



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Migration: An Indian Scenario

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Abstract: This article is an attempt to analyse the motivations and intentions of international student migrants from India. The methodology of literature review is employed for this study. For this the most important and relevant articles which deals with the subject of international student migration from India are reviewed. Important theoretical and conceptual frameworks applied in the studies are examined. The important findings from the studies are elaborately discussed and critically analysed. The major gaps and limitations of the studies are also pointed out. The scope and directions for future research are also being discussed.

Index Terms - Student migration, International education, Motivations for migration, Intentions of student migrants

I. INTRODUCTION

International student migration/mobility (ISM) can be defined as the paradigm that deals with the various aspects regarding the movement of individuals from their native country to foreign country for the purpose of study. International student migration was often considered as a marginal component in the grand arena of migration studies. Most of the academicians who worked in the field of migration studies were concentrated on analysing the dynamics between migration and employment. Despite the rising number of international students year by year the subject of international student migration did not receive adequate attention from academic community. But now academic community is giving more attention to the dynamics of international student migration. Walters and Brooks (2010) point out that international education has shifted from a topic of peripheral and peculiar interest among academics, practitioners, and policy makers to occupy the centre stage of many contemporary debates. Thus international student migration has emerged as an important sub-field of migration studies. An international student refers to an individual who has left his/her country of origin and moved to another country for gaining tertiary education. There are significant studies in the global level which try to unearth the dynamics of international student migration. Lewis (1995), Carlson (2013), Geddie (2013), Raghuram (2013) and Walters (2006) are some important studies which gave contributions to the field of international student migration in global level. There are also studies, highlighting on the specific components and dimensions of international student migration have also emerged. In these studies special focus is given to each specific dimension of international student migration like the academic experience of international students, cultural interactions, economic aspect and so on. Researchers are also interested in focussing on the factors that motivates students to study abroad. Fiendlay and King (2010) have analysed the motivations of U.K. students to go abroad. Turcan (2017) studied on the motivations of students from Moldova to choose international education. Nghia (2019) have tried to analyse the motivations of Vietnamese students to go abroad. These studies tried to systematically analyse and delineate those motivational factors which drive the students to pursue international education. According to

UNESCO Global education monitoring report 2020 India is the second largest source of international students after china. The report also points out that India has the fastest growing international student population in the world. According to the report of the central ministry of education government of India shows that in the year 2018-19 there were 620156 Indian students studying abroad. They are mainly concentrated in four countries- U.S.A., Australia, U.K., Canada and New Zealand. Besides these nations , china, Germany, Netherlands and countries in Eastern Europe are also emerging as favourite destinations of Indian students. According to a study conducted by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, in terms of capital outflow these expatriate students cost India an estimated 10 billion U.S. dollar annually (Pande, 2016). In this context the international student migration from India should have been an important concern for our policy makers and academics. Policy makers consider international student migration as an irrelevant matter which has no domestic implications. Academic community has also shown an indifferent attitude towards international student migration from India. As a result of this the studies on this subject are very scarce and inadequate. The apathy of researchers to international student migration from India is being exposed when it is compared to the researches done in the employment related migration from India. Still there are some important studies that tried to contextualize international student migration from India. Pande (2016), Kaur (2019), Singh (2011), Hawthorne (2014) are significant studies. This article attempt to analyse the motivations and intentions of international Indian students by reviewing 6 most relevant and important studies. The decision to study abroad is a very decisive step in the life of the student and his/her family. As Pirgaru and Turcan (2017) point out the decision to study abroad is not only a complex decision making process a student goes through but at the same time is among the most significant and expensive initiative a student undertakes. They also adds that it is a decision driven by a series of push and pull factors as well as internal, personal and aspirational qualities. (Pirgaru and Turcan, 2017). In order to understand the reasons behind pursuing international education it becomes necessary to trace out the motivations and intentions of students. The motivating factors for international education are very diverse and interconnected. There are also various social, political, familial and individual factors which give shape to the motivations and intentions of the individual to study abroad. Only a careful analysis can trace out the motivations and intentions that drive Indians to pursue foreign education.

II. METHODOLOGY

The important methodology used for this study is review of literature. For this study, six most relevant and important studies dealing with international student migration in the context of India are being reviewed. These researches were selected through a thorough and systematic of reading literature in which several articles related with the subject were examined. Articles which give more importance to the motivations, intentions and preferences of international students are selected for review. Articles which deal with the international student migration in global level are also examined extensively. Insights from those studies are also included in this paper. Secondary sources like UNESCO student report, report of Indian education ministry and report of ASOCHAM are also utilized for obtaining statistical information.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Researchers have used different theoretical perspectives to analyse international student migration. Rafi and Lewis (2013) draw on the theoretical framework of push and pull factors to analyse the motivations, intentions, preferences and plans of Indian students studying abroad. Push factors refer to those factors which forced the students to leave their home country. Pull factors stand for those factors which attracted the students to pursue higher education in a particular foreign country. Rafi and Lewis (2013) also used the theoretical framework of structural changes in newly industrialised economy which connects structural changes in economy with demands for employment and education. This theory states that structural changes that happen in the economy of newly industrialised developing countries results in the demand for professional and highly educated labour. The growing middle class in these countries demands better educational opportunities which are not available in the country. Thus according to this theoretical framework the demand of the middle class for better education and the increased market demand for highly

skilled workers results in international student migration. King and Sondhi (2018) have put forward multiple theoretical frameworks to analyse international student migration and the motivations of students going abroad. By applying human capital theory King and Sondhi(2018) have viewed international education as a career enhancing investment, a rational strategy which will provide the students with considerable upper hand in international and domestic labour market. They also try to insert international student migration into the conceptual framework of 'global youth mobility cultures'. In this framework the freedom to travel and to explore different places and cultures is seen as a lifestyle attribute of middle-class youth. Here international student migration is considered as the outcome of middle-class youth's appetite for personal adventure and exploring new cultural experiences. King and Sondhi(2016) who tried to analyse the gendered nature of international student migration have employed the theoretical framework of gendered geographies of power. Through they also attempts to bring women as the subjects of migration research. This framework analyses how gender relations are reaffirmed and reconfigured in the study-migration process.

IV. DISCUSSING KEY FINDINGS AND IDENTIFYING MAJOR GAPS IN THE STUDIES

Study on international student migration is a very challenging endeavour. The researcher has to confront many methodological and conceptual dilemmas. The imprints of these methodological dilemmas are apparent in the six reviewed articles. Most of the studies relied on mixed methodology making use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Hercog and Van de laer (2017) conducted a survey among students at five prominent universities in India to identify the motivations and constraints of Indian students going abroad.. They complimented it with qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews of selected students. King and Sondhi (2018) have undertook online survey of Indian and UK international students in order to compare their motivations and preferences. They also conducted in-depth interviews with students. King and Sondhi (2016) have employed survey and in-depth interviews for analysing the gendered nature of international student migration from India. Bass (2006) employed qualitative methodology by conducting in-depth interviews among Indian international students, migration agents, lecturers and social workers in the city of Melbourne to identify the main intention of Indian students. There are also some studies which did not attempt to conduct field work but based their research on the analysis of secondary data. Rafi and Lewis (2013) relied on the data provided by various international agencies and government of Australia. Kumar et al.(2008)have used the data obtained from OECD data base. Though most of the studies employ mixed methods, more weight is given to qualitative data analysis. In-depth interview is the most common method used for data collection. But the participants in the interviews come from similar backgrounds mostly living in the same city. This homogeneity of samples restricts the scope and range of study. The quantitative data collected through surveys are very inadequate. The weakness of quantitative data creates many problems in research analysis and generalization. Highly fluctuating nature of data and statistics obtained from secondary sources also creates insurmountable challenges for the researchers. Geographically dispersed nature of international Indian students made the process of data collection very difficult. Most of the studies are concentrated on the Indian international students in Western countries. These studies ignored the motivations and experiences of Indians studying in countries like china, Russia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and so on. Another major methodological weakness is the over-reliance on secondary data. Studies conducted by Rafi and Lewis (2013), Kumar et al.(2008) are entirely based on the data obtained from international and national agencies. Though the use of such grand and big data is useful in capturing general trends, it does not help to analyse more deeper aspects like motivations and aspirations of international students.

The words , 'motivations', and 'intentions' are often used in purely subjective contexts. But whenever we try to analyse the motivational factors of social actors, it should overcome the narrow frame of individual-subjectivity. International students are also very sophisticated social actors operating within a wide spectrum of social circles. Geddie (2013) and king, Raghuram (2012) posit that international students should be recognized as complex individuals who are entangled in a wide set of social relationships. So while analysing motivations of Indian students to study abroad, it should be based on a wide social perspective which recognizes the complexities of the context and the terminologies used. But most of the studies reviewed here have failed in positioning the motives of international students in a wider picture. Researchers have mainly employed push and pull factors for analysing the motivations of Indian students going abroad (Hercog and van de lear2017, king and sondhi 2018, Rafi and Lewis2013). But this mechanical division of migration motivations into push and pull factors clearly misses the complexities involved in the process of student migration. A more nuanced and holistic approach should have provided much deeper understanding regarding the motivational aspects. Most of the studies agree that education from a world class university is

the most important factor that motivates students to go abroad for study (Hercog and Van de laer 2017, King and Sondhi 2018, Rafi and Lewis 2013, Kumar et al. 2008). By going abroad students are able to access education at a higher level of quality or in the field of specialisation which is not available in the home country (Hercog and Van de Laer, 2017). Researchers also point out to the inherent weakness of the Indian education system that pushes the student to seek education abroad. King and Sondhi (2018) argue that studying abroad is a pragmatic response to structural barriers within Indian higher education system. According to them the increasing conflict among the emerging middle class in India for accessing quality education creates enormous pressure upon education system. Students need to compete for limited seats in few quality higher education institutions in India. In this context studying abroad becomes a means to mitigate the fear of failure resulting from the possibility of being unable to access the best local higher education (King and Sondhi, 2018). Kumar et al. (2008) also points out to the incapacity of Indian universities to absorb all the applicants as the reason why students are forced to pursue international education. Researchers are cautious about the changing nature of Indian economy and its relationship with international education. King and Sondhi (2018) points out that the demand of Indian labour market for highly skilled and trained labour motivates Indian students to study abroad. Even the multinational corporations which work within India prefer employers with international experience (King and Sondhi, 2018). Kumar et al. (2008) posit that a foreign degree is considered superior than a degree provided by most Indian institutes and is valued highly in the native job market. Thus the ability of the foreign degree to maximise their chances in the domestic labour market is an important motivation for studying abroad.

In Indian society family and kinship relations are of prime importance. If western societies are characterised by extreme individualism, solidarity created by family bonding is the corner stone of Indian society. Therefore in India even individual decisions are strongly influenced and moulded by family ethos. King and Sondhi (2016) points out that in India family decision is very crucial in international student migration. Their study proves that difficult and protracted negotiations take place between sons/daughters and their parents in order to get permission to go abroad for study. King and Sondhi (2016) have tried to examine the role of gender in these family negotiations. Female students face more difficulty in attaining permission from family to pursue foreign education. King and Sondhi (2016) points out that mothers are important motivating factor behind the international education of female students from India. King and Sondhi (2016) also points out that in the patrifocal family system in India when their children go abroad parents consider it as the lose of their power over them. But in the changed socio-economic context Kumar et al. (2008) posit that more middle class parents are willing to support their children's education abroad. They are even willing to take educational loans and other types of loans to finance their child's education abroad. Here it becomes important to analyse the motivations of family to send their member to pursue foreign education. King and Sondhi (2018) argue that it can be clearly seen not only as an investment by the family in order to ensure a successful future for their children but also an attempt for the reproduction or advancement of the family's social class and cultural capital. Here King and Sondhi (2018) try to apply Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to explain Indian families attempt to provide their child with foreign education. But the authors used this concept in a limited scope. They did not try to analyse the interconnection between international education and social status of the family in Indian context. The most prominent international student migration scholar Johanna L. Waters have used Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital in the context of international student migration from Hong Kong. She explores the relationship between education and social production and also develops a link between parental choice, class status and spatial mobility. Her study reveals how migration to Canada has enabled the middle class families in Hong Kong to accumulate a more valuable form of cultural capital through a western university degree (Waters J.L. 2006). In Indian society where traditions of hierarchy such as caste status still persists, international education may be an important way for asserting and reinforcing social status and hierarchy through social reproduction. We can also apply Thorstein Veblen's concept of 'conspicuous consumption' for analysing this. Conspicuous consumption refers to the use of consumption as a means of retaining, attaining and showing social status. Here international education becomes a product consumed by elite families in order to exhibit and perpetuate their social status.

Social networks also play important role in facilitating migration. In the context of international student migration social networks have more significance. Social networks not only act as facilitators but also as motivational aspect of student migration. Hercog and Van de Laer (2017) points out that migration experiences of friends and colleagues positively correlates with migration wishes of the students. The presence of relatives or friends working or studying abroad is a major motivational factor for pursuing foreign education. A person with no such social networks is less likely to pursue international education. International student migration also has a cultural aspect. It provides the individuals with the opportunity to experience new cultures. Hercog and Van de laer (2017) points out that the chance to get exposure to foreign cultures is an important motivation for pursuing international education. King and sondhi (2018) adds that some Indian students consider international education as a unique adventure and a transformative experience. Students are motivated to experience other cultures and to redefine their self-image and identity. The connection between international education and permanent residency is a very complex issue. Bass (2016) has done an extensive study on the intentions of Indian students to acquire permanent residency in Australia. He argues that the main objective of majority of Indian students in Australia is to obtain permanent residency in the host country. He also adds that Indian students tailor their choices of university and course with this aim in mind. Kumar et al.(2008) also points out that a sizable proportion of Indian international students aim long term migration and want to become permanent residents in the destination country. King and sondhi(2018) also argue that Indian students give great importance to the route that studying abroad provides for accessing an international career preferably in the host country. Bass (2006) also argues that even before coming to Australia most of the Indian students have already figured out which courses will provide the easiest way to permanent residency and will base the course they enrol in on this. Bass (2006) describes such students who are seeking permanent residency as consumers who know what they are buying by investing in education. But study conducted by Hercog and Van de laer (2017) shows that most of the international Indian students wants to return to India as soon as they complete their education. Most of the researchers argue that a substantial segment of Indian international students chose international education with the intention of getting permanent residency in the host country. But there are some potential flaws in these arguments. Acquiring permanent residency is to be considered as occurring as part of a long process instead of viewing it as the one and only aim behind pursuing international education. The root cause of this flaw lies at the notion of considering international study migration as single event,instead it should be viewed as an ongoing process which involves multiple stages and steps. Permanent residency may be an intended or unintended consequence of this process.

There are some motivating and demotivating factors that attract or repel a student to choose a particular country as his/her destination for study. Rafi and Lewis (2013) posit that presence of safe environment is the most significant predictor of intentions to choose a foreign education destination. The study conducted by Singh (2011) proves that increasing racist attacks against people of Indian origin in Australia have led to a decline in the number of Indian students migrating to that country. Incidents of racist attacks also prompt the parents to discourage their children to pursue education abroad. The rising trend of xenophobia, racism and discrimination against people of Asian origin are demotivating factors for Indian students who plan to study abroad. The study conducted by Hercog and Van de laer (2017) proves that Indian students are very much concerned about the racist attacks they confront in the host country. As pointed out by King and Raghuram (2011) one of the most significant issues facing international students is the increasing racialization of the discourses around their presence. They have become objects of suspicion and targets of racist attacks. Immigration policies of the particular countries also have an important role in shaping the preferences and intentions of students to study abroad. Rafi and Lewis (2013) point out to the trend in which a lot of Indian students are choosing New Zealand and Canada as their study destination instead of U.S.A. because of the comparative easiness in acquiring student visa. Student friendly and migration friendly immigration policies motivate and attract international students. Bass (2006) argues that Indian students are very much concerned about the immigration policies of the potential host country. But these studies did not go deep in examining the how the immigration policies of countries influences the choices and preferences of Indian students. Very rigid and restrictive immigration policies discourage students to pursue foreign education. According to the report of the ministry of education the number of Indian students going to Canada are increasing. This is because of the student friendly immigration policies of the Canadian government. The number of Indian students going to U.S.A. was gradually decreasing but the anti-immigrant policies of president Donald Trump have further diminished that number. Indian students are also very much concerned about the cost of international education. Bass (2006) points out that most of the Indian students have chosen to study at the relatively low cost metropolitan campuses of Australia's regional universities. Indian students are also

motivated by the prospect of getting part time jobs that will help them to finance their education. Hercog and Van de laer (2017) posit that the possibility of getting international scholarships and grants is also an important motivation to pursue foreign education.

In this age of globalisation education has become an international commodity. International education has acquired all the characteristics of a global market place. Some international educational institutions are very keen in attracting foreign students. For this some prestigious foreign universities are engaging in marketing strategies which play important role in motivating Indian students to pursue foreign education. Kumar et al.(2008) points out to the role of educational fairs conducted by prominent foreign universities in India and it's impacts on the preferences and motivations of Indian students. Educational fairs are intended to make the application, selection and other related procedures quick and easy for the aspirant students. But the real intention behind these fairs is to motivate and attract students to pursue higher education in those foreign universities. This proves that international student migration is a part of commercialisation and globalisation of higher education. The global education market plays a major role in formulating the motivations and intentions of prospective students. But none of the studies tried to analyse this complicated market dynamics of international education. International education has now transformed into a global commodity and international students have become its consumers. There operates several international actors and global players who determine the contours of international education. This even questions the position of international students as independent agents with motivations and intentions free of external influences.

Indian international students do not constitute a homogeneous group. There are various components in it, based on caste, religious, regional and linguistic categories. Most of the researchers ignored this diverse nature of international Indian student community. They mostly considered it as a homogeneous indivisible category. This monolithic categorisation hinders the scope for a thorough analysis of the motivations and intentions of various communities of students within India for pursuing education abroad. Only Hersog and Van de Laer (2017) tried to analyse it by collecting caste based information, but it was very limited and restrictive in scope. They found out that students from scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other backward caste backgrounds are more likely to have plans to move abroad for study. They argue that this is because people from deprived sections attributes higher benefits to moving abroad. Their options in the home country are worse than that of the majority group despite the reservation system in education institutions and government jobs (Hersog and Van de Laer, 2017). This finding completely shatters the age old myth of the so called 'meritorious' upper caste people migrating to other countries because of the lack of opportunities in India due to the 'unjust' reservation system that favours 'less qualified' lower castes. Though there are some significant findings and observations these studies did not succeed in fully analysing the motivations and intentions of Indian students to go abroad.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND THE SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From the above discussed major findings it can be concluded that the wish to acquire quality education from a world class institution is the most important factor that motivates Indian students to go for international education. The pathetic condition of Indian higher education system, lack of quality institutions, inability of Indian education system to accommodate all the aspirant students pushes them to leave India in search of better educational opportunities. The growing anxiety of India's middle class regarding the educational prospects of the new generation also contributes to international student migration from India. Student migration from India is also closely linked to the changing nature of India's economy and labour market. The realisation that international education will maximise their scope to get elite jobs in India motivates the students to pursue foreign education. In the context of India negotiations and interactions within the family is an important determinant factor in facilitating student migration. The nature and outcome of these family negotiations varies depending upon the gender of the student-migrant. Women from educated backgrounds are motivated by their highly qualified parents especially by mothers to pursue education abroad. Easy availability of educational loans also motivates middle class families to send their children abroad for higher education. Besides ensuring the future success of their children, families also try to gain cultural capital through foreign education that will help them to maintain and enhance their social status and position. Thus international education acts as a way of conspicuous consumption and social reproduction of hierarchies. The wish to attain cultural capital is an important motivational factor. The web of social networks in which an

individual is embedded plays an important role in facilitating student-migration. The presence of relatives and friends in foreign countries motivates individuals to pursue international education. Desire to have new cultural environment and the wish to have challenging experiences also motivates Indian students to pursue foreign education. They consider it as a transformative experience which will redefine their self-image and identity. Scope of getting permanent residency in the host nation also motivates Indians to study abroad. There are some important factors which motivate students to choose a particular country as his/her destination of study. Safe environment and multiculturalism attracts students to a country. On the other hand racist attacks and xenophobia are factors that demotivate students to go abroad. Indian students are also cautious regarding the cost-effectiveness of foreign education. They are mostly attracted to countries where they can pursue higher education with a modest cost. The nature of the immigration policies of the countries also influences the preferences and intentions of Indian students. They prefer countries with student friendly and migration friendly policies. Marketing strategies like educational fairs conducted by foreign universities also motivates Indian students to opt for foreign education. Through this we can conclude that there are multiple levels of motivations and intentions that drive Indian students to pursue foreign education. It is impossible to categorize them into push and pull factors, which is a very reductionist, simplistic and mechanical classification. The multiple motivational and intentional factors are very much interconnected and often operate in a very complex way. So a very comprehensive and holistic analysis and approach is needed to understand the motivational aspects of student migration from India.

The enormous gaps and limitations in the reviewed studies that we have discussed in the previous section points out to the need to have further researches. The future studies should address the methodological weaknesses of the existing studies. Most of the researchers are only concerned with the Indian international students in western countries. Future studies should include the motivations and experiences of Indian students in other countries. Over-reliance on secondary data while studying international student migration is a major defect of the existing studies. More researches based on field work and primary data are necessary. On the theoretical aspect future researchers should attempt to apply social network theory and most recent innovations in the mobility paradigm, which will enable them to unravel the complex dimensions of international student migration from India. Future studies can also apply the theoretical framework of conspicuous consumption developed by Thorstein Veblen. Future researchers should recognize the international students as complex social actors operating alongside with several other socio-economic forces. Such a nuanced perspective may lead to path-breaking research. Researchers should also work on developing Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital in the context of student migration from India. Examining how student migration becomes a path for Indian families to attain cultural capital which turn helps them to reinforce or advance their social status is of great sociological relevance. In the caste dominated Indian context researchers can examine the role of student migration in the social reproduction of caste hierarchy. This will unravel the hidden intentions and motivations behind student migration. The prevalence of international student migration among India's most elite political and business families is also worth of a deep research. International student migration also has a gender aspect. As a highly patriarchal society which tightly controls the mobility of women, the international migration of women students from India deserves special attention. Examining the differences and similarities in the motivations and intentions of men and women students will be a great contribution towards the nascent academic literature of international student migration from India. Future researchers should recognize the diverse nature of India's international student community. The religious, regional, caste and linguistic components within international Indian student community should be studied separately. They can examine how motives and intentions for study-migration vary depending upon different community of students. As one of the major source country for international students, India should be a main focal point of academicians.

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