The Influence of Women Workers' Decisions to Migrate Abroad After the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to find out the factors that influence the decision of women workers after the Covid-19 pandemic to migrate abroad to increase household/family income and find out other causes outside of the research variables that make the decisions of women workers. The object of this research is female workers who have been migrant workers or who have never been migrant workers in East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province. This study uses primary data, namely questionnaires and in-depth interviews as well as secondary data obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of West Nusa Tenggara Province. The research method used is a quantitative approach with Binary Logistics analysis tools. The results of the analysis show that age, number of children, and former TKW affect a person's chances of deciding to become a TKW to migrate abroad, but the level of education does not affect the decision to migrate.

Keywords: Migrant Women Workforce, Migration, Binary Logistic Analysis
JEL Classification: J61, I25, R2, D1

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as a developing country, in its development process is not free from various problems and obstacles. As for one of the obstacles, namely in the field of population and employment. Population growth is one of the demographic factors that have a direct impact on the growth in the number of workers and causes problems in the provision of jobs for the workforce. For this reason, innovation, creativity and careful policy planning are needed, to be able to encourage the creation of job opportunities (Fadliyanti, Rois and Mulawiani, 2019). When job opportunities and employment opportunities cannot accommodate the workforce, then one of the solutions taken by the workforce is to migrate.

The global labour market has been a major driver of population migration in this decade. Migration is the result of responses to driving factors related to environmental, technological-

economic, political-institutional and sociocultural structures (Pandey, 2021). International migration is one solution that is often decided by job seekers when job opportunities are decreasing due to the high size of the labour force. International migration is the movement of a person across national borders, intending to stay at a destination for a certain time and purpose abroad (Fleury, 2016).

At a time when the Covid-19 pandemic was occurring throughout the world, the governments of countries in the Asia and Pacific region made policies to close their territories and implemented massive social restrictions. This has consequences in the form of disruptions to all economic and social activities and has implications for disruption to the economy as a whole. One of the impacts is a disruption to the labour market and decreased worker income in all regions (de Haan, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic is one of the biggest challenges in the 21st century, which has an impact on public health which in turn has economic, social and structural inequalities which greatly affect the workforce, especially migrant workers (de Haan, 2020; Ansar, 2023).

The biggest impact that must be faced by migrant workers is unilateral termination of employment, wages that are not paid by employers, up to returning to their place of origin. Most of the migrant workers are trapped abroad due to restrictions on access to and from the country, so they have to face conditions of limited food stocks and are under pressure. This does not only happen to migrant workers abroad but also to migrant workers who have returned to their respective areas (Rahmawati and Kamilah, 2020). When the pandemic occurred, the inflow of migrant workers decreased, which increased the unemployment rate. In addition, there are fewer permits to work for migrant workers in destination countries (Ra, 2011). This had quite a big impact on women, both during the pandemic and during the recovery period from the outbreak. This impact will last longer for female workers compared to men, this condition is due

to the experience they already have in the labour market (Alon *et al.*, 2020).

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the involvement of women in supporting the family economy. The entry of women into the workforce is a result of the process in which women initially see and learn about the influence of a mother's work on their children, so that the desire to work also arises, which in turn increases participation in the female workforce (Fogli *et al.*, 2008). In general, women in rural areas, especially among the lower middle class, are more likely to be involved in economic activities, to support household life. They try to improve the family economy even by leaving the village to look for work. Women's contribution to their family/household income can raise their family's social and economic status. However, limited skills and mastery of technology are barriers to getting a job. By migrating women can increase human resources, women's self-esteem, and the value of women in their families and communities (Fleury, 2016). In conditions of increasing globalization, women are

required to be able to compete, so those with limited abilities have the potential to be left out in the world of work.

International migration is one of the strategies for making a living in saving the family economy for both single and married women. The opening of opportunities to become informal workers abroad causes the participation rate of women in labour migration to increase. Marital status is also very important in determining rural women's migration decisions. that the majority of female migrants are unmarried and in this case, they prove that married status has a negative influence on migration decisions (Zhu, 2002). The participation rate of married women in the labour market is highly dependent on family factors, responsibility for taking care of the house and caring for children. Such conditions become obstacles in making work decisions. The family's economic situation and education level influence a woman's decision to work. In addition, the different wage levels between regions or even countries, as previously

mentioned, encourage migration to get jobs that pay higher wages.

The relationship between migration and the labour market can be shown using the migration model *Harris-Todaro* which states that migration flows occur due to differences in income conditions (expectations of income to be received) between regions of origin and regions' objectives. Harris-Todaro shows that an economically rational migration model can directly have a relationship to benefits or cost benefits. Migration decisions depend on the difference between the expected income in the area of destination and the actual income in the area of origin (Todaro and Smith, 2006).

Based on this model, migrant workers need to weigh the labour market opportunities that exist in their origin and destination areas. Then they can determine the option that provides the maximum expected profit (*expected gains*). Bahns (2005) applied the Harris-Todaro model which yielded the result that this wage inequality is the motivation for workers to move.

In the context of international migration, Massey *et al.*, (1993) state that international migration is caused by geographical differences in the demand for and supply of labour. Countries with a lot of domestic labour as capital have a low market wage balance, while countries with little domestic labour as capital are characterized by high market wages. As a result of this wage differential, workers migrate from low-wage to high-wage countries, reducing the supply of labour and increasing wages in poor countries as the supply of labour increases and wages fall.

Theory*The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM)* is a theory that emerged as a response to Neoclassical theory which was rigid in explaining the relationship between migration and development. Neoclassical economics and NELM suggest that there are different motivations for international migration (Abreu, 2012). Neo-Classical assumes that people move abroad permanently to maximize lifetime income whereas NELM assumes they leave temporarily to overcome market

shortages at home. As a result, the two models result in very different conceptualizations of return migration (Constant and Massey, 2002). Emigration decisions are not made at the individual level but across important human groups, such as families or households. Members of this group act together, not only to maximize their income but also to minimize their risks and overcome the limitations that occur as a consequence of national market failures, not necessarily in the labour market (Porumbescu, 2015). Besides that, neo-classical economists also explained that a person migrates permanently to increase and maximize their wages in the receiving country, migrating back is seen as a failure, if it is done with compulsion. On the other hand, from the point of view of the NELM that a person migrates temporarily to achieve their goals or targets in the receiving country, as a prerequisite for returning home, return migration is seen as a success story, if not a logical outcome (Abreu, 2010)

Davis and Winters, (2001) explained that the decision to become a migrant worker is a household decision and not an individual decision. It is hoped that families sent as migrant workers can send remittances to their families. The hope of obtaining a higher level of income is one of the impetus for allowing families to become migrant workers. This theory explains migration as a livelihood strategy in differentiating family income as labour and a job that attracts and emphasizes *remittance*, as well as looking at how to minimize risk in migration decisions when income differences occur in conditions that are not supposed to migrate.

From a gender perspective, the Equilibrium theory is a theory of balance that emphasizes the concept of partnership and harmony in working together for both men and women. This theory found that women engage in visual interactions compared to men (Aiello, 1972). Abdulloev, Gang, and Yun (2014) in their research on migration, education, and the gender gap in labour participation. Women wanting to work often face more hurdles than men, as is the case in Tajikistan where there is a large gender

gap in labor force participation. There are 2 (two) factors, namely international migration and education in the decision on labour force participation and the gender gap. The results show that education and migration have a significant relationship with the gender gap in labour force participation in Tajikistan. Women gain greater access to education and men increase their migration abroad contributing to reducing the gender gap.

Bélanger and Rahman (2013) researched migrant women workers in Bangladesh. In 2010 all unskilled migrant workers were from Bangladesh where women accounted for less than 3%. The very low proportion of women is caused by the many socio-cultural, religious and political barriers faced by women migrant workers. Based on 23 in-depth interviews collected in 2009 in Bangladesh with former migrant domestic workers working in the Gulf region, the result is that women actively negotiate these barriers before going abroad and after returning. Using a micro-sociological perspective on gender and family relations, the results of this study show that depending on women's family situation and relationships, they are more or less at risk of suffering from stigma in the pre-departure and return stages of non-permanent labour migration. The findings of this research show how international migration of women can disrupt the patriarchal gender order, but can also serve to further subordinate women once they return home.

Pandey (2021) studies the process of re-migration of immigrants from Denmark. The result is that migrant success and proper labour market integration at the destination are significant factors influencing return migration. Lack of success and inadequate labour market integration will increase return migration. Socio-economic conditions in the country of origin, age at entry of migration, level of education and family ties have a significant influence on migration decisions.

Mannan and Fredericks (2015) analyzed the relationship between the head of a migrant household and the determinants of remittances in 10 (ten)

households receiving remittances in rural Bangladesh. Using regression analysis it was found that the relationship between the head of the household and migrant workers is a strong determinant of remittances as well as other variables. In addition, the relationship between the head of the household and migrant workers, such as fathers, mothers, brothers and wives, also has different influencing factors. The findings from this study indicate that the age, household income, land and marital status of migrant workers are closely related to the father, wife and mother of the respective household heads.

West Nusa Tenggara Province is one of the largest provinces sending migrant workers abroad. At the end of 2021, remittances of IDR 394,502 billion were recorded. The value of this remittance is sent by workers from various placements outside countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, South Korea, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore. Among the 10 regencies and cities in the province of NTB, East Lombok district provides the largest contribution in

sending migrant workers. However, when the Covid-19 pandemic occurred, many workers returned to their areas of origin and lost their jobs. During the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the groups that was negatively affected was migrant workers. The biggest impact is job loss in destination countries because the Covid-19 pandemic has affected economic activity in various countries.

At this time, after the Covid-19 pandemic, of course, it is not easy for migrant workers to improve their economic conditions in their areas of origin. Becoming a migrant worker again may be an option to improve the economic conditions of the family. Several labour-receiving countries have started to open up opportunities for migrant workers in the informal sector. The decisions to be made by the labour force or migrant workers who have returned to their place of origin, especially female workers, depend on their current social and economic conditions. For this reason, it is necessary to know the factors that make up the decision of female workers to return to migrate abroad.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with analytical tools using analysis Binary Logistic by using primary data. Data analysis technique using binary logistics which is used to determine the effect of one or more independent variables on one dependent variable with the condition that the dependent variable must be a dummy variable.

The research location is in East Lombok district with a total of 5 (five) sub-districts with the largest population of the 20 sub-districts in the district, namely Sikur, Aikmel, Masbagik, Sakra and Pringgabaya sub-districts.

The sampling method is done by Purposive Sampling. For the five sub-districts studied, 1-2 villages were taken each with the consideration that they could represent respondents from villages in each sub-district. The total sample taken was 148 married respondents from the entire female workforce population, whether or not they had been migrant workers.

Then the equation of Binary Logistic model, with variable measurements as follows:

$$Pr(TKW_i = 1) = 1/(1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 UTK_i + \beta_2 PD_i + \beta_3 JMA_i + \beta_4 MTKW_i + \varepsilon_i)})$$

The definition of independent variables can be explained in the following table:

1. TKW is the respondent's decision to become a migrant woman worker (if 1: to be a migrant woman worker; 0: not to be a migrant woman worker).

2. UTK is the age of the respondent

3. PDD is the last education level of the respondent (1 if not attending school/last education is SD; 2 if the last education is SMP; 3 if the last education level is SMA and 4 if the education level is above SMA (D1, D2, D3, D4, S1, S2, S3).

4. JMA is the number of family dependents, namely the number of family members who are borne by female workers including husbands, children or other families who live in the respondent's house.

5. MTKW is a variable *dummy* respondent who has previously or

has never been migrant worker (if 1: have been migrant workers; 0: have never been migrant workers).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of data analysis using Stata 17, the test results obtained are pseudo-R^2 values is 0.2553. Parameter estimation results can be seen as follows:

Table 1. Logistic Regression Results

Variable	Coefficient	S.E
Age (UTK)	-0.0922712**	0.0297181
Education (PDD)		
2	1.183945	0.8610163
3	1.307121	0.8655773
4	0.961413	0.8985039
Number of Children (JMA)	0.4585105**	0.1539613
Former Migrant TKW (MTKW)		
1	2.062733***	0.4698355
constant	0.076399	1.313578
Obs	148	
Prob>who²	0.0000	
Pseudo R²	0.2553	

***, **, and * significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% significance level

Data Source: Processed, 2023

After analyzing the results of the logistic analysis, the analysis is carried out multiplier effect to be directly interpreted as a probability value. We use the analysis multiplier effect particularly average marginal effect which results as follows:

Table 2. Marginal Effect

Variable	dy/dx	S.E
Age (UTK)	-0.014248***	0.0040597
Education (PDD)		
2	0.1947633	0.1415627
3	0.2130121	0.1413659
4	0.1605159	0.1491602
Number of Children (JMA)	0.0708004***	0.021183
Former Migrant TKW (MTKW)		
1	0.3475173***	0.0683673

***, **, and * significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% significance level

Source: Processed   Data,   2023

a. The Influence of the Decision to be a Migrant Female Workforce on the Age of the Female Workforce

From the results of this data processing, it can be seen that the older the woman is, the lower the probability of becoming a migrant worker about 1.4%. The results of this study are following Pandey (2021) who states that the decision to become a migrant worker is again influenced by socio-economic conditions in the country of origin, age when they become migrant workers, level of education and family ties have a significant effect on migration decisions.

De and Ratha, (2012) in their research said that female workers who are on average young have a low level of education, this is what triggers them to want a change in a better standard of living. Age is not a barrier for married women to work overseas. Apart from the economic demands of the family, this is also caused by the large demand for workers from the destination country and the ease of administration of departure to the destination country. The minimum age to become an Indonesian worker is 21 years, and the minimum education level is Junior High School (SMP). However, in reality,

many women under the age of 21 go on to become migrant workers.

Carletto *et al.*, (2006) suggested that international migration decisions are influenced by household characteristics such as assets, land ownership and demographic composition. The expectation factor that is owned by young women tends to be higher. This hope is due to the success of several women who go to become migrant workers, giving rise to their desire to try their luck overseas. The young age generally provides many opportunities in making decisions as a migrant worker. With the support of their parents, husband or family, it is easy for women at a young age to become migrant workers. Young women are more interested in becoming migrant workers than going to school.

b. The Influence of the Decision to Become a Migrant Female Workforce on the Education of the Female Workforce

Women with recent education (PDD) in junior high school, senior high school and above high school when compared to those who do not attend school/elementary school do not have a significant difference in the decision to become a migrant worker. This is inversely proportional to the results of research conducted by Abdulloev, Gang, and Yun (2014) researching Migration, Education, and the gender gap in labour participation. Women wanting to work often face more hurdles than men, and there is a large gender gap in labour force participation. The results of this study indicate that education and migration have a significant relationship with the gender gap in labour force participation. This difference is due to differences in culture and culture of the people in East Lombok district, education is not important for women in the area. This is in accordance with data from the Central Statistics Agency (2022) which shows that on average women in East Lombok have primary education, which is only 33.51 per cent.

c. The Influence of the Decision to Become Migrant Women Workers on the Number of Children

The marginal effect analysis shows that that the higher the number of children, the higher the chance for a woman to become a migrant worker, which is 7.08%. These results are in accordance with research conducted by Cox and Ureta (2003) who stated that the number of children included in the household characteristics influenced the decision to migrate abroad. An increase in the number of dependents in the family will also increase expenses. Expenditure is increasing but income is not increasing forcing women workers to seek greater income.

d. The Influence of the Decision to Become Migrant Women Workers Again on Former Migrant Women Workers

Meanwhile, former migrant woman worker abroad when compared to those who have never been migrant workers have a 34.7% greater probability of becoming migrant woman worker abroad. In Harris and Todaro's theory, it is stated that migration decisions depend on the difference between the expected income in the destination area and the actual income in the area of origin. This is in line with Bahns (2005) which applied the Harris Todaro model for rural-to-urban migration in developing countries. The main reason for migration from rural to urban areas is the imbalance between real wages in rural and urban areas. Where the decision to re-enter rural agriculture or the industrial and service sectors is unbalanced. And it is this wage inequality that motivates rural workers to move to cities. Likewise, the decision of former female migrant workers to return to work abroad has a high chance compared to female workers who have never migrated abroad. This condition is caused by the wages earned in the destination country, which are greater than the wages earned in the region of origin.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that age, number of children, and former migrant worker influence the probability of a woman becoming a migrant worker. However, the variable level of education does not influence the decision of woman workers to migrate abroad after the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Suggestion

From the results of this study, several suggestions can be given:

1. Factors such as age, number of children, and former migrant workers need to be of concern to all *stakeholder* policymakers who have an interest in the decision of women to migrate abroad.

2. There are several implications for the results of this study. The younger a woman's age will increase the potential to become a migrant worker, this tends to lead to a low level of education. TKW has the potential to work not as skilled workers. The government needs to encourage them to also work as skilled workers.

3. Factors in the decision of woman worker to migrate abroad need to be further investigated. Several demographic variables need to be taken into consideration, such as status in the family, such as being the head of the household or being the backbone of the family. These variables should be considered to influence women's decisions to choose to work abroad.

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