

## ARTICLE

# International Migration Dynamics of Female Migrant Workers from West Nusa Tenggara

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### St. Maryam

Universitas Mataram  
Mataram, Indonesia

Email: [maryamnanang@gmail.com](mailto:maryamnanang@gmail.com)



### Abstract

This study aims to examine the dynamics of international migration of female workers from West Nusa Tenggara. The research was conducted using qualitative descriptive methods. Type of data, primary data obtained from key migrant worker information from West Nusa Tenggara, some of which were associated as companion information (as well as for validation tests). The results showed that: 1. On average, international migrant workers are included in the productive age group and the majority are married; 2. economic factors are the dominant factors as the reason for becoming migrant workers; 3 other reasons are: they want to get work experience, they want to be able to go on the pilgrimage for those who work in the Middle East, and they want to be able to go abroad; 4 remittals are used for household consumption needs and investment needs which in fact, is more dominant for consumption than for productive investment; 5. the positive impact of international migration on migrant households back in their home regions, among others, increasing household income, increasing social status, or maintaining household life, reducing unemployment in their home regions, and accelerating the process of receiving ideas; 6. Negative impact of international migration of female workers is the separation of the nuclear family due to the mother works in a faraway so there is lack of communication.

**Keywords:** international migration, female migrant workers, remittances

### Introduction

International migration is a process of workers transfer over countries because of certain incentives and goals. In general, international migration is very much related to economic growth and the transition of democracy in a country. When a country experiences an economic downturn characterized by low economic growth and high population growth, it is highly unlikely that the country's economic activities can absorb excess labor. For this reason,

sending labor abroad is a solution to labor problems. In the economic theory of occupation and employment, this is often described as the first stage of labor migration transition (Tjiptoheriyanto, 1997). The number of Indonesian international migrant workers has continued to increase; around 70 percent of the number of workers is women who are vulnerable to facing problems from the migration process. International migration can have positive impacts.

The Central Bureau of Statistics has recorded that the official sending of overseas contract workers has been rapidly escalated since the late 1970s with the greatest demand from the Middle East for construction workers and domestic workers. During the 1980s, a significant number of female migrant workers began to work, especially in the domestic sectors, as a result of the new government policies that started promoting the export-labor policies. Previously, reducing the impact of both migration and marginalization had played an important role in the poor and its aspects of reducing budget constraints. The findings of the study show that the health of these poor households, which is indicated through the asset index, has a significant impact on education. Remittances actually refer to money or goods sent to families or people who come from home, by migrants who work outside of the country (Adam, 2010). In terms of economics, the flow of this remittance sent by migrant workers abroad is categorized as income.

As a rule of thumb, the concept of income in the study of economics, the acquisition of income from (international) immigration activity serves as one of the supporting factors for the sustainability of the family or family economy. Remittances are an important indicator in the social and economic life of the community because they can improve the economy of the community as well as have other social impacts such as changes in behavior and life style, changes in life orientation that are more materialistic and also have a profound effect on labor in the region of origin.

West Nusa Tenggara is one of the Provinces in Indonesia that deals with population problems, among which is the growth of the workforce which is not balanced with the creation of job opportunities. This condition brings about to unemployment every year which in turn will lead to poverty. According to Tjiptoherijanto (1998), low level of economic growth and high population growth will make the country's economic activity is very unlikely able to absorb excess labor. Thus the sending of labor abroad is a solution to labor problems. This is all about the theory of the first stage labor.

International migration can have positive impacts on countries of destination, countries of origin as well as migrants and their families. For the destination country, the presence of migrants can fill the workforce segment that has been abandoned by the local population since the country's prosperity is increasing.

West Nusa Tenggara is listed as the fourth area for the resource of Indonesian workers abroad. In 2019, 70 percent of Indonesian workers from West Nusa Tenggara were women out of a total of 30,707 people. Migration of labor abroad occurs almost every year in all regions in West Nusa Tenggara. The three highest ranks of Indonesian Migrant Workers are: East Lombok Regency (12,000 people), Central Lombok (9,000 people), and West Lombok with 4000 people (Radar Lombok, 2020).

The role of women as migrant workers shows the reality in the era of globalization. Nowadays women are required to participate in economic activities by interfering with the work field. This is because there are demands for a better life. In the beginning, women were predicted to only perform mobility in the near future, but nowadays the increase in the mobility of female workers has exceeded the State, and has even contributed a large amount of income to their territory. The involvement of women in overcoming these family economic difficulties is aimed at making family life survive and improving the economy of the household.

The positive impact of sending labor to foreign countries should be assessed from the social, economic and cultural aspects of being remittances and changes in attitudes, which is called changes in perceptions of attitudes and work ethics. In essence, most of the people who go abroad have a yearning; at least have a legal bond with their family, which is usually stated by means of goods in the form of money or goods obtained from the country of destination. Remittances are a fairly important source used for the education costs of their children and their close relatives, for the purposes of accumulating family capital, and for the purpose of a consumptive nature. The benefits of these remittances in a broader sense will be giving the effects of the ability to fulfill their obligations as residents, paying for the Village fees or taxes. In addition to the fact that there is a significant amount of money circulating in the area of origin and this condition helps the development that is being carried out in the area of origin. It is also expected that there will be a change in attitudes in the caseload, which is a change in perceptions of the environment and employment. Therefore, according to the descriptions above, the existence of mobility and remittances of workers has a very important sense in increasing household income which will ultimately help development in the area of origin. Hence, it is necessary for the researcher to study the use of remittances for female migrant workers for consumption or non-consumption / productive usage.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Theory of Migration and Remittances***

Migration is a movement of population with the aim of settling from one place to another place that goes beyond the political / state boundaries or administrative boundaries / the boundaries of a country. Migration that goes beyond the country's borders is called international migration, while internal migration is the movement of population that occurs within the territorial boundaries of a country, both between regions or between provinces. Some immigration studies conclude that migration is due to economic reasons. This condition is in accordance with Todaro's (1998) migration model which states that the flow of immigration takes place as a response to differences in income between areas of origin and destination. Revenue is meant income expected (expected income) not actual income. According to Todaro's model, migrants compare the labor market available to them in the origin and destination areas, and then select the one that is considered to have the maximum expected gain.

There are quite a lot of economic advantages of international migration for workers such as the level of income in new places is higher than what they earn from their place of origin. With higher incomes they will get a better standard of living. They can also provide education, opportunities and a better future for their children (Salvatore, 1996).

In the beginning, the term remittance was money or goods sent by migrants to an area of origin, while migrants were still at their destination (Connell, 1976). In its development, this definition has been expanded, not only money and goods, but also skills and ideas that are

also classified as marginal to regional origin. The skills gained from the experience of immigrating will be very beneficial for migrants to return to their villages, as well as new ideas that can also contribute to the development of their villages; for example, ways of working, building a good home and environment, a healthy life and so on.

Remittances, according to Curson (1981), are in the form of money, goods, and development ideas from migratory destination areas of origin and are an important instrument in the socioeconomic life of a community. From an economical point of view, the existence of privacy is very important because it can improve the economy of the family and also for the progress of the community.

In a broader perspective, remittances from migrants are viewed as an essential factor in improving the balance of payments, and stimulating savings and investment in the region of origin. Therefore, it can be argued that remittance is an important component in linking the mobility of workers with the development process in the region of origin. This is supported by research conducted in the Jatinom area, Central Java (Effendi, 1993). Since the mid-1980s along with the increasing mobility of workers, there has been a change in the pattern of migrant families in the area of origin to become a model with a healthy climate. These changes cannot be separated from the increase in the purchasing power of migrants in the area of origin, as a result of remittances.

Remittances are the sending or transfers of funds from senders usually located abroad. Usually, these funds are sent by workers working abroad for families living in their home country. Remittances can be made using transfer between accounts, bills, or checks. Remittances are usually widely used in developing countries. Generally, the growing population of the country goes abroad to work and get a better income. The proceeds will be sent to the country of origin by mail. In 2019, it is estimated that this number of remittances will grow by 3.7%. For developing countries with low incomes, remittances do contribute a large portion of the country's income. ([www.simulasikredit.com/apa-itu-remittance-definisi-remittance](http://www.simulasikredit.com/apa-itu-remittance-definisi-remittance) 21 Nov 2020, Jam 06.43 WITA)

### ***Previous Research***

Several studies stated that migration with remittance, as a part of it, is very influential on welfare. These studies suggest that migration and remittances have the potential to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty, increase family income, savings and investment, consumption, and others (Kawi, 2006), Damon (2009), Malone (2007), Adams (2003,2010), Haas (2007). In a nutshell it can be said, one of the efforts to achieve prosperity is obtained from remittances, because the common function of democracy is to improve well-being.

Kawi (2006), conducted a study on the background of Balinese culture, found that the inheritance of migrants was related to the individual variables of the Balinese, the binding of the region of origin and the destination area, employment acquisition, income in the destination area. This is due to migrating, conditions for migrants as a remittent sender to a better future. Factors of belief in religion influence the expenditure / use of remittances he accrues. Damon (2009) examines the impact of international migration and management of remittances in El Salvador especially focused on the allocation of off-farm, on-farm, household workers, and job opportunities for adult women, the results of this study show that migration determines the allocation of human resources in family members.

Malone (2007) evaluated the ability of the remittances of migrants to promote development through investment in human resources. The results of this study indicate that the ability of migrants depends on gender (ie, the allotment pattern of the remittances depends on the sex of those who migrates and the sex of those who receives the remittances) and the remittances sent by immigrant who become fathers and mothers are mostly invested on education. Adams (2007) analyzes the impact of international remittances on poverty and household consumption and investment, in Indonesia. His study found that international publication has a large (statistical) effect on poverty reduction in Indonesia. And household consumption is increasing (increasingly consumptive).

Rosen (2007) found that mitigation influenced household investment decisions. This investment decision is divided into two components. First, the household applies the expenditure between aggregate consumption and investment. Second, the household determines the investment asset for purchases based on the expected return on investment and the household's tolerance results. The estimation results show that the household which has no remittance will value investment as an "unimportant good". This is in contrast to the view of the household which has remittance. The elasticity of the substitution between investment and consumption does not show signs of being affected by remittances..

## **Research Method**

The study used descriptive qualitative approach, research prodecure of which objective is to obtain descriptive data in the form of writing or observable behavior from subject (Moleong,2001)

The study was conducted in West Nusa Tenggara, one of the provinces in Indonesia with the highest number of female migrant workers. Unit of analysis was female migrant worker. The informants were female migrant workers who went worked in foreign countries more than once. They worked as domestic helper, babysitter, caretaker, or a cook. Main informants were 15 female migrant workers, while supporting informants were these workers' husbands, and family members who lived in the same house as the main informants do. Supporting informants were involved in data validation.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Demographics***

This section described the main informant's age, sex, marital status, and number of family members. Most of the informants were in their productive age, which means that they are able to work. Furthermore, in terms of marital status, most of them were married. Based on the interview, there were three factors that forced the subjects to work in foreign countries, namely financial issues, lack of jobs allowing the subjects to earn a sufficient income, and willingness to help their siblings or parents.

The majority of the female migrant workers had five family members indicating how much burden their family had. Many times, the workers lived together with their extended family members, for example their parents or in-laws. This condition motivated the workers to work in foreign countries. Prior to working in foreign countries, they had worked as farmers, craftsmen, seller, or laborer. However, they could not earn sufficient income to support neither themselves nor family members.

### ***Factors Affecting Female Worker's International Migration***

Discussion on factors affecting international migration of female workers is a complex matter. Although each migrant worker has different working motivation, they have one thing in common; they had understood how much impact working in foreign countries may bring to themselves or their family members.

The first factor was area where the migrant workers were from, for instance typography and climate, including drought.

The second and the most frequent factor was financial difficulty. Todaro (2003) in Expected Income Model of Rural-Urban Migration called migrant worker's expectation to earn higher income in foreign country a rational economic decision-making. Migration will occur when people are unable to find any job or earn sufficient income.

Decision-making to work as migrant workers depends heavily on situations in both the workers' hometown and destination country, personal decision, and obstacle. On economic perspective, positive (pulling) factors in area are business opportunity, job opportunity, and high salary. In general, the dominant factor that encourages individual to work as migrant workers is financial issue. The informants admitted that higher salary and dream of creating a better life for their family members are the reasons why they fled to foreign countries to work. They earned higher salary doing the same job as they had done in Indonesia abroad.

Other motivating factors were to gain job experience, visit other countries, and go on pilgrimage, more particularly migrant workers in the Middle East.

Prior to making decision to work as migrant workers, the informants had lengthy discussion with their spouses, children, and parents. This decision will solve their financial income, but at the same time limit communication between the workers and their family members. Sending remittance, migrant workers helped improve economic and social conditions of their nuclear and extended family members who lived in the same household as the workers did. In short, the remittance allowed the migrant workers to contribute to their household economy, build house and send their children/ sibling's to school. In broader context, using the remittance to pay for local retribution and tax, the migrant workers could fulfill their responsibility as Indonesian citizens. As an addition, remittance increases money circulating in an area, and contributes positively toward regional development.

### ***Remittance and Its Contribution toward Household Income***

Increase of household income, social status and quality of life, decline in unemployment rate, and new ideas are effects of international migration toward returning migrant workers' household. Limited natural resources, for example infertile soil, drought, and limited ownership of agricultural land make remittances pivotal. The results showed that remittances contribute to household income and improve household economy. The informants stated that after returning home they worked as farmers, sellers, and made handicraft. All informants mentioned that their current income was lower than that when they worked as migrant workers.

Remittance affects circulation of money in community, and thus, improves regional economy. In terms of human resources, returning migrant workers had a significant contribution towards

social and economic conditions in their hometown. They were able to share experiences, knowledge, and skills to develop their hometown.

Besides basic necessities, the informants explained that remittance was also allocated for regional development. The migrant workers or their family members spent some percentages of the remittance to help regional government programs, for example sanitation and reforestation program, building roads and place of worship, and supporting orphans. In the setting of the study, a mosque was erected from migrant workers and returning migrant workers' donation. In terms of taxes, the informants stated that they always pay tax. They spent their remittances for investment such as buying rice fields and repairing/buying houses, and household appliances such as radio, TV, and furniture. Some informants spent it for education.

### **Conclusion**

1. Average migrant workers are at productive age, which indicated that they are physically capable of working in order to gain income. Majority of these workers are married.
2. Financial issue is the most dominant factor that forces individuals to work in foreign countries. All informants admitted that they worked as migrant workers to support their family. They earned more money doing the same job abroad. Furthermore, they send some percentages of their money home (remittance).
3. Other factors that motivates individuals to work as migrant workers are seeking for job experience, and dreams of visiting foreign country and pilgrimage for those working in the Middle East.
4. Higher percentage of remittance is allocated for household consumption. Besides household consumption, it is also allocated for investment.
5. Positive effect of international migration toward returning migrant worker workers' household are increase of household income, social status and quality of life, decline in unemployment rate, and new ideas.
6. Its shortcoming is lacking communication between female migrant workers and their family.

### ***Limitation of the Study***

The study is limited to run analysis on dynamics of international migration among female migrant workers, namely its pulling factors, objectives, and benefits. The study did not discuss amount of remittance or how long female migrant workers work in foreign countries.

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