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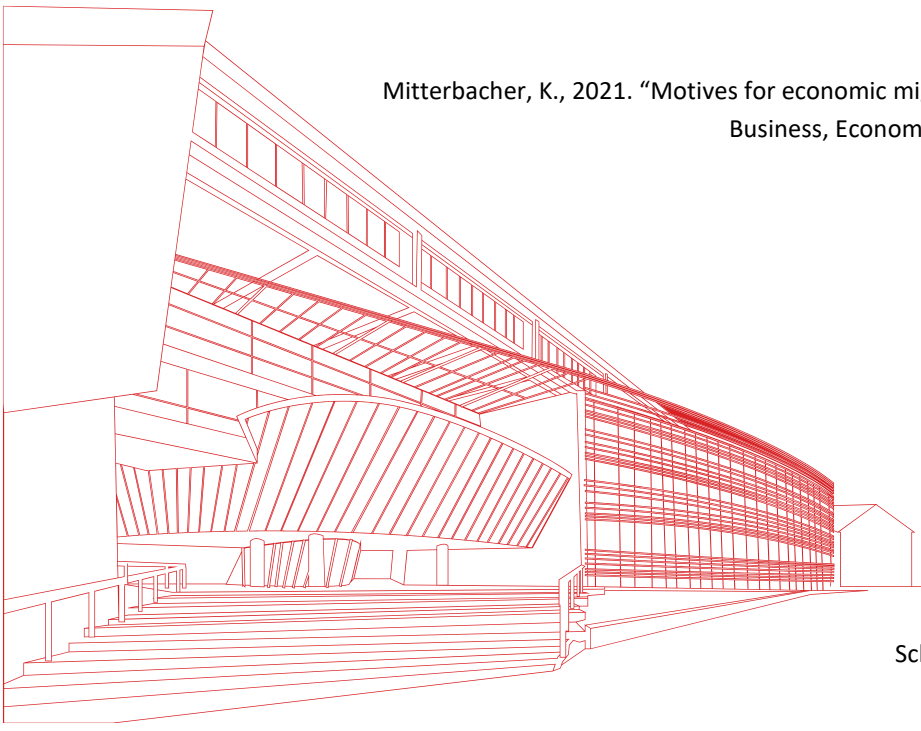
Motives for economic migration: a review

Kerstin Mitterbacher

Working Paper 2021-07
October 22, 2021



Recommended citation:
Mitterbacher, K., 2021. "Motives for economic migration: a review", University of Graz, School of Business, Economics and Social Sciences Working Paper 2021-07.

Working Paper Series
School of Business, Economics and Social Sciences
University of Graz
ISSN 2304-7658
http://bit.ly/graz-working-papers
sowi-wp@uni-graz.at

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Kerstin Mitterbacher
University of Graz, Institute of Banking and Finance
Corresponding author: +43(316)380-7301, kerstin.mitterbacher@uni-graz.at

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The present paper sheds light on the motives of economic migrants---an aspect that has not been discussed at a general level so far. Previous work has only focused on specific fields of interest and used different terminologies, hence impeding comparison and the synthesis of findings across studies. Derived from theoretical, empirical, and analytical research outcomes, the paper concludes that economic migrants' movements are influenced by the socio-demographic factors of 'age' and 'education' and are motivated by both the economic motives of 'expected income' and 'employment' and the economic-related motives of 'corruption', 'amenities' and 'happiness'. Furthermore, these motives reveal a typical profile of economic migrants: a typical economic migrant is characterized by being of working age, highly educated and male, and by wishing to migrate to developed countries to achieve a fulfilling life.

Keywords: literature review, economic migrants, motives, typical profile
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Motives for economic migration: a review

Kerstin Mitterbacher

Department of Banking and Finance, University of Graz, Universitätsstraße 15, 8010 Graz, Austria

Abstract

The present paper sheds light on the motives of economic migrants—an aspect that has not been discussed at a general level so far. Previous work has only focused on specific fields of interest and used different terminologies, hence impeding comparison and the synthesis of findings across studies. Derived from theoretical, empirical, and analytical research outcomes, the paper concludes that economic migrants' movements are influenced by the socio-demographic factors of 'age' and 'education' and are motivated by both the economic motives of 'expected income' and 'employment' and the economic-related motives of 'corruption', 'amenities' and 'happiness'. Furthermore, these motives reveal a typical profile of economic migrants: a typical economic migrant is characterized by being of working age, highly educated and male, and by wishing to migrate to developed countries to achieve a fulfilling life.

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The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive overview regarding the motives of economic migrants moving within and across national boundaries. This aspect has not been addressed by the scientific community so far. I thus contribute evidence regarding the complex dynamics of economic migration decisions by outlining the motives of economic migrants. In reviewing the literature, I collect and aggregate results of 161 published and 30 working/unpublished papers, as well as 30 books/book chapters from theoretical, empirical, and analytical research, predominantly from survey studies.[1] My intention is to summarize the existing research related to the motives of economic migrants and report the results to familiarize the audience with the current state of knowledge. I further intend to provide makers of migration policy with a first guideline for distinguishing more easily between economic migrants and refugees; an important tool since the soft and often blurred boundaries between economic migrants and refugees hinder taking effective policy actions (Smith, 2019). My research question is:

Research question) What motivates economic migrants to move within and across national boundaries?

Email address: kerstin.mitterbacher@edu.uni-graz.at (Kerstin Mitterbacher)

[1] I follow the recommendation of Thompson and Pocock (1991) of including unpublished work in order to limit the influence of a possible publication bias.

In the remainder of this paper, section 1 introduces the topic, section 2 gives an overview of the different motives of economic migrants, and section 3 summarizes and concludes.

1. Introduction

The significance of migration has increased worldwide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Migration flows and dynamics has become more complex in times of an increasingly interconnected world (European Commission, 2021). Especially the COVID-19 crisis has exposed the crucial role of migrant workers in economies but also their often discriminatory treatment in societies.[2] As a case in point, migrant workers are crucial in agriculture, health, or distribution sectors (OECD, 2020) but are often excluded from social security benefits, wage subsidies, or unemployment benefits (ILO, 2020) and also face stricter lockdown regulations in many countries (MPI, 2021). A related challenge occurring throughout the world is the problem of population ageing. Asia, Europe and Northern America currently have the highest proportion of people aged 65 and older relative to the total population (UN DESA, 2020). Following OECD (2019) forecasts, the global working-age population will be 10 percent lower by 2060; i.e., for every 100 people of working age (20 to 64) there will then be 58 people of old age (65+). Thus the world may—before the end of the century—experience a shortage of the workers necessary to maintain its current standard of living. This problem, however, can be tackled with migration, as demonstrated by Megan and Brown (2017), Marois et al. (2020), Scott and Tegunimataka (2020), as well as by the European Commission (2019).

Migration is an ongoing, global phenomenon. People have always been, and will always be on the move (de Gruyter, 2016; Nnebedum, 2021). They move—temporarily or permanently—either within national boundaries (internal migration) or across them (international migration); for reviews of internal migration see Elizaga (1972) or Etzo (2008); for reviews of international migration see Salt (1989), Massey et al. (1993), or Facchini et al. (2015). The number of internal migrants reached 740 million in 2009 and most moved within countries of America, followed by Europe and Africa (UNDP, 2009).[3] By comparison, the number of international migrants reached 281 million in 2020 (UN DESA, 2020) and most moved to countries of Europe, followed by Northern America, Northern Africa and Western Asia (UN DESA, 2019).

Economic migration refers to a special kind of migration. Indeed, the majority of migrants are economic migrants (Winchie and Carment, 1989; Browne, 2017) albeit a universally agreed-upon definition is missing. Browne—among others—does not specify the term 'economic migrants' in more detail. Dictionary definitions mainly refer to economic migrants as individuals in search of improved living standards (e.g., HarperCollins, n.d.; Lexico, n.d.); sometimes these definitions overlap with academic definitions (e.g., Cambridge, n.d.). In academia, studies' definitions often refer to 'labor market' or rather 'job

[2]The present paper (section 2.2.2) publishes evidence that migrant workers are a subgroup of economic migrants.

[3]Estimates on internal migration are scarce. Thus, most recent studies also refer to UNDP (2009); see, e.g., Skeldon (2017), Shi et al. (2020), or IOM (2019a).

opportunities' (Yang and Guo, 1996; Corkill, 2001; Mendoza et al., 2019) while non-academic institutions' definitions often refer to 'economic opportunities' (IOM, 2019b; European Commission, 2021). In trying to draw a global picture of the motives of economic migrants, I base my definition on the pioneering thoughts of Ravenstein and Borjas. Ravenstein (1876, 1885) defines the *Laws of Migration*, eleven hypotheses about people's migration and relocation behavior. The underlying data is mainly derived from UK data supplemented with international data. One of his laws states that economic causes are the major migration motive. Borjas (1987), on the contrary, identifies both non-economic and economic migration motives. Including also economic-related motives, I define an economic migrant as follows: A person who voluntarily migrates from one place to another in order to improve his or her quality of life purely out of economic or economic-related interests.[4]

An important distinction in the context of economic migration is that between refugees and economic migrants (Larsen et al., 2018; SSI, 2015). The terms 'refugees' and 'migrants' are often used interchangeably and even adjoined to 'economic refugee' (see, e.g., Ghoshal and Crowley, 1983; Maharaj, 2002; Elmorchid and Hourmat-Allah, 2018). This, however, is a misuse of the term 'refugee' (Sengupta, 2015; European Commission, 2021). The term 'refugee' is defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention. It refers to an individual who, 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion', is forced to remain outside his or her respective home country and is entitled to asylum in any signatory nation of the convention (UN, 1951, Article I (2)). The term 'migrant', on the other hand, is defined by IOM (2019b) as 'a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons', excluding those 'who flee wars or persecution'. Migrants thus do not qualify for receiving asylum as they do not flee wars or persecution (Semmelroggen, 2015; Holehouse, 2016; UNHCR, 2021). Indeed, migrants—particularly economic migrants—often face a less welcoming culture than refugees (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018; De Coninck, 2020). However, it is difficult to separate economic migrants from refugees (Trilling, 2018) as the two often arrive for the same reasons such as safety, livelihoods and aspirations (Cummings et al., 2015). Thus, asylum seekers are frequently perceived to be economic migrants; in other words, they are perceived to be 'bogus' rather than 'genuine' refugees (Neumayer, 2005). Despite this difficulty of classification, the motives of refugees and asylum seekers lie outside the scope of this paper.

2. Motives of economic migrants

Motives are the reasons why economic migrants move within or across national boundaries. As mentioned before, the motives of economic migrants comprise economic and economic-related motives. By 'economic motives' I refer to those that are closely related to the economic motives' general definition of 'the desire to possess wealth' (Wicksteed, 1933), i.e.,

[4]Other interests are: social interests, political interests, cultural interests and environmental interests (Rubenstein, 2019; Sabot, 2019; Matias et al., 2020).

they motivate economic migrants to build wealth. By 'economic-related motives' I refer to motives that are more loosely related to this definition, i.e., economic-related motives motivate economic migrants to sustain wealth. I identify the economic motives to be the main focus of migration research (Jennissen, 2003; Ortega and Peri, 2013; Brzozowski and Coniglio, 2021) while only a small number of researchers investigate economic-related motives (Grimes and Wesselbaum, 2019).[5] Motives play a crucial role in the migration decision (De Jong and Gardner, 1981).

Migrants' motives mirror their individual preferences. They vary across time, distance and countries (Ortega and Peri, 2009; Hampshire, 2010; Niedomysl, 2011; Polgreen and Simpson, 2011; Thomas et al., 2019). Van der Land (2018) furthermore finds that motives differ between individuals of different age, education, or gender. Correspondingly, Schwartz (1976) finds that age and education affect migration decisions. Collectively, Rones (1980) shows that both age and education affect economic considerations, aligned with van der Land (2018), and migration propensity, aligned with Schwartz (1976). I thus outline the socio-demographic factors 'age' and 'education' in the following sections to provide a richer understanding of the motives of economic migrants.[6] Afterwards I outline the different motives of economic migrants and present their typical profile that can be developed based on these motives.

2.1. Associations between socio-demographic factors and migration motives

2.1.1. Age

***Observation* 1.** *The age-migration relation is understudied, especially for the elderly.*

Support: The literature on age-specific migration is thin (Millington, 1971), especially that on migration of the elderly (Baykara-Krumme and Platt, 2016; IOM, 2021). Lundborg (1991) investigates migration by the elderly and finds that older migrants move less often than younger migrants because of the former's higher importance of family and job security. More recently, IOM (2019a) also publish evidence for the lower migration rates of older people than of younger people. Middle-aged people, i.e., 20 to 49 years, mostly move for economic reasons (Colón-López et al., 2009). Bernard et al. (2014) discovers that the reason is their high mobility, which is especially present among those aged below 30. Additionally, under-30s migrate either with parents (Lundborg, 1991; Lemmermann and Riphahn, 2018) or alone (Alexander and Ward, 2018) and they do so for educational, military or occupational reasons (Pittenger, 1974). Only people moving for occupational reasons meet the present

[5]Migration is a multi-disciplinary concept and comprises various disciplines such as economics, sociology, psychology, geography, culture, law, political science, demography and international relations (Cohen, 1996; Pisarevskaya et al., 2020). Only recently does de Haas (2021) make an attempt to develop an aspirations–capabilities framework to construct a universal theory.

[6]I choose to outline 'age' and 'education' because (1) they are pertinent for both motive selection and migration decision, and (2) most economic migrants are male, as demonstrated in section 2.1.2. While the impact of gender is an interesting topic in its own right, it falls outside the scope of this paper.

paper's definition of an economic migrant. Furthermore, Agudelo-Suárez et al. (2012) and Browne (2017) argue that economic migrants are commonly people of working age, i.e., 16 to 65 years. Thus, people who move for education in hopes of securing a good job in the future also fall outside the scope of this paper.

***Observation* 2.** *Migration motives vary by age. Older and younger migrants move for varied reasons.*

Support: Graves (1979) provides evidence that migration motives change with age. He finds that young migrants predominantly move for economic opportunities such as income and employment, while older migrants move for the amenity mix of the location. Clark and Hunter's (1992) findings, aligned with Graves's (1979), show that both the middle and senior-aged have a greater probability of migrating for amenity purposes, compared to the younger. Moreover, the middle-aged prefers locations with low housing values while their older cohorts prefer high-value locations. Millington (1971) also shows that the elderly primarily move in search of better amenities and housing cost effects. He suggests analyzing migratory flows disaggregated by age since migrants' motives are age-related, arguing that failing to disaggregate by age prevents researchers from correctly interpreting migration motives.

Alongside the different motives, Colón-López et al. (2009) observe that younger migrants have advantages compared to older migrants—they can more easily learn new languages and adapt to new social customs.

***Observation* 3.** *The age-migration relation shows an inversely U-shaped pattern.*

Support: Pittenger (1974) shows that immigration and emigration rates are age-specific. For example, rural areas are characterized by low early-age immigration rates and high early-age emigration rates—especially amongst people between 20 and 24 years. Following Pittenger's work, Rogers and Castro (1981) innovated by describing migration rates as a function of age: the propensity to migrate steadily declines with age and peaks at 20 years. They further show that these age-specific migration rates define a replicable age profile of migration. Bernard et al. (2014) elaborate on Rogers and Castro's work and additionally report higher migration rates amongst children and in those around retirement age. Deviations were found in China, Brazil and Portugal. Inspired by Bell and Muhidin (2009), Bernard et al. justify their identified deviations by cross-country differences within one's lifespan. These and other researchers' findings (see, e.g., Taylor, 1986; Stark and Taylor, 1991; Adams, 1993) suggest that the age profile takes the form of an inverse U-shape.

2.1.2. Education

***Observation* 4.** *Education is either occupation-based, skill-based, or a mix of both.*

Support: Schultz (1961) pioneered migration research by correlating migration and education through the human capital model. Its introduction considered education as an investment in human capital. Sjaastad (1962) applied Schultz' approach to the analysis of migration decisions where migration is treated as an 'investment increasing the productivity of human resources'. The main conclusion is that migration is not an isolated process; for the movements of migrants, complementary investments in humans are at least as important as the migration process itself.

Moreover, educational levels are indicators for economic migrants' skill levels (Beine et al., 2007). The high skill-low skill dichotomy is widely discussed in the literature but its definition differs across studies. In other words, skills are either occupation-based, school-based (Zaletel, 2006), or inseparable (Rao, 2018). For example, in the context of high-skill migrants, 'occupation-based' means that these migrants have special skills due to experience in a specific field, and 'school-based' means that they have a tertiary level or higher educational degree such as a Master or a PhD (Eich-Krohm, 2013). Mendoza et al. (2019) separate the school-based from the occupation-based definition by distinguishing between 'knowledge migrants' and 'economic migrants'. Knowledge migrants move within academia and comprise students and academic staff. They move for universities and research centres, while economic migrants move for companies and institutions in the general labor market. Owing to their idiosyncrasies, findings referring to knowledge migrants lie outside the scope of this paper.

***Observation* 5.** *Education and migration are interrelated in complex ways.*

Support: The migration-education relationship is complex (Williams, 2009). While some researchers find a positive relationship between education and migration, others find a negative relationship, or no significant relationship at all. Quinn and Rubb (2005) provide an overview of these different findings and argue that the differences stem from education-occupation (mis)matches. In a similar vein, Browne (2017) outlines three generalizable findings. First, education influences immigration and emigration in that lower education leads to fewer options for legal migration (see also Ginsburg et al., 2016). Second, high-skill people are more likely to migrate than low-skill people (see also Ascencio-Lozano and Gandini, 2012, who additionally identify high-skilled migration as a major global trend). Third, male migrants are more likely to move for work whereas female migrants are more likely to move for education. Thus, male migrants are more likely to be 'economic migrants' and female migrants are more likely to be 'knowledge migrants' as defined earlier by Mendoza et al. (2019).

***Observation* 6.** *High-skill migrants are privileged.*

Support: High-skilled migration has a greater likelihood of occurring as migration by the highly-skilled is typically encouraged (Naumann et al., 2018; Skeldon, 2018), especially in Europe, which is faced with an aging population (Zaletel, 2006). When it comes to low-skill migrants, natives often see these migrants as net beneficiaries and therefore as 'welfare migrants' instead of 'economic migrants' (Warin and Svaton, 2008). However, upon closer

inspection, in contrast to poorer natives, it was found that the wealthy are unfavorable to the idea of low-skilled migration due to tax issues, specifically the imposition of progressive taxes. It creates a situation where the wealthy tends to shoulder the net fiscal costs of low-skilled migration as taxes are proportional to income levels (Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Naumann et al., 2018). Furthermore, networks in destination countries help low-skill migrants to enter the desired country as lower migration and assimilation costs are guaranteed (Lumpe, 2019).

2.2. Economic motives

2.2.1. Expected Income

***Observation* 7.** *Most economic migrants move in hopes of receiving a higher income in the destination country.*

Support: The prospect of higher incomes motivates most economic migrants (Bartram, 2011). Sjaastad (1960, 1962) first investigates the relationship between migration and income. He uses U.S. interstate migration data and finds that migration correlates positively with income at the destination. Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) follow up on Sjaastad's work and introduce a two-sector model of internal migration, more precisely of rural-urban migration. Their model provides evidence that migration continues for as long as actual rural wages are lower than expected urban wages. Although these early pioneers focus on internal migration, the expected income effect is also important for international migration (Stark and Bloom, 1985; Black et al., 2011). As a case in point, Ortega and Peri (2009, 2013) stress the positive impact of income inequality on international migration flows. They find that a 10 percent rise in income per capita in a destination country leads to a 0.76 percent rise in immigration flows. Other researchers' findings also support the conclusion that the potential income in the destination country plays a key role for international migration choices (see, e.g., Borjas, 1990; Lee, 1996; Bauer and Zimmermann, 1998; Clark et al., 2007; Mayda, 2010; Grogger and Hanson, 2011). Studies showing similar results for internal migration are Zhu (2002) for China, Hierro and Maza (2010) for Africa and Kennan and Walker (2011) for Spain.

***Observation* 8.** *As time passes, economic migrants may move for other motives than expected income.*

Support: The literature reveals that recent papers on the migration-income relationship are scarce. Admittedly, Simpson (2017) outlines the importance of income, but her findings are based on studies published up to 2013. Additionally, von Reichert and Rudzitis (1992) already claimed that 'the simple income maximization model is no longer accepted as adequate in explaining migration trends'. Their findings are based on US data. Therefore, I suggest that further research be conducted to examine whether the topic of expected income has already been adequately researched or lost its importance.

***Observation* 9.** *Economic migrants mainly strive to obtain a high relative income. They settle permanently if the income is high and use a high proportion of the income for remittances. Furthermore, economic migrants are increasingly attracted to non-earnings income sources and tend to experience deprivations if the income is low.*

Support: Besides the general research on the income-migration relationship, researchers investigate specific income-related aspects. In light of the aim of this paper, I consider five findings to be the most interesting and relevant. First, migration is driven by low relative income rather than a by low absolute income. In other words, poor people who are surrounded by the relatively more wealthy are more likely to move than poor people who are surrounded by other poor (Vernazza, 2013; Simpson, 2017). Second, the prospect of higher incomes becomes more important when migrants aspire to settle permanently (Akay et al., 2012); however, when the income at their destination turns out to be lower than expected, they often decide to return home (Makina, 2012). Third, 50 percent of the income is sent home in the form of remittances (Van Hear et al., 2012). Fourth, income consists of non-earnings, i.e., investment income, and of earnings, i.e., wages and salary; the former is an increasingly attractive source of income (Nelson, 2005). Fifth, low-income economic migrants experience deprivations in housing and employment. They live alone or with friends in neighbourhoods that are characterized by limited access to local amenities and services (Lombard, 2021).

***Observation* 10.** *Young economic migrants have higher levels of income and education than do older economic migrants.*

Support: The results of Colón-López et al. (2009) and Gruber and Sand (2020) suggest that the age function is closely related to income. Arriving in a destination country before the age of 20 results in higher income and higher education. Colón-López et al. attribute this to a longer stay in the destination country. Generally speaking, older migrants earn less than younger migrants. Alexander and Ward (2018) argue that this is due to the often unrecognized home country job experience when in the destination country. Nevertheless, older migrants still on average enjoy higher incomes in their destination countries than they did at home.

2.2.2. Employment

***Observation* 11.** *Economic migrants are long-term, committed employees although they may suffer discrimination.*

Support: Economic migrants move to fill labor market gaps (Papademetriou et al., 2008; Cangiano, 2014; European Commission, 2015a). Bartel (1979) discovers that having employment prospects plays a central role in the decision to migrate. She recommends considering three joint probabilities when investigating the migration-employment relationship: 'the joint probability of quitting and migrating', 'the joint probability of being laid off and migrating', and the 'joint probability of not separating from the firm and migrating'. She

concludes that the length of employment correlates negatively with both the probability of quitting the job and the probability of being laid off, while it correlates positively with the probability of staying in the company.

Shirmohammadi et al. (2019) review the literature about skilled migrants and their qualification matching in employment, finding that employers are biased and discriminate against migrants because they do not recognize the migrants' home country work experience as local work experience.

***Observation* 12.** *Interpersonal skills and commitment to the host countries' way of life support economic migrants' employment prospects, whereas coming from a developing country and being a female spouse diminish their prospects.*

Support: The survey of Wright and Constantin (2021) shows that soft skills such as teamwork, social skills, personality and values are more important than hard skills, such as qualifications and unique specialization. When comparing job skills, educational level, language proficiency, and commitment to the host country's lifestyle and culture, Farashah and Blomquist (2020) find the latter to be the most important attribute for European managers employing migrants. Shirmohammadi et al. (2019) who review the employment prospects of skilled migrants find that the home country is decisive. Negative perceptions regarding developing countries impede adequate job prospects. Economic migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Former Soviet Union are particularly affected. Conversely, positive perceptions help skilled economic migrants find jobs and are detected for developed/western countries. Irrespective of education levels and job suitability, Cangiano (2014) outlines the difficulties female spouses face when job hunting. Migration policies which often include selection mechanisms, like pre-entry language tests for family members, were one of the reasons found.

***Observation* 13.** *Economic migrants predominantly work in the service sector. They often experience precarious working conditions and are economically worse off than natives, especially females.*

Support: Economic migrants mainly work in the manufacturing, construction and agriculture sectors as well as in (low-wage) service industry occupations (Cholewinski and Pecoud, 2009; Boski, 2013; Strauss and McGrath, 2017). McDowell et al. (2009) show that migrants in service sectors, particularly in the UK, often work under precarious working conditions. They tend to be underpaid, overqualified, and receive no reciprocation for the total flexibility given to employers. Additionally, in Greece, Drydakis (2021) finds that precarious working conditions affect migrants' mental health. Yet, this phenomenon does not only affect economic migrants. McDowell et al. further show that in the UK, natives are also subject to these precarious working conditions.

Cangiano (2014) draws attention to the bigger picture by highlighting that economic migrants cannot catch up with natives. Economic migrants often have an economic disadvantage compared to natives, especially when they are non-EU migrants or female. Overall, the participation of migrant women in the labor market is low. Kaestner et al. (2003) reveal

that the reason can be found in destination countries' welfare regimes. When welfare rules are migration-friendly, low-educated women are more likely to ignore distance from home when searching for employment. Nonetheless, Kaestner et al. admit the existence of different results in the literature. Based on the fact that also low-educated women move in search of employment, I conclude that the typical picture of many migrants undertaking welfare migration, i.e, migration due to welfare generosity, is unfounded.[7] McKinnish (2007) and Godin (2020) support this conclusion.

***Observation* 14.** *Economic migrants aspiring to self-employment feel motivated by higher expected income. Furthermore, good social support networks and balanced skill sets facilitate self-employment.*

Support: When moving for employment, economic migrants also choose self-employment instead of paid employment (Constant, 2014). Some scholars believe they do so to overcome employment obstacles, such as the difficulty of finding a job itself (Cui et al., 2013). However, when asking self-employed migrants for their motivations for choosing self-employment, the top 3 reasons found were: higher income, more flexibility and freedom, and the ability to be one's own boss. Few migrants choose self-employment because they were unable to find a job (Zhang and Zhao, 2015). Rees and Shah (1986), Li (2001) and Constant and Zimmermann (2006) partially agree, stating that higher income is the main reason. However, Petersen (1989) and Portes and Zhou (1996) argue that the higher average income is merely a consequence of longer working hours. Conversely, Hamilton (2000) does not observe a correlation between income and working hours.

Overall, one can argue that self-employment is challenging. Zhang and Zhao (2015) conclude that social and family networks matter because they provide easy access to financial support and efficient advertising, i.e., word-of-mouth recommendation by friends and relatives. Concretely, Zhang and Zhao outline that each additional person in one's social network increases the probability of self-employment by 0.63 to 0.83 percent. Another factor supporting self-employment is human capital. Lazear (2004, 2005) shows that individuals with a more balanced skill set—regardless of whether they acquired it through education or through work experience—are more likely to become self-employed. Constant et al. (2007) compare natives and migrants in Germany and find that the latter have a higher probability of self-employment, but that ethnicity is decisive: Turkish nationals are more likely to become self-employed than other ethnic groups. Furthermore, they find that the self-employment probability changes with age. In short, the relationship between the two is concave: self-employment probability increases with age, yet declines after a peak. Thus, the average age of self-employed immigrants in Germany is 43.25 years.

***Observation* 15.** *Overeducated economic migrants are more likely to move than undereducated economic migrants.*

[7]Female migrants and low-educated migrants are commonly perceived to burden the welfare system (McKinnish, 2005; Razin and Wahba, 2015).

Support: Quinn and Rubb (2005) examine migrants' education-occupation match and suggest it as a possible reason for the mixed results in the literature on the migration-education relationship. They demonstrate that positively mismatched workers—i.e., migrants who are overeducated for a job—are more likely to migrate. On the contrary, negatively mismatched workers—i.e., migrants who are undereducated for a job—are less likely to migrate. The reason for this pattern is that negatively mismatched migrants are likely to have a favorable education-occupation match and migration for them thus is less likely to result in a more favorable occupation.

2.3. Economic-related motives

2.3.1. Corruption

***Observation* 16.** *Corruption is an understudied motive, yet is related to the economic motive of expected income.*

Support: The economic-related motive of corruption is largely underresearched (Dimant et al., 2013; Carling et al., 2015) and has not previously been mentioned in the context of economic migration. Nonetheless, I derived it from the literature especially because Lapshyna (2014) and Poprawe (2015) demonstrate that, while income is a primary motive, corruption is also relevant. Other researchers agree but draw different conclusions regarding the relationship between corruption and income (Zúñiga, 2017). To illustrate, Gupta et al. (2002) as well as Dincer and Gunalp (2012) claim that corruption causes income inequality, while Jong-Sung and Khagram (2005) as well as Uslaner (2008) argue that the reverse could also be true, in that high income inequality may cause corruption. This is especially true for individuals who wish to protect their personal privileges and resort to corruption to do so. For a general review of the interplay between corruption and migration see Wheatland (2015).

***Observation* 17.** *Corruption appears in different places, mostly in the form of bribes. Bribes hit low-income economic migrants harder than those with high-incomes.*

Support: Corruption appears in different contexts: the healthcare system, the education sector, the labor market, and even entrepreneurship (Lapshyna, 2014), commonly taking the form of bribery. As Dincer and Gunalp (2012) point out, bribery-induced corruption constitutes a financial burden for people, especially for those with low incomes, as low-income earners pay relatively higher bribes than high-income earners. Concretely, 2.3 percent of low-income earners' pay are relegated to bribes, compared to only 0.9 percent for high income earners.

***Observation* 18.** *Corruption functions as a push and as a pull factor for economic migrants. The impact that pushed high-skilled migration has on countries of origin is most severe, as it causes brain drain.*

Support: Corruption is positively correlated with emigration and negatively correlated with immigration. People commonly seek to avoid losses (Tversky and Kahneman, 1992) and thus, I conclude, leave to avoid corrupt countries. Poprawe (2015) shows that a decrease in corruption by 1—measured via the Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International—leads to 30 percent less emigration.[8] According to Ariu and Squicciarini (2013), corruption-driven emigration would be less problematic if emigration equaled immigration in a given country; commonly referred to as balanced net migration. However, it is problematic when high-skill people leave the country as this results in a lower return on education, causing brain drain.

One study discussing skilled migration and corruption is Cooray and Schneider (2016). The authors investigate the effect of corruption on the migration decisions of differently skilled groups and observe a corruption-driven emigration of high-skill people. Remarkably, they find this decision to be dependent on whether or not the emigration of the medium- and low-skill people is positively correlated with emigration. In other words, emigration of high-skill people increases with corruption while emigration of other groups declines once a certain threshold is reached.

***Observation* 19.** *Corruption exists in all countries in a real and perceived form. European countries are perceived to have low levels of corruption and are thus preferred destinations for economic migrants.*

Support: Corruption is a global problem (Myint, 2000) and has two dimensions: real corruption and perceived corruption (Melgar et al., 2010). Although the former influences the latter, perception-based corruption has more devastating effects as it is sufficient to deter migratory decisions. According to Lapshyna (2014), people prefer migrating to Europe since they perceive a low level of corruption there. On a related note, Dimant et al. (2015) find that corruption can be seen as a migrant's personal characteristic that impacts destination countries. More precisely, immigration from corruption-ridden origin countries promotes corruption in the destination country.

2.3.2. Amenities

***Observation* 20.** *Amenity motives are complex and broad in nature. They make economic migrants' life more livable.*

Support: Amenities are elusive (Judson et al., 1999) and the related motives are complex (Williams and Jobes, 1990). The term 'amenity' paints a picture of quality of life issues and thus comprises anything that has the ability to make life more pleasant and comfortable (Chipeniuk, 2004). The term particularly comprises four groups of amenities that can

[8]The Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International ranks countries by their perceived levels of corruption based on expert assessments and opinion surveys. In the version of Poprawe (2015) it ranges from 0 to 10, with lower scores indicating higher corruption and vice versa. (The original range is 0 to 100.)

be classified along the dimensions of rural and urban amenities (Clark et al., 2002; Mulligan and Carruthers, 2011; Büchler et al., 2021). The first group are natural—also called environmental—amenities like mountains, volcanoes, lakes, rivers, coastlines, forests, and climate (Rasker et al., 2009; Van auken and Rye, 2011; Brown and Scott, 2012), whereas the second group are man-made amenities like well-maintained roads and parks, bars, restaurants, and recreation and shopping opportunities (Chipeniuk, 2004; Chi and Mracouiller, 2011; Brown and Scott, 2012). The third group, that of social amenities, refers to tangible and intangible features such as an open or tolerant society, good conditions for raising children, practicing or enjoying art, and warm human relations (Chipeniuk, 2004; Brown and Scott, 2012; Zheng, 2016). Finally, the fourth group consists of city amenities like population density, low crime rate, school quality, parks, museums, art galleries, orchestras, roadway musicals, theatre, signature buildings, and public services such as hospitals, libraries or post offices (Cushing, 2004; Rupasingha and Goetz, 2004; Zheng, 2016).

***Observation* 21.** *Amenities as a motive for economic migrants are an emerging research field.*

Support: Amenity research can be traced back to Graves and Linneman's (1979) *consumption theory of migration*. These authors conclude that the desire for amenities rises with income and that preferences differ over age and ethics. Overall, amenity research is rather new (Albouy et al., 2021) but has become prominent globally (Matarrita-Cascante and Suess, 2020). The literature reveals amenities as a migration motive for economic migrants (Treyz et al., 1991; Hayes, 2015). Nonetheless, migrants moving for amenities are often also seen as a separate group altogether, namely as amenity migrants (Chipeniuk, 2004), or are discussed together with economic migrants, namely as amenity-led migrants (Moss, 1994, 2006; Glorioso, 2009). Furthermore, amenities hold both an economic and non-economic status of motive (Treyz et al., 1991; Chipeniuk, 2004).

I classify amenities as an economic-related motive for economic migrants for three reasons: First, the term 'wealthy' is often associated with migrants moving for amenities (Abrams et al., 2012; Croucher, 2012; Chipeniuk, 2004). Second, amenities affect economic development and are involved in a complex interplay with labor market issues. For example, amenities are often capitalized into housing prices and therefore implicitly influence income and employment (Treyz et al., 1991; Büchler et al., 2021; Nunns, 2021). Third, amenities relate to quality of life issues which genuinely go along with the economic migrants' aim of improving their quality of life (Niedomysl and Hansen, 2010; Mulligan and Carruthers, 2011).

***Observation* 22.** *Rural-amenity economic migrants move to realize entrepreneurial dreams while urban-amenity economic migrants move to flee from a lack of amenities.*

Support: When migrants take up employment, movement to rural areas occurs often to perform entrepreneurial activities in the tourism sector, for example when migrants start a tourism business (Kuentzel and Ramaswamy, 2005; Hayes, 2015). When migrants move to urban areas, they often do so to flee from a lack of amenities, i.e., emerging disamenities

(Winkler and Rouleau, 2020). Disamenities are the opposite of amenities (Mulligan and Carruthers, 2011), defined as inferior amenities that are lower in value. They arise particularly in natural amenities, either caused by climate change which leads to natural hazards like earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, or wildfires; or they exist naturally due to negative conditions like extreme cold such as in the tundra or extreme heat such as in deserts (Albouy et al., 2016; Winkler and Rouleau, 2020). Disamenties in urban, man-made amenities are, for example, nuclear waste (Rupasingha and Goetz, 2004) or pollution (Zheng, 2016).

***Observation* 23.** *Amenities have characteristic features and preferences for amenities depend on an economic migrant's income and age.*

Support: According to Green (2001), amenities have four important characteristics. First, non-producibility: Once destroyed, amenities cannot be renewed or at the very least, attempts are limited. Second, non-tradability: There is no market for amenities as they are fixed assets. Third, non-substitutability: Amenities are unique and cannot be replaced by another type of amenity. Fourth, high income elasticity: Amenities and living costs are positively correlated. Amenities, as well as living costs, are expensive, which is a fact that people are willing to accept even if they have low incomes. Nonetheless, the amenity demand generally co-moves with income. In a more nuanced analysis, Chi and Mracouiller (2011) report that for economic migrants the importance of amenities increases with age.

***Observation* 24.** *Amenity-motivated economic migrants are of a special socio-demographic type and follow a path dependent pattern. They look for other amenity-motivated economic migrants when deciding where to live.*

Support: Economic migrants moving for amenities are mainly retired (Treyz et al., 1991; Chipeniuk, 2004; Ferguson et al., 2007; Scott, 2010; Hayes, 2015), wealthy (Chipeniuk, 2004; Abrams et al., 2012; Croucher, 2012), or highly-skilled (Chipeniuk, 2004; Storper and Scott, 2009; Brown and Scott, 2012; Zheng, 2016; Büchler et al., 2021). In fact, economic migrants do not generally move for amenities. Disamenities are also favored due to feelings of familiarity, as the opposite causes stress and affects mental health. Albouy et al. (2021) describe this phenomenon as path-dependent taste. Such path-dependency for example lets people prefer cooler summers, although most people prefer a moderate climate, i.e., warm temperatures and sunny, dry weather (Cushing, 2004; Rappaport, 2007). However, Brown and Scott (2012) do not find a general pattern regarding climate preferences. Albouy et al. (2021) document that climate preferences may depend on individual preferences.

Migrants moving for amenities also prefer to move where other people already live, especially skilled migrants move to areas where they are surrounded by other skilled people (Zheng, 2016; Büchler et al., 2021). A new trend emerging in Europe is moving close to mountains (Bender and Kanitscheider, 2012), with people willing to pay a mountain tax (Winkler and Rouleau, 2020). Other favorable amenity destinations are Norway (Flognfeldt, 2006), the Philippines (Glorioso, 2006), the Czech Republic (Bartoš et al., 2009), New Zealand (Hall, 2006) and Argentina (Otera et al., 2006).

2.3.3. Happiness

***Observation* 25.** *Economic migrants regard happiness as more than economic well-being and individually define what happiness means for themselves.*

Support: Happiness is commonly defined as 'subjective well-being' (Martin, 2008; Bartram, 2015) which is more than economic well-being (Easterlin, 1974). Happiness is typically measured at the individual level, using self-report instruments such as questionnaires or interviews (Veenhoven, 2017). Individuals respond to single direct questions by ticking one of several answer options, often using Pavot and Diener's (1993) five-item *Satisfaction with Life Scale*. Accordingly, the extent of happiness rests in the eye of the beholder and thus depends on the individual's evaluation of how well their personal life is unfolding (Hendriks and Bartram, 2019). See Paloma et al. (2021) for a review of the determinants of economic migrants' happiness.

***Observation* 26.** *Happiness is the latest migration-related research field. The effect of happiness on migration is mixed. In general, economic migrants, named the 'frustrated achievers', seek a life of greater happiness.*

Support: Research on happiness as a motive for economic migration is relatively new (Polgreen and Simpson, 2011; Betz and Simpson, 2013; Shamsuddin and Katsaiti, 2020; Brzozowski and Coniglio, 2021; Hendriks and Burger, 2021). Scholars hold different opinions about whether happiness motivates migration (Hendriks and Bartram, 2019). In other words, the impact of migration on happiness varies from positive to negative effects, but in any case the impact is stronger for international migration verses internal migration (Hendriks and Burger, 2021). The authors argue that this is mainly due to smaller differences within countries such as culture or language.

Hendriks et al. (2018) find that most people are happier after migrating. In their study, those who are happy after migration were able to fulfill their basic needs while the unhappy bore mental strain from issues such as family separation. Another angle is highlighted by Nowok et al. (2011), Carol and Markowitz (2011), Chindarkar (2014), Grimes and Wesselbaum (2019), and Brzozowski and Coniglio (2021): People migrate because they feel unhappy at home. Carol and Markowitz (2011) and Olgiati et al. (2013), both of whom focus on international migration, call this phenomenon 'frustrated achievers', i.e., people who have a high level of absolute happiness—such as a high income—but are dissatisfied with their personal lives and seek improvement through migration. This phenomenon of 'frustrated achievers' holds also for internal migration (Kratz, 2020). Happy migrants tend to stay permanently (Mara and Landesmann, 2013; Shamsuddin and Katsaiti, 2020).

***Observation* 27.** *The happiness-migration relationship is U-shaped.*

Support: The relationship between happiness and emigration is U-shaped. People from happy and people from unhappy countries both are likely to emigrate (Polgreen and Simp-

son, 2011).[9] Happy people migrate because they hold higher optimism levels than unhappy people (Wright and Bower, 1992) hence inducing movements to benefit from better opportunities abroad (Polgreen and Simpson, 2011). Likewise, Ek et al. (2008) and Simpson (2017) find that migrants are more optimistic than non-migrants. On the contrary, Polgreen and Simpson (2011) find a causal relationship between unhappiness and migration wherein unhappy people migrate because it makes them happy. Grimes et al. (2014) support Polgreen and Simpson's findings. Grimes and Wesselbaum (2019) add that people from unhappy countries are more likely to migrate than happy people.

***Observation* 28.** *Economic migrants face a happiness gap between poorer and wealthier destination countries. Wealthier countries are more happy and wealthy economic migrants move more often.*

Support: People moving to more developed countries experience the largest happiness gains (IOM, 2013; Hendriks et al., 2018). After comparing 141 countries, the top 5 happiest countries are Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Switzerland, whereas the top 5 unhappiest are Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, Malawi, and Venezuela (Helliwell et al., 2018a). Thus, it can be seen that, generally, people in poor—i.e., low GDP per capita, low-income—countries are less happy in comparison to those in wealthy—i.e., high GDP per capita, high-income—countries (Polgreen and Simpson, 2011; Ventura, 2021; World Population Review, 2021). The results of Diener (2008) also support this conclusion. Correspondingly, Melzer (2011) shows that migrating to wealthy regions increase happiness, while Bartram (2015) shows that migrants who move from wealthier to poorer countries on average experience decreased happiness.[10] The reason why people in wealthy countries are happier may be that these countries are more livable, i.e., that the living-conditions are good. Economic migrants, when asked about their migration motives, prefer living in a livable environment (Hendriks and Bartram, 2019). The reason for the decrease in happiness when moving to poor countries may be unfulfilled expectations or that a positive impact on happiness is outweighed by the negative impact of the difficulty of integrating into the new society. Hendriks et al. (2016) confirm the latter by showing that the social climate is important. The 2018 World Happiness Report reaches the same conclusion (Helliwell et al., 2018b). However, unhappy people in low-income countries migrate less often than unhappy people in high-income countries, as it is more difficult for low-income people to bear the financial costs of migrating (Bartram, 2011; Migali and Scipioni, 2019; Hendriks and Burger, 2021). Nonetheless, moving to a wealthy country alone neither generates nor guarantees happiness, as migration is a longitudinal process that unfolds over many years (Bartram, 2011). Data, with a focal point on happiness, before and after migration must be considered to evaluate the migration impacts. Furthermore, a significant proportion of migrants also move between countries at similar levels of economic development (Ratha and Shaw, 2007).

[9]The country's level of happiness is assessed via aggregation of individual-level data such that happy countries are defined as those hosting mostly happy people, while unhappy countries are those hosting mostly unhappy people (Helliwell et al., 2018b; Hudson et al., 2020).

[10]Note that Hendriks et al. (2018) find a null effect.

***Observation* 29.** *Economic migrants are less happy than natives in the destination country but happier than stayers in the home country. However, there are differences between ethnic groups.*

Support: Researchers comparing the happiness of migrants with that of natives in the destination country find that the former are less happy (Werkuyten and Nekuee, 1999; Bălţătescu, 2007; Amit, 2010; Safi, 2010; Constant et al., 2012; Gokdemir and Dumludag, 2012; Bartram, 2013a; Obućina, 2013; Hendriks et al., 2016). Kóczán (2016) discovers that lower levels of happiness are due to employment-related issues, such as education-occupation matching or the degree of job security, whereas Arpino and de Valk (2018) opposingly discover that reasons lie in the lack of social contacts—problems that natives face less frequently. Bartram (2013a,b) on the contrary, demonstrates that the reason for migrants' lower levels of happiness stems from the change in the reference group they compare themselves to: migrants no longer compare themselves with stayers in the home country (i.e., non-migrants), but rather with natives in their chosen destination country. Bartram's argument rings true, especially because Erlinghagen (2011) and Hendriks et al. (2018) find that migrants are happier than stayers.[11]

More generally, Firebaugh and Schroeder (2009) argue that migrants mainly compare themselves with locals, while Gelatt (2013) finds that migrants compare themselves to both natives and stayers. When considering differences in migrant groups within a country, Amit (2010) shows that in Israel, Western immigrants are happier than immigrants from the Former Soviet Union. Amit and Litwin (2010) probe deeper and analyse ethnicity by focusing on immigrant groups older than 50. They find that ethnic origin seems to be less important for migrants' happiness compared to other socio-economic factors such as economic status, social capital, or health status. Amit (2012) extends the analysis of ethnicity by additionally considering Ethiopians and investigates 'self-identity' as a determinant of happiness. He finds that the effect of identity on happiness differs between immigrant groups, with Western immigrants being happier than immigrants from the Former Soviet Union and Ethiopia.[12] Furthermore, Kushnirovich and Sherman (2018)—among others—show that ethnic and immigrant minorities experience lower levels of happiness compared to the native-born majority.

***Observation* 30.** *The relationship between happiness and age is U-shaped, i.e., economic migrants are least happy in their middle age.*

Support: Many studies, most notably that of Blanchflower's (2021), find a U-shaped relationship between happiness and age (Nowok et al., 2011). Blanchflower examines this

[11]Note that although Bartram (2013a,b) demonstrates that the reason why migrants are less happy than natives is the change in reference group, he find no difference in the happiness levels of migrants and stayers. In other words, he find migrants to be as happy as stayers. Yet Hendriks and Burger (2021) argue that the reason could be grounded in Bartram's methodology.

[12]Amit (2012) points out that identity can be defined as the way a person views himself/herself in relation to existing groups or social categories in his/her society.

relationship in 145 advanced and developing countries. To minimize the issue of possible differential response rates among older people, along with the concern that happy people live longer, he excludes older people from his analysis. In particular, he focuses his analysis on people from early adulthood—usually age 18, but in some samples 15—to under the age of 70. He finds a minimum at age 48.3 across poor and rich countries; i.e., people are least happy in their middle age.

***Observation* 31.** *Economic migrants follow the eudaimonic lifestyle.*

Support: Derived from the literature on subjective well-being and positive psychology, Boski (2013) formulates four lifestyles: *eudaimonia*, *hedonism*, *self-sacrifice*, and *alienation*. These lifestyles differ in their characteristics regarding the relationship between 'Delayed Gratification' and 'Intrinsic (Autonomous) Satisfaction with an Activity'. Both variables can be described as either high or low. In terms of the former, high refers to future satisfaction, and low, to immediate satisfaction. These orientations vary in state depending on relations with the latter and the type of lifestyle. By using a questionnaire based on theoretical assumptions of the aforementioned lifestyles, Boski finds that the dominant lifestyle among economic migrants is eudaimonia, where people live in accordance with their true self. This occurs when lifestyle activities and personal values align (Waterman, 1993). Hence, activities are then seen as meaningful, consequentially creating a positive relationship between eudaimonia and happiness (Boski, 2013). Conclusively, economic migrants aspire to live a fulfilling life.

***Observation* 32.** *Happiness is linked to income and employment.*

Support: To complete the picture of motives, I find that the economic-related motive of 'happiness' is linked to the economic motives of 'income' and 'employment'. Research on happiness particularly studies the links between income and happiness (IOM, 2013). Overall, income and happiness share a complex relationship (Polgreen and Simpson, 2011) and remains relatively unexplored for international migrants (Calvo and Cheung, 2018). Easterlin (1974) pioneered happiness research by studying the relationship between happiness and income, demonstrating that income cannot significantly explain subjects' well-being anymore. This finding—or rather phenomenon—challenged the traditional view of well-being's dependency on both absolute and relative income in what has become known as the *Easterlin Paradox* (Frank, 2012). However, some earlier studies by researchers such as Stevenson and Wolfers (2008) and Sacks et al. (2012), challenge the Easterlin Paradox as they demonstrate that the core of Easterlin's argument is untenable due to faulty data. Fischer (2008), on the other hand, suggests a different way to read the data, by utilizing household income, male income, and average wages to measure wealth instead of the GDP per capita. Veenhoven (2008) adds another angle by arguing that absolute income is important as people with sufficient absolute income are better able to fulfill their needs. Bartram (2013a), on the other hand, points out that economic migrants might only believe that income makes them happier, but that they may be misguided in this assumption. They base their argument on the work of Gilbert (2006) and Bartolini et al. (2007). Both document the existence of

mistaken beliefs about ways to achieve happiness. This phenomenon of mistaken beliefs is supported by the work of Hendriks and Bartram (2016). They find that it is a key justification for immigrants' disappointing outcomes of migration. Additionally, the findings of De Jong et al. (2002) suggest that recent migrants experience a negative impact on happiness due to unrealistic and unfulfilled beliefs about the quality of life in the destination country or town.

Besides income, scholars mainly investigate the relationship between happiness and employment in the context of economic migration (Clark et al., 2006). Nowok et al. (2011) find that migrants moving for employment are happier than those moving for other reasons. Melzer (2011) shows that happiness increased after migration especially due to labor market outcomes. Easterlin (2013, 2021) confirms that happiness can be increased by policies promoting full employment, despite a low GPD per capita.

2.4. Profile of economic migrants

Taking a closer look at the motives reveals a typical profile of economic migrants. This profile is characterized as follows. The typical economic migrant is between 16 and 65 years of age, male, wealthy, and highly-skilled; the latter is independent of whether these skills are gained from tertiary education or from work experience. Developing countries are the main destinations; for those moving internationally, Europe is the most preferred destination, while for those moving internally it is America. Overall, they move voluntarily to improve their quality of life. Their motives are economic or economic-related. Economic motives are 'expected income' and 'employment', and economic-related motives are 'corruption', 'amenities', and 'happiness'. The motives crucial in the migration decision are individually determined and vary over time, distance, and across countries; they are further influenced by the socio-demographic factors of 'age' and 'education'. High-skill migrants are more likely to migrate because they are more welcomed by natives and bear migration costs more easily.

Economic migrants—irrespective of their employment status (self-employment or paid employment)—move at the age of 20, mostly to increase their expected relative income. If this income fulfills their needs, they stay permanently rather than moving back home. Income increases with age as a result of increased work experience (this is also the case for natives and non-migrants); most of the income earned is used for remittances, in addition to a trend of increasing investment income. Both self-employed and paid employed economic migrants mainly work in services. Although the latter are seen as long-term, committed employees, their income is mostly low and working conditions are often precarious. This precarity is also reflected in the living conditions of economic migrants. They often live in neighbourhoods characterized by limited access to local amenities and services. In general, economic migrants prefer to live where other economic migrants live. High-skill economic migrants prefer the presence of other skilled migrants and of skilled people in general.

Generally, younger economic migrants face better economic and social integration, as they more easily adapt to destination circumstances. Nonetheless, economic migrants are often worse off than natives due to discrimination. Social networks, however, help them to integrate in the destination country. In terms of employment, the self-employed benefit from both efficient advertising and financial support while the paid employed benefit from

the latter; a fact which may be of particular importance for low-skill migrants, since poor educational attainment dampens the means of legal migration. As people age, moving becomes rare. When it occurs, it is usually for amenities. Amenities, however, do not need to be of high value as economic migrants also move for low valued amenities that are reminiscent of home. High-skill and wealthy economic migrants are also motivated by amenities.

Overall, economic migrants strive for happiness—they are called frustrated achievers—and most of them are happy after migration; those who are not consider returning home. In any case, economic migrants are less happy than natives but happier than stayers. They live an eudaimonic lifestyle where they want their life activities to be in line with their true values to achieve a meaningful life.

3. Summary and conclusion

This paper reviews the academic and policy literature and presents the first results on the motives of economic migrants derived from theoretical, analytical, and empirical research. In addition, these motives can be aggregated to reveal a typical profile of economic migrants. Economic migrants move within and across national boundaries for economic motives (expected income and employment) and economic-related motives (corruption, amenities, and happiness). The economic motives are closely related to the desire to possess wealth while the economic-related motives are not; the former is the main focus of research, but all motives are closely interrelated. Influenced by age and education, economic migrants—mainly of working age, male, wealthy, with high levels of education, migratory aspirations towards developed countries, and a meaning-oriented lifestyle—migrate in search for quality of life improvements. They are different from refugees, since economic migrants move voluntarily and are not entitled to asylum status. Nonetheless, economic migrants are often confused with refugees due to similarities with their reasons for migrating; a circumstance which makes it harder for policymakers to take the correct steps.

This paper intends to provide policymakers with a first guideline for distinguishing more easily between economic migrants and refugees, keeping in mind that—if properly integrated—economic migrants have a positive effect on the economic and social system of home and destination countries (Hübschmann, 2015; Berry and Hou, 2016; Bastia and Piper, 2019; Kóczán et al., 2021; UNDP, 2009). My paper demonstrates that the flow of economic migrants also makes the welfare hypothesis obsolete. Nonetheless, economic migrants from developing countries struggle with xenophobic sentiments. Within the context of this paper, I conjecture that the economic-related motive of corruption may be a main reason for the xenophobic sentiments against migrants from developing countries. Corruption mainly affects developing countries (Fleming, 2019) and natives fear implantation of that same corruption into their own societies.

By supporting economic migrants' integration, policymakers can contribute to tackling the global problem of aging societies which is particularly grave for Northern America and Europe; regions that are the most preferred destinations for economic migrants. I recommend that policymakers adapt migration policies promoting socially fair outcomes, since

most economic migrants experience discrimination irrespective of whether they migrate intra-nationally or internationally (Cheng et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015; Andersen and Migali, 2016; Frank and Hou, 2017; Godin, 2020; European Commission, 2015b; ILO, 2020; MPI, 2021; PwC, 2021).

I have two suggestions for what future research should focus on: first, compose a literature review about the empirical findings of economic migrants' motives only, to provide a deeper understanding of their migration decision; second, analyse the economic migrants' impact on home and destination countries in detail. In terms of the literature review, I further suggest a separation of motives by gender (male, female) and by type of migration (internal, international) to examine whether patterns emerge that may hold specific implications for policymakers. Additionally, a special focus should be maintained on the motive of 'happiness' as I believe that happiness is gaining importance, since humanitarian crises are rampant worldwide.

This research contributes to a better understanding of the decision-making process of economic migrants through an analysis of their migration motives. A better understanding of these motives is necessary in favor of cultivating a mutually beneficial coexistence of migrants and natives within destination societies.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the Austrian Academy of Science for supporting me with a DOC Fellowship (DOC stipend 25665). This stipend allows me to focus all my energies on research. Further thanks go to Joselle Ali for proofreading my work, Stefan Palan for providing valuable comments as well as to Ulrike Leopold-Wildburger for providing valuable insights into the topic of publishing in social sciences.

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