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# THE EFFECT OF POLITICAL PUSH FACTORS ON INTENTION TO MIGRATE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG PROFESSIONALS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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#### **ABSTRACT**

# Purpose

The main purpose of the study is to examine the effect of political push factors of on the intention to migrate among professionals, the mediating role of psychological distress.

# Methodology

This paper explores the effect of political push factors on intention to migrate through previous literature.

## Results

This study considers appropriate propositions to enhance the professional's intention to migrate. The study develops related propositions that the political push factors enhance the intention of migration.

# **Implications**

Understanding professional's intentions to migrate are crucial for the hospital management for the real motives behind professional's intentions to migrate, which will suggest them to make appropriate decisions. These suggestion eventually used for developing a conceptual framework for future empirical research.

#### INTRODUCTION

With the growing pace of globalization, countries around the world are struggling with challenges in retaining critical talents (Ahammad, Glaister, Sarala & Glaister, 2018). Countries which fail in providing with basic necessities such as high salary to professional that end up losing their competitive advantages on the global level (Morris, Snell & Bjorkman, 2016). These failure such as low wage, low freedom of express cause for professionals to leave a nation of origin to find better ways of living (Docquier, 2014; Tung, 2016).

In the case of migration, Kerr, Kerr, Ozden, and Parsons (2016) discussed that brain drain of professional was high while relating to unprofessional. Kerr, Kerr, Ozden and Parsons (2016) further claimed that developed countries benefit most from international professional migration. Numerous professionals acquired high income working in developed countries that sense would develop high migration of skilled workers (Beine, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2008).

As indicated previously, the phenomenon of brain drain is a global issue, which is proven by its occurrence in OECD countries as well. To illustrate, approximately eight million of skilled individuals from UK, Mexico and Italy migrated to counties of OECD in 2000 (Dunnewijk, 2008). However, the leakage of skilled professional to OECD countries was offset by the coming of professionals' migrants from developing countries as workers. This phenomenon occurred in Canada and Germany regardless of the high outflow of the residents (Docquier, 2014). This current conceptual study, therefore, attempts to identify the push factors which arouse the professional employee s' intention to migrate to other developed country for his betterment.

#### Problem statement

The phenomenon of brain drain among Iraq healthcare professionals is continuously pressuring the country which is in the process of rebuilding after a very long time of the gulf war and domestic unrest. Although, researchers has suggested several revival plans, these plans are progressing at a slow pace due to poor management strategies, security issues, corruption and politics (Lafta et al., 2018). The WHO indicated that Iraq is continuously faced with a severe shortage of healthcare professionals (Organization Mundial de la Salud, 2012). Consequently, the total collapse of the Iraqi healthcare sector may occur if the issues are not properly addressed.

The physician workforce issues have not gained significant attention. However, a few empirical studies have shown a considerable degree of interest in medical doctors' intention (Baruch et al., 2007). It is crucial to determine

the factors of intention to migrate of professionals. Therefore, reviews on this aspect are important so that appropriate policies can be proposed (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2019; Keynes, 2018). It was believed that an individual's decision to change his or her existing location is influenced by the push factors occurring in his or her country. This phenomenon is also due to the pull factors offered by other countries (Ullah et al., 2019; Calisi, 2013; Toren, 1976).

From the perspective of political factors, political instability such as freedom of religion, freedom of press, access to the internet have a strong impact on migration and brain drain. It has also been the main benchmark for an individual's decision to stay in a country, or otherwise. Besides, the many years of political instability in Iraq have led to brain drain (Al-Tamimi, 2006; Lafta et al., 2018).

With all the factors highlighted above, this current study is believed to be relevant. The factors that will be investigated are associated with the intention of Iraqi healthcare professionals to migrate. As the push factors proposed in this study are based on the findings of previous researches, proper scientific investigation is further needed to validate the model to be proposed. In this study, the actual phenomenon occurring in Iraq will be taken into consideration. It is believed that through the ability to review the critical talented professionals' intention to migrate, the management of healthcare sector in Iraq, and other countries may retain their professionals.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

# Intention to migrate

The intention is a behavior that depicts certain acts of the individual (Mohsin, 2012). Intention refers to the attitude to the consequence of one's behavior to do act (Sazila, Abdullah, Mohamed, Khadri, Abdullah, Mat, & Rahman, 2018). The intention to migrate is a reliable indicator of individuals' expectations for their future in the long term (Yasin, & Yasoa, 2010). The intention is defined as the "conceptions formed by directing the mind towards an object" (Hornby, 1992).

Further, migration refers to the procedure through which non-natives visit a country for staying. Migration is called the procedure of visiting either the outside of the country or inside the country (Vafeas, 2013). The term of migration which encompasses all those people are moving to settle themselves either temporarily or permanently in the host country. Migration assumes the movement of refugees, displaced people, and the movement of the population (Vafeas, 2013). Migration might be defined as a permanent move or a temporary move. It can broadly be described as an everlasting or permanent or semi-permanent move of living place (Bell, & Ward, 2000). Migration is a selective process during which those leaving their country of origin are 'selected' by certain characteristics, so their composition is different from that of the population of origin (Ambrosini, Mayr, Peri, & Radu, 2012). The composition of migrants may have many economic and demographic

consequences for both the countries of origin and destination. Diaspora is another term which is used in some previous literature of migration to discuss the people's scattering from their native town sometime by forced from native relations. Indian and African people have been moving to many host countries (Brown, 2011).

However, studies found that many professionals particularly doctors migrated from home to developing countries to do work in developed countries. There are numerous factors such as political that affect the intention to migrate among the professionals. They migrated over there to obtain a high salary (Connell, Zurn, Stilwell, Awases, & Braichet, 2007).

There are two types of factors economic view and political view, from the economic view that has an influence on the migration decision (Thet, 2012). Further, the first sort is associated with the micro, individual level, like a job, expected income (Ajzen, 1991). The second sort of view is political conditions and economic conditions, such as war, and fiscal policy. Though, in experimental applications may be hard to take all the factors that affect the process of decision making (Stark, 2003).

# Determinants of Intention to Migrate

#### **Political Factors**

Political stability includes a safer environment, bureaucracy, and government policies and how it influences to migrate. A study in Baluchistan, Pakistan by Mohyuddin, & Ulllah (2015) found that civil unrest and political instability has become the main driver of Pakistan's brain drain. Political instability has become a factor for African to migrate to a more politically stable developed country (Wazir, Jani, Othman, & Shahabudin, 2017).

Political factors means less freedom to express their role in politics, civil unrest and political instability could make an encouraging atmosphere for planned crime as well as trafficking in persons. In that situation, the disturbance of life of traditional community, with its protecting structure, and the resultant displacement of people to make persons very vulnerable to exploitation (Saxenian, 2005).

Political instability puts strong effects on migration and brain drain movement. It is a very important facet for many investors when they decide to invest in a developing country. It has also been the main benchmark for one to decide to stay in a country. For many years, politics in Iraq is unstable, this factor strongly inspires for creating brain drain perception (Al-Tamimi, 2006). Iraq has a different ethnic group, this leads to creating disharmony among people (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011) which leads to persons migrate to other political stable countries for more harmony. Different religious mind people also make a mess such as injustice and less willing to bear the minority (Johnson, 2008). Political instability also leads to prevail the crime rate which causes professional concern about security and force them to migrate to a country where they would feel better security (Saxenian, 2005).

Political instability causes the brain drain (Laila, & Fiaz, 2018) and intentions to migrate (Docquier, & Rapoport, 2012). However, economic push-pull factors are to be expected to hamper migrants' political incorporation, while political push-pull factors cause migrants to remain engaged in politics while staying abroad (Kazlauskienė, & Rinkevičius, 2006).

Kazlauskienė, and Rinkevičius (2006) also acknowledged that 'brain drain' gives a challenge for policymakers of developing countries (Kazlauskienė, & Rinkevičius, 2006) because political instability enhances psychological distress such as depression and anxiety in individuals' minds. This psychological distress force skilled workers to migrate to politically developed countries (Slone, Kaminer, & Durrheim, 2000). Brain drain factors are almost the same for all developing countries (Paulauskaitė, Šeibokaitė, & Endriulaitienė, 2010).

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The unsafe working environment makes the professional intention to migrate (Chau, 2012). Many skilled workers are forced to work out of their country due to the high ratio of crimes. This wave of brain drain affects the performance of many organizations which results in the shortage of many professional minds. Consequently, crime is the main reason for the migration of professional. The dangerous criminal acts such as stabbing, killing, and rape, are rising, hence that the financial costs incurred through crimes (Rasool, Botha, & Bisschoff, 2012).

Oosthuizen, and Ehlers (2007) argued that a work environment that causes migration (Shariff et al., 2018). A developed country allows an organization to perform its activities in safe surroundings (Jauhar, & Junaimah, 2016; Chau, 2012). Further, the political and economic stability and development of a country are highly depending on the security level. There is a link between migration rate and national security (Hendel, & Kagan, 2011). Political factors have influences on the brain drain, it is essential elements for an investor when they make a decision whether to invest or not in that country (Ghazali et al., 2010).

Political events such as terror and war (Ronen et al. 2003; Garbarino et al. 1991; Garbarino, and Kostelny 1996), the assassinations (Klingman, 2001; Raviv et al. 1998), (Shacham and Lahad 2004), and a range of other violent politically related events (Slone et al. 2000; Slone et al. 1998) were all found to have a negative effect on the wellbeing of people and have psychological distress. The association between political events and the feelings of

psychological distress experienced by youth depends on the political-ideological worldviews of the youth (Laufer, Shechory, & Solomon, 2009).

# Political instability

Political instability is an important variable that has been seen as hampering monetary development (Elbahnasawy et al., 2016). Instability, Carmignani, (2003) and Elbahnasawy et al, (2016) stated that induces vulnerability about future approaches that subsequently demoralize speculation and prompt flight of human capital. It also adversely affects the volume and quality of work that can be produced by the most talented. Economically advised employees avoid strategic isolation from mistreatment (after political change) or quit in pursuit of better monetary prospects.

The degree of income would decline, and the economy would not be in an optimal course of growth. This underscores the importance of political soundness and the need to research the way through which the political equalization can be agitated by different components. In many parts of the world political instability has become a common situation. Exposure to multiple forms of adverse conditions greatly impacts the psychological state (Papanikolaou, et al, 2013).

Continued exposure to potentially harmful situations may contribute to psychological distress (van Prooijen, & Krouwel, 2019). A growing number of researchers have concentrated on the harmful short- and long-term impacts on the psychological health of various forms of disasters — for instance, environmental disasters (Papanikolaou, Leon, Kyriopoulos, Levett, & Pallis, 2011), technical failures, refugee status and terrorist threats (Papanikolaou, et al, 2013).

Throughout the sense of mass fatalities, political violence is well known on how political conflict and its effects (loss of psychosocial capital, seeking rewards, and psychological distress). The increased political violence decreased lack of psychosocial support, lower gain identification, lower education, and older age significantly predicted mental distress, which, in effect, was correlated with increased political violence (Heath, Hall, Canetti, & Hobfoll, 2011). Likewise, political and economic uncertainty is often associated with the decisions of migrants to move abroad, the interaction between economic and political influences affects the decision to migrate (Ghazali, et al., 2015).

#### Corruption

Corruption is a persistent feature in human societies. More recently, corruption and its variants have been studied across several disciplines, including psychology, sociology, economics, law, and political science. Typically, each discipline tends to examine corruption from a particular level of analysis, be it the individual (e.g., psychology, economics), the organization (e.g., sociology), or the economy (e.g., political science). While management

scholars have examined corruption at both the individual and the organization (Pinto, Leana, & Pil, 2008).

Corruption is a repercussion of the poor public sector (Coovadia, 2019). Brollo et al., (2013) examined the association between corruption and political foundations from 1984 to 1999 for in Eastern Europe and Latin America found that governmental frameworks, more high levels of the system of vote-based, opportunity and political security of the press were entirely associated with lower low corruption (Dell'Anno, & Teobaldelli, 2015; Johnston, 2017). Besides, the links between institutional quality, the shadow economy, and corruption find that, for creating nations around the world during 1999-2002, an improvement in institutional quality legitimately decreases the size of the shadow economy and legitimately and implies corruption (Dell'Anno, & Teobaldelli, 2015). An inquiry into the effect of corruption on growth under various political regimes in African, Scandinavian nations, and Latin Americans during 1960-2000 showed that low rates of corruption could advance monetary growth while high rates of corruption could delay monetary development (Uslaner, & Rothstein, 2016). Subsequently, there is a (low) degree of corruption in both accounts that boosts growth a growth that amplifies the amount of corruption. However, the kind of political structure is often seen as essential for the relation between corruption and progress (Johnston, 2017). There's a connection between employee-perceived corruption and their plan to leave the government, migration is related to corruption. The aim of workers to relocate on the basis of corruption perceived at the country level and of multiple organizational factors, like, perceived organizational corruption, observed organizational misconduct, career satisfaction, and turnover intention, (Crisan, Crisan-Mitra, & Dragos, 2019).

# Psychological distress

Psychological distress is a symptom of emotional suffering; it is viewed as emotional conflicts that can influence the daily and social life of an individual. Thus, psychological distress is often labelled as a mental problem which is not specific to any gender. Indeed, the term is often used for the homogenous combination of indicators or symptoms related to stress, depression, trauma and anxiety (Chang, 2017). Psychological distress is a natural human response to stressful conditions. Some of the critical components in distinguishing between normal distress responses and the potential presence of disorder in people's experience of stress, may require reconsideration. These considerations vary by the degree, severity and duration of their responses in the context of an individual's experienced stressors (Scanlan, 2013).

Psychological distress is not a positive emotional state. It is akin to mental destruction, mental threat and loss of a significant target. Based on Mclean, Strongman, and Neha (2007), negative state of emotions has been labelled as unfriendly, annoying, short-tempered, worrying and nervous feelings. Common psychological distress covers general disappointment and dissatisfaction with the current job. Both kinds of distress affect the mental state of the individual. Psychological distress is characterized as feelings of unhappiness, depression and anxiety based on the prime directions of negative

effect on the mood. It is argued that general psychological distress of workers is related to work-related issues, such as the absence of work support, overburden and restricted working environment (Munir et al., 2007).

Furthermore, psychological distress has the potential to influence many aspects of daily life, including anger management, physical health, thought patterns, stress level, life satisfaction and work performance (Williams, Magliano, Tapp, Oldenburg, & Shaw, 2013; Francuz, 2016). Psychological distress is a multi-layered and difficult concept to define. It is a "multifactorial unpleasant emotional experience of a psychological, social and spiritual nature" (Thomas, Thomas, Nanda-Mohan, Nair, & Pandey, 2009; Kantor, 2013).

In Iraq, many medical students face anxiety and stress and want to leave Iraq when they complete their medical education for their safety and career advancement (Sadeghi, Navidi, & Sadeghi, 2007). People around the world are also facing the anxiety and depression related to their work tasks. For instance, physicians and doctors in Saudi Arabia also face high levels of stress based on the standardized principal of stress (Katz, Sharp, & Ferguson, 2006). This stress is related to single, young and female individuals (Katz et al., 2006). Similarly, more than half the medical staff of Iran healthcare have medium levels of stress (Joules, Williams, & Thompson, 2014).

Iraqi doctors are characterized as a different group of individuals since they are experiencing very serious bouts of unbearable stress which is making them the weakest and most helpless group of individuals. Iraq is known as the most dangerous country among all countries of the world. The doctors in Iraq face sleepless nights with no leisure and happiness in their life. Doctors are living under serious threat to their lives, and kidnapping and inhuman crimes are the common practices they have to face on a daily basis. There were many violent incidents against Iraqi doctors during 2004-2007, and the rate of death due to violence was 1.6% (Alwan, 2011).

Psychological distress is a negative mental state which cannot be clearly specified. This mental state contains emotions and feelings which are directly related to sadness/depression and anxiety/apprehension. Distress can be defined through the following qualities: a supposed failure to work efficiently, sudden change in feelings, uneasiness and difficulties in interacting with people, which could result in serious damage to individuals' emotions and mind (Berkman, 2014). Stress includes lack of eagerness or excitement, sleeping problems, feeling dull or faint, feeling disheartened and demotivated about career, emotionally sad or bored and demonstrating no interest in surroundings with feelings or ideas about suicide (Weaver, Treviño, & Agle, 2005). Thus, this is why psychological distress is said to be the combination of negative emotional indications, such as unhappiness /depression, anxiety and stress (Moe, 2012).

Lerutla (2000) described psychological distress as, "the emotional mental state of an individual in which he/she feels upset, dissatisfied, frustrated and

forlorn". Dhir, Yossatorn, Kaur, & Chen, (2018) added that psychological distress is feeling sad and depressed, anxious, tense, restless, worried and afraid, with the display of emotional and psychological actions and feelings. The researchers further argued that the range of psychological distress is from slight to life-threatening, which is known as schizoaffective disorder. Alao (2017), stated that psychological distress is a non-stop cycle of unhappiness and nervousness, and feeling extremely sensitive with unhealthy personal relationships (Shaheen et al., 2014). Based on previous studies, the main dimensions of psychological distress are irritability, self-depreciation, social disengagement and depression.

# Underpinning theory of migration

## Push-pull theory

Previous studies have suggested numerous theories to elaborate why migration as well as brain drain happens. Migration is perceived as a way of relocating from the present unsatisfactory living circumstances, which is normal human behavior for survival, to better living conditions. A few theories on migration are the Dual Labor Market Theory, Neoclassical Migration Theory, Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior Theory.

Empirical studies have shown that a set of comparatively reliable factors push individuals to migrate out of the country and pull them into the developed or host countries (Mahroum, 2000). Push and pull factors are able to work at the same time, whereby an individual might be pushed by the environmental background and pulled by the economic or financial opportunities in the developed or destination country (Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2018). Individuals who have professional skills with working experience come more under the effect of pull factors (Demet Güngör & Tansel, 2008). Based on the study of (Kingma, 2018), push and pull factors are interrelated. Irrespective of how the pull factors are powerful from the developed country are, the decision of migration is taken on the bases of significant push factors in the home country.

Generally, the push factors are negative and connected to motherland issues (like unemployment in the home country). Though, pull factors are positive and allied with the perceived destination (like decent or better job opportunities) (Toren, 1976). The pull-push theory has been used to clarify the intention to migrate (Toren, 1976; Chang, Chou, & Parutis, 2013). However, previous studies have tended to focus on the simple pull-push theory (Toren, 1976) that explains why people migrate for economic or career reasons (Tharenou, & Caulfield, 2010; Tharenou, & Seet, 2014). The decision is not only influenced by individuals themselves but also by the values, beliefs and needs of their families, employers and countries (Baruch, & Reis, 2015). Therefore, it is also crucial to understand intentions to migrate through social and psychological lenses (Tharenou, & Seet, 2014).

As mentioned above, most previous studies have focused on the simple pullpush theory (Toren, 1976), that explains why people expatriate for economic or career reasons (Tharenou, & Seet, 2014). This study will extend the pull-push theory by exploring not only career factors (e.g., career outcomes and career satisfaction), but also family and psychological factors (Laila, & Fiaz, 2018). Currently, migration theories are dominated by sociological or economic explanations. Push factors are origin-related and intrinsic or intangible desires to migrate. On the other hand, pull factors refers to the attractive factors of a destination. It also includes the migrants' perception of the expected benefits in the host destination (Wong, Musa, & Taha, 2017).

The current study will use the push-pull theory (Toren, 1976), in its interpretation of the intentions of individuals towards migration. This is the appropriate theory to analyze the social, political and economic realities in Iraq, which have led to migration.

# Conservation of resources theory

The Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) is a general theory that depends on the reason that people look to protect, reestablish and upgrade their assets and when they cannot do as such, they experience pressure. At the end of the day, Hobfoll, (2001) argued that stress happens when assets are seen as threatened, when people cannot achieve or protect assets with their accessible methods.

Assets are characterized as target individual attributes, conditions or vitality that is esteemed in them or on the grounds that they add to accomplishing or protecting esteemed assets. The COR theory has been proposed as an integrative stress theory (IST) which incorporates employees' abstract procedures (i.e., individual characteristics, for example, locus of control and adaptability, which may apply effect on the impression of worry at work), and goal or (e.g., natural outrageous, physical damage or extraordinary work conditions). In view of this theory, Hobfoll, (2001) explained that it might be guaranteed that as work requests surpass the limits of the employees' occupation, the specialist of numerous assets that are required to satisfy the conventional activity, along these lines leaving the employees with fewer assets to give to ordinary assignments, which, increment the feeling of pressure.

Crawford, LePine, and Rich, (2010) discussed that this consumption of assets leads after some time to burnout. Maslach, and Jackson, (1981) stated that Worker burnout is a dynamic psychological reaction to interminable work pressure including passionate fatigue, depersonalization and sentiments of diminished individual achievement. For medical doctors, burnout is a word related illness that damages both the nature of social insurance and doctors' wellbeing. It is related with medical negligence, psychological distress, and reduction in individual effectiveness and expanded danger of health issues (West, Dyrbye, & Shanafelt, 2018).

Hobfoll, (1989) explained that The COR theory establishes a helpful system to comprehend the connections between working environment stressors and psychological distress and turnover. As per the COR theory, individuals

endeavor to acquire, hold, encourage and ensure their assets (Hobfoll, 2011). Assets incorporate article assets, condition assets, individual assets and energy assets (Hobfoll, 1989). The fundamental principle of the COR theory is that asset misfortune is excessively more remarkable rather than asset gain since it speaks to a significant risk to endurance (Hobfoll, 2011). This suggests anticipated or real asset loss has a more inspirational influence than anticipated asset gain (Gorgievski, & Hobfoll, 2008).

Hershcovis, and Barling, (2010) sated that relational stressor is an especially distressing, and compromising circumstance. Thus, Martinko, Harvey, Brees, and Mackey (2013) the relational stressor may trigger psychological distress among subordinates. Restubog, Scott, and Zagenczyk, (2011) explained that psychological distress indicates to a psychological state described by negative considerations and emotions identified with tension, or misery. In fact, when people are psychologically distressed, their own assets, as energy and time, are used to manage the unpleasant circumstance, Lapointe, Vandenberghe, and Panaccio (2011) and as a result, they may take part in avoidant coping policy to themselves from further asset loss. Relational pressure prompts the development of turnover goals legitimately too by implication by means of psychological distress (Saleem, Yusaf, Sarwar, Raziq, & Malik 2018).

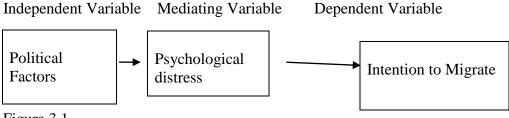


Figure 3.1 *The theoretical framework of the study* 

#### **DISCUSSION**

All the way through the literature, the researcher synthesizes prior literature to identify the dynamic of research on the intention to migrate. This literature review focused mainly on the effect of push factors (economic, social, and political) on the professional's intention to migrate. These push factors, like political show the condition of developing countries, where professional feels, low freedom of express and low social support. These driver force to the professional to develop the intention to migrate to developed countries for a high security. The analysis of the existing literature shows that prior researchers consider diverse types of antecedences to examine their association with professional's intention to migrate.

# **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this paper is to synthesize prior literature to identify the dynamic of research on the intention to migrate. This literature review concentrated mainly on the effect of political push factors on the professional's intention to migrate. The analysis of the existing literature indicates that prior researchers consider diverse types of antecedences to examine their relationship with the professional's intention to migrate.

However, the results of previous studies are varied for different antecedents, consequences, nature of the business, and context of the study. These inconclusive results highlight the need to study further to examine those relationships to magnify the understanding of the association of different antecedents and consequences of professional's intention to migrate.

#### LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper has some critical implications of assisting future researchers, academics, and managers to track the trend of professional's intention to migrate research as well as to provide a bird's eye view of the intention to migrate research. The researcher has time limitations; future researchers could overwhelm this problem by appropriately formed a schedule to make their research smoother. Moreover, in future studies, researchers also would use mediating variables such as psychological distress to mount the intention to migrate.

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