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# Entrepreneurial Desire for Outmigration: A Validated Measure

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The objective of this study was to understand the personal and interpersonal pressures entrepreneurial individuals feel to pursue opportunities outside their home country.

**Methodology:** Entrepreneurs in Mexico were given a survey regarding personal and interpersonal pressures to out migrate.

**Findings:** Exploratory factor analysis showed three valid factors for outmigration: personal preference, social pressure, and perception of opportunities.

**Value Added:** The instrument developed offers an overall Outmigration Tendency (OT) score which can provide valuable insight into why entrepreneurs choose to emigrate. This appears to be the first instrument to measure outmigration pressure and to be validated internationally.

**Recommendations:** The tendency score resulting from the survey can help researchers and policy makers understand the likelihood of a worker leaving his/her country to seek work opportunities elsewhere.

**Key words:** entrepreneurship, outmigration, outmigration instrument, developing countries

**JEL codes:** F22, L26, R11, R23



## Introduction

Many countries suffer from the negative impacts caused by the outmigration of skilled workers who leave to seek better opportunities in other countries. Countries in which outmigration is a common occurrence are left with many negative consequences such as income distribution inequality and brain drain (Galiano & Romero, 2018). It is difficult for impoverished countries to compete with the benefits associated with established countries and provide the infrastructure entrepreneurs are seeking. Factors such as job security, higher wages, and growth opportunities entice workers in poor countries to out migrate. This results in loss of human capital, knowledge, and technology, making it difficult for countries to grow and develop (Castro-Palaganas et al., 2017; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2002).

This study provides a measure for understanding the personal and interpersonal pressures entrepreneurial individuals feel to pursue opportunities outside their home country. The instrument offers an overall Outmigration Tendency (OT) score which can provide valuable insight into why entrepreneurs choose to emigrate.

## Literature Review

Studies on outmigration are extensive and encompass three primary strands: migration to a different country, migration within a country such as from rural to urban, and return migration. Outmigration studies tend to focus on factors contributing to migration as well as its impact. Measures for these studies typically involve analysis of large-scale international and national surveys and databases. Understanding outmigration issues in a range of contexts and sectors informs policy and related strategies for sending and receiving countries as well as managing movement within countries.

## *Contributing Factors*

A driving factor for outmigration is economic. Economic downturns, particularly increased unemployment, typically lead to increased outflows from a country (Bazillier et al., 2017). These downturns in effect substitute for restrictions on migration enacted by policy even though rising unemployment may cause policy makers to encourage unskilled or unemployed migrants to return home (Hatton, 2014). In essence, a laissez-faire policy may be the best approach as short-term downturns have the same effect in increasing desired outmigration as do policies (Bazillier et al., 2017).

In some cases, highly skilled professionals may emigrate, leaving critical shortages in the home country. Such out migrations may also be influenced by political situations. In Europe, the lifting of employment restrictions for new European member states led to a large number of doctors and dentists, seeking higher wages, to migrate from Hungary to Austria and Germany (Varga, 2017). However, more than half ultimately returned. Return migration results in increased knowledge and skills for the home country.

Several factors lead to outmigration such as the opportunity for land ownership (Roli, 2019) or other economic benefits. Land ownership also deters outmigration both within a country and internationally (ul Haq et al., 2015). On the other hand, poverty has been shown to not be an incentive for outmigration (ul Haq et al., 2015). Although climate change, such as decreased rainfall, has been thought to promote outmigration for subsistence farmers, such was not found to be the case in Sahelian Africa (Grace et al., 2018) nor were environmental threats the cause of outmigration in Ghana and Indonesia; rather, migration was related to individual characteristics (Goldbach, 2017).

Outmigration within countries provides additional insights into contributing factors. Young people in Europe tend to seek universities in developed regions due to a more favorable job outlook after graduation (Bover & Arellano, 2002; He et al., 2016) although

regional factors such as availability of university programs, gender (e.g., less mobility for females), and distance from the capital city also play a role (D'Agostino et al., 2019). Gender differences are also relevant in other contexts. In Kosovo, for example, outmigration from rural to urban areas for males was attributed to a lack of labor and equipment while for women to a desire for education (Sauer et al., 2019).

Although traditionally people have migrated from rural to urban areas to seek employment, education, and a better quality of life (Theodori & Theodori, 2014; Leibert, 2016; Sardadvar & Vakulenko, 2016; Kawawaki 2018), the opposite is occurring in some contexts. Movement from larger to smaller cities may be attributed to technological advances and improved transportation enabling greater mobility and decreasing the negative effects of dense populations (Taima & Asami, 2019). In Japan, such outmigration is primarily due to occupation, education, and marriage and children. Women tend to move from areas with low marriage rates, and families from areas with high crime rates to those more suitable for raising children (Taima & Asami, 2019).

### *Impact*

A key impact of outmigration occurs in the form of remittances, which can be both financial and social. Financial remittances to the home country by those who have emigrated are a significant source of income, currently estimated at approximately US \$551 billion annually and likely to reach \$597 billion in 2021 (Ratha et al., 2019). In 2016, the largest receivers of remittances were China, India, Mexico, and the Philippines (United Nations Economic & Social Affairs, 2017). However, remittances to low and middle-income countries are projected to decrease by 7% in 2020 and 7.5% in 2021 due to the impact on the economy, employment levels, and currency depreciation in countries sourcing remittances as a result of COVID-19 (World Bank, 2020). Data related to this projection is not yet available. The World Bank also projects that countries will

need to find ways to support migrants returning to their home countries due to the pandemic and support them in finding employment and starting businesses. The cost of sending remittances has also increased, further impacting the positive benefits of out-migration.

Remittances from entrepreneurs, or those who are self-employed, are a substantial means of decreasing poverty; in addition, these entrepreneurs can invest capital and generate jobs (Naudé et al., 2017). Within the country of origin, remittances may be spent on education (Acosta et al., 2007), improving the standard of living (Acosta et al., 2007; Adams, 2009; Adams & Page, 2005), healthcare (Mansuri, 2007), and increasing human capital through knowledge and skill development (Stark & Wang, 2002).

However, policies related to entrepreneurship and migration may be ineffective, resulting in not only failure to innovate or create jobs, but in overall business failures (Naudé, 2010; 2011). Examples of such policies are those that support the immigration of entrepreneurs who lack needed skill sets. This requires the expenditure of scarce funds for training, which may discourage participants from starting businesses when they learn what is involved (Naudé et al., 2017; Oosterbeek et al., 2010). An emphasis on attracting and training entrepreneurs may come at the cost of facilitating immigrants into wage earning opportunities (Naudé et al., 2017).

Remittances are not only financial but also include social capital and expertise that migrants acquire abroad and contribute to their place of origin (Levitt, 1998). These social remittances, or ideas, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, know-how, and skills, are transferred through return visits or through various modes of communication (Naudé et al., 2017). Political values and practices can be disseminated in similar ways (Docquier et al., 2016).

Particularly relevant to the current study is how remittances encourage entrepreneurship in the home country. In Mexico, for example, remittances provide funding for microenterprises (López-Córdova & Olmedo, 2006). Migrant networks between Mexico and the United States also provide financial benefits and encourage

economic growth (Woodruff & Zenteno, 2007). Return migrants may also be more likely to have the capital and skills to expand entrepreneurship in their countries of origin (Marchetta, 2012; Wahba & Zenou, 2012); however, some studies have found that return migrants are no more successful as entrepreneurs than are non-migrants (Gibson & McKenzie, 2012).

These examples demonstrate how outmigration can impact economic growth and development as well as social norms and beliefs in the country of origin. However, although migration improves well-being in a number of ways in both sending and receiving countries, claims that migrants are more entrepreneurial due to a willingness to take risks (Jaeger et al., 2010), that remittances fund home country start-ups, and that return migration provides needed skills in home countries are mostly unsupported (Naudé et al., 2017).

Immigrants may face hostility in their new countries due to a lack of understanding of cultural and linguistic differences of those in the host country as well as fears that new residents will create competition for jobs or drains on regional or national services such as education, healthcare, and unemployment benefits. Discriminatory practices can prevent entrepreneurship or have the opposite effect – pushing people towards it who may be more suited to salaried work (Naudé et al., 2017). Other concerns related to entrepreneurship in the host country are that migrants have limited networks and difficulty getting loans; thus, the most effective policies to encourage self-employment may be those focused on non-discrimination (Naudé et al., 2017).

Another impact of outmigration is the brain drain. Some calculations indicate that countries who benefit from the brain drain experience relatively small gains, rarely impacting more than 1% of the skilled labor force; however, 10% of the labor force may be impacted by countries who lose skilled workers (Beine et al., 2008). Countries with low levels of human capital and low levels of skilled worker out migrations tend to benefit. Losers tend to lose more than winners gain. In some instances, countries that benefit such as China, India, and Brazil, experience small gains. Overall, the

brain drain results in more skilled workers in developing countries although distributions are unequal.

Outmigration has positive benefits in some contexts due to alleviating unemployment and the benefits associated with remittances that increase the standard of living and boost the economy (Asch, 1994). As such, less developed countries may encourage emigration in order to support economic development and financial and social capital investment in the home country (Global Migration Group, 2010). Governments in less developed countries in Africa, Asia, and Oceania view their levels of emigration as too low (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011). However, governments in Latin and the Caribbean view it as too high. Globally, most governments do not have emigration policies and only 9% want to raise levels with 32% seeking to lower them (United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, 2017). Mexico's policy is to maintain current levels. Migrant remittances in 2016 amounted to nearly \$28 million U.S dollars or 2.7% of the GDP. Mexico, one of 20 countries with the greatest number of citizens living abroad (13 million), also has the policy to encourage the return of citizens to benefit from the capital, investments, technology, and skills.

Overall, factors impacting outmigration are complex, context-specific, and influenced by personal factors. Although reasons for outmigration and its impact can be identified, predicting it and fully understanding its effects is a challenge. The current study provides insight into the predictability of outmigration. It introduces an instrument that identifies the pressures – both personal and interpersonal – that individuals feel when seeking opportunities elsewhere. The instrument helps identify those at risk of out migrating, better comprehend or even anticipate the reasons for emigration, and have a better picture of the loss of human capital and entrepreneurial drive that results when skilled workers leave a country. Policymakers within impacted countries can utilize this instrument to develop strategic policies to more effectively stem some of a country's losses due to "brain drain."



## Methodology and Framework

The survey was created by interviewing entrepreneurs in the course of operations by the Academy for Creating Enterprise (ACE) in locations ranging from the Philippines to Mexico. Alumni, current students, donors, administrators, and business professors were asked about the pressure to out migrate and from their responses, the most commonly mentioned pressures were used to create the instrument.

Participants were 376 entrepreneurs in Mexico who had taken at least one entrepreneurship class from the Academy for Creating Enterprise (ACE) in Mexico City. They were contacted and recruited by ACE for the survey. Links to the Qualtrics survey were sent via the alumni office and alumni were also notified in chapter meetings. Paper copies were distributed to those without internet access or on request. Informed consent was gathered for all data. The scale is called the Outmigration Tendency (OT) scale. The 11 questions included in the OT score are summarized in Table 1 and the answers were dichotomized to “in Mexico” (scored as 0) and “out of Mexico” (scored as 1). Scores range from 0 to 11, with higher scores indicating higher levels of pressure to leave the country.

We measured entrepreneurial desire using the Entrepreneurial Intensity scale developed by Welsch and Co-authors (Welsch, 1998; Gundry & Welsch, 2001; Liao et al., 2005). For details regarding the theoretical constructs underlying the measure and the validation of the survey instrument, see Liao et al. (2005). Entrepreneurial intensity measures the focus and commitment of entrepreneurs regarding their entrepreneurial undertakings. Questions focus on the entrepreneur’s willingness to sacrifice other pursuits to ensure the success of the business (“Owning my own business is more important than spending time with my family” and “I will do whatever it takes to make my business a success”). The measure also captures an individual’s desire to be their own boss, even if it means earning a lower salary. This commitment was measured

with two questions: “I would rather own my own business than receive a higher salary employed by someone else” (scored from 1 to 5) and “I would consider working somewhere else only long enough to make another attempt to establish my own business”, (scored from 1 to 5).

## Results

The OT Score questions were first analyzed for reliability using Cronbach’s Alpha and McDonald’s Omega (McDonald, 1999) which can both be used for dichotomous variables (Hilbert et al., 2016). Results showed a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.893 and a McDonald’s Omega of 0.907 indicating high reliability. As the variables are dichotomous, tetrachoric correlations were calculated to offset the errors associated with Pearson correlations run on factor analyses with dichotomous variables (Kubinger, 2003). Exploratory factor analysis, using parallel analysis to determine how many factors to use (Lim & Jahng, 2019), was run. The parallel analysis suggested 3 factors and the exploratory factor structure based on promax rotation (as recommended by Meyers *et al.*, 2016) can be seen in table 1, with loadings below 0.30 omitted, with the intercorrelations in Table 2. As per Tabachnick & Fidell (2007) each of the factor loadings falls above the fair (>0.45) and good range (>0.55), with many in the very good (>0.63), and excellent (>0.70) ranges.

**Table 1:** Survey questions and factor loadings (N = 376)

No.	Question	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	My family expects me to live (in Mexico / out of Mexico)		0.71	
2	I will have the most job opportunities...			0.61
3	I can best meet my financial obligation...			0.62
4	I would rather live...	0.85		
5	I would rather work...	0.54		
6	I prefer to support my family...	0.48		
7	My family believes I can best support them from...		0.92	
8	I have the means to live...		0.81	
9	I can best obtain a well-paying job that I am qualified to do...	0.60		
10	I feel I should live...	0.99		
11	I would be more useful to my country if I lived...	0.74		
SS Loadings		3.15	2.40	1.34
Proportional Variance		0.29	0.22	0.12
Cumulative Variance		0.29	0.51	0.63

Source: own study.

**Table 2:** Intercorrelations between factor scores (N = 376)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1	1		
Factor 2	-0.75	1	
Factor 3	0.76	-0.77	1

Source: own study.

In a sign of convergent validity, the summed OT score was significantly correlated ( $r = 0.48, p < 0.001$ ) with the participant's answer to the question, *What is the probability that you will leave*

a significant positive, though small, correlation ( $r = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) with the respondent's Entrepreneurial Intensity score. In other words, individuals with the highest Entrepreneurial Intensity were also the ones feeling the most pressure to leave.

## Discussion

Outmigration contributes to the loss of human capital, knowledge, and technology, making it difficult for poor countries to develop (Castro-Palaganas et al., 2017). This study offers a validated measure of outmigration drivers, specifically personal preferences, social pressure, and perception of better opportunities. The tool helps clarify why individuals prefer to live and work abroad, such as to support their families, benefit from better job opportunities, meet financial obligations, or due to social pressure to earn a living abroad and submit remittances. In fighting the brain drain, policymakers can use the tool to market, educate, strategize and encourage entrepreneurial individuals and appeal to the preferences and pressures they face as validated in this study.

There are countless approaches that governments, policymakers, and even the private sector can take to encourage entrepreneurs to launch ventures in their own countries and satisfy the pressures that would normally drive them abroad. If policymakers can convince entrepreneurs that there are opportunities for sustainable employment locally, and if they are able to provide programs as well as marketing to educate entrepreneurs on why it is beneficial to stay, they might be able to make changes and bring value and growth to their countries. The challenge for developing countries is to find ways to incentivize entrepreneurs to stay local and build their businesses.

To ensure that zealous entrepreneurs have the facts and equip themselves with information that changes their perceptions and leads them to consider other alternatives, policymakers could facilitate networks for entrepreneurs to partner and support each other. Rewards and support networks at home can be offered to



encourage entrepreneurs to return, transfer their knowledge and skills to the home country, give back to their communities, and build their home country economies. Policies that outline active and functional ways for entrepreneurs to be rewarded for innovation and business building could make a big difference. This, in turn, can build the local country's economy.

If entrepreneurs feel they can sustain their jobs and support their families at home, they may change their preferences. They may prefer to live and work locally. Policymakers might launch campaigns to upend some of the socially accepted perceptions that outmigration is the best option. If outside social pressure to leave, based on the perception that money is more easily gained elsewhere, is dispelled, they may stay. Their preferences will change because their perceptions will change. Social pressures will change because the attitudes of family and society will change as policies and data show that success can be realized locally.

The factors that drive entrepreneurial individuals away are difficult for developing nations to combat when faced with the ability of developed countries to provide a more appealing landscape and more potential for entrepreneurial success. The findings in this study can provide policymakers with insights to help them craft policies that answer the needs of their nascent entrepreneurs and convince them to innovate in their home countries with the support of their countries.

Access to the tool in this study provides an understanding of the pressures that fuel entrepreneurial outmigration decisions. It also furnishes policymakers with the capability to know the likelihood of entrepreneurs leaving the country. It provides a predictor as to who may leave and why. While it will take time and more research to implement such measures, the ability to appeal to and mitigate pressures in small but specific ways will generate change over time.

Future research needs to help policymakers and strategists further understand outmigration drivers. The current sample consisted of aspiring entrepreneurs. While this is one class of skilled workers, a number of other classes, such as skilled professionals (nurses,

doctors, scientists, engineers, etc.), are at risk of emigrating. Future research needs to obtain a better understanding of their drivers and pressures in comparison to aspiring entrepreneurs.

## Conclusion

While it is challenging for developing countries to compete with developed economies, appealing to the entrepreneurial spirits of citizens and incentivizing them to innovate at home necessitates an understanding of their motivation. This study has attempted to identify the underlying drivers of out migration. Familiarity with these drivers allows policymakers to improve conditions at home in order to reduce outmigration, particularly of talented, capable, and skilled workers.

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