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Social Networks and Migration Preferences in rural Armenia

Introduction

Reasons to migrate have long been discussed in the literature, and studies have identified various factors that may affect the decision, rate and destination of migration. One of the most important factors is believed to be social networks. It has been shown that people with migrant networks are more likely to migrate. However, what keeps individuals from migration has not been adequately studied. Using recent data from rural Armenia, this paper examines the role of social networks in women's desire to migrate, focusing in particular on how non-migrant networks at places of origin may discourage them from migrating.

Background and conceptualization

Network migration is one of the new approaches explaining the continuation of migration flows. As defined by Massey et al (1993), migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in the areas of origin and destination. This networks increase the likelihood of migration by decreasing the costs and risks related with it. The main concepts of this approach are that, first, migration networks have multiplier effect (Arango, 2000), second, family reunification makes up a big part of migration flows and finally migration networks are cumulative in nature. In the early stages of this perspective it was criticized of being just on the conceptual level and not having empirical evidence. However, the latest research on migration has concentrated on the studies of networks and found empirical

evidence for these ideas. (Choldin, 1973, Winters et al, 2001, MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964, Shah and Menon, 1999, Delechat, 2001, Curran and Rivero-Fuentes, 2003, Hagan, 1998, Cerrutti and Massey, 2001).

Research has shown that migrant networks affect not only the decision to migrate but also the destination, the number of household members to be involved in migration and how well migrants will adapt to the country of destination (Choldin, 1973, Winters et al, 2001, MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964, Shah and Menon, 1999, Delechat, 2001).

Choldin (1973) found that decision to migrate is being made after a relative has moved to another country. The decision is affected by the information, help and encouragement by the migrant relatives. Delechat (2001) in her study of Mexican migration found that presence of family network and migration prevalence in the community are strongly associated with US-bound migration by increasing the expected benefits from US work. However, she didn't find a significant effect between having close relatives with US migration history and costs of entry into the US.

Winters et al (2001) besides the results that strongly support the positive influence of migrant networks on the decision to migrate and number of migrants to send, found differences in the impacts of weak and strong ties. According to the results, households with weaker family ties benefit more from community networks than those with large networks. Shah and Menon (1999) found that the impact of networks differ by country. Their study of migrants in Kuwait showed that networks may be more active for migrants from some countries than others. However, they support the general idea that networks of relatives and friends encourage additional migration.

Studies found that the impact of networks on migration decision and process itself also differs by gender (Curran and Rivero-Fuentes, 2003, Hagan, 1998, Cerrutti and Massey, 2001).

The gendered outcomes of migration are considered to be influenced by the unequal access to resources for men and women which in its turn is a result of weak (out of kin) networks for men and strong (family and kin) networks for women related to the kind of job they do (Hagan, 1998). Cerrutti and Massey (2001) found that while the determinants of male migration are human and social capital indicators, for women having a family member or close relative in the country of destination is a stronger predictor of migration. Besides, they imply that in most households males are the ones that start international migration, while women usually follow either their parents or husbands.

Menjivar's (2000) study of Salvadorian migrants in the US showed that the role of social networks in the migration decision, the process itself and later adjustment to the host country differs from case to case. If for some individuals it provides support and help in the migration process and finding a job, for others it might not be the case. Arriving in the country of destination Salvadorian women often find themselves abandoned as the networks they depended on for finding a job or housing for the first period of their arrival refuse or are not able to help. So while the migration decision is often influenced by migrant networks as it may decrease migration-related costs, it often turns out not to be true.

In summary, studies support the importance of social networks in the decision making and processes of migration. However, while emphasizing social networks as catalysts of migration, the literature does not consider that networks can also *discourage* migration. In this study, we focus on how non-migrant social networks, net of migrant networks, affect women's desire to migrate. We hypothesize that women with larger social networks in the country of origin are less likely to want to migrate due to financial, social and psychological support they receive from them. However, with the discussed literature in mind, it is also expected that migrant networks will increase women's migrational aspirations. Especially those that will have

a husband involved in migration labor will be much more likely to want to move in order to reunite the family. The previous migration experience is also expected to have positive effects on migration aspirations.

Data and methods

Data for this study come from the survey on Migration, Social Capital and Reproductive Health in Armenia, conducted in Armenia in 2005. The survey consisted of 1040 standardized interviews with women in 52 villages of two marzes (administrative units) of Armenia that differ in their geographic, economic and social characteristics with one of them being comparatively prosperous province and the second one as one of the most vulnerable regions of the country. The field work was conducted in October- November of 2005, just before migrant husbands typically come back from abroad.

Women of 18 to 45 years old married to migrant and non-migrant husbands were interviewed for the survey. They were selected randomly with women with migrant husbands being over sampled. Husbands that were out of country for work reasons for at least three consecutive months were considered having migrant status. In each randomly selected household only one woman was interviewed.

The survey questionnaire included modules of household members' characteristics, women's work history, reproductive history and behavior, health, social networks, gender attitudes and their husbands' labor history in the country and abroad.

Statistical model

The method of analysis is binary logistic regression. The dependent variable is dichotomous: whether women want to migrate or not. The data allow differentiating between the desire to migrate internationally and migrate in general. The main predictors of the model are women's migrant and non-migrant networks, controlling for main demographic, socio-economic characteristics, financial and non-financial support from kin and non-kin and husband's migration status.

Women's migrant networks are measured through three variables: number of her and husband's relatives residing in Armenia's capital city, number of her and husband's relatives outside of the country and number of friends (non-relatives) outside of the country. All close relatives and in-laws, such as parents, adult children, aunts, uncles, adult nieces and nephews are considered as relatives. For the non-migrant networks the data allow differentiating between women's relatives and their in-laws. So the main variables are the number of relatives women have weekly contacts with, the number of in-laws they have weekly contacts with and the number of non-kin they have weekly contacts with. Table 1 summarized the definition and distribution of the dependent and independent variables.

Preliminary Results

The preliminary results of multivariate analysis are presented in Table 2. As expected, we found support for previous findings indicating that women with migrant husbands are more likely to wish to migrate than women with non-migrant husbands. However, our results provide only partial support for the role of migrant social networks.

Interestingly, the effects of the main predictors differ when the dependent variable is the desire to migrate internationally from the model with the desire to migrate in general. It turns out that none of the kin and non-kin migrant networks have a significant impact when it comes to the desire to migrate out of the village in general. However, having more migrant friends increases the probability of those who want to migrate internationally. Kin migrant networks appear not to have any impact on migrational aspirations of women in both models.

The results are different for non-migrant networks too. While the significant predictor of preventing international migration is non-kin non-migrant network, for the migration in general only the number of close relatives in the village decrease women's desire to migrate and the

results are significant controlling for husbands migration status and financial and non-financial support they get from their networks. The only exception in this case is the financial support they get from own relatives. The effect on the desire to migrate out of the village is positive but only marginally significant.

Among significant predictors for the desire to migrate in general are previous migration experience and the province. Our findings show that the more women had migrated before, the higher the probability that they would like to migrate again. For the effect of province we found that those who live in the less prosperous marz have increased odds of desire to move out.

So the preliminary results of our analysis show that the social networks that include migrants do not always encourage individuals to migrate as usually stated in the literature on migration. Moreover, the networks that consist of non-migrant individuals may make migration less desirable for women, even for those whose husband is involved in migration. These findings suggest that in order to better understand the migration processes and make the image more comprehensive factors preventing individuals from migration along with those encouraging it should be taken into consideration in future studies. Non-migrant networks are only a part in a range of factors preventing individuals from migration.

Next steps

As we prepare this paper for presentation at the PAA meeting, we plan to refine the models trying other alternatives for migrant and non-migrant networks measures. Also, we are looking for other social factors that may add to the explanation of variation in women's desire to migrate.

Table 1. Distribution and descriptive statistics of dependent and independent variables in the model.

Variables	
Wants to move out of village (%)	55.7
Wants to move out of country (%)	12.2
Woman's age (mean, years)	34.4
Woman's education (%)	
Secondary or less	51.8
Sec. vocational and higher	48.2
Currently working out of home (%)	16.6
Currently not working (%)	83.4
Number of kids under 18 (mean)	2.1
No kids under 18 (%)	13.4
Has 1 or 2 kids under 18 (%)	61.2
Has 3 and more kids under 18 (%)	25.5
Place of residence (%)	
Ararat	50.0
Tavush	50.0
Socio-Economic Status (mean)	3.03
Number of times woman ever moved (mean)	1.9
Never moved (%)	24.4
Moved once (%)	52.9
Moved more than once (%)	22.7
Migrant husband (%)	36.9
Non-migrant husband (%)	63.1
Gets non-financial support from relatives (%)	24.0
Gets non-financial support from in-laws (%)	22.2
Gets non-financial support from friends (%)	18.3
Gets financial support from relatives (%)	21.6
Gets financial support from in-laws (%)	22.2
Gets financial support from friends (%)	23.4
Number of relatives in Yerevan (mean)	2.2
No relatives in Yerevan (%)	17.1
1-9 relatives in Yerevan (%)	44.3
10 and more relatives Yerevan (%)	38.6
Number of relatives out of the country (mean)	2.1
No relatives outside (%)	17.9
1 to 9 relatives outside (%)	54.7
10 and more relatives outside (%)	27.4
Number or friends out of country (mean)	1.4
No friends outside	71.3
1 to 3 friends outside	14.5
4 and more friends outside	14.2
Number of close relatives in the village (mean)	1.4

No close relatives (%)	64.2
1 to 4 close relatives (%)	30.2
5 and more close relatives (%)	5.6
Number of close in-laws in the village (mean)	1.6
No close in-laws (%)	50.0
1 to 4 in-laws (%)	41.5
5 and more in-laws (%)	8.5
Number of close friends in the village (mean)	1.9
No close friends (%)	27.7
1 to 4 friends (%)	53.9
5 and more friends (%)	18.4

Table 2. Multivariate analysis of woman's desire to migrate (odds ratios), controlling for woman's socio-demographic characteristics, financial and non-financial support from networks and for migrant and non-migrant networks.

Variables in the equation	Dependent variable	
	Wants to move out of village	Wants to move out of country
Woman's age (mean, years)	.957**	.981
Woman's education		
Secondary or less (ref)	-	-
Sec. vocational and higher	.845	.525**
Currently working out of home	1.185	1.229
Number of kids under 18		
No kids under 18 (ref)	-	-
Has 1 or 2 kids under 18	1.093	.948
Has 3 and more kids under 18	.930	.942
Place of residency		
Ararat (ref)	-	-
Tavush	1.280	.788
SES	1.054	.907
Number of times ever moved		
Never moved (ref)	-	-
Moved once	1.802**	1.029
Moved more than once	2.648**	1.303
Migrant husband	1.418*	2.335**
Gets non-financial support from relatives	1.236	1.167
Gets non-financial support from in-laws	.874	1.188
Gets non-financial support from friends	.912	.690
Gets financial support from relatives	1.407†	.869
Gets financial support from in-laws	.762	1.090
Gets financial support from friends	1.187	.872
Number of relatives in Yerevan		
No relatives in Yerevan (ref)	-	-
1-9 relatives in Yerevan	1.189	1.165
10 and more relatives Yerevan	1.078	1.074
Number of relatives out of country		
No relatives outside (ref)	-	-
1 to 9 relatives outside	1.230	1.154
10 and more relatives outside	1.398	1.444
Number or friends out of country		
No friends outside (ref)	-	-
1 to 3 friends outside	.275	1.143
4 and more friends outside	.097	2.288**
Number of close relatives in the		

village		
No close relatives (ref)	-	-
1 to 4 close relatives	.707*	.836
5 and more close relatives	.754	.588
Number of close in-laws in the village		
No close in-laws (ref)	-	-
1 to 4 in-laws	1.026	1.034
5 and more in-laws	1.008	1.027
Number of close friends in the village		
No close friends (ref)	-	-
1 to 4 friends	.910	.608*
5 and more friends	1.177	.879
Number of cases	1040	1040
-2LL	1336.9	719.1

** - $p < 0.01$

*- $p < 0.05$

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