



The International Institute of Migration and Development

*Indian
Families –
Mediated
Migration
Trajectories*

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Working Paper

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1. Introduction

Humans have been on the move throughout history, and this movement has been an essential method of economic and social growth (McNeill, 1984). According to the world migration report (2022), the number of individuals migrating inside and across borders has consistently increased from 2010, outpacing worldwide population growth rates. International student migration (ISM) is part of a set of multinational migrations and is viewed as one part of a lifetime of mobility (Raghuram, 2013). Over the last few decades, student mobility has become a significant component of the global higher education environment. During the previous three decades international student migration has outpaced overall international mobility (OECD, 2019). Therefore student migration patterns are important in studying human capital development, which is one of the most important determinants of long-term socioeconomic growth. As UNESCO (2018) reports, the number of international students in higher education increased from 2 million in 1998 to 5 million in 2016. Students from India constitute a significant proportion of these. In 2019 around 219,000 Indians held study permits in Canada, accounting for 34 percent of the country's international student population. In 2018, the number of Indian students in Canada surpassed the number of Chinese students, with the Indian student population quadrupling from 48,765 in 2015 to 219,855 in 2019 (Kumar, 2021). During the 2019–20 academic year, Indian students contributed USD 7.6 billion to the US economy (PTI, 2020).

Indian students make a significant contribution to the global economy and play a role in the economic and social structures of other nations but little is known about what supports and hinders their migration, or how they affect migration outcomes and patterns. This review focuses on the role of the family in Indian student migrants' decision-making process. What does the influence of family mean in various settings, and how and to whom does it apply? We investigate some of the factors that affect students' decisions to relocate to Western nations for higher education, particularly students from India.

2. Family: The Decision Influencer

India's population of 1.2 billion people resides in 248.8 million households. The rural population is 833.1 million people, whereas the urban population is 377.1 million (Ministry of Home Affairs — Social Studies Division, 2011). In India, the family is a fundamental, coherent, and essential component of larger social systems. In a huge and culturally varied country like India, families come in a variety of shapes and sizes, depending on class, ethnicity, and personal preferences (Tata Institute of Social Sciences – TISS, 1993). The family is the most fundamental and essential component of Indian society due to its involvement in the development of human capital resources including education, training, intellect, skills, and health as well as its influence over individual, domestic, and communal behaviour. (Sriram, 1993).

There is an increasing trend of migration among the Indian middle class, with at least one family member from each family migrating for study or work (Baas, 2010). As a consequence of prior migrations, most members of the Indian middle class already know someone who has lived abroad and achieved economic success. As a result, they tend to believe that migration will improve one's quality of life. One of the key drivers of

international student mobility in primary source countries like China, India, and Vietnam is the growing affluence and size of middle-class families (Tran, 2015). In these countries, a family's reputation, status, and income are tied to their children's achievements. This is why many Asian middle-class families try to send their children overseas to be educated (Huang & Yeoh, 2005). Charlier and Croché (2010) claim that maintaining or enhancing social class and cultural capital is one of the major reasons families help their members relocate.

For those who migrate as students, families play a crucial role in their decision making (AIEF, 1997; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Research has investigated variables that underpin migrant decision making (Aslany et al., 2021; Carling, 2014; de Haas, 2010). Studies span a wide range of issues and chronologies, and overlapping disciplines and techniques—from historical to sociological and anthropological approaches. The socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of the family and their belief in the essential values of overseas study and proficiency in language influence the choice to migrate and the decision to study abroad. Student mobility is not a response to “global forces,” rather it is attached to family and social expectations (Pimpa, 2005).

The family has two kinds of effects on students' decision making: guidance/advice and financial assistance (Defauw et al., 2018; Kainuwa, Binti, and Yusuf, 2013). Fleischer's (2007) study on the decision-making process for migration shows that the fundamental decision to migrate is made by the extended family who invests in the migration of young people as an investment in human capital, with expectations of certain obligations in return. The costs and benefits of the current situation and the anticipated future are analyzed before the individual migrates (Sjaastad, 1962). Thus, families support migration because they consider it beneficial for the families rather than for the individual.

The “human capital perspective” brings in the same idea that the family analyzes both monetary and nonmonetary costs and benefits before the migration of the individual takes place (Sjaastad, 1962). Some see it as putting their money and resources into a foreign country (UN, World Youth Report, 2013). A study on families' impact on migration (Charlier and Croché, 2010) discovered that one of the key motives for families to assist their members to relocate is to keep their societal relevance, which Waters (2006) also referred to as social class and cultural capital.

Family-mediated transnational migration is distinguished from other states and market-mediated equivalents by the fact that movement with the assistance and direction of the family is more connected with emotional mobilization (Xiang and Lindquist, 2014). Studying abroad is frequently presented in mainstream Indian media as a more elite kind of educational consumption and a matter of personal preference, despite the marketization of India's higher education system and the marketing of foreign student migration. In order to address the issue of the country's unequal distribution of educational resources, the state has made conscious efforts to loosen its control over transnational student mobility. This is reflected in the self-funded study abroad market in India and the unequal distribution of educational resources. (Mukundan, 2020; Muraleedharan, 2021).

Members who move as a result of family-mediated migration need to deal with emotions between families and work (Hu, Xu, & Tu, 2020). Family ties have always been a significant influence on how individuals behave and are motivated to move around. The line between an individual and an institution is blurred in this process because of the emotional burden that relates to family dynamics and the job's financial security. When the emotional attachment to the family is strong, the likelihood of migrating abroad is

expected to decrease (Jokela, 2009; Polek et al., 2011). This was especially true during the pandemic when families persuaded their children to choose their homeland for higher education, as we discuss later.

For Asian parents, migration destination choices are influenced more by factors grounded in cultural, political, and socioeconomic efficiency (Bodycott, 2009). Conklin and Dailey (1981) explained that there is a direct relationship between the increased level of parental encouragement and the motivation for students to attend university. Parental financial support was of particular importance for students who decide to study abroad (AIEF, 1997). The academic emphasis that Indian parents place on their children's academic performance works as a powerful motivator for Indian youngsters to pursue higher educational and professional goals. In western society, middle-class children from a young age often expect their parents' investment in their education but in Indian culture, children will owe their parents the financial assistance they receive (Sarma, 2014). Family motivation and encouragement are critical for pursuing higher education overseas. Parents give continual assistance to their children in both academic and non-academic areas. According to one study, personal and family ambitions are linked (Tang, Kim, & Haviland, 2013).

The desire for economic independence plays a significant role in the desire to migrate overseas (Ashby, 2010; Yakovlev and Steinkopf, 2014). Students in emerging and developing countries are more optimistic than the publics in established economies about the future. Majorities throughout the world are ready to accept some inequality in order to have a free market economy, despite the fact that the majority of students are highly worried about the gap between the affluent and the poor in their own nation. The more students prefer free markets, the more likely they are to migrate to other nations (Papapanagos & Sanfey, 2001). The family uses its financial capital to obtain the desired institutionalized capital in their native nation to provide their children with the opportunity to receive a western university education and thereby improve the family's social position. Family plays a crucial role and leverages its capacity to focus on problem-solving, its ability to act, its speed of decision-making, the level of knowledge that organizations have, and its adaptability which can be said as institutionalized capital. (Tran, 2015; Zanker and Hennessey, 2021).

"Positional" and "transformative" investments are two types of investments that affect students' decisions to pursue a western education (Pyvis and Chapman, 2007). Positional investment refers to how students are encouraged to pursue foreign education as a method of achieving greater social status and career prospects and give them a competitive edge. The transformational investment gives individuals the opportunity to broaden their cultural, professional, and personal horizons.

Personal loans, investment costs and returns, and other variables affect most Indians' decisions on where to study and relocate (Choudaha, Chang, & Kono, 2013). Although, both structural (social, political, or cultural environment) and interpersonal variables (family ties, personal and emotional problems) affect the decision to stay in the host nation, friends and family tend to encourage the individual to return to their home country (Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Jackson et al. 2005). Individual and structural elements are intertwined: a person's experiences shape how they react to structural influences (Hazen & Alberts, 2006)

Migrant students' emotional ties to their parents and siblings add an emotional dimension to decision making. Individuals migrate because of a strong sense of commitment to their families and their financial well-being (Mai & King, 2009). Emotional

and practical obligations associated with the family also have a major role to play in influencing post-study decisions (Monro, 2004). The impact of social networks on student international migration decisions differs depending on the way they navigate the preference of the country.. Students whose relatives and acquaintances have been or are presently mobile have particular notions of education migration, especially if the relative is a close tie. Some families invest in the migrant's successful future without expecting any returns (King & Sondhi, 2016).

3. Migration's Trajectory

Families and friends have a significant influence on migration decisions, but some researchers (West & Noden, 2002) argue that migration is more personal — that people migrate for a variety of reasons, including better work conditions, exposure to the host country's culture, language improvement, adventure and travel experiences, escaping from certain situations, financial incentives, and so on. Expecting high living standards (Geddie, 2013; Skachkova, 2007), a desire for professional advancement and opportunities (Asis and Battistella, 2013), better-quality institutions in the host country (Fitzgerald, Leblang, & Teets, 2014), and the socio-cultural background prevailing abroad will be the major factors motivating them to migrate (Epstein & Gang, 2010).

International students are neither immigrants nor self-initiated expatriates, but they are considered prospective self-initiated expatriates because they may return to the home country or remain in the host country after studies (Tamburri, 2013). Tung (1998) points out that diverse forms of socializing with host country citizens can be expanded to include students studying abroad who consider themselves self-expatriates. These people are different from assigned expatriates in that they actively seek for abroad postings rather than waiting for their company to assign them one. This may be the result of a variety of factors, including the absence of numerous employment opportunities in the country of origin and a strong desire to go abroad or reside in the host country. The host nations support international student mobility because students are prospective skilled labourers. And because international students can contribute to the country's skilled labour force and economic growth, host nations tend to encourage and welcome students more than they encourage other immigrants (Al Ariss, 2010).

Students' career perceptions are a factor in deciding whether to stay in the host country or return to the home country (Hall, 2004). Studying abroad is often a beneficial turning point in a student's career since it raises their likelihood of becoming a skilled migrant in the future (Vertovec, 2002). Host countries benefit from international student migration primarily through the revenue generated from fee-paying international students. The country's labour market benefits when students remain after their studies. But student migration from the origin country is a disadvantage for the sending country because it contributes to the depletion of already-scarce labour and human resources (Gribble, 2008). Developed countries' spending on education depends on their quality of education and the reputation of their higher education systems (Caruso & de Wit, 2015; Ackers, 2005). The host country's institutional social capital significantly increases students' job prospects (Waters & Leung, 2013). Because receiving countries train migrants as skilled professionals who later contribute to their new country's social and human capital (Nunn & Price, 2005) these developments are considered to be a significant loss to the sending country.

An individual's networks in the host country reduce their expenses and raise the advantages of migration (Massey, 1990). Along with other traditional reasons such as post-study work rights, graduate employment, university rankings, and lifestyle aspects, students' networks have a substantial effect on their decisions to study abroad. One of the principal motivations for international education is employability. The students' networks in the host country can help them acquire a job (although it may not be connected to their educational background and they can still face precarity). The Indian business diaspora in the host country is a prime source for Indian students who seek employment opportunities (Deutchar, 2021). The availability of employment opportunities in the host country compared with the predicted ease of finding a job in the home country will have a strong effect on students' decisions (Baruch, 2004).

Post-study employment opportunities for overseas graduates are an important determinant in their choice of destination to study (IDP Education, 2014). Baruch, Budhwar, and Khatri (2007) found that student loans are a major reason for students to remain in the host country initially. Some of these young people's paths are structurally pulling them towards precarious futures, such as working as lower skilled labour for the IT industry, made possible by the convergence of the debts they owe, the university's neoliberal agenda profiting from their migration, and the potentially exploitative labour practices that take advantage of these circumstances. The satisfaction level that the individual gets from their studies abroad and related activities will influence the emotional part of the decision making as well. The social support that students get in the host country is a major factor that influences their decision to return or stay (Muraleedharan, 2021).

Social networking site users can acquire a vast number of friends and followers who can function as bridges for the accumulation of social capital and information about the different destinations, along with their advantages and downsides, so that student mobility can proceed (Steinfeld, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008). Social media can influence mobility in different domains (Amaro, Duarte, & Henriques, 2016; Tran et al, 2021). Before leaving home, the individual will search for the feedback of people who have travelled for study or work. "Family migration capital" or the positive representations of migration experiences by relatives or friends can influence the migration intentions of students which eventually reduces the nonpecuniary costs of migration (Plopeanu et al., 2018). A known individual's migration experiences will boost favourable sentiments about migration and are considered less risky from the parents' point of view. Parents view such positive overseas experiences as rewarding and enriching (Ivlevs & King, 2012).

Because host nations want to attract international students, they improve the quality of their educational systems through practical approach and get access to the advantages of human capital acquired through this process. Thus one of the key motivators for students to study abroad is the difference in educational quality between a foreign degree and a local one (Szelenyi, 2006). Many Indians choose to study abroad because their home nation lacks excellent institutions, and there is intense rivalry for limited places among the existing institutes. Because only a few of the universities provide quality education it is very challenging to secure admissions to these universities (Mukherjee & Chanda, 2012). In highly populated nations like India, the educational industry is extremely competitive as a result of the dearth of resources for high-quality education and career prospects (Sarma, 2014). Because of this competition and because India lags in various fields of expertise such as science, technology and medicine People travel to countries that can provide them with the fundamentals for developing their

knowledge and talents. Student migrants receive suitable training throughout their further education, and their networks in the host nation expand over time, allowing them to work with prominent individuals and increase their chances of being established in the global system (Vasudevan, 2018).

In Indian culture, certain vocations like nursing are considered undesirable, yet in Western society, those professions are well-paid positions. People who have worked in other countries have a better chance of finding jobs in their own country (Rai, 2005). With international experience (Tung & Lazarova, 2006) the likelihood of finding a job in the host or home country influences the students' choices about their future career prospects (Rauch, 1991).

4. Associated Responsibilities: Adaptation and Duties to Home

One of international students' main responsibilities in the host institution is to adapt to and assimilate into Western academia (Ryan & Viète, 2009). Students' have to adapt to the new culture in order to improve performance and effectiveness (Shay & Baack, 2004), but also they must cope with cultural differences such as language, conventions, norms, and traditions, which aid in social integration, the building of networks and relationships, and the search for career prospects (Rajani, Ng, & Groutsis, 2018). Their links to their families, social networks, and socialisation processes, such as their capacity to participate in academic and social activities, are crucial when students have cultural difficulties when transitioning from one culture to another. (Hercog & Van de Laar, 2017).

One of the most complicated and diversified migration histories may be found in India. Indian students appear to experience smaller cultural challenges in English-speaking host countries (Budhwar, 2003) than other international students do. For example, Indian students have more chances of staying in the host country than students from China. This trend may be influenced by the impact of the "British Raj" on Indians (Oomen, 1989). During India's colonial era itself, emigration to the United Kingdom and Northern America began. The anglophone link frequently caused a rise in the number of Indians, which benefited the students. The cultures of the home and host countries differ, and this has a significant impact on international students' decisions. Because of the strong cultural gap (Ronen & Shenkar, 1985; Warner, 2013) between the Far East and the West, people from the Far East find it more difficult to adjust to Western host countries than people from western-based countries. This influences people from the Far East to return to their origin country (Giacobbe-Miller et al., 2003). A sense of belonging to one's home country's culture is critical for increasing the exchange value of intercultural capital in transnational mobility. In other terms, a transnational social field is the actual or virtual area that encloses the social interactions and behaviours that span national boundaries. Their intercultural ties are special due to the nature of their situation as overseas students. Due to their migration to a different nation, they are exposed to less family, cultural, and social support. (Tran & Vu, 2017).

Transnational education mobility and its associated responsibilities improve international students' internal sense of attachment to their home country. They have to perceive and develop new responsibilities toward both their home and host countries whereas domestic students lack this opportunity. International students represent their home country overseas. Students self-position their connection with their homeland through their identity by respectfully representing their motherland's identity through their behaviour and social responsibilities in the host country. Some associate their

responsibility with their transnational education's future outcomes in their home country (Mukundan, 2020). Students extend their feeling of duty beyond their own nation to the host country as well, blending in with the local population, following local norms, and acculturating themselves to the local culture. They also have interpersonal obligations — duties to the social networks developed as a result of their transnational mobility experience. They believe they are accountable for treating other members with respect and consideration, as well as being honest and aiding others when feasible (Tran & Vu, 2016). The primary barriers to overseas students' social integration are cultural differences and a lack of institutional assistance (Hail, 2015; Wei et al, 2007).

5. The Pandemic's Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the intricate interplay of migratory infrastructures, which are made up of complex interactions among institutional, regulatory, commercial, social, and technical elements that influence international educational mobility (Ma, 2020). International students were trapped in their host nations, unable to pursue their educational dreams (Hu, Xu, & Tu, 2020). When governments closed their borders and prohibited international flights to other countries to combat the virus and implemented city-wide lockdowns, the factors that influenced the migration decisions and destinations also changed — especially health security and safety as priorities in decision making to move abroad (Menon & Vadekekat, 2021). The pandemic will have a difficult impact on the economies of nations that rely on the tuition payments of overseas students (Marginson, 2020).

Prejudice associated with COVID-19 exacerbated the powerlessness of Asian students in western nations (Ma & Zhan, 2022; Tan, 2020). Reports of such experiences influence the future educational mobility plans of prospective students (Mok, 2020). Study programs relocated to online platforms and student exchange programs and summer schools have been discontinued or postponed. As international students become a scarce resource in the international education sector because of the pandemic, competition among host countries will increase and the rate of recovery from the pandemic and the post-pandemic governance will be major influencing factors for students choosing their destination to study (Goris, 2020).

While the pandemic will have a significant influence on international student mobility, demand will not fall as precipitously as predicted because a large number of young people in the higher education age groups remain interested in mobility. These students will be in high demand as they become a crucial source of talent and revenue (Rajan & Cherian 2020; Brooks et al., 2021). Before the pandemic, international institutions had already begun to shift patterns in teaching and learning scenarios by providing online courses and bringing foreign qualifications into local settings through online networks and collaborating with corporate organizations in India. As a result, the abrupt shift from offline to online classes was not difficult to implement, even if it was hampered by poor network connections and other related challenges (Mercado, 2020).

In the post pandemic scenario, the accessibility restrictions due to limited mobility might recede, but students still lack in-person cultural exposure and social well-being in the host country (Rajan and Cherian, 2020). Online education dramatically reduces students' opportunities to access international experiences. International students have also faced shortages in part-time employment opportunities which resulted in adverse financial conditions for them (Alaklabi et al., 2021). Financial burdens and health concerns

coupled with homesickness have made international students anxious and frustrated (Aristovnik et al., 2020). Schulman (2020) postulate that the pandemic forced families to pressure their children to pursue studies in their homeland or countries where education is more reasonably priced.

6. Conclusion

Families play a crucial role in researching the decision-making process regarding foreign education, which, as prior research has demonstrated, combines the emotional trappings of familial goals and expectations, investment prudence, and future of their children (Belousova, 2018; Waters, 2003). Families are both a source of hope and a protective barrier in the most vulnerable conditions, even during the pandemic (Hu et al., 2020). Although the markets catering to foreign students have evolved significantly, decision making regarding student migration is essentially still a family affair. International students' families and countries of origin view them as investments, while receiving countries see them as resource extraction sources. Despite students' significant contributions, little attention is paid to the complexities of students' decision-making process or their families' involvement. The regulations over international student mobility are constantly changing so prior study findings must be reviewed to reflect and accommodate the newer circumstances.

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