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Push and Pull Factors of Youth Migration in Balochistan: An Examination of Educational and Economic Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The human-development indexes in Balochistan remain the worst in Pakistan and a larger percentage of the province's youth is migrating to the other provinces for education and work. This study utilized the Aspiration-Capability Framework and studied the relationship between push factors (Educational Scarcity, Economic Hardship) and pull factors (Destination Educational Quality, Destination Economic) related to youth migration intentions from Balochistan. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used and 500 Baloch students who have migrated from Balochistan to Universities of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa foe pursuing higher education were selected using stratified random sampling technique. The four predictor constructs and migration intention were assessed using a 34-item, five-point Likert scale which were reliable according to Cronbach's alpha (all constructs ≥ 0.70). The SPSS program was used for descriptive, correlation, and reliability analysis. Results indicated that all four factors had positive, significant relationships with migration intention, with Educational Scarcity being the strongest correlate (r = .68), followed by Economic Hardship (r = .59) and Destination Economic (r = .59), and Destination Educational Quality (r = .58). The results suggested that lack of educational facilities and poor economic prospects in Balochistan along with the perceived better educational and economic opportunities of other provinces are responsible for the migration of youth. The study highlighted the importance of targeted investment in the capacity of higher education institutions and local economic development in Balochistan to reduce the emigration of the youth, and calls for more regression based and longitudinal studies in order to build causal and predictive relationships.

Keywords: *Push–Pull factors, Educational scarcity, Economic hardships, Balochistan, Aspiration–Capability Framework*

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a complex social, demographic, and developmental phenomenon, which has been a part of human society throughout the history of human existence. Generally understood as the relocation of people from their usual residence within or across countries, temporary or permanent (Tataru, 2019). Today migration is a more complex process which doesn't just react to one condition but is shaped by the combination of personal desires, family situation, and structural opportunity conditions in both origin and destination countries (de Haas, 2021). This reframing is important in the present study as it moves away from the approach of 'push factors' checklists and focuses on the linkage between aspirations to migrate and the ability to do so, which is often confused in previous studies on migration. Migration has been a catalyst for social change, labour mobility and demography since time immemorial (Hoesch, 2018).

Its processes have been further accelerated by the globalization and digital connectivity, as well as the growing transnational networks. Today, youth's decisions regarding migration are made in a much more complex information space than ten years ago, and the digital platforms are increasingly defining how young people learn about, imagine, and plan mobility (Jan et al, 2023).

Youth are a unique group in terms of their mobility choices in South Asia: their migration decisions have disproportionately large impacts on the social and economic development of both migration sending and receiving regions, and young people make up a large share of the population in South Asia (Riaz, 2021). Furthermore, the situation in Balochistan is further exacerbated by long-term developmental gaps, inadequate educational facilities, and poor economic prospects, as a result of which, the majority of the youth see migration as the only means for acquiring education and uplifting their economic status. It is therefore important to grasp the motivators of these intentions to develop policy for regional development and youth retention (Jan et al., 2023).

This study examined to explore the push and pull factors for youth's intentions of migration in Balochistan with education and economic perspective. Despite all this literature, empirical studies of the determination of internal youth migration intentions in Pakistan rather than international migration and the ones based on the same multidimensional perspective of education and the economy of Balochistan are still limited (Chachar et al., 2023). Even in this vast literature, empirical studies of internal youth migration intentions in Pakistan, instead of international migration or a mere labour migration, are still limited and those based on the same multidimensional framework of education and economy for Balochistan, in particular, are even less common (Baig et al., 2024). This study aimed for a useful contribution to explore push and pull factors of migration and also applied the Aspiration–Capability theoretical framework in one area of the world where there have been relatively few empirical studies of internal migration. It fills this gap by exploring the push and pull factors of migration from youth.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the effects of the Educational Scarcity (ES) on migration decisions of youth from Balochistan.

2. To find the relationship between the Economic Hardship (EH) and migration decisions of youth from Balochistan.

3. To assess the relationship between the Destination Educational Quality (DEQ) and migration decisions of youth from Balochistan.

4. To examine the effect the Destination Economic (DE) on migration decisions of youth form Balochistan.

Research Question

RQ1: Is there any significant effects of the Educational Scarcity (ES) on migration decisions of youth from Balochistan?

H1: There is a significant effect of Educational Scarcity (ES) on migration decisions of youth from Balochistan.

RQ2: Is there any significant relationship between Economic Hardship (EH) and migration decisions of youth from Balochistan.

H2: There is a significant relationship between the Economic Hardship (EH) and migration decisions of youth from Balochistan.

RQ3: Is there any significant relationship between the Destination Educational Quality (DEQ) and migration decisions of youth from Balochistan?

H3: There is a significant relationship between the Destination Educational Quality (DEQ) and migration decisions of youth from Balochistan.

RQ4: Is there any significant effect of Destination Economic (DE) on migration decisions of youth from Balochistan?

H4: There is a significant effect of Destination Economic (DE) on migration decisions of youth from Balochistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Migration and Youth Migration Intentions

Migration requires considering in multiple dimensions including the movement of people from place to place, whether temporary or permanent and in search of social, educational, economic, or personal goals (IOM, 2024). It has a role in demographic change, labour market change and regional development. Migration intention specifically relates to an individual's willingness or desire to move to the future to take up better opportunities and living conditions (Dadras et al., 2023). Moreover, the migration has been a topic of academic interest as youth are among the most mobile sub-populations of society, often travelling for educational, employment and career progression purposes. Factors driving youth migration intentions are not just one but rather several, including educational opportunity, economic conditions, family circumstances and social environment (McAuliffe & Oucho, 2024).

However, migration trend can be seen at the national level in the case of Pakistan. Recently, statistics regarding labour migration have revealed that more than 727,000 Pakistanis have migrated for employment in 2024 alone, a 15 percent drop from 2023, but the volume of people leaving the country is still high, with about 200,000 of whom being skilled or professional workers This is further compounded by a demographic fact that around 64 percent of Pakistan's population is below the age of 30 and is actually a potential ‘demographic dividend' given the persistent high rate of unemployment, lack of good governance and the limited confidence in opportunity structures at home (Akram, 2024).

This situation is particularly problematic in Balochistan in Pakistan. The province has ample natural-resource potential, but it has the worst human-development figures in the country, with 71 percent of its population in multidimensional poverty, a condition with the lowest rate of urbanization about 14 percent, and the lowest literacy rate around 42 per cent, according to the 2023 census (Zarar et al., 2025). The education sector is spending around 1.5 per cent of GDP, which is the lowest in the region, and at the same time, the share of education in Balochistan's limited overall allocation is very small, resulting in a large number of school-age children remaining out of schools completely (Ahmed & Ishrat, 2020). The province’s overall labour force participation rate is around 38.6 per cent with, as in other parts of the world, a large proportion of the available employable labour being in the informal sector with low-paid jobs, and a clear mismatch between the theoretical training provided by the local university and the extent of practical, market-oriented skills that employers require (Shafqat & Shahid, 2017). Recent social studies do not just

interpret these situations as an economic burden, but as a structural factor that significantly affects youth disillusionment among the residents of Balochistan, as they lose trust in institutional and opportunity systems as a result of the triple deprivation of quality education, joblessness, and lack of social upward mobility (Kakar et al., 2025).

Push and Pull Factors in Migration

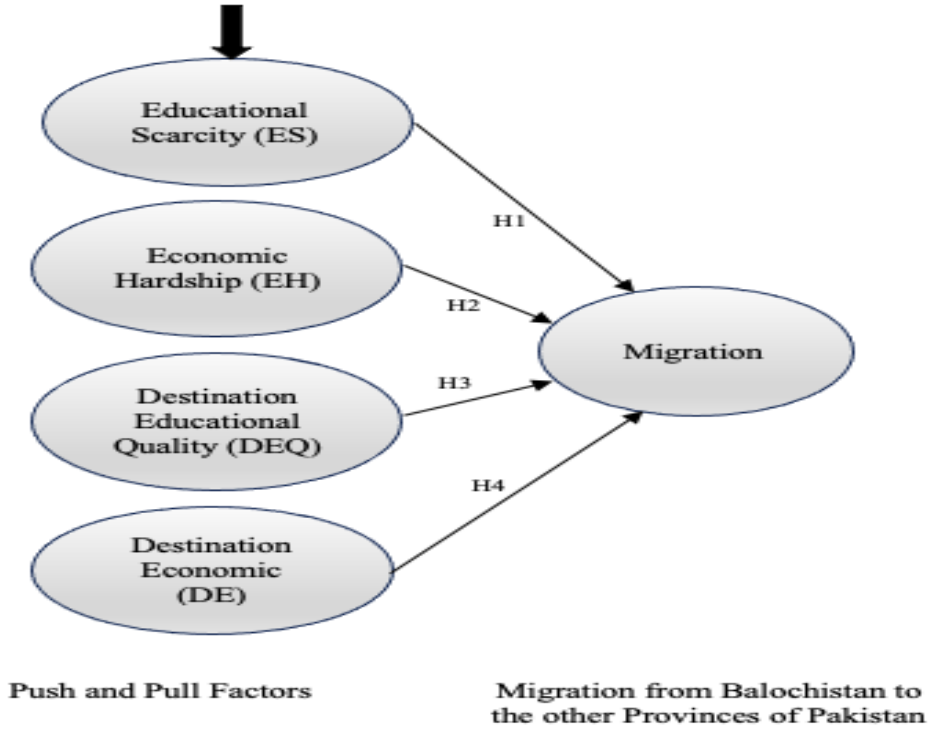
Push and pull factors are commonly used as an explanation for migration decisions: push factors are those that make one want to consider leaving, as well as pull factors, which are those that make one want to go to the place of arrival. Further, the Push factors generally are employment, economic instability, lack of educational facilities and poverty; pull factors generally are quality education institutions, better economic opportunity, living conditions. (Khan et al., 2023). This study identifies four major variables and maps these variables to this framework: Educational Scarcity (ES) and Economic Hardship (EH) are push factors based on origin; Destination Educational Quality (DEQ) and Destination Economic(DE) are pull factors based on destination.

Additionally, Education ranks always among the most powerful factors influencing migration intention amongst young people. The relationship between educational goals and migration intentions was found to be significant in every region (Urbański, 2022). Tertiary students from low economical countries and cities have their migration decision influenced by the lack of specialized study fields in their home country and greater academic infrastructure in the destination country (Shah et al., 2024). It is evident from Pakistan's own statistics that the country's own efforts to promote tertiary education were not very impressive, with gross tertiary enrolment at a mere 13 per cent in 2023, far lower than the regional averages for India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, despite an increase in student numbers of over 30 per cent in just one year (ICEF Monitor 2024). For the pull side, factors at the destination educational quality rather than at the home country influence the establishment of forward-looking migration intentions students. However, the economic insecurity is linked closely to the educational scarcity. The Economic Survey 2022–23 was released by the Ministry of Information and Culture, revealing that Pakistan's youth unemployment rate in the period stood at 11.1 percent while underemployment in rural areas was more prevalent than urban areas. Long-run econometric analysis (1976-2020) reveals that unemployment, wage gap and sluggish investment expenditure have been identified as major determinants of brain drain of skilled workforce from Pakistan (Shah et al., 2024). These pressures are not uniform across the country; the inter-district migration data revealed that, in the past, the poorer and less developed districts of Pakistan such as many parts of Balochistan, have exported working age migrants to the provinces and cities with higher employment densities, while pockets of Balochistan have imported in-migrants that fit particular labour niches (Siddiqui, 2021). This indicates that a province can have push and pull forces that do not necessarily exist in a binary relationship.]

Research Model

The conceptual model looks at the role of two push factors, namely Educational Scarcity (ES) and Economic Hardship (EH) and two destination factors, namely Destination Educational Quality (DEQ) and Destination Economy (DE) on migration from Balochistan to other provinces of Pakistan. Based on the above descriptions, the model is proposed that the migration intention has a direct and significant relationship with the following independent variables, expressed in the following hypotheses (H1–H4). It offers a framework for analyzing the impact of conditions in the country of origin and destination on migration decisions of school pupils and youth.

Figure 2. Research Model

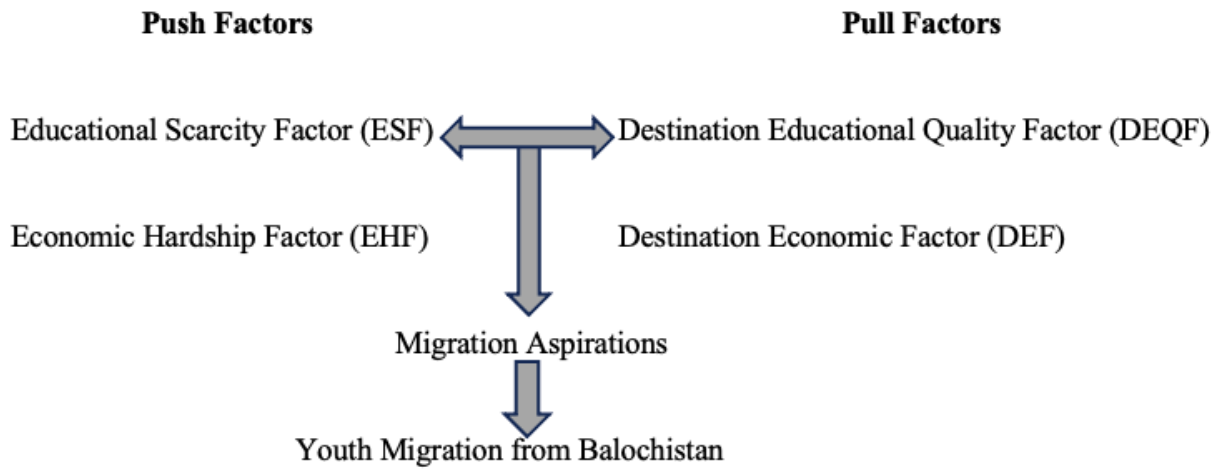


Theoretical Framework

This study implemented the Aspiration Capability Framework first developed by Carling (2002), and subsequently developed and modified by Carling & Schewel (2018). The framework suggests that with migration intention not being generated by desire alone, but rather by desire and the ability to do so. Aspirations are formed when they see a difference between what they see themselves as and what they want to become a difference that is one of the most likely to be shaped by their educational and economic opportunities. Whereas, capabilities are resources which enable such aspirations to be realized, including access to information, social networks, family support and financial resources. The concept of involuntary immobility those who wish to migrate but are unable to is just such an example and it is precisely because aspiration and ability are analytically distinct and not reduced to the one "desire to move" (Carling, 2002).

Education and economic conditions are conceptualized as a push–pull dynamic, as described in the introduction: the push (Educational Scarcity, Economic Hardship) comes from the place of origin, and the pull (Destination Educational Quality, Destination Economic) comes from the destination. This structure leads to the four hypotheses below. Aspiration–Capability Framework suggests that people obtain education and skills to enhance their future prospects (Carling & Schewel, 2018).

Figure1. Theoretical Framework



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Methodology is a systematic approach to data collection and analysis to achieve research goals (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). The study was quantitative and cross-sectional survey design was used in which educational and economic factors related to the intentions of youth migration from Balochistan to other provinces of Pakistan have been considered. The study's aim was to test hypothesized relationships between four independent variables (ES, EH, DEQ, DE) and a dependent variable (Migration) and thus numerical measurement and statistical hypothesis testing was required, as opposed to exploratory or interpretive analysis.

Population and Sample

The sample size of 500 students were selected from the population from Balochistan who were currently enrolled in various graduation programs in three provinces of Pakistan. From the population of an estimated 2496 number of students currently were studying in five universities across three provinces (Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) chosen as relevant destination contexts for internal migration from Balochistan. This is a large enough sample size to give confidence in the statistical estimation from this population size in the sample size table provided by (Taherdoost, 2017).

Sampling Technique

The respondents were selected by stratified random sampling technique which was based on two criteria of province and university in such a way that the respondents were proportionally selected from three provinces of the destination and the sampling bias was minimized to ensure an equal chance of selection, and thus representativeness of the sample, respondents were selected randomly within each stratum (Taherdoost, 2017).

Research Instrument

The data was gathered using a structured, self-administered survey questionnaire with 34 items under five constructs, namely the four independent variables, that is, Educational Scarcity (ES), Economic Hardship (EH), Destination Educational Quality (DEQ) and Destination Economic (DE), and the dependent variable, Migration (M). The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The internal consistency for the instrument was evaluated before the full administration of the instrument, to ensure that each construct was measured reliably before hypothesis testing, Cronbach's alpha was calculated and the coefficient measured was compared with the conventional acceptability limit of 0.70 (Taherdoost, 2016). The questionnaire was distributed face-to-face to the enrolled students at the universities selected and responses were anonymous and voluntary to minimize social-desirability bias for the sensitive questions of economic hardships and migration intention.

Data Analysis Technique

IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 was used to analyze the collected data. Respondent characteristics and build-level responses were profiled using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations). The strength and direction of the relationship between variables of ES, EH, DEQ, DE and youth migration factors were then examined using inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis and multiple linear regression, to conduct formal testing of the hypotheses (H1–H4) (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic findings indicated that the majority of respondents were male **(**69%**),** whereas females represented 31% of the sample. Most respondents **(**85.8%**)** belonged to the 20–30 years age group, indicating that the sample largely represented young individuals who are commonly involved in educational and career-related decisions. Previous studies have indicated that youth populations are more likely to demonstrate mobility intentions because educational attainment and career aspirations are generally stronger during early adulthood.

Furthermore, 95.6% of respondents reported migration for educational purposes, suggesting that education is one of the major factors associated with migration decisions among youth. This finding is supported by previous studies showing that young individuals often migrate to gain access to better educational opportunities and future career prospects (Basnet et al., 2023; International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2024). Regarding migration destinations, Punjab (47%) and Sindh (46%) represented the most preferred provinces, suggesting that these regions are perceived as offering better educational and economic opportunities.

Table 1 Demographic Information

Gender	Frequency	Percentage%
Male Respondents	349	69%
Female Respondents	151	30%
Age		
20 to 30	434	85%
31 to 40	55	10%
41 to 50	11	3%
51 to above	0	0%
Migrated for Education		
Yes	484	95%
No	22	4%
Province of Migration		
Sindh	233	46%
Punjab	238	47%
KPK	35	6.9%

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
M	21.7072	2.11752	-0.50	-0.70
ES	53.0273	5.14187	-0.51	-0.44
EH	30.2648	3.51623	-0.58	-0.38
DEQ	22.4308	2.38480	-0.45	-0.74
DE	22.2134	2.51843	-0.47	-0.66

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of study variables through mean values, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis. The findings showed mean values of 53.02 for Educational Scarcity (ES), 30.26 for Economic Hardship (EH), 22.43 for Destination Educational Quality (DEQ), and 22.21 for Destination Economic (DE). The skewness values ranged from −0.45 to −0.58, whereas kurtosis values ranged from −0.38 to −0.74. According to Hair et al. (2023), skewness values within ±2 and kurtosis

values within ±7 indicate acceptable normality. Therefore, the findings suggest that the data satisfied the assumptions of normal distribution and were appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Reliability Analysis

Table 3. Construct Reliability

Construct	Mean	Std. Dev	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
M	22.7273	2.11752	.700	5
ES	54.0277	5.14187	.803	12
EH	31.1423	3.51623	.736	7
DEQ	22.4308	2.38480	.805	5
DE	22.2134	2.51843	.844	5

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to examine the internal consistency of the measurement scales. The findings showed reliability values of 0.700 for Migration Intentions, 0.803 for Educational Scarcity**,** 0.736 for Economic Hardship, 0.805 for Destination Educational Quality, and 0.844 for Destination Economic.

All constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Similar studies have suggested that Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 demonstrate acceptable reliability and indicate that the measurement items adequately represent the intended constructs (Taherdoost, 2017).

Correlation Analysis

Table 4. Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

M	1				
ES	0.68	1			
EH	0.59	0.75	1		
DEQ	0.58	0.70	0.82	1	
DE	0.59	0.69	0.70	0.71	1

The correlation analysis revealed positive relationships among all study variables. Educational Scarcity showed a positive relationship with Migration (r = .68), followed by Economic Hardship (r = .59), Destination Educational Quality (r = .58), and Destination Economic (r = .59). These findings indicate that both educational and economic dimensions are associated with migration intentions among youth.

The results support the Aspiration–Capability Framework, which suggests that migration intentions emerge when individuals experience unfavorable conditions in their place of origin while simultaneously perceiving attractive opportunities elsewhere (Carling & Schewel, 2018). In the context of Balochistan, limited educational opportunities and economic hardships may create aspirations among youth to seek better conditions in other provinces of Pakistan.

The findings also align with previous studies indicating that educational limitations and economic challenges act as push factors, whereas better educational environments and economic opportunities function as pull factors in shaping migration intentions (Urbański, 2022; IOM, 2024). Therefore, the present findings suggest that both push factors (Educational Scarcity and Economic Hardship) and pull factors (Destination Educational Quality and Destination Economic) are associated with youth migration intentions in Balochistan.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to test the relationship between four factors with migration intention among youth of Baloch origin (N = 500), namely, Educational Scarcity (ES), Economic Hardship (EH), Destination Educational Quality (DEQ), and Destination Economic (DE). There was evidence for all four hypotheses. Educational Scarcity had the highest correlation (r = .68), followed by Economic Hardship and Destination Economic (r = .59 each), and Destination Educational Quality (r = .58). Moreover, the trend of youth migration from Balochistan is evident that first lack of educational opportunities in Balochistan and second almost equal lack of economic opportunities in Balochistan and presence of economic opportunities in other areas motivate young population to leave Balochistan. This is confirmed by the demographic information: 95.6% of respondents came to Pakistan for higher education; and 93% were in Punjab and Sindh, where the higher education system is developed. The findings support the central tenets of the Aspiration–Capability Framework: the necessity of a reason to move, as well as a viable place to move, and the fact that educational scarcity is the sole policy lever.

Furthermore, the two caveats matter. First of all, the reported relationships of the constructs are correlational and the regression analysis reported in the methodology should be reported in its entirety, before H1–H4 are interpreted as statistically established relationships. Secondly, the sample contains students who had already migrated, not a comparison group of those who were thinking of migrating but who did not do so, thus giving a description of realized motivations for migration, not a full predictive model.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education scarcity was the most significant determinant of migrants' intention to migrate, indicating that the provincial and federal government policy-makers should give special attention to increasing the percentage of education funding for Balochistan and extends the capacity of universities of Balochistan and diversifies the subjects offered, and should continue to work on employment generation not after educational reforms, as economic hardship was found as the second most significant determinant. The skills gap needs to be addressed by universities linking curricula to employer needs, creating new courses that are not offered in the province and increasing the number of scholarships based on need to address the compounded effect of educational and economic disadvantage. Economic development entities must invest in Balochistan's natural resource-based industries like mining, energy and agriculture sectors and use them as a viable opportunity for formalization of youth and make vocational education more popular and relevant

to the local industry requirements viable alternative to migration. Lastly, future studies should provide detailed regression results (β, t, p, R^2) to shift from correlational support to actual hypothesis testing, incorporate non-migrant youth in a longitudinal design to enhance the causal inference, and go beyond university students to other under-resourced provinces to determine the extent to which these findings can be generalized.

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