

The Choice of First Destination for Immigrants: Determining Factors and the Immigration Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

*By Shuruq Ismail Alsharif**

Economics is considered the most significant factor influencing the human behaviour of migration. Reports suggest that around 30% of Saudi Arabia's population are immigrants, mostly from Asian countries. This figure is high compared to other countries. Saudi Arabia aims to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil as part of its Vision 2030. Therefore, the government seeks to attract more foreign investors. This paper examines immigrants' initial migration and destination choices. Focusing on migration in Saudi Arabia, the study aids in understanding how foreign-born immigrants congregate in gateways where resources are available. Immigration studies have focused on specific theories to understand the international immigration process. Ecological theory, assimilation theory, neoclassical theory, and new economics are among the most significant theories in this field. These theories aid in understanding Saudi Arabian migration in terms of the decision to relocate and the choice of destination. To achieve this study's objectives, all related and previous studies were reviewed according to the nature of this study. This involved discussing and focusing on the initial gateways chosen by first-generation immigrants. The researcher also used the Geographic Information System to design maps illustrating the population distribution in several Saudi Arabian cities.

Keywords: *population, immigration, gateways, assimilation theory, neoclassical theory*

Introduction

Population migration has endured throughout history with the creation of settlements and multicultural human societies. Its origins are linked to individuals' desires to overcome difficult living conditions such as poverty, deprivation, marginalization, and social injustice and look elsewhere for elements of a decent life. Because technology has "shrunk" the world, migration is no longer limited to geographically close areas. People now migrate to distant countries, such as the nearly 3.5 million Indians residing in North America, almost 1,160 miles from their home country (Al-Aouni 2022).

In addition, migration has developed rapidly in connection with communication innovation. This poses new social, economic, cultural, and political challenges for governments and decision-makers receiving goods and exporting to migration countries. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2021), there were 281 million international migrants in 2020. Canada, the United States, and European countries such as France attract the highest numbers of

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international migrants due to historical migration patterns and their economic and cultural factors such as Canada's strong job market and multicultural policies, the United States' economic opportunities and entrepreneurial culture, and France's social welfare system and historical ties to former colonies (OECD 2021, Swaydi 2012).

International migration is driven by intertwined motives and factors pushing individuals to migrate to other countries to compensate for losses in their homeland. These motives can be natural (disasters, famines, epidemics, etc.), social (marginalization, dissatisfaction with living conditions, etc.), economic (poverty, lack of job opportunities, etc.), and political (wars, persecution, major conflicts, etc.). However, rapid demographic growth impacts natural resources negatively, causing social and economic problems (especially in underdeveloped countries) and driving people to migrate to richer countries to pursue better living conditions (cf. *repel* migration factors). Conversely, factors attracting migrants include incentives provided by the receiving countries and economic opportunities—the top attracting factor (Swaydi 2012).

Similarly, migration motives, together with destination selection, are not limited to economic, political, or cultural reasons, nor are they limited to social motives for eliminating poverty and seeking well-being. Rather, social networks (e.g., diaspora and migration networks), ethnic and linguistic ties, and geographical proximity play a decisive role in determining migration choices. According to Massey and Denton (1985), family and community ties in the destination country are crucial in facilitating migration and providing psychological and economic support to migrants. Moreover, shared cultural characteristics may influence migration decisions and determining destination countries. Zhou and Logan (1989) suggested that first-generation migrants tend to settle in areas with similar communities and cultural affinities to their homelands, allowing easier adaptation and integration into the host societies. However, motives and reasons for migration differ significantly among subsequent generations of immigrants; that is, the first generation tends to migrate for mostly economic reasons such as better job opportunities or escaping crises, while the second generation tends to evaluate their options for education and cultural identity.

Notably, Saudi Arabia is the top country in the Middle East in general, and in the Gulf in particular, in terms of attracting immigrants of various nationalities due to its thriving economy, rich social opportunities, and government policies regulating the status of expatriates and encouraging foreign investment. According to the General Authority for Statistics (2020), migrants represent about 38% of the Saudi Arabian workforce, a high percentage that reflects the country's strong economic position and its role in attracting foreign labor, particularly in sectors such as construction, domestic work, and healthcare. In contrast, immigration data for the United States shows that about 44% of new migrants are motivated by economic factors, such as seeking job opportunities or improving their living conditions, but also include factors like family reunification, educational opportunities, and political asylum (Pew Research Center 2020). This contrast highlights the fact that while economic factors are a key driver for migration to both countries, Saudi Arabia's focus is predominantly on labor migration, whereas the United States offers a more diverse set of motivations for migrants.

According to a United Nations (2020), there are around 281 million international migrants globally; 87 million go to Europe, and around 60 million go to North

America. The United States has the largest number of migrants (51 million), followed by Saudi Arabia and Germany (13 million each), and Australia (8 million) (United Nations 2020). Saudi Arabia and the United States are significant destinations for migrants worldwide due to these countries' job opportunities, powerful economies, safe and stable climates, and unique educational opportunities. The oil- and gas-based economy of Saudi Arabia attracts foreign workers, while the United States offers wide-ranging economic and educational opportunities and a culturally diverse social environment.

Migration is a complex global phenomenon that presents significant challenges for governments and decision-makers worldwide. It is driven by a range of social, economic, and political factors, as individuals seek better opportunities, safety, and stability (World Bank 2020). The impact of globalization, particularly through advancements in communication, transportation, and the integration of global markets, has significantly accelerated migration flows. This global interconnectedness has made migration not only a critical issue for receiving countries but also a key area of study for researchers, policymakers, and international organizations. Understanding the driving forces behind migration and its consequences has become crucial for developing informed policies that address both the opportunities and challenges migration presents on a global scale (OECD 2021).

This study sheds light on migration to Saudi Arabia and the United States and the motives driving multi-national migrants' decisions when choosing host destinations. It determines the essential characteristics and skills of migrant workers and examines the challenges and opportunities they encounter. These insights, in turn, may enrich sustainable development plans in Saudi Arabia and help formulate better policies and programs related to migration issues between Saudi Arabia and migrants' original countries.

Statement of the Problem

International migration greatly interests governments and research institutions due to its positive and negative effects on both the originating and host countries. One area of significant debate is the impact of skilled or proficient migrants on economic development. Specifically, the migration of highly skilled workers in sectors such as technology, healthcare, engineering, and education is of particular interest. In host countries, proficient migrants can contribute to innovation, fill labor shortages, and drive economic growth by boosting productivity and expanding expertise in critical industries. Conversely, concerns are raised about the potential brain drain in originating countries, where the outflow of skilled workers may hinder local economic development, particularly in areas like healthcare and education. Understanding these dynamics is essential for shaping policies that maximize the benefits of skilled migration while mitigating potential negative impacts on both sending and receiving countries. Negatively, exporting countries may show significant losses in development plans, while positively, migration may form an incentive for individuals to contribute to human capital to obtain better immigration opportunities.

Since the early 1990s, migration rates from developing countries to oil-producing and more developed countries have increased, making migration a prominent global economy feature. This prompted the International Labour Organization to analyze migration trends and incentives, especially for low-income developing countries, which are the main source of migrants. While the incentives are diverse, economic factors appear to be the most important. However, most studies on migration issues confirm that immigration tends to flow away from developing countries and toward countries that offer economic progress such as job opportunities and high wages (Ullah 2012).

The number of people migrating from their home countries is increasing for several reasons, including improved living conditions in the host countries, as well as better educational or job opportunities, and escape from harassment or disasters (Ali 2023). In 2022, there were 281 million international migrants. The most important factors driving their migration decisions were the demographic structures of their home countries, the availability of social networks, and the job opportunities in the host countries (International Organization for Migration 2022).

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2021a), there were over 30 million international foreign workers in the Gulf countries in 2020; the number of migrants exceeded the number of citizens of many of these countries. However, the Gulf countries, led by Saudi Arabia, have shown great commitment to sustainable development goals, adopting the Global Compact for Safe and Regular Migration. Most migrants move to Saudi Arabia as workers under temporary contracts and a sponsorship system, for which a number of reform legislations are established to prevent smuggling migrants and to protect them from abuse and exploitation. Social, economic, and political motives drive migrants' choice of destination in Saudi Arabia, with economics remaining the main motive to avoid poverty, unemployment, and insufficient income and to improve their living conditions. In some contexts, conflicts and political instability exacerbate these motives.

Migration studies address many theories highlighting the importance of migration, forming a triple gain for migrants and their home and host countries. Despite the diversity of these theories, there is no comprehensive theory explaining the motives and dynamics of migration. Similarly, the theoretical contributions explaining migration do not exceed models that merely explain some of its aspects. In his book *Sociology of Migration in the United States of America*, Duchac (1974) provided several assumptions about the attitudes of international migrants, most notably that most of them move short distances, that they are driven to major industrial and commercial centers, and that city dwellers migrate more than villagers and women migrate more than men.

Greenwood and McDowell (1992) aimed to identify the determinants of migration from 23 developing countries to the United States, confirming that high wages are the most preferred motive among other determinants, namely distance between countries, population in the destination country, and family members already living in the destination country. However, Nee et al. (1994) showed that economic factors and government policies play an important role in directing migration to specific developed countries, forming basic determinants of migration. For Portes and Rumbaut (2001), there are differences between first and second generations of

migrants concerning education and economic opportunities—second- generation migrants in the United States have higher educational levels (70%) than the first generation (40%), indicating an expansion in their job opportunities. Similarly, Victor (2013) focused on the central factors affecting migration flows, classifying them into social (quality of education, health services, etc.), political (freedom of expression, etc.), technical (easy communication and transportation, etc.), and economic factors (high wages, industrial progress, good job opportunities, etc.). He focused on economic factors as the initial and primary motive of global migration flows.

Holland and Peters (2020) argued that migration decisions are made in two stages: The migrant is driven by economic and political factors and conflicts to discover the gains that migration brings them, and the new opportunities in destination countries (e.g., government policies that support and sponsor incoming migration) push them to make the final decision to migrate to those countries. Finally, a study conducted by Global Migration Group (2021) found that about 75% of migrants prefer to move to countries with communities that share the same culture and ethnicity, which enhances the feeling of security and support.

This brief review makes clear a diversity in researchers' perceptions of the migration phenomenon. However, all of the examined perceptions hold that migration results from several factors. Studies on migration to Western countries, especially the United States, are numerous, but there is a lack of studies on migration to Saudi Arabia. This highlights the importance of this study, supported by the 2021 report of the IOM, which purports that 38% of the Saudi Arabian workforce is made up of immigrants. There is also a lack of studies connecting economic theories to their practical applications in the two different contexts of Saudi Arabia and the United States, creating a gap in the comprehensive understanding of migration. International migration is likely to remain the most important and complex global challenge, as the motives that drive migrants to new countries form an important criterion for policymakers. However, it is vital to understand the propensity to migrate to achieve universally legal, safe, and stable migration.

The growth in migration rates in recent decades in many receiving countries, including those in the Arab world (e.g., Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries) and the Western world (e.g., the United States, France, and Canada), has sparked significant discussions in political, economic, and academic circles. Studies have explored various aspects of international migration, such as its driving forces, the reasons for migrant concentration in specific regions, its economic and social impacts, and its role in shaping the policies of host countries (Castles & Miller 2009, Koser 2016). Research has shown that while migration flows are often driven by economic factors, such as the search for better job opportunities, political and social factors also play an important role in migration decisions (Borjas 2017, Munshi 2020). In particular, Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, attract a significant number of labor migrants due to their oil-driven economies, while Western countries like the United States and Canada attract migrants for reasons ranging from employment opportunities to political asylum and family reunification (Swaydi 2012). Despite the significant migration flows into and out of Arab countries, there remains a notable gap in comparative studies between countries like Saudi Arabia and the United States, particularly regarding the motivations and influences behind migrants'

decisions in selecting their first migration destinations. Moreover, although migration is a key phenomenon in the Arab region, it has not received adequate attention from Arab researchers (Swaydi 2012).

This study is concerned with the lack of a comprehensive understanding of how economic, social, and political factors influence decisions to migrate to Saudi Arabia and the United States. The study focuses on the factors driving migration, sheds light on the role of social networks in determining the initial migration destinations of Saudi Arabia and the United States, and analyzes the role of government policies in shaping migrants' experiences. The study's concern can be summarized as follows: What motives drive migrants to choose Saudi Arabia as their initial destination? To answer this, the following sub-questions are examined:

1. How can the theories illuminating migration in the United States explain the factors leading to the selection of Saudi Arabia—a modern country characterized by a continuous flow of migrants—as an initial destination?
2. How do government policies contribute to shaping migrants' experiences and destination choices?

The study is limited to the factors and reasons affecting migration decisions concerning Saudi Arabia from a theoretical and practical perspective. It highlights the most important theories that explain migration and links them to migrants' experiences in the United States. It also illuminates government policies that ensure migrants are offered support and opportunities for empowerment in both countries.

Research Methodology

First, this study applied a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the migration phenomenon and clarify the theoretical concepts related to it. Second, a critical approach was used to evaluate how well the theories of international migration are applied in the contexts of Saudi Arabia and the United States, specifically analyzing the extent to which these theories explain the patterns and motivations of migration in each country. Finally, an inductive approach was used to collect data on the migration trends in both countries by examining relevant case studies and statistical data.

- Previous studies on international migration.
- Official reports and national statistical data.
- International databases.
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to display geographical and descriptive information in maps and graphs to facilitate understanding of the interactions between migrants and their surrounding environments.
- Spatial Analysis tools to explain complex concepts and migration dynamics. This was achieved by analyzing migrant distribution, which highlighted the higher-density areas of migrant communities, identified the factors and purposes influencing the choice of destination, identified the effect of social

networks on destination choices, and determined the possibility of directing policies and resources toward support programs for migrants in needy areas.

Migration Factors

Economic factors are the most prominent for migration, falling under what are known as “push factors”. These factors are unemployment, low wages, low standards of living, low health services, and low education quality. According to a United Nations (2020), almost 182 million migrants (more than two-thirds of all international migrants) reside in high-income countries that provide them with greater economic opportunities. Al-Dhafiri (2022) found that 70% of Arab-region migrants expressed their desire to migrate due to poor economic conditions, while security, educational, and political factors were considered secondary. Similarly, the Arab Barometer (2022) showed that difficult economic conditions dominate young people’s thinking in the Gulf region and increase their desire to migrate to countries that offer job opportunities and higher wages. In some countries, deteriorating political conditions (instability, wars, discriminatory policies based on religion or ethnicity, etc.) result in high rates of voluntary or obligatory migration. Sassen (2016) purported armed violence and local economic destruction as the main reasons behind the displacement of many Syrian, Iraqi, Afghan, and Somali citizens toward Europe. Similarly, Ali & Hamid (2017) argued that political unrest (revolutions, armed conflicts, etc.) worsens living conditions and causes people to seek safety and stability in other countries.

Push and Pull Factors

The above reasons and factors can be classified into two primary types:

- **Push factors in the origin country:** These are local factors that push people to leave their countries. They include poverty, unemployment, and poor health and education services. Al-Aouni (2022) indicated that poor economic conditions in countries such as Yemen and Syria are the most significant factor increasing migration.
- **Destination country attraction factors:** These refer to the advantages that receiving countries offer to migrants, such as higher wages, better education services, and government policies that enhance the rights of migrant workers. Center for International and Regional Studies (2011) showed that Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE are attractive destinations due to high wages and diverse economic opportunities.

Thus, economic and political factors are intricately intertwined in the Middle East, and economic challenges often occur when there is political instability. For example, poverty and unemployment are economic push factors that result in social and political instability. This increases tensions and drives people to look for safe havens. In contrast, destination countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE offer strong attraction factors for migrants seeking better opportunities. This interaction

between push and attraction factors shows a complex dynamic that reinforces regional migration flows.

Theory

International migration increasingly draws the attention of governments and academic institutions due to its profound impact on issues such as development, identity, integration, and social change. With the diversity of theoretical approaches in the field of the sociology of migration, researchers strive to analyze and explain the motivations behind international migration flows and their effects. However, they face a diverse accumulation of theoretical perspectives, reflecting the varied intellectual frameworks and ideological backgrounds of experts and academics in this field, alongside the complexity and uniqueness of migration as a phenomenon.

Micro-Level Migration Theories

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory forms a key concept in migration research and highlights the importance of education and skills in making migration decisions. According to Miller (2017), highly educated migrants seek better job opportunities that explains why people from developing countries migrate to developed countries. This is attributable to investments in education, which yield greater benefits through improved job opportunities and increased income.

In the Saudi context, skilled labor represents a large part of the labor market. Abd El-Motaleb (2018) reported that many migrants in Saudi Arabia are highly qualified and contribute to the development of the national economy. Focusing on high skills aligns with the kingdom's Vision 2030, which aims to attract global talent and achieve sustainable economic development.

New Economy Theory

This theory focuses on the factors influencing individuals' decisions and considerations of gain and loss. While human capital theory explains migration as an investment in individuals, new economic theory expands on this by considering migration as a strategy for households or communities to manage risks and improve their economic stability, often through remittances or diversifying income sources. New economy theory expands on this by focusing on the family's role as a decision-making entity in migration. However, Massey et al. (1993) suggested that families use a migration to cope with economic risks, such as loss of income or rising living costs; that is, migration is seen as a means of improving a family's economic situation by the migrant-sending remittances, which in turn support the local economy in the country of origin.

Neo-Classical Economy Theory

Neoclassical economy theory explains how wage gaps influence individual migration decisions. Borjas (2017) found that large wage gaps between countries

motivate individuals to look for better opportunities. This is clear in the Saudi context, where high wages in sectors such as construction and services are seen as attractive factors for migrants. These economic factors lead to an increased inflow of skilled labor, which is essential to support development and infrastructure projects in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, labor inflow is closely linked to wage gaps as individuals seek to improve their living conditions by moving to more productive and affluent work environments.

From a comprehensive perspective, these theories overlap in their explanations of the phenomenon of migration. Human capital theory focuses on how skills and education affect migration decisions, while neoclassical economy theory shows how families use migration as an economic strategy, highlighting the importance of wage gaps as a major factor in migration decisions.

Intermediate-Level Migration Theories

Social Network Theory

This theory suggests that social ties between migrants, e.g., families, friends, and cultural groups, play pivotal roles in facilitating migration and adaptation. According to Black (2021), a strong migrant community can facilitate integration into a host society by providing psychological and material support and sharing information about employment and housing opportunities. This, in turn, reduces the costs and risks of migration.

In the Saudi context, evidence shows that migrant communities provide significant support to new migrants. For example, many migrants move to areas where there are large communities from their origin countries. This increases their success in the local labor market and facilitates cultural adaptation. Al-Shammari (2020) asserted that migrants who join strong social networks have better opportunities for finding suitable jobs and social integration.

Social Identity Theory

This theory focuses on the factors that enable or inhibit migrants in receiving countries and emphasizes the importance of social ties between migrants and host communities. Black (2021) argued that social ties reduce migration costs and facilitate adaptation to new environments. Additionally, social identity theory, proposed by Bella (2015) shows that migration affects individuals' collective identity allows individuals to form new identities. Studies confirm that migrants integrating into host societies effectively achieve economic and social success (Dustmann & Frattini 2014). Research also shows that the interaction of migrants in Saudi Arabia with their local communities enhances social cohesion and creates a dynamic environment with cultural diversity (Kapiszewski 2006).

Social network theory and social identity theory overlap significantly in their suggestion that social networks help to form migrants' collective identities. By belonging to a strong migrant community, migrants reinforce their old cultural identities and benefit from new opportunities. This creates a balance between integration and identity preservation, which is a vital dynamic in the Saudi context, where many

migrants seek to adapt to the local culture while retaining their cultural heritage, reflecting the rich diversity of Saudi society.

Macro-Level Migration Theories

World System Theory

This theory focuses on the effect of globalization and capitalism on promoting migration. De Haas (2010) confirmed that globalization widens the economic gap between countries. Attracting foreign labor is part of the Saudi economic development strategy because migrants support vital sectors such as construction and trade.

Push and Pull Theory

Push and pull theory explains how the economic and social conditions in origin and destination countries affect migration flows; that is, push factors include unemployment, poverty, and persecution, while pull factors include high wages, economic opportunities, and quality of life. Afan (2018) argued that individuals in developing countries move to developed countries for better living conditions, showing that economic factors play a pivotal role in their migration decisions. For example, migration from low-wage countries to countries with high wages occurs because individuals seek to improve their living conditions by moving to places that offer better job opportunities.

In Saudi Arabia, pull factors such as high wages and economic opportunities are extremely important in attracting migrant workers. According to Borjas (2017), large wage gaps between countries indicate that migrant workers tend to move from countries with low wages to those with higher wages. Additionally, statistics from the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (2020) show that many migrants work in non-oil sectors, such as construction and services, where wages are relatively high and job opportunities are diverse. Studies on labor migration in the Gulf region (Kapiszewski 2006) confirm that these economic factors are major drivers for attracting migrant workers to the Saudi labor market.

The motivations behind migration continue to intertwine economic, social, psychological, and political factors. In the pursuit of developing a comprehensive sociological theory in the field of migration studies—one that keeps pace with global developments and reflects the interconnections among these various factors—new approaches and conceptual frameworks emerged during the 20th century. Among these is the circular theory or systems approach, first introduced by Akin Mabogunje. This framework considers all overlapping factors influencing migration, including economic factors such as wage increases and industrial growth; social factors like healthcare and education quality; political factors such as freedom and democracy; and technological factors like transportation and communication. Mabogunje further incorporated two novel elements: information exchange and mechanization (Victor 2013, pp. 26–27).

Additionally, Max Weber introduced the concept of urban citizenship in host societies, emphasizing the need to accept and recognize "the other". This concept laid the foundation for what later became known as the transnational approach, one of the innovative frameworks for interpreting international migration. This approach

centers on blending two distinct identities: the identity of the sending society and that of the receiving society. Furthermore, the transnational approach is closely tied to social network theory, which sustains the phenomenon of international migration and aids in understanding the factors behind successful migration experiences and the elements that enhance migrants' adaptation to their new environments.

From the above discussion, it becomes evident that theoretical perspectives on migration motivations and impacts vary. However, they all converge on viewing migration as a result of interconnected economic, geographical, social, political, technological, and environmental factors.

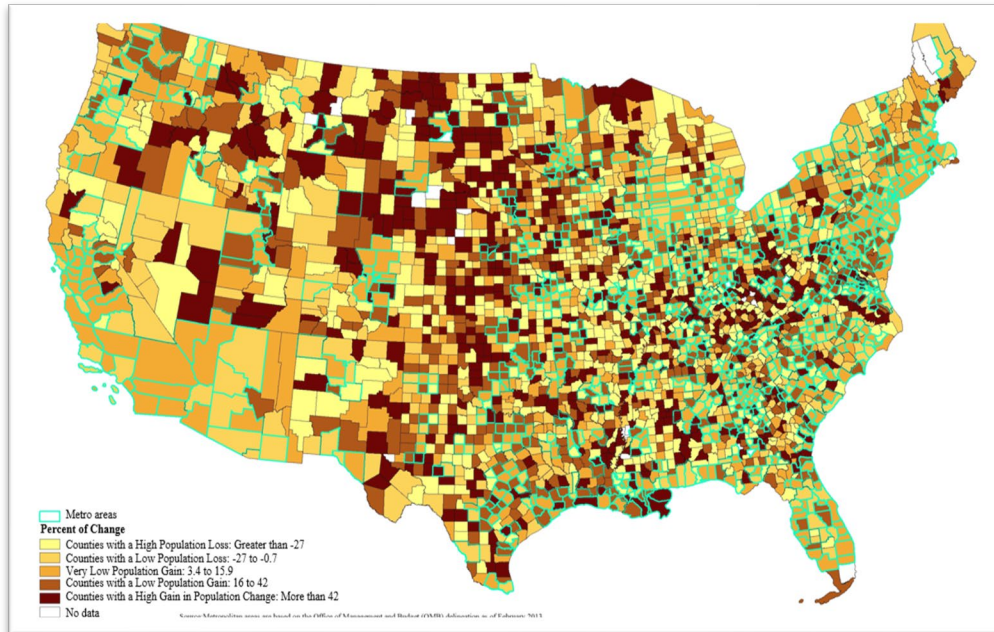
Migration to Saudi Arabia and the United States

Migration to the United States

The United States has been one of the most prominent migration destinations throughout history. For centuries, it has witnessed large influxes of migrants from all over the world. Since Christopher Columbus discovered the American continent, the United States has opened its doors to different nationalities and cultures, making it a melting pot of diverse traditions and origins. By 2000, the total number of foreign-born residents in the United States had surpassed 30 million, representing approximately 10% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau 2020, Daniel 2003). According to the International Organization for Migration (2021b), the United States remains the leading remittance-sending country, with \$68 billion sent to migrants' origin countries in 2020. This highlights the United States' vital role in the global economy. Furthermore, the United States remains the leading destination for international migrants. The foreign-born population in the U.S. increased from under 12 million in 1970 to nearly 51 million by 2019 (Pew Research Center 2020). This growth in migration plays a significant role in strengthening the U.S. economy, as migrant workers fill critical labor shortages in sectors such as construction, housekeeping, and agriculture—industries often unattractive to local workers due to low wages and challenging working conditions (Idris 2018).

Social Networks

According to the Institute for Immigration, Globalization, and Education (2019), around 70% of new migrants rely on social networks to facilitate their move to the United States. These networks are essential for integration because they help new migrants adapt and provide them with the necessary information and support.

U.S. Gateways**Figure 1.** *Percentage Change in Foreign-Born Population and Metropolitan Areas*

Source: American Community Survey 2006–2010 and 2012–2016 five-year estimates. The Metropolitan areas are based on the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Figure 1 shows the percent change in foreign-born population and metropolitan areas. The metro data is based on the metropolitan areas taken from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) delineation as of February 2013, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Economic Research Service, and the 2013 Urban Influence Codes. The OMB divided metro and nonmetro areas into two metro and 10 nonmetro groups. This scheme was initially established in 1993. The metro area includes large areas of more than 1 million residents and small metro areas of less than 1 million residents.

1. **California**, especially Los Angeles, is a popular destination for migrants due to its economic diversity and large Mexican and Asian migrant communities.
2. **New York** is a historical gateway for migrants, offering great economic and educational opportunities and a strong support network for migrants of all nationalities.
3. **Texas** is a prominent destination for Mexican migrants, attracting skilled and unskilled workers to its diverse and thriving economy.
4. **Florida** is famous for its migrants from Latin America, especially Cuba. This state offers employment opportunities in the tourism and service sectors.
5. **Illinois'** Chicago is an important center for migrants. They enjoy strong communities with long immigration histories.
6. **New Jersey** has a diverse population, making it attractive to migrants worldwide.

All these states support migrants through job opportunities, strong social networks, and a tolerant political climate. This confirms Massey et al.'s (1993) study that examines the factors that affect migration decisions. The states mentioned above represent traditional gateways for migrants and reflect the intricate ties between the social and economic factors that drive migration to the United States.

Government Policies in Migration Management

The United States distinguishes between two types of migration: legal and illegal. The government attempts to regulate the entry of immigrants through a family reunification policy, making it easier for migrants to join families already residing in the United States. Moreover, the government offers citizenship opportunities after five years of residence for those fluent in English and knowledgeable of the country's history (Kandel 2018). The U.S. government issues severe penalties for those employing illegal migrants, adopting a serious approach to combating illegal migration (Abdulrahman 2018). The Secure Fence Act of 2006 strengthens the US border, relying on advanced technologies such as satellites and hidden cameras. Government policies also tighten visa procedures for foreigners. Applicants are carefully screened to ensure they do not threaten national security (U.S. Government Publishing Office 2016). Furthermore, the Smart Border Action Plan between the United States and Canada was approved to combat illegal migration while maintaining freedom of movement between the two countries (Mamdouh 2008).

Reasons for Pulling

There are many reasons why the United States is an attractive destination for migrants. It has a diverse economy (the largest in the world), which provides job opportunities in sectors such as technology, medicine, and services. In addition, it is home to several prestigious universities, making it a preferred destination for students and researchers. The United States also provides a social environment that enhances freedom of expression and cultural diversity, allowing individuals to express their identities comfortably.

These social, political, and economic factors intersect to make the United States attractive for many migrants seeking better lives and demonstrate how government policies and social networks can influence migrants' experiences in the United States.

Characteristics of Migrants in the United States

Statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau (2020) indicate a significant gender balance among migrants, with women forming around 51% of all migrants. This indicates significant changes in migration patterns, with women increasingly contributing to the labor force and strong social networks supporting the integration of migrant women, improving their economic and social status.

Education level is an important factor that shapes the profile of migrants, particularly in how they contribute to the economy of the host country. According to the Pew Research Center (2019), highly educated migrants account for about 29% of the total migrant population in the U.S. Among them, 53% hold undergraduate or postgraduate degrees. These migrants are a vital part of the U.S. economy, enhancing

innovation and productivity in various sectors by applying their high skills and expertise to meet labor market needs.

Country of origin is a key element in understanding the demographics of migrants. According to the Pew Research Center (2020), Mexico is the largest source of migrants, accounting for 25% of the total migrant population, followed by India with 11%, and China with 5%. This cultural diversity enriches U.S. society, fosters cultural exchanges, and reflects the global nature of the United States. However, this diversity is not only demographic but also fundamental for innovation and economic growth. Data indicate that international migrants contribute significantly to the United States' economy. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), there were 44.9 million immigrants living in the United States in 2020, representing 17% of the total U.S. population.

In addition, the Pew Research Center (2019) indicates that migrants contributed about \$1.9 trillion to the total local production (gross domestic product). This economic impact shows how migrants are part of the labor force and a significant economic growth driver.

The diverse genders, educations, and nationalities of migrants shape the fabric of US society. This enhances the United States' competitiveness and underscores the importance of crafting policies that support sustainable migration. By understanding these characteristics, officials and policymakers can develop strategies aligned with changing social and economic needs. A sustained flow of highly skilled migrants fosters future growth and innovation.

Migration to Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the largest migrant destinations in the Gulf region. Its foreign labor flows are essential to its demographic and economic structure. However, this demographic diversity influences many government policies and strategies for sustainable development and reduces dependence on oil revenues.

Demographic Structure and the Effect of Migrants

Statistics show that Saudi Arabia is home to 7.3 million foreigners, making it the largest country after the United States to receive migrants. This number represents a large percentage of the total population, as expatriate workers represented 41.6% in 2022 (Esbar Center 2023). These numbers show that migrants are not only guests but also an integral part of Saudi society. However, this necessitates consideration of migration policies.

Economic Motives for Migrant Workers

Economic motives are prominent in attracting migrants to Saudi Arabia. The IOM indicates that Saudi Arabia is developing strategies to strengthen the local labor market and reduce dependence on foreign labor. "Saudization policies" were adopted in the early 1990s, whereby the government set specific percentages for local employment in various sectors (Ministry of Economy and Planning 2023). Studies indicate that these policies are adopted to address unemployment issues,

reflecting new economy theory's influence on how families make migration decisions in response to economic challenges (Massey et al. 1993).

Social and Cultural Influences

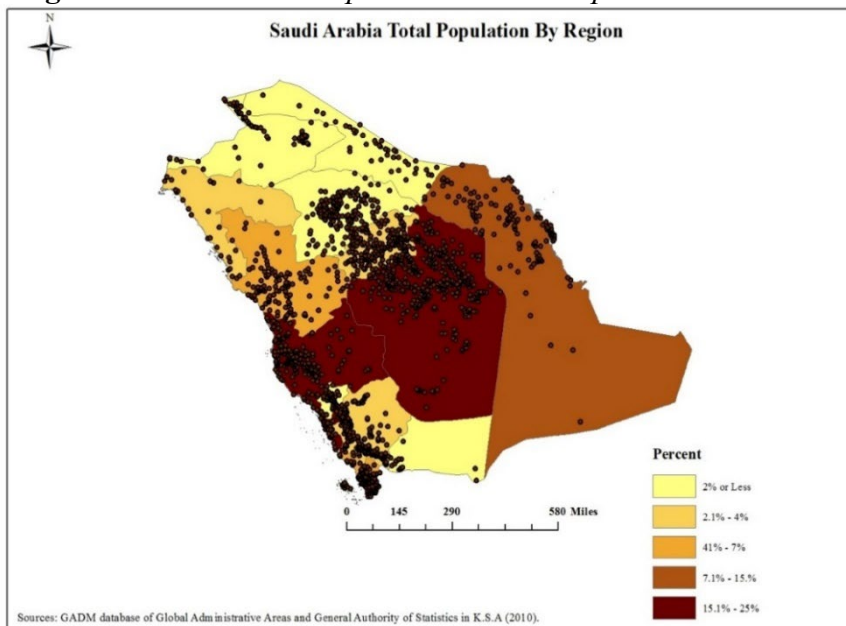
Data show that Saudi Arabian migration is no longer temporary but a permanent phenomenon affecting social and cultural identities. Social ties between diverse migrant communities and their families in their countries of origin are important in making migration decisions, which aligns with social network theory.

Main Immigration Gateways

The map in Figure 2 shows areas of population concentration, especially migrants, but it has no data showing the distribution of migrants in Saudi Arabia or their places of entry. This makes it challenging to determine their distribution. However, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam are the main gateways of migration to Saudi Arabia. Riyadh is the capital and economic center, with many job opportunities (High Commission for the Development of Riyadh 2016). Whereas Jeddah is the principal maritime gateway with a large migrant community, and Dammam is an industrial center that attracts migrant workers. These cities demonstrate how pull factors, such as job opportunities and living standards, play vital roles in migration flows and align with push and pull theory.

Figure 2 shows the population density in the three major urban areas of Riyadh, Makkah Al-Mukarramah, and the Eastern Region. The density of migrants in the Eastern Region may be due to the density of oil companies. Makkah Al-Mukarramah attracts migrants for *Umrah* and *Hajj* (pilgrimage) annually, while Riyadh is the capital of Saudi Arabia and has more job opportunities, tourist attractions, and foreign investment (Riyadh Development Authority 2016).

Figure 2. Saudi Arabia Population with Metropolitan Areas



Source: General Authority for Statistics (2010).

Future Migration to Saudi Arabia

Expectations indicate that the flow of migrants to Saudi Arabia will continue to be linked to economic and social transformations. As the government moves toward diversifying sources of income and moving away from oil dependence, the need for migrant workers will remain, especially in sectors lacking local workers (Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation 2019). The government may need to develop more effective policies to promote migrant integration that align with national development goals. Migration to Saudi Arabia demonstrates how interconnected economic and social factors influence demographic and economic structure. Therefore, understanding these dynamics will promote effective policies that support migrants and enhance the stability and diversity of society. Saudi Arabia remains a vibrant example of how migration affects development and social change, showing future challenges and opportunities (Arab League General Secretariat 2018).

Government Policies of Migration Management in Saudi Arabia

Through Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia seeks to improve the business environment and attract foreign investment, increasing the need for migrant workers in various sectors. This vision forms a comprehensive strategy that enhances Saudi Arabia's ability to attract skilled migrants, contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. These policies align with push and pull theory, focusing on the factors that push individuals to migrate from their countries of origin and those that pull them to Saudi Arabia.

Wage Protection System

In 2013, Saudi Arabia began implementing the Wage Protection System, which includes fundamental reforms in migrant workers' rights. This system requires employers to register workers' wages at the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and deposit them directly into their bank accounts, ensuring that wages are not delayed and that working hours are clearly defined. These measures agree with the push and pull theory as they reflect Saudi Arabia's commitment to protecting the rights of migrants and providing better working conditions, making it an attractive destination for skilled workers (Abdulrahman 2018).

Grace Period for Irregular Migrants

Saudi Arabia provides a grace period for irregular migrants to regularize their status, demonstrating its commitment to humanely addressing migration issues. These policies are consistent with push and pull theory because they reduce the pressures that may push people toward illegal migration, ensuring societal stability and improving conditions for migrants (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) 2015).

Partnerships with International Organizations

The Saudi Arabian government seeks to establish strong partnerships with international and regional organizations to ensure good migration management aligning with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration objectives. These

partnerships enhance the positive aspects of migration, supporting push and pull theory by improving the work environment and rights of migrants (United Nations 2017).

Pulling Foreign Investment

As part of the government's efforts to make Saudi Arabia an attractive investment destination, the Investment Law has been updated to include regulations and facilities for foreign investors. This includes reducing administrative complexity, enabling investors to obtain licenses more quickly, and supporting innovative technology and renewable energy projects. According to the UNCTAD (2021), Saudi Arabia is expected to be the primary destination for investment in these areas. This trend reflects push and pull theory, which supports the view that economic opportunities enhance the flow of skilled migrants to Saudi Arabia.

Efforts for Combating Illegal Migration

The Saudi Arabian government's efforts to combat illegal migration are represented in the building of massive fences equipped with border surveillance devices, especially on the Saudi–Iraqi borders. In addition, Saudi Arabia enacts strict laws to combat illegal migration. These policy implementations reflect the trend toward reducing push factors as Saudi Arabia seeks to reduce the chaos resulting from irregular migration (Asbar Center 2023).

Pulling Reasons

There are many reasons why Saudi Arabia is a preferred destination for migrants, including cultural unity. The shared religion, culture, and opportunities for Muslims to perform *Hajj* and *Umrah* are very attractive for Arab migrants. Moreover, economic recovery and job opportunities make Saudi Arabia attractive to workers. Rizk & Halim (2021) show that these factors support push and pull theory, encouraging people to choose Saudi Arabian migration.

Government policies concerning Saudi Arabia's migration management reflect a solid commitment to improving the work environment and protecting the rights of migrants. By strengthening international partnerships and implementing wage protection systems, Saudi Arabia has created an attractive environment for migrants that enhances economic growth and achieves the Vision 2030 goals. These policies are consistent with push and pull theory; they focus on reducing the push factors by improving living and working conditions while enhancing the economic and social attractiveness of Saudi Arabia.

Characteristics of Migrants in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a significant destination for migrants worldwide. Migration is pivotal in shaping the country's demographic and economic structure. Migrants in Saudi Arabia are of diverse genders, nationalities, and education levels, which contributes to the understanding of labor market dynamics and their effect on society. Statistics show that about 75% of migrants to Saudi Arabia are male, reflecting the economic nature of Saudi Arabia, which requires a male workforce, especially in the industrial and service sectors, where many jobs focus on physical and practical skills. According to the International Organization for Migration (2021b) this high

percentage reflects the cultural and social values that govern men's work in Saudi society. The nationalities of migrants in Saudi Arabia are diverse, including Indians (approx. 38%), Pakistanis (approx. 18%), and Egyptians (10%). This reflects the migration history of these countries, showing that economic and social relations between Saudi Arabia and these countries have seen continuous growth. Additionally, these percentages reflect the effect of economic factors, e.g., the need for labor in certain sectors, making Saudi Arabia an attractive destination for workers.

According to the General Authority for Statistics (2024), about 20% of migrants have higher educational qualifications, while many have academic backgrounds in engineering and medicine. However, about 80% of unskilled workers are in construction and agriculture. This structure reflects the Saudi economy's challenges in meeting its needs for skilled and unskilled workers, highlighting the importance of developing educational and training programs that meet market needs.

As demonstrated, the characteristics of migrants in Saudi Arabia show great diversity in gender, nationality, and education, reflecting the challenges and opportunities Saudi Arabia encounters in achieving its development goals. By strengthening migration policies that target skilled and unskilled workers, Saudi Arabia can better balance the labor market and promote sustainable economic growth.

Similarities and Differences Between Saudi Arabia and the United States in International Migration Experiences

International migration experiences are complex and require a deep understanding of the sending and receiving countries' political, economic, and social contexts. Saudi Arabia's and the United States' migration experiences can be related to push and pull theory and the economic contexts and social networks that influence those experiences.

Saudi Arabia focuses primarily on attracting expatriate workers and economic migrants to support economic development and infrastructure, but it opens its borders to those who are displaced and fleeing civil wars and political conflicts, such as Yemenis, Syrians, and Palestinians. Asylum laws in the United States provide protection and asylum to people fleeing danger or political, religious, or ethnic persecution in their countries. The United States also considers asylum a human right and adheres to international agreements related to refugee rights. Asylum applications are carefully examined to ensure their validity (UNHCR 2024).

Immigrants' Rights

Immigrants in Saudi Arabia have rights in the field of work and companies must commit to providing safe and appropriate working conditions. Migrants are also entitled to legal protection in the event of any violations against them. Immigrants in Saudi Arabia also enjoy rights in the field of health care and access to basic medical services, while everyone in the United States enjoys basic rights regardless of their immigration status. The most prominent rights of immigrants in the United States are:

- The right to safe housing.
- The right to a safe and fair work environment.
- The right to free public education regardless of immigration status.
- The right to health care.
- The right to move freely within American territory provided that they obtain an appropriate identity card (Human Rights Watch 2020).

Saudi society maintains local values, traditions, and culture. Cultural integration requires immigrants to understand and respect these values. The Arabic language is a major factor in the process of integration into Saudi society, as it facilitates communication with local residents and participation in daily life, and coexistence in a spirit of tolerance and respect, in addition to the impact of social networks in supporting and facilitating the processes of attraction and integration into Saudi society (Saudi Arabia - Migrants & Refugees Section 2023).

Work Visa Policies for Foreign Workers

In Saudi Arabia, employment is governed by a contract that specifies the worker's job and salary, which is certified by the Saudi Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (2024). Work visas are typically valid for one year and can be renewed annually as long as the worker remains employed (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development 2024). Expatriate workers are also allowed to bring their immediate family members (spouse and children) to live with them in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, there are regulations such as prohibiting outdoor work during the hottest part of the day in the summer. A 2013 decision concerning domestic workers mandates that employers pay wages on time, grant weekly rest days, set working hours, and improve living conditions.

Types of Visas

The Saudi tourist visa for short-term tourism activities is a multiple-entry visa valid for one year. The Saudi work visa allows entry into the kingdom for 90 days, during which time the foreign employee must apply for a Saudi residence visa in order to work and live for a longer period, up to one year, and then renew it. The Saudi student visa is granted to foreign students who enter the kingdom to enroll in educational activities. It is available to citizens of more than 160 countries and provides short-term and long-term student programs based on the degree or training that the foreign student will be enrolled in. The Saudi premium residence visa is granted to foreign citizens wishing to invest in Saudi businesses without the need for a Saudi sponsor. The Saudi family visit visa is granted to Saudi citizens and legal residents wishing to host a first-degree relative on a short-term visit. The Saudi personal visit visa is granted to Saudi citizens wishing to host friends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on a short-term visit that is neither related to family nor

related to work. The sponsorship system in Saudi Arabia has a significant impact on the movement of migrants and their rights. Under this system, expatriate workers are tied to their employer, and their ability to change jobs, leave the country, or even bring their family members depends on the employer's approval. This system can restrict the freedom of movement for migrants, as they often rely heavily on their sponsor for permission to make important life decisions (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development 2024).

Under the sponsorship system in Saudi Arabia, migrants' freedom of movement and ability to choose employment are often limited. This residence dependency means that migrants are highly reliant on their sponsors to secure basic services, such as residency and the completion of administrative procedures (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development 2024). However, in recent years, the Saudi government has introduced reforms to the labor and residency system aimed at improving conditions for migrants and reducing their dependence on sponsors. These changes align with global trends, granting workers more freedom to move and seek employment in new job opportunities without needing their sponsor's approval, unless the sponsor retains specific rights over them (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development 2024).

Related to Irregular Immigrants

In 2013, the Saudi government granted a grace period for irregular immigrants to regularize their status. During this period, those who left the country were exempted from residency fees, work permits, and other fines that had been previously imposed on them. However, once an undocumented immigrant is caught, they are arrested, fingerprinted, and deported. Additionally, Saudi Arabia has cooperated with the State of Djibouti to combat illegal immigration, as Djibouti serves as an important transit point for irregular migrants and is located close to the Yemeni-Saudi border.

The Saudi government has used the media to raise awareness of the dangers of irregular migration in several languages including Arabic and Urdu. The impact of development plans such as Vision 2030 on migration patterns. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan is a comprehensive initiative that aims to transform and modernize the kingdom's economy and diversify its sources of income away from its current reliance on oil. Vision 2030 could impact migration patterns to the kingdom as follows:

1. Employing citizens: Vision 2030 aims to increase employment among Saudi citizens and encourage them to participate in the labor market, which could reduce the need for expatriate labor in some sectors.
2. Improving the work environment: By developing the work environment and improving education and training opportunities in the kingdom, opportunities available to Saudis could increase and thus reduce the need for expatriate labor.
3. Diversifying the Saudi economy: Expanding non-oil sectors could encourage the attraction of more expatriate labor in sectors that require additional allocations.

4. Stimulating foreign investment is a key component of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. By attracting foreign direct investment, Vision 2030 aims to create job opportunities for expatriate labor, particularly in the country's development and economic transformation projects (Saudi Development Authority 2021).

Related to the United States

Green card visa for employment is granted to temporary immigrant workers. The diversity lottery is granted to permanent immigrant workers. Immediate family members is a type of visa issued for the purpose of reuniting families and relatives.

The student visa is granted to foreign students and those on scholarships from academic institutions. Refugee status is granted to individuals who are fleeing persecution and seeking asylum (USCIS n.d.).

Type of Efficiency

The quality of skills among migrants varies significantly between Saudi Arabia and the United States. In Saudi Arabia, there is a higher concentration of unskilled laborers, particularly in sectors such as construction and agriculture, where they make up the majority of the workforce. This trend aligns with Saudi Arabia's economic needs, as the country rapidly develops its infrastructure and diversifies its economy. In contrast, the United States attracts a larger proportion of skilled migrants, especially those in fields related to innovation, technology, and higher education, who contribute significantly to economic advancement and technological progress.

Gender

Approximately 75% of migrants to Saudi Arabia are male, reflecting the male-dominated nature of the economy, especially in sectors with high labor density. In contrast, the U.S. labor market is more gender balanced. This difference illustrates how social networks influence opportunities and how social ties are critical in guiding migration decisions where male culture is dominant.

Pulling Reasons

The motives for migration vary significantly between Saudi Arabia and the United States. Migrants to Saudi Arabia tend to be motivated by the need to escape difficult conditions in their home countries, highlighting the influence of push factors. Conversely, the United States is seen as an attractive destination for migrants due to educational and professional opportunities. Therefore, pull factors are evident as migrants seek to improve their living conditions by taking advantage of economic opportunities in the host country.

Migration to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia may be driven by spiritual and religious motives. Hajj and Umrah present opportunities for Muslims from all over the world to connect with each other, strengthening religious ties and solidarity among Muslims. A large influx of Muslims often occurs during the Hajj and Umrah

seasons, leading to an increase in temporary migration or religious visits. Additionally, the influx of pilgrims and Umrah performers supports local economies through spending on services and goods, creating job opportunities for citizens and residents in sectors such as hotels, transportation, and logistics. Some migrants travel to Saudi Arabia in search of spirituality and meditation. Hajj and Umrah bring together Muslims from various cultures and ethnicities, contributing to cultural exchange and enhancing cultural diversity. In short, migration to the Kingdom driven by Hajj and Umrah reflects a complex interaction between economic, spiritual, and religious factors, underscoring the importance of the spiritual and religious dimension in the context of migration to Saudi Arabia (Oxford Business Group 2024, Ministry of Hajj and Umrah 2024).

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion policies form one of the main differences between the two countries. The United States depends on a system that aims to integrate migrants more comprehensively into society, enhancing the “melting pot” concept. However, Saudi Arabia places more weight on national priorities, attempting to find solutions that meet the migration demands of all parties. This reflects the specificity of the Saudi experience in managing migration flows.

Furthermore, migration experiences in Saudi Arabia and the United States show similarities and differences in shaping migrants’ identities and experiences. By linking these experiences to push and pull theory, economic contexts, and social networks, future policies can better enhance migrant experiences in both countries, considering the needs and challenges of local communities.

Discussion

Saudi Arabia and the United States are significant destinations for international migrants. Both countries have high migration levels due to their powerful economies, diverse job opportunities, and attractive investment environments. In addition, both countries have social, political, and legislative factors that support migrants’ rights. Statistics demonstrate that the United States ranks first globally in terms of the number of migrants it receives, followed by Saudi Arabia.

Migration Motives

Migration motives in these two countries vary, and both push and pull factors overlap in influencing migrants’ decisions. In their origin countries, many migrants suffer from poverty, unemployment, persecution, poor living conditions, and political unrest. These factors push them to migrate in order to find better lives. In terms of pull factors, Saudi Arabia and the United States attract migrants due to their powerful economies, diverse job opportunities, and high wages, which make them preferred destinations.

Irregular Migration

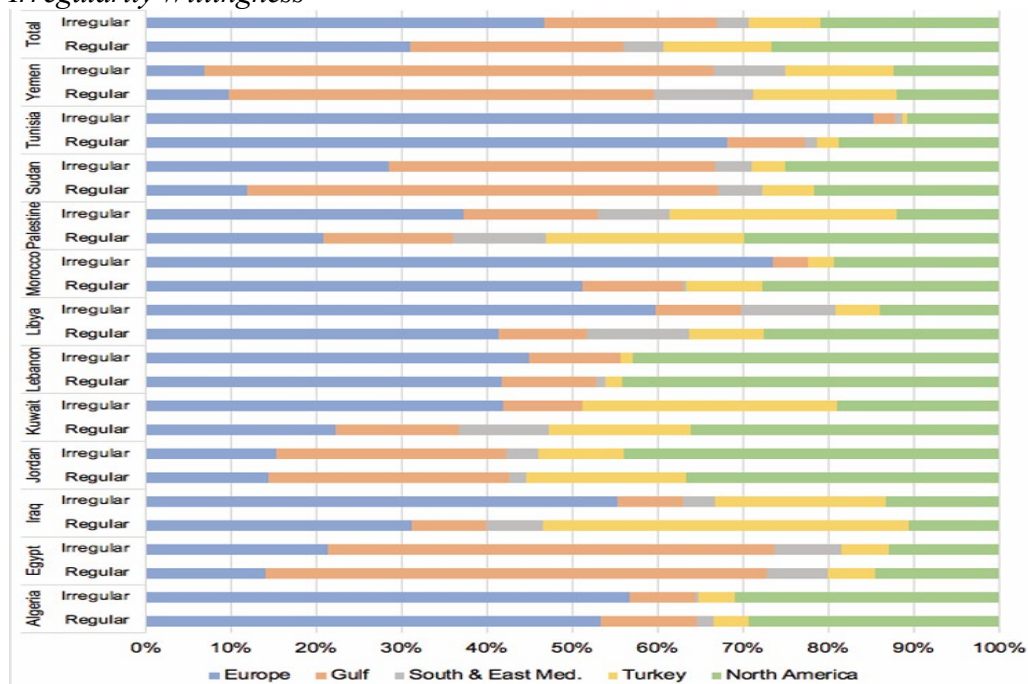
Irregular migration is illegal in Saudi Arabia and the United States if it opposes applicable regulations such as residency, labor, and border security laws. These violations result in penalties such as detention, imprisonment, and fines. This highlights the importance of adhering to local laws and the challenges migrants encounter when attempting to improve their living conditions.

Theory and Distance

Although René Duchac did not fully agree with these laws, statistical analyses from the United Nations Statistical Division indicate that international migrations tend to occur over relatively short geographical distances. For example, over 86% of migrants in Africa remain within the continent, while 80% of migrants in Asia are also of Asian origin (United Nations 2020).

However, migration rates today, particularly under the influence of globalization which has transformed the world into a “global village”, show that migration is no longer confined to geographically proximate areas. The following chart, based on an international and statistical survey conducted by the Arab Barometer across the Middle East and North Africa from 2006-2021, illustrates the preferred destinations for potential migrants by country and type of migration. This data can be used by researchers to challenge the plausibility of the distance theory. For example, over 50% of Algerians wishing to migrate to Europe despite the 2,183 km distance, and over 60% of Jordanians wishing to migrate to North America, despite the 9,852 km distance.

Figure 3. *Desired Destinations of Those Wanting to Emigrate, by Country and Irregularity Willingness*



Source: The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) (2022).

The data presented in Figure 3 illustrates the geographical distribution of preferred migration destinations among potential emigrants from various Arab countries, highlighting distinct patterns between regular and irregular migrants. Europe emerges as the most sought-after destination, particularly among irregular migrants from North African nations such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, where over half of potential emigrants express a preference for moving there. This trend can be attributed to several factors, including geographical proximity, historical ties, and the relative accessibility of irregular migration routes.

In contrast, North America appears to be a primary destination for regular migrants, especially from countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, where over 60% of those intending to migrate express a preference for the region. This inclination may be driven by the presence of well-established diaspora communities, as well as economic and educational opportunities that provide greater stability compared to other migration destinations.

Meanwhile, the Gulf region remains a key destination for regular migrants from countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and Sudan, reflecting the strong demand for both skilled and unskilled labor in these economies. Conversely, Turkey and the South and East Mediterranean region attract a smaller share of migrants relative to Europe and the Gulf, though certain national groups—such as Libyans—may exhibit a stronger preference for these locations due to geographical proximity and historical migration patterns. Overall, these migration trends underscore the economic and social disparities across the Arab world. Countries facing economic hardship tend to produce higher numbers of irregular migrants, while those with historical and socio-political ties to Europe and North America are more likely to engage in regular migration channels. This differentiation in migration preferences reflects broader structural dynamics, including labor market demands, legal migration pathways, and the role of transnational networks in shaping mobility patterns.

Data concerning the number and nationality of migrants contradict distance theory, which assumes a direct relationship between distance and migration. This theory suggests migrants prefer geographically close countries, but in reality, while migrants from countries such as Egypt choose Saudi Arabia, Lebanese and African migrants prefer the United States. This can be attributed to cultural, social, and economic factors that exceed geographic constraints, showing how developments in transportation and communications change traditional migration patterns.

Despite the complexities and varied types of migration, as well as the interwoven reasons for migration, the need for a comprehensive explanatory theory has become an urgent academic necessity and a global imperative. This does not contradict the acknowledgment of the difficulty in establishing a universal theory to explain the dynamics of migration, as "René Duchac" once stated:

"If we mean by the word 'theory' a construct that can encompass every observable migration movement, controlling for all the determinants, motives, phases of this movement, and predicting its outcomes, then it is clear that such a theory does not yet exist in this branch of sociology (migration sociology)".

However, the researcher believes that there is a significant gap between the scale of international migration, its increasing rates, and the contributions of academic

research in this field, particularly in Arab countries. This gap contrasts with the interest of governments and states in the phenomenon and their attempts to understand its causes and motivations. Therefore, it is essential to build upon the current theoretical propositions, seek to develop them, and contribute to creating a new, comprehensive theory in the field of migration that aligns with modern developments and aims to understand and analyze the dynamics of population migration and uncover the best methods to integrate it into the process of overall development.

The researcher also considers it essential, when attempting to build a comprehensive theory in the context of international migration, to account for the transformations that have taken place in this phenomenon in modern times. With the rise of globalization, migration has become increasingly complex, as multiple factors such as economic, political, cultural, and technological factors intertwine in shaping migration decisions. Thus, the critique of traditional migration theories lies in their inability to absorb the complex dynamics of this phenomenon within the context of modern globalization.

Additionally, it is crucial to reconsider the concepts of identity and integration in the context of migration, as migrating communities today are formed in a more flexible way, with individuals interacting with multiple cultures and not confined to their original identities or future destinations.

Government Policies

Both Saudi Arabia and the United States are committed to combating illegal immigration. Each adopts migration management policies that align with its national goals and security. These countries cooperate with international organizations and regional consultation groups by signing charters and agreements on reducing irregular migration.

Historical Events and Their Effects

Saudi Arabia witnessed a significant influx of migrants due to the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the Arab Spring revolutions (2010-2012). These events prompted many individuals to flee their home countries due to widespread devastation, political instability, and violence. The Gulf War in the early 1990s, followed by the political upheavals of the Arab Spring in 2011 and the years that followed, led to an increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons seeking refuge in Saudi Arabia, which provided a safer environment amid regional turmoil.

The migration experiences in Saudi Arabia and the United States demonstrate multiple complexities that reflect each country's unique social, economic, and political contexts. By understanding migration motives and the factors influencing migrant decisions, both countries can improve their policies to accommodate migrants more effectively, benefiting both society and migrants.

Limitations

This study faced certain limitations due to the lack of accurate data on migrants arriving from abroad, their movements, and their concentration in specific regions. These factors reduced the precision of the research, as having more detailed data could have provided a clearer understanding of migration patterns and population distribution. This would have allowed for more reliable conclusions regarding the impact of migration on different areas.

Conclusion

Migration is a complex social and economic phenomenon that affects societies worldwide. Migration experiences vary across countries based on economic, social, political, and cultural factors. This paper has reviewed the theoretical approaches used to explain the differences and similarities between migration experiences in the United States and Saudi Arabia.

According to push and pull theory, high wages, educational opportunities, and cultural diversity are the primary pull factors for the United States, which attracts migrants from countries that push people to leave because they are suffering economic and political problems. Saudi Arabia has a high demand for skilled and unskilled labor in vital sectors such as construction and energy, attracting migrants from countries such as Yemen and Syria, where unfavorable economic and political conditions increase the desire to migrate to Saudi Arabia to pursue better opportunities.

Highly educated migrants move to the United States to seek jobs in technology and medicine. In Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030 reinforces the demand for highly skilled migrants in the technology and renewable energy sectors, reflecting the country's investment trend. However, the influx of unskilled labor is still significant due to conditions in regions countries.

Cultural and social factors play crucial roles in migration experiences, and cultural trends and traditions affect the way migrants are welcomed in receiving countries. In the United States, cultural diversity facilitates the integration of migrants and enhances their sense of belonging. In Saudi Arabia, however, policies focus on integrating migrants into the Saudi society. However, they face challenges with rights and privileges because Saudi Arabia seeks to balance its national identity with its need to attract labor.

The theoretical approaches to understanding migration experiences in the United States and Saudi Arabia provide a comprehensive framework that highlights differences and similarities in push and pull factors. Understanding these experiences requires a careful analysis of economic, social, cultural, and political factors. This allows for a greater understanding of the phenomenon and enhances the effectiveness of migration management policies.

Therefore (and to the best of the researcher's knowledge), migration requires further study, particularly analyzing and addressing the challenges migrants encounter in host countries concerning cultural identity, social integration, and support networks.

Recommendations

Based on the theoretical concepts and intellectual premises addressing the motives for international migration, the framework of the previous data, and the current study's findings, the researcher introduces the most critical recommendations:

- Research is needed to dismantle and analyze all aspects of illegal migration, addressing migrants' motives and ways to combating illegal migration (by the Ministry of Interior, research centers, universities, and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development).
- Advanced technology and artificial intelligence software should be used to tighten controls and intensify follow-up of illegal entry operations, especially in border areas (by the Ministry of Interior, General Directorate of Passports, communications and technology companies, etc.).
- Policies and legislation should be directed to stimulate national and foreign investment (by the Ministry of Human Resources, the Ministry of Investment, the Ministry of Economy and Planning, and the Ministry of Information).
- Training is needed to raise awareness and proficiency for security service members to enforce laws that do not violate migrants' rights (by the General Directorate of Passports, the Border Guard Forces, the Ministry of Information, and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance).

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