo (2012), as youth emigration plays an essential role in the social and economic growth of the country, this issue should be the focus of the policy 'maker's agenda.

Recommendations to prevent youth emigration:

- Strengthening the economic institutions and policies to create an incentivizing environment for young people to stay in Albania;
- Adapting the education system to the specific requirements of the labor market. (making the education system more responsive to the labor market). Moreover, foster entrepreneurial skills in young people.
- Promoting and offering greater support to all returned emigrants, as this would increase the number of skilled workers.

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Appendix

Variables (Drivers)	Likert Scale
Future in the country	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
Education in Albania	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
Unemployment rate	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
Security of job position	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
Financial security	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
Migration Law Package	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
Qualification / Experience	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
A better job	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
Family circumstances	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
Age	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}
Foreign language skills	{1- the main reason for staying in the country; 2- the reason for staying in the country; 3- indifferent; 4-reason for leaving the country; 5- the main reason for leaving the country}

Annex. Bivariate correlation table

Correlations											
	Future in the country	Education in Albania	Qualification/ Experience	A Better job	Security of job position	Unemployment rate	Family circumstances	Migration Law Package	Age	Foreign language skills	Financial security
Future in the country Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC 1										
Education in Albania Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .594**	1									
Qualification/ Experience Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .349**	.541**	1								
A Better job Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .423**	.481**	.487**	1							
Security of job position Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .392**	.401**	.410**	.554**	1						
Unemployment rate Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .293**	.206**	.186**	.365**	.415**	1					
Family circumstances Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .281**	.193**	.212**	.209**	.157**	.087	1				
Migration Law Package Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .060	.069	.225**	.157**	.219**	.124*	.320**	1			
Age Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .215**	.155**	.237**	.229**	.279**	.241**	.397**	.349**	1		
Foreign language skills Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .100	.120*	.155**	.119*	.134*	.122*	.253**	.294**	.419**	1	
Financial security Sig. (2-tailed)	PCC .299**	.210**	.267**	.368**	.450**	.310**	.236**	.184**	.329**	.247**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).