

Theoretical Considerations for Studying Socio-Psychological Factors in Migration

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Although the existing literature in social sciences provides considerable factual information about migration which has been gathered through refined techniques and research tools, it is often claimed that the information on migration is still mostly in unstructured state because of the lack of a general theory on the migration phenomena. Social scientists, like Hauser [6, pp. 70-85], Lee [8, pp. 47-57], Vance [15, pp. 88-94] and Wilber [16, pp. 52-61] have expressed similar views and emphasized the need for the development of a general theory in order to integrate the existing diverse findings regarding the migration process, and also to provide guidelines for future research on the subject.

Beijer [1, pp.12-21] is among the few who maintain that migration phenomena cannot be explained and understood without understanding the economic, social, and demographic forces. He strongly stresses that migration studies formulating theoretical statements must take these forces into consideration. Heberle [7, pp. 65-70] and Peterson [10, pp. 256-266] are among others who also realized this need and set up typologies of migration based on migratory selective factors such as age, sex, occupation and family status. The main purpose of these typologies was to offer, by an ordering of conceptual types, a basis for the possible development of theory. In spite of the fact that these scholars felt the shared concern and came forward to set up typologies of migration, not much attention has been given to typologies as conceptual tools. Attempts at model building by sociologists such as Folger [5, pp. 155-164] and Taft [12, pp. 141-156] also indicate a similar concern for theoretical guidelines for the study of migration.

Although there is a growing realization of the need for greater attention to the theoretical aspects of the study of migration, there are certain problems

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which create numerous obstacles in the task of building a general theory for this purpose. One of the problems concerns adequate conceptualization of the phenomenon. The study of migration is not the monopoly of a single discipline in the community of behavioural sciences. Migration has been and will continue to be a field of investigation by sociologists, anthropologists, demographers, economists, political scientists, social psychologists, historians, and human geographers. Within each of these sciences, there are differences in orientation and approaches to the study of migration. As a result, most migration studies present discipline-oriented abstractions of the phenomenon with inadequate definitions and treatment.

Another important problem which creates difficulties for building theories in the study of migration relates to the type of data used by investigators. A review of the existing migration literature reveals only a limited number of studies based on direct survey data. There is a general consensus among behavioural scientists that data from direct surveys are needed to arrive at meaningful generalizations about migration. Traditionally, data for migration studies have been obtained from secondary sources such as government censuses, medical records, port statistics, and, even telephone directories. While these secondary data are valuable, it is generally recognized by demographers, e.g., Bogue [2, pp. 486-509] and Tarver [13, pp. 162-163] that these statistics vary in degrees of usefulness and accuracy. Tarver [13, p. 163] expressed the views that "in order to maximize the usefulness of published census data in migration research, there is a need for the following additional types of classification: (1) By type of residence at both origin and destination; (2) By the four types of migration according to the unit of migration; (3) By characteristics of family head and size of family at the date of migration."

With a sense of optimism it is strongly maintained here that the development of a theoretical framework for migration research not only is a possibility but must be an important concern for social scientists. Verification of phenomena is a continuous process in the development of a systematic and scientific theory. An attempt is made in this note to offer a guideline for avoiding some of the misconceptions involved in the segmental approaches, which are followed in behavioural sciences, in the study of migration. Before presenting such a guideline it would be useful to have a glimpse at the following examples of conceptualization phenomenon, as done by some social scientists:

Thomas [14, p. 510]:

Migration is defined as the movements (involving change of permanent residence) from one country to another which take place through the volition of the individuals or families concerned.

Einstadt [4, p. 1]:

We define migration as the physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another. This transition usually involves abandoning one social setting and entering another and different one.

Peterson [11, p. 592]:

A migration means, therefore, not merely a shift of a certain number of undifferentiated persons from one place to another, but also a change in the occupational and population structure of both countries or regions.

Mangalam and Morgan [9, p. 8]:

Migration is a relatively permanent moving away of a collectivity, called migrants, from one geographical location to another, preceded by decision-making on the part of the migrants on the basis of a hierarchically ordered set of values or valued ends and resulting in changes in the interactional system of the migrants.

An analysis of the above definitions of migration reveals that they have agreements and disagreements on certain conceptual components. One major point of disagreement is the conceptual treatment of the individual versus the group in the study of migration. Mangalam and Morgan basically view migration phenomenon as group activity and do not refer to the individual except in a passing manner. They follow the human interactional approach in which they abstract and define the social (interactional) part of the phenomenon from the totality of its dimensions. Their social organization framework tends to leave out individual behaviour from migration and concentrates on the human social (interactional) element. It is an incomplete approach to an understanding of migration. The treatment of migration phenomenon in this manner stems, perhaps, from their particular orientation according to which sociology deals with human groups, not with individuals. It is true that sociology is primarily concerned with the social processes and social relationships by which human activity takes place. Nevertheless, in order to understand the associational life of man, it must also study the individual in his physical and psychological make-up and his acquired nature as well as his biological nature. With this orientation in mind, this note stresses that, in order to explain the migration phenomenon, any theoretical framework must take into consideration the social as well as socio-psychological aspects of migration. It should be pointed out, however, that social and socio-psychological factors involved in migration are conceptually distinguishable but structurally and functionally intertwined. Whether migration is by individuals alone or in groups (mainly families) both social and socio-psychological factors are always involved.

In this note, migration is conceived as a phenomenon having both social and socio-psychological aspects. Some aspects deal with the social system, some with the cultural system, and others with the personality system of persons in their social and cultural milieu. The theoretical framework outlined here, thus, takes into account both the individual and collective aspects of migration. The social aspects of migration can be studied within the social and cultural systems, while the socio-psychological aspects must be understood within the context of the personality system. Within the context of the social and cultural systems, influences on migrant's decision to migrate include the felt deprivations as well as negative attitudes of other persons towards him. On the other hand, aspirations and motivations are influenced by reference objects largely through socio-psychological interaction, and these factors which also influence the decision to migrate may be best explainable within the personality system. Thus, persons may vary markedly in their propensity change, in risk taking in connection with migration, etc.

The conceptualization of migration as both a social and social-psychological phenomenon is set forth in the theoretical framework which follows. Emphasis is placed on both social interaction and social-psychological interaction factors influencing decisions to migrate. Migration is a relatively permanent moving away of an individual or a collectivity from one geographical place to

another. The decision to move is based on certain deprivations, stresses, constraints, aspirations, motivations and attitudes felt in the major institutional spheres at the place of origin as well as known or perceived opportunities at the possible places of relocation. The decision-making in respect of movement is influenced through both social interaction and socio-psychological interaction. The decision to migrate and the selection of destination are made within the framework of the above factors and simultaneously within the context of known or perceived constraints as intervening obstacles and finally the process of migration ends up with changes in the social and physical setting, at the places of both origin and destination.

The characteristics included in the above theoretical framework set specific boundaries for the study of the migration phenomenon. One of the aspects of migration included in the framework is related to permanent moving or change of residence involving movement from one geographical place to another. Like other existing conceptual frameworks, especially of Mangalam and Morgan, the framework outlined above also excludes tourists, commuters, and salesmen from the category of migrants. The reference to time dimension implied in the expression "relatively permanent moving away of an individual or a collectivity" requires that change in residence involving movement between places within a given society as well as international movements should have at least some minimum duration, say, one year. It is obvious that the choice of a criterion and duration is arbitrary. However, reference to some measurable extent of the permanency of movement is essential if migration is to be adequately measured and its implications better understood. For example, persons having lived less than one year at their current residence could be asked their intended duration of stay.

Another important aspect of migration as outlined in the theoretical framework deals with the definition of the geographical places of origin and destination. The place from which a migrant departs is termed the "place of origin" and the place at which he arrives is termed the "place of destination." It is often seen that in most situations the boundaries of individual communities are not delimited or else are delimited very imprecisely. Only rarely are the legal boundaries coterminous with the functional boundaries. The scattered residential patterns of rural population and sub-urbanization make it difficult to delineate the exact boundaries of a particular community. For this reason, a desirable definition of migration as movement between communities cannot be employed with empirical precision in migration research. Instead, some existing sets of well established and universally familiar boundaries can be used as an approximation. Villages, towns, cities, municipalities and similar areas most nearly match the definition and are practicable since population data may be found for such places.

The last aspect of migration included in the present conceptual framework and dealing with changes in the social and physical setting both at the place of origin and the place of destination sets limits to the time and distance dimensions before a particular movement can be called migration. Collectivity and individuality are interactional dimensions in the framework and deal with the social and socio-psychological aspects of the migration phenomenon respectively.

The decision to move is based both on 'push' factors (felt deprivations, stresses, constraints, aspirations, motivations and attitudes) and 'pull' factors

(such as known or perceived opportunities at possible places of relocation). The "push—pull" dichotomy is an abstraction which deals with the classification of the specific forces of migration. In each case of migration, several variables of both types may be operating and interacting so that the movement cannot be attributed wholly to either 'push' or 'pull' factors alone. Discussing the forces of migration, Bogue [3, p. 756] states: "some of the forces represent impersonal conditions in the environment, while others represent the mental states of individuals. Ultimately, all migration (if it is voluntary) results from a subjective response to two subjectively perceived and subjectively interpreted socio-economic environments—the one presently occupied and another one that is possible alternative."

For an understanding of the dynamics of the migration process, the mechanism of decision-making occupies an important place in the conceptual framework of this note. Deprivations are felt by the collectivity or the individual when immediate needs are not fulfilled by conditions existing within a community. The existing conditions may be characterised either by the absence of certain institutions within the community or by the lack of opportunities in the existing institutions in terms of people's dominant values, e.g., higher education and higher income. Exploitation of certain classes within the community may become another cause of migration. These deprivations felt by the people in terms of their abstract values are important in the study of migration. Reviewing the importance of deprivations in the migration process, Mangalam and Morgan [9, p. 9] write: "Not only are these deprivations in the more highly valued ends significant in the decision to move, but they are also important factors in the adjustmental phase that follows migration. For, it is legitimate to assume that if the deprivations responsible for the move continue to exist even after migration, the probability of a lack of adjustment after the move is very great."

The conceptual components such as stresses and constraints play a significant role in explaining migration behaviour. The concept of stress, as a component within the framework, can be used in seeking the social explanation of migration in terms of the processes of population movements as adaptations to social pressures for success. This note defines 'stress' in a narrow sense as cultural values focusing on self-achievement and self-reliance in one's career. These values are transmitted to individuals through social interaction in the process of socialization. It is assumed in this framework that when opportunities are not available within the community to fulfill the cultural pressures, then certain members of the community (as groups or as individuals) conceive the idea of moving out of it and going to a different place within the same society, or another society where they can find adequate facilities and opportunities to rise in their career through self-achievement.

The concept of constraints is another component which also deals with the social aspect of migration. It is assumed that a rigid code of life imposed on members of a community through social and cultural constraint frequently compels some people to migrate from that community to another community. These three concepts, viz., deprivations, stresses, and constraints, can be employed effectively in understanding migration differentials and other aspects of migration behaviour. Therefore, each occupies an important place in the theoretical framework.

migrants face certain problems during the process of adaptation to the new culture. In the initial stages, migration is generally regarded as an adaptive process during which the migrants maintain the dynamic equilibrium of their social organization with minimum changes, at the same time trying to meet their felt needs. Complete integration with the new culture is always a slow process and creates many problems.

The migration process also brings about changes in the population composition and economic resources at both the place of origin and the place of destination and this creates new problems at both places. Reviewing the process of international migration, Mangalam and Morgan [9, p. 8] quote Taft and Robbins:

The emigrant leaving his native land breaks ties with his people, and with the goals and practices of his home culture. The immigrant entering his adopted land establishes new ties, comes to accept new values; yet he contributes something himself to the new culture. And whatever his direction, the migrant is caught up in the larger problems which confront both native and foreigner. These include population growth, the search for economic satisfaction, racial contacts and conflicts, the development of national loyalties, the establishment of intercultural relations. In short, the migrant is part of and is influenced by the basic social processes.

With certain modifications these statements can be applied to internal migrants as well.

The area of migration research has been covered quite extensively and intensively in the Western countries, particularly the United States. But, unfortunately, not much work has been done in Pakistan. The theoretical statements found in the empirical studies done so far are concerned mostly with interpreting specific dimensions of the migration phenomenon. Such studies, detached and isolated in conceptual and methodological neatness as they are, have been used in this note as guidelines for developing the present theoretical framework. The author intends subsequently to apply this framework to migration studies in Pakistan.

An understanding of the forces which determine human migration is of interest and importance both to the scientists and the policy makers who utilize the knowledge about mobility to achieve national and local economic goals. With rapid urbanization taking place in Pakistan, there is a need for substantial research on factors of migration in order to understand this phenomenon in its proper perspective.

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