

## ELDERLY MIGRATION IN THE MORE AND LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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### Intisari

Tulisan ini bertujuan mendiskusikan migrasi yang dilakukan oleh penduduk lanjut usia, baik di negara-negara maju maupun di negara-negara yang sedang berkembang. Dalam tulisan ini dibahas faktor-faktor penyebab terjadinya migrasi serta jenis migrasi yang dilakukan oleh para lanjut usia. Literatur mengenai migrasi penduduk lanjut usia kebanyakan berdasarkan pada kondisi di negara-negara maju. Namun demikian, pada keadaan tertentu ada relevansinya dengan negara-negara sedang berkembang. Berdasarkan studi kepustakaan didapatkan bahwa ada beberapa jenis migrasi yang dilakukan oleh penduduk lanjut usia. Kategori yang dimaksud adalah *migration for amenity*, *return migration*, *assistance migration*, dan *kinsbip migration*. Dari semua kategori tersebut, *assistance migration* kelihatannya paling relevan bagi penduduk lanjut usia di negara-negara berkembang, diikuti oleh *kinsbip migration* dan *return migration*.

### Introduction

In the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) studies of elderly migration has received inadequate attention from scholars. Indeed, there is no research in the field of migration which specifically examine migration of the elderly (Guest, 1991: 1). Since the peak of migration rates is among the young economically active cohorts, studies of migration are focused on migration of such groups of population. In fact, the elderly do migrate although their rates are not as big as the younger aged people. Data from Indonesia, for instance, revealed that 1.03 per cent of males and 0.93 per cent of females aged 65 years and over have ever changed their residences in the three years prior to 1985 (Guest, 1991: 11). This indicates that the elderly

are not immobile group among the whole population.

By contrast, studies of elderly migration has been more advanced in the western and More Developed Countries (MDCs). This is mainly caused by the higher rates of elderly mobility in these countries and also much greater concern with the aged population compared to LDCs. In MDCs there tend to be high rates of mobility among people at the young working ages and also the post retirement ages (Rogres, 1988: 355). It is not surprising, therefore, to find that studies of elderly migration are mostly based on the experience of the western, industrial countries.

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Migration of the elderly is different from those at the younger aged groups. Accordingly, general migration theories which emphasize migration of the young working aged people may not be applied entirely to migration of the elderly (Biggar, 1980: 75; Murphy, 1979: 84). Factors such as employment opportunities and wage level differentials which are normally known as main factors inducing the young aged groups to migrate may not play important role in facilitating the elderly to move. This paper will discuss the nature and extent of elderly migration. Despite the fact that the literature is mostly based on the western, industrialized nation's experiences, in some instance it has relevance for LDCs. It will be discussed in this paper as well.

#### **Causes of Elderly Migration**

Many factors facilitate elderly migration and as mentioned before they are generally different from the factors underlying general migration. Based on the western, industrialized nation's experience, abrupt changes in the elderly life cycle are more likely to induce migration (Clifford, et al., 1982: 140). These factors include retirement and loss of income, children leaving home, loss of a spouse, decreasing of health status this argument by saying that the factors above trigger migration of the elderly. Moreover, Lee (1980: 132) argues that migration of the old aged people is motivated by illness or the death of a spouse and the need to move closer to relatives or to more specialized aged and health facilities.

In addition, there are other factors that stimulate elderly migration which are based on environmental

considerations. The lower cost of housing, better quality of life and nicer neighborhood are included in such factors (Mcyer and Speare, 1985: 81). In many cities in the United States, crime rates tend to determine the level of elderly migration as well. Places with high crime rates, including property crime, have higher outmigration rates of the level of elderly compared to those with low crime rates (Serow, 1987: 98). It can be said that endogenous factors such as changes in the elderly life cycle coupled with environmental considerations, which is known as exogenous factors, play an important role in encouraging the old aged people to migrate. Nevertheless, in MDSc a good deal of elderly migration is not voluntary, as some involves the response to health deterioration, physical disability and loss of a spouse.

Like their counterparts, in LDCs the prominent events promoting migration are retirement and loss of a spouse which lead to increasing in dependency, particularly among female elderly. In Indonesia, for example, the 1985 population survey revealed that many migration of the elderly are associated with retirement migration. Such migration comprised the elderly who have retired from their jobs and many of them go back to their areas of origin (Guest, 1991: 19).

#### **Typology of Elderly Migration**

Migration of the elderly can be categorized into various types. Wiseman (1980: 149) mentions three primary types of elderly migration regarding long distance movement. Such types are amenity, assistance and return migration. In addition, Gober and Zonn

(1983: 288) point out that elderly migration can be categorized into return, kinship and amenity categories. Each type of elderly migration will be discussed in this following section.

#### **a. Migration for Amenity**

Migration for amenity reasons can be viewed as movement of the elderly in order to look for amenities and a better quality of life. Meyer and Speare (1985: 80) mention that such migration relates to the younger aged, good health status, married status, high income and education status and high previous mobility. Migration for amenity reasons is more likely to be found among the elderly in the more advanced countries. This is because moving to amenity areas, which are probably not close to kin, is more likely to be undertaken by independent and more affluent elderly. Speare (1992: 58) mentions that as societies develop more elderly are able to live independently and this is likely to increase mobility to amenity economically advanced countries migration for amenity reasons has tended to increase among younger elderly couples.

It also can be stated that migration for amenity reasons occurs among people at the early retirement phase. Since the people in this type of migration are newly retired, most of them are in the younger old aged group and mostly married. Moreover, they are likely to be couples who change their residential circumstances after spending much of their adult lives in the labour force.

Environmental considerations play the most important role in decision making to migrate in many MDCs. Accordingly, places with better and

warmer climates and good recreational facilities become the most attractive places to move. For example, migration from the Snowbelt to the Sunbelt states in the United States among the old aged people are mostly for amenity reasons (Litwak and Longino, 1987: 270). Similar conditions also occur in migration flows from metropolitan to nonmetropolitan areas. Migrants in such flows are also those who move often seeking better amenities. Because looking for amenities is the main reason for migration it seems that people in this category have better financial conditions. Serow (1987: 588) supports this argument by saying that movement of the younger and relatively affluent elderly is most likely based on climate and the availability of amenities.

#### **b. Return Migration**

In this type of migration, the areas of destination among elderly migrants are their places of birth or places where they grew-up (Wiseman and Roseman, 1979: 334). Elderly migrants who are categorized in this type of migration are those who left their own home to search for employment in other places and after retirement they decide to go back to their places of origin. Therefore, in terms of the decision of where to move, the migrants are not likely to consider any other places except their own home places.

Longini (1979: 737, cited from Bowman and Maoris, 1967 and Vanderkamp, 1967) pointed out that return migration is often associated with economically unsuccessful migrants in their places of destination. This also applies to the elderly return migrants. Wiseman and Roseman (1979: 334) and

Longino (1979: 740), point out that return migration among the elderly involves those who are often less affluent retirees, since they do not have enough money to move to other place such as those which are known for recreation and amenities. The only alternative available to them is to come back to their original places of residence. Furthermore, a study conducted in France revealed that the majority of low income people constituted return migration and only a small minority of those who are well-off undertaken return migration (Cribier, 1975: 367).

The presence of family and friends still plays an important role in the decision making of return migrants (Serow and Charity, 1988: 161). A study by Longino (1979: 740) about elderly return migration in the United States confirmed this argument. The study found that elderly return migrants constitute the old aged people who reside in older houses, live with siblings and also black people with low personal income. Again, this study supports the proposition that migrants in such migration are those who are more likely to be economically unsuccessful.

In many LDCs, return migrants consist of widows or chronically ill elderly who come back to their home towns or villages (Siegel, 1982: 29). These circumstances may imply that the elderly go back to their own places and live near kin to obtain help or assistance. Hugo (1985: 49) mentioned that based on a study in West Java, return migrants tended to be retired migrants who had spent many years in other places where they had held jobs. After retirement they are likely to return to their own places

in rural areas. In this case, the migrants are mostly government, police and army officers. Many factors stimulate those retired elderly to come back to their home areas. Some of these include the fact that their amount of pension may be to low compared to the high costs of living in urban areas, such as housing costs. Since they have retired from their actual jobs those who usually occupy government houses have to leave the houses. In fact, the costs of hiring or buying a house is very expensive in urban areas. As a consequence, most of them prefer to return to their home villages where the cost of living is relatively low compared with urban areas.

It should be noted, however, in LDCs this kind of migration is not always associated with economically unsuccessful migrants. In West Java, for instance, it has been found that many migrants have built a house in their villages during their period of residence in urban areas (Hugo, 1985: 50). This can be seen as an attempt to prepare for their retirement. Many other migrants bought farm land in their own villages and after retirement they go back to those places.

### **c. Assistance Migration**

Assistance migration tends to be associated with the elderly who move in order to seek help or assistance. These migrants are mostly the very old elderly, most commonly widowed females, living alone and having very poor health condition (Meyer and Speare, 1985: 80). In other words, they are very destitute and the more dependent elderly who look for care and support. The main destination for the elderly who search

for assistance is children's or relative's homes (Wiseman, 1980: 141). This is because of the assumption that they are responsible for caring for their old aged parents. Therefore, many old aged people move to other places and live with their children or relatives to obtain help. Evidence has shown that the migration of elderly from nonmetropolitan to metropolitan areas in the United States can be considered as a movement for assistance reasons (Litwak and Longino, 1987: 269). This is because their children and kin mostly reside in metropolitan areas, so that to fulfil the need for assistance the elderly have to move to these areas.

The elderly who move for assistance reasons are mostly widowed after the death of a spouse (Serow, 1988: 583). Such conditions also occur in the Less Developed countries. Guest (1991: 17) mentioned that among old aged women in Indonesia migration is associated with dependency. This includes financial and psychological dependency. It is common to find many old aged women who live in rural areas migrating to the cities to join their children or relatives following the death of their husbands (Hoover and Siegel, 1986: 20). This leads to the greater number of old aged women living in urban areas compared to old aged men. In the Asia region the greater number of old aged women living in urban areas happens in almost all countries, except in Bangladesh, China, Japan, Nepal dan Pakistan (Martin, 1988: 104).

For the elderly who do not have any children or relatives they are forced to move to institutionalized homes as demand for assistance increases. As deterioration of health occurs the only

choice for those who have no relatives is to enter a home for the aged which range from rather limited facilities to full care facilities. although most of them do not like living in institutions, they are forced to stay there because they do not have any other alternatives.

#### **d. Kinship Migration**

Kinship migration involves movement to reside near kin. There is no clear separation between this type of migration and assistance migration. This is because kinship migration is triggered by motivation to get help or assistance from kin (Wiseman and Roseman, 1979: 334). In the More Developed Countries, migration of the very old elderly is motivated by the need to live near kin, primarily adult children (Clark and Wolf, 1992: 92). Furthermore, economic dependency can be considered as a factor stimulating this type of migration. Old aged people are forced to live with their children or kin because they are not economically independent.

In the context of the less Developed Countries elderly migration to be close to kin or children's homes is more likely associated with financial dependency. This is because of the limited coverage of pension and other kinds of social security scheme for the old aged people provided by the government (Conspiration, 1988: 409). In Indonesia, for instance the pension scheme covers only a small number of old aged people, some 16 per cent of males and 5 per cent of females receive pensions, with most of them previously employed as government officials (Chen and Jones, 1989: 58). These data clearly indicate that only selected people receive pensions, particularly government

officials and employees of a small number of private firms in the modern sector. Pension recipients are more likely not to be dependent financially on their children or kin. On the other hand, for the elderly who do not receive any pension or other kinds of old aged security tend to rely solely on their children or kin. Therefore, it is not surprising to find many elderly migrating to be close to their children or kin when they are no longer capable of earning money for themselves or able to support themselves.

Of all the typologies of elderly migration, it seems that assistance migration is the most applicable for the elderly in LDCs. However, there is a slight difference between the two groups of countries. In MDCs assistance movement is primarily due to physical disability which leads to the need for assistance in carrying out daily activities. The elderly move to children's houses as the needs for physical assistance increase. Moreover, if children are no longer able to provide assistance or the elderly are suffering from more chronic disabilities they move to institutional homes for the elderly. In LDCs, provision of care for the old aged parents by children is an important cultural norm (Nugent, 1985: 78). It is not surprising, therefore, to find more elderly in LDCs move to kin's houses, primarily children, compared with those who move to homes for the aged which are in very short supply in most Asian countries.

Kinship migration is also relevant to the Less Developed Countries. Similar with assistance migration the elderly are forced to move close to kin when they are physically incapable or their health

deteriorates. However, kinship migration in LDCs is not only due to physical deterioration, but also associated with economic dependency. This is because of the limited cover of the social security for the aged. Indeed, some poor economic countries cannot afford even minimal social security for the old aged people (Jones, 1990: 9). Women, in particular, are more likely to coreside with their children, especially after the death of a spouse, due to economic dependency. Women are less likely to receive monetary support such as pensions or a provident fund. In ASEAN countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and even the newly industrialized country, Singapore, it was found that only a very small percentage of women were receiving pensions (Chen and Jones, 1989: 59). Since family is the basic unit which provides economic security for the elderly moving into children's houses when they become dependent economically.

Another type of elderly migration which is relevant for LDCs is return migration. Return migrants comprise retired people who have spent their working lives in many places outside their provinces of birth. Those who become dependent, physically or economically, may go back to live with kin who still live in their home areas.

On the contrary, elderly migration for amenity reasons is less likely to be applicable for the elderly in LDCs. As mentioned before, migration seeking more favorable amenities is more likely to be undertaken by independently living elderly. In the less Developed Countries most elderly still tend to rely on their children. This is reflected by the

high number of elderly who live with children or other relatives. In countries such as Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore it is found that more than 70 per cent of the elderly are living with one or more children (Concepcion, 1988: 409). Therefore, most migration of the elderly in LDCs is tied to kin. Very few of older people migrate for amenity reasons. Furthermore, this kind of migration has a positive relationship with economic development of the countries. Therefore, the more developed a country becomes, the more likely it is that migration toward amenity destinations will be undertaken by the more affluent and economically independent elderly.

### **Conclusion**

From the discussion above it can be concluded that elderly migration is different from migration of the general population. Processes underlying such migration are different to those underlying general migration. Accordingly, general migration theories which focus on migration of the young aged population or on labour mobility cannot be applied automatically to migration of the elderly.

Migration of the elderly in some ways is more complicated as it consists of many types of movement with different causes stimulating such movement. The most common types of elderly migration mentioned by many scholars are amenity migration, return migration, assistance migration and kinship migration. The major factors causing elderly migration tend to be related to abrupt life cycle changes of the elderly. These include retirement and loss of income, children leaving home, loss of spouse and

physical and health deterioration. Environmental considerations, such as a better quality of life and neighborhood satisfaction also contribute to elderly migration. Nevertheless, each type of migration is induced by specific causes which differ from the others. Moreover, the characteristics of elderly migrants are not the same for all types of migration. In other words, elderly migrants in particular types of migration have different socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, and indeed also differ from migrants in other groups.

Furthermore, studies of elderly migration which are mostly based on the More Developed Countries' experiences, may or may not be relevant for the Less Developed Countries and many more empirical studies need to be undertaken. Nevertheless, there will be differences in the causes and characteristics of elderly migrants among the various countries. Return migrants, for example, in MDCs are frequently associated with economically unsuccessful migrants in the areas of destinations. By contrast, in LDCs, return migration can be directly linked to success in the areas of destination. Moreover, kinship and assistance migrants in LDCs are primarily related to dependency and more commonly, economic dependency, than is the case in MDCs.

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