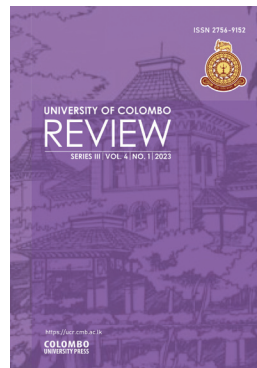


<https://doi.org/10.4038/ucr.v4i1.121>

University of Colombo Review (Series III),
Vol.4, No.1, 2023



Social networking and subjective well-being among Sri Lankan youth immigrants in South Korea

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ABSTRACT

Labor migration is often seen as a means to offer economic stability to prospective migrants, especially in developing countries. However, the desire for migration becomes less favorable in the absence of the supportive framework fostered by social networks among immigrants. Sri Lankan youth from rural areas who frequently experience financial hardships are being encouraged to migrate to South Korea. This article investigates how social networking influences the subjective well-being of those Sri Lankan labor immigrants in South Korea. In-depth interviews, case studies, and the retrieval of social media data were used to collect data. According to the analysis, the capacity for social networking influences the outcomes of migration. In addition, migration to South Korea has been promoted not as an alternative to existing financial stability solutions, but as a mainstream strategy for enhancing life satisfaction, particularly for young rural men in Sri Lanka. In addition, it is discovered that the host country must provide an environment conducive to the operation of migrant networks. Overall, the article demonstrates that having access to migrant networks is a fundamental element in ensuring the well-being of immigrants.

KEYWORDS:

Migrant networks; Social-networks; Sri Lankan migrants; Subjective well-being; Youth migration

Suggested Citation: Udayanga, S., Chamathya, Y. & Perera, N.G. (2023). Social networking and subjective well-being among Sri Lankan youth immigrants in South Korea. *University of Colombo Review* (New Series III), 4(1), 124-155.

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Introduction

Young labor migrants in Sri Lanka have chosen South Korea as a dream country where they can accomplish their desired life goals because of the high level of living standards and welcoming attitude towards immigrants (Jayawardena, 2020; Shaw, 2010). However, without the aid of social networking, migration aspirations are undesirable (Bankston, 2014). The present article thus demonstrates how social networking contributes to the subjective well-being (SWB) of Sri Lankan youth immigrants in South Korea. While there is no consensus on the definition of youth migrants, the United Nations (UN) defines youth migration in terms of their intentions, encompassing pursuits such as seeking employment opportunities abroad (United Nations, 2003). Youth, typically ranging from ages 15 to 24 [even though in Sri Lanka it extends from 15 to 29 (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development, 2014)] fall within this categorization. For the purpose of this research, youth immigrants aged 20 to 40 were considered, as this age bracket aligns with the range in which individuals tend to migrate in search of job opportunities (United Nations, 2003). Migration is viewed as a process that enhances the overall well-being of potential migrants (Chen et al., 2019). A migrant is a person who moves from one location or nation to another, typically with the intent to reside or work there temporarily or permanently (Pinnawala, 2009). Migration can occur for numerous reasons, including the pursuit of better economic opportunities, the evasion of persecution or conflict, the reunion of family members, and the pursuit of educational opportunities (Chand, 2012; Jayawardena, 2022; Lightman et al., 2022). “Immigrant” is a term used to describe a person from the perspective of the host country (Vorländer, 2020).

Migration to high-performing countries indicates a desire to improve the quality of life for immigrants. However, in the absence of effective social, cultural, and economic inclusion and SWB, the purpose of migration can be jeopardized (Nash et al., 2006). SWB or experienced happiness is measured using a life-satisfaction scale, which is an individual’s assessment of their life (van Praag et al., 2003). Van Praag et al. (2023) show that SWB is primarily the result of a set of determinants, including their degree of integration, and the support received from social networks. Furthermore, it has been argued that immigration is only successful when it benefits both immigrants and the host country (Katwala et al., 2014; Pinnawala, 2009). Understanding how social networking affects the SWB of Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea is therefore a topic of contemporary importance.

SWB is defined as a person’s cognitive and affective evaluation of life that can be influenced by the culture and identity of immigrants (Diener et al., 2009, p. 63). SWB is an aggregate conceptualization of quality of life, life satisfaction, and depression level (Stranges et al., 2021). Because the belief in a better future elsewhere is one of the expectations of human migration, migrants can be assimilated into a new

cultural domain, thereby changing their habitus (the way in which the social world is perceived and reacted to) (Bourdieu, 2002). The reshaped habitus is a crucial factor in ensuring SWB. Thus, migration reshapes how the world is perceived and how individuals respond to new life circumstances (Nowicka, 2015). Munas (2023), on the other hand, found how religious identities of immigrants play a considerable role in forming political identities in the host countries. Migration is thus a cultural phenomenon; consequently, the ultimate goals of migration can only be attained by strengthening social networks and linking them to the institutions of the host country. Social networks among migrants developed on the basis of the identity of country of origin provides a supportive environment for migrants, including the strengthened collectivity for common gains (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011). Pathirage & Collyer's research demonstrates the crucial role of social networks and social capital in facilitating immigrant integration, with a specific focus on Italy (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011).

Labor migration is not only for economic purposes and includes a societal process (Foresti & Hagen-Zanker, 2018). Although human migration is viewed as an effective strategy for a country's economic growth, the 2030 agenda for sustainable development highlights the importance of social policies that assist immigrants in achieving their desired quality of life (International Organization for Migration, 2018). The agenda sheds light on the need to improving labor migration governance and promoting decent work (Foresti & Hagen-Zanker, 2018; International Organization for Migration, 2018). Thus, it is useful to clarify how migrants experience their life satisfaction, as the promotion of decent work and the governance of labor migration are heavily dependent on how migrants ultimately express their success and life satisfaction.

Labor migration is not just an economic phenomenon; rather, it is also a subjective phenomenon because the ways in which individuals and cultures perceive the advantages and disadvantages of their decision to migrate can vary (Boccagni, 2017). For instance, previous research indicate that the purpose of migration is to increase happiness while ensuring the life satisfaction of migrants (Bartram, 2013; Czaika & de Haas, 2014; Sriskandarajah, 2005). However, SWB or the subjective evaluation of life quality, life satisfaction, and depression level, as perceived by immigrants, has received little attention. This article, therefore, focuses on the relationship between the capacities emerging from social networks and SWB among Sri Lankan youth immigrants in South Korea.

The economic policy of Sri Lanka considers women's migration to the Middle East as a potential means of boosting the country's gross national product three to four decades ago, but men's migration to South Korea now holds a prominent position in terms of its social impact and relatively high level of forex earnings (Han, 2022; Silva & Udayanga, 2018). The migration trend has moved from the

Middle East to South Korea, and from women to men (Shaw, 2010). This shift has reshaped the family structure of the country (Yi et al., 2020). Moreover, Jayawardena (2022) noted that Sri Lankan perceptions of Sri Lankan immigrants encompass two contradictory aspects. She found that there exists a paradoxical and conflicting perspective towards their migrants. On one side, migrants are regarded in a favorable light, seen as valuable economic assets. Conversely, they are also perceived in an unfavorable manner, labeled as disloyal individuals. Sri Lankans who have not migrated hold this second viewpoint due to a nationalistic standpoint. They associate a person's loyalty with their physical presence within a specific territory.

Several studies have been conducted on migration and such related topics (Czaika & de Haas, 2014; Hoang, 2016; Tienda & Booth, 1991; Toma, 2016). In contrast, relatively limited research has been conducted on how social networks influence the SWB of immigrants. Berkman (2000) demonstrates the intricate integration of social networks and social support, highlighting their pivotal role in enhancing health standards of immigrants. Additionally, he presents a comprehensive framework for studying the significance of social networks and their contributions to individuals' well-being. The notions of social capital and the significance of social networks stand as crucial factors influencing migration experiences. Without a grasp of the interconnections within migrant social networks, a comprehensive understanding of their experiences remains elusive (Bankston, 2014). Nonetheless, several studies on migration and culture have concentrated on the relationship between cultural identity and sociocultural adaptation (Zlobina et al., 2006). Furthermore, some have emphasized the significance of immigrants' subjective identities, which influence how they respond to the social context of the host country (Schwartz et al., 2006). The gender dimension of migration has been the subject of extensive research (Fernandez, 2018; Minocha, 2012; Pinnawala, 2009). Studies highlight how immigrants experience new circumstances in the host country, and how immigration aspirations are shaped by gender identities (Halfacree & Boyle, 2000). The gender dimension is also an integral component of narrative identity formation and social network formation among immigrants (Abadia et al., 2018; Curran et al., 2005; Lechner & Renault, 2018). This article too devotes considerable attention to the gender dimension. Gender plays a crucial role in social networking and ensuring SWB through social capital. Research indicates that labor migration to South Korea is predominantly undertaken by men, in contrast to women. Consequently, men have a greater opportunity to harness the benefits of labor migration (Han, 2022).

A large proportion of Sri Lanka's gross domestic product is comprised of remittances, to which Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea contribute significantly (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2020). In 2022 alone, Sri Lankan workers remitted approximately \$3.8 billion. And in 2022, more than 300,000 Sri Lankans left the country in search of employment abroad, indicating that migration has become one

of the most important economic determinants of the country's economic growth and social development (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2023). The economic crisis and certain deteriorating social conditions in Sri Lanka have also contributed to the outmigration of the country's youth (Lansakara, 2023). In addition, more than 60% of reported immigrants are men (SLBFE, 2022). The vast majority of them were skilled professionals and laborers. In 2004, six countries, including Sri Lanka, became the first to be included in the employment permit system (EPS) in South Korea. Since then, Sri Lanka has continued to send Sri Lankans to work as unskilled laborers in South Korea. According to the Ministry of Employment and Labor, a total of 40,000 Sri Lankans are working in Korea under the EPS in 2022, together with 500 newcomers (Lansakara, 2023). In recent years, bilateral agreements between Sri Lanka and South Korea have increased migration to South Korea. In 2023, South Korea increased the allocated job quota to 6,500 for Sri Lankans, in addition to the existing 40,000 quota. Sri Lankans in South Korea remitted around \$520 million to the country in 2019. The contribution of remittances from Sri Lankan migrant workers in South Korea amounted to 7.75% of total foreign remittances, or 0.62% of Sri Lanka's gross domestic product (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2023). All of these factors prompted Sri Lankans to migrate to South Korea, and the government actively encourages this migration, thereby increasing competition among young men in rural Sri Lanka to migrate to South Korea. In addition, it offered hope to those who lacked education or vocational qualifications. Furthermore, the significant turnover of local employees in demanding and labor-intensive occupations in South Korea stands as a crucial factor prompting South Korea to extend invitations to young migrants for employment within the country (Wijayasiri, 2019).

Sri Lanka's Foreign Employment Bureau facilitates South Korean Migration in various capacities, and many young men (20-45 years old) from rural and semi-urban areas migrate due to South Korea's high wages and substantial human development. South Korea has achieved remarkable progress in human development (0.925 in 2021) over the past few decades. This progress can be attributed to various factors, including economic growth, education, healthcare, and social policies (Jwa, 2023). Compared to the migration of women to the Middle East, the migration of young men to South Korea has increased for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to South Korea's migrant-friendly social policy (Shaw, 2010). For example, from a legal perspective, individuals from other countries are permitted to enter primarily for the purpose of taking on low-wage employment, whilst being eligible for social welfare benefits (Seol, 2018). In addition, the diversified market economy including agriculture, production and fisheries in South Korea attracts workers (especially young male workers) from developing countries. Sri Lanka has established a mechanism that enables Sri Lankans to work in South Korea, particularly in the industrial and service sectors. More than 40,000 Sri Lankan immigrants work in

South Korean industries and service sectors as of 2022 (SLBFE, 2022). As many young people work in South Korea without being reported, the unreported number is likely higher than the actual number (Wijayasiri, 2019). Migration restriction issues and COVID-19 have contributed to a decline in the number of Sri Lankans migrating to South Korea over the past two years, particularly among men. However, the number of Sri Lankans migrating to South Korea is projected to rise again after 2023 (Figure 1). According to Figure 1, female migration to South Korea has been significantly low.

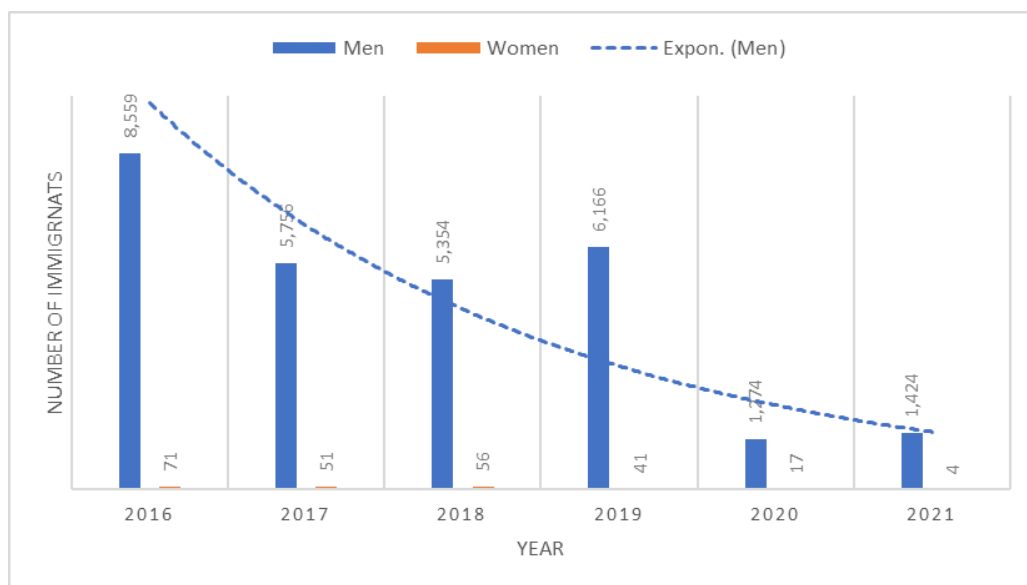


Figure 1: *Number of Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea (SLBFE, 2022)*

Labor migration to South Korea is primarily concentrated in four major sectors: fisheries, agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, while the service sector receives a negligible amount which is below 5% (Mailan Arachchige Don & Hong, 2022). Many young Sri Lankans migrate to South Korea in search of employment in the manufacturing sector, as opposed to the other three sectors, due primarily to the high salaries and other social service facilities offered (Withers, 2019). Moreover, initial attitudes about the quality of life in South Korea promotes migration decision among young men in rural Sri Lanka. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Quality of Life as a person's evaluation of their position within the culture and values of their environment, taking into account their hopes, expectations, benchmarks, and concerns (WHO, 2003).

Existing research regarding the transformation of cultural disposition of immigrants in a different cultural setting indicates that immigrants are highly likely to assimilate into a new cultural setting. This assimilation includes the adaptation

of certain social and cultural facts in the host country while retaining certain ideas, values, and customs from the country of origin (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2008; Phinney et al., 2001).

Studies show that social networking on the basis of cultural identity reinforces the immigration integration process. Furthermore it enhances the prospects for migrants to achieve their desired objectives of the migration process (Bobowik et al., 2022; Bucholtz & Sūna, 2019; Ryan, 2011). The strength of social networks or bonding social capital is defined by Putnam (2000) as “connections within a group or community characterized by high levels of similarity in demographic characteristics, attitudes, and available information and resources” (p. 43). Putnam’s explanations provide valuable insights to study social networks among immigrants.

The formation and utilization of social networking by Sri Lankan youth immigrants in South Korea in terms of ensuring their SWB is less studied, despite its significance for policy formulation. Therefore, this article focuses on the following two objectives: to understand the association between social networks and employment success of Sri Lankan immigrant laborers in South Korea, and to explore how social networking contributes to ensuring the SWB of Sri Lankan immigrant laborers in South Korea.

Materials and Methods

This article was grounded on constructivist ontology, and that was decided on the basis of field-based experiences and theoretical understanding (Bryman, 2008). This perspective challenges the premise that categories such as culture and social structure are predetermined or exist independently of human intervention and interpretation. Therefore, in this approach social actors are viewed as active agents of society (Crotty, 1998). This article’s objectives reflect a constructivist position, and hence the constructivist grounded theory was employed, particularly for data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The main intention of the present study was to understand life experiences of youth immigrants as they narrate it. This article’s epistemological premise accepts that knowledge is socially created and perceived. The interpretivist epistemological perspective is rooted in the belief that knowledge is subjective rather than objective. Accepting both the constructivist ontological and interpretivist epistemological positions, a qualitative study was conducted in the present study while following grounded theoretical approach (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019).

The recruitment of twenty-two (22) participants began with purposive sampling and continued with snowball sampling. First, three young immigrants known to the authors, were contacted, and a request was made for introductions to other immigrants. The research was conducted at mutually convenient times, specifically targeting individuals who had migrated from rural areas. As soon as the

theoretical saturation was reached, sampling ceased (Morse & Clark, 2019; Saunders et al., 2018). On the basis of the data that have been collected or analysed hitherto, further data collection and/or analysis were unnecessary. However, there appears to be uncertainty as to how saturation should be conceptualized, and inconsistencies in its use. In this paper, we look to clarify the nature, purposes and uses of saturation, and in doing so add to theoretical debate on the role of saturation across different methodologies. We identify four distinct approaches to saturation, which differ in terms of the extent to which an inductive or a deductive logic is adopted, and the relative emphasis on data collection, data analysis, and theorizing. We explore the purposes saturation might serve in relation to these different approaches, and the implications for how and when saturation will be sought. In examining these issues, we highlight the uncertain logic underlying saturation-as essentially a predictive statement about the unobserved based on the observed, a judgement that, we argue, results in equivocation, and may in part explain the confusion surrounding its use. We conclude that saturation should be operationalized in a way that is consistent with the research question(s). Working in South Korea for over five years and migration from rural areas were the two main admissibility criteria. The sample included those aged 25 to 40 who migrated as laborers. Despite the stipulated age range defined by the National Youth Policy of Sri Lanka (15-29 years) (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development, 2014), immigrants up to the age of 40 were included in the recruitment process. This inclusion was necessary due to some individuals having lived in South Korea for over a decade, having migrated at 29 years of age or younger.

In addition, five (5) returnee migrants were interviewed to understand reflective experiences of immigrant lives. The overall sample included twenty-seven (27) participants purposively recruited (see Table 1 below). This article employing grounded analytic sampling consisted of four steps: grasping the phenomenon, identifying theoretical components, constructing the theory, and sampling for the development of the theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019). The 22 respondents selected were indicative of different ages, marital status, education levels and livelihoods, number of children and place of origin. Most respondents self-identified as Buddhists.

In-depth interviews with immigrants in South Korea and social media data retrieval were employed to collect data. Semi-structured guide was employed in every interview. Nineteen (19) in-depth interviews with current Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea were conducted online and three case studies were carried out with Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea who remigrated after a five-year return to their home country. Four (4) in-depth interviews were also conducted with returnee migrants and a case study were also conducted to confirm previous data received. Five selected social media groups (three WhatsApp groups, and two Facebook pages) were observed for three months to understand how social networking is developed, ideas are shared, and supportive collaborations are developed.

Data analysis was carried out by processing the MAXQDA software. The analysis began with line-by-line coding and progressed to incident-by-incident coding. Regardless of the stage of the coding process, regular comparisons were conducted (Bryant, 2007). After the initial coding was completed, focused coding was conducted to synthesize significant parts of the initial codes. During this phase, initial codes were compared to identify those with the greatest analytic capability. The final concepts (categories) were determined through focused coding. Focused codes were then axially coded in order to compare with other codes and establish key theoretical groups and major themes.

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Participants (N=30)

| Name | Age | Gender | Hometown | Marital status | Employment | Level of Education |
|----------|-----|--------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Amal | 27 | Male | Embilipitiya, Ratnapura | Single | Chef | O/L |
| Kamal | 32 | Male | Kirinda, Matara | Single | Packing Section | A/L |
| Sunil | 29 | Male | Kirinda, Matara | Married | Machine operator | O/L |
| Kasun | 32 | Male | Welihinda, Matara | Single | Machine Operator | A/L |
| Janith | 31 | Male | Kirinda, Matara | Single | Electrical engineer | Degree |
| Ranjith | 31 | Male | Kirinda, Matara | Single | Bakery | O/L |
| Nimal | 33 | Male | Kekanadura, Matara | Single | Assembler | A/L |
| Bimal | 32 | Male | Dewata, Galle | Married | Constructor | A/L |
| Yahapath | 27 | Male | Yatiana, Matara | Single | Motor Car Company Packing Section | External Degree |
| Janaka | 29 | Male | Divulapitiya, Gampaha | Single | Assembler | O/L |
| Sunimal | 34 | Male | Kekanadura, Matara | Married | Assembler | A/L |
| Ravindu | 37 | Male | Morawaka, Matara | Married | Technical Officer | O/L |
| Pasindu | 32 | Male | Kolonna, Ratnapura | Married | Fisheries Sector | A/L |
| Geetha | 29 | Female | Dondra, Matara | Single | Bender | A/L |

| Pasan | 28 | Male | Kollonna, Ratnapura | Single | Assembler | Degree |
|---------------------------------------|-----|--------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Sarath | 28 | Male | Buluthota, Ratnapura | Single | Fisheries | NVQ |
| Saman | 27 | Male | Kollonna, Ratnapura | Single | Fisheries | A/L |
| Amara | 22 | Male | Sooriyakanda, Ratnapura | Single | Fisheries | O/L |
| Sarith | 28 | Male | Kahawaththa, Ratnapura | Single | Assembler | A/L |
| Namidu | 27 | Male | Embilipitiya, Ratnapura | Single | Assembler | A/L |
| Bimal | 33 | Male | Peradeniya, Kandy | Single | Fisheries | A/L |
| Aravinda | 28 | Male | Karadeniya, Galle | Single | Fisheries | A/L |
| Returnee Migrants to Sri Lanka | | | | | | |
| No | Age | Gender | Hometown | Marital status | Job status | Education Level |
| Kavindu | 40 | Male | Vavulanbokka - Kirinda | Married | Assembling | A/L |
| Bimindu | 38 | Male | Hettiyawala, Kirinda | Married | Machine Operator | A/L |
| Yaham-path | 30 | Male | Wewahamanduwa, Matara | Married | Fisheries | O/L |
| Silindu | 35 | Male | Kollonna Maduwanwela | Married | Production Operator | A/L |
| Uvindu | 37 | Male | Kollona, Ratnapura | Married | Fisheries | O/L |

Results and Discussion

Three major theoretical positions were identified to interpret the relationship between immigrants' SWB and the potential use of social networks among youth immigrants. Figure 2 depicts those thematic areas of the study: social networking and employment success, encountering emergencies and ensuring stability in migrant lives, and ensuring SWB through social networking. The present article suggests that social capital is a primary determinant of SWB, and the desired outcomes of immigration are dependent on the capacity for social networking.

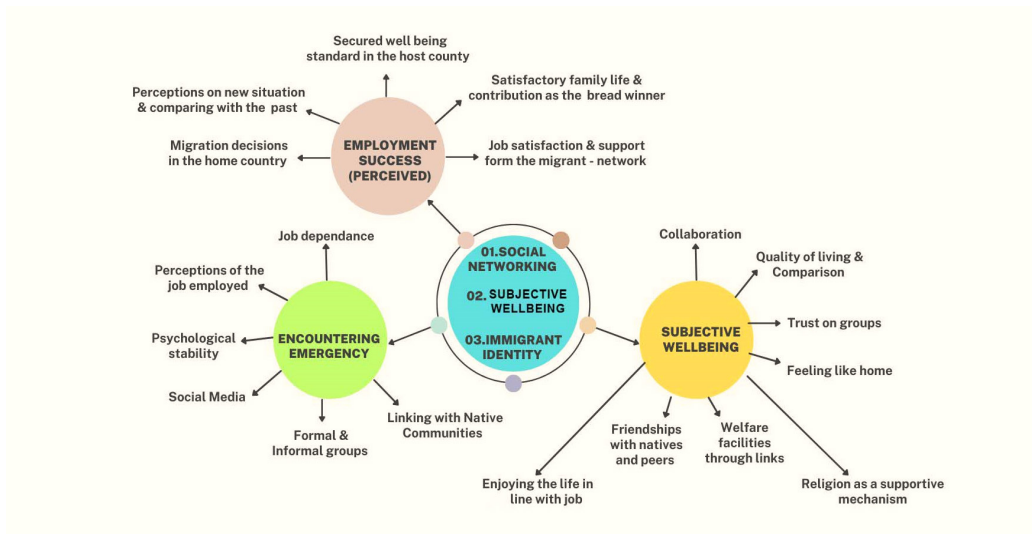


Figure 2: *Thematic areas of the present article (Source: the authors)*

Broad view of the migration decision and migration toward South Korea

Even though migrating to another country while leaving their loved ones was previously viewed as a most difficult decision in their life, respondents now indicate that migration to South Korea is not considered as a difficult decision. They consider it as a good decision to elevate their life standards economically and socially. Male migration to South Korea is regarded as a wise decision to live in a dream country by family members, in contrast to the hurtful and negative experiences reported by female labor migrants to the Middle East. South Korea has become a dream destination not only because of its high standard of living but also because it has helped most young people to achieve their life goals in their home country (Lansakara, 2023). Except for those who consider South Korea as a place of permanent residence, migration to South Korea is a temporary decision made by youth immigrants to support their family in Sri Lanka. In general, migration is viewed as one of the last options for ensuring SWB or overall satisfaction in living. In contrast, the majority of unskilled young adults in the country view migration to South Korea as a primary path to happiness. Migration to South Korea is commonplace for unskilled young men who can work in the manufacturing, agriculture, and fisheries sectors; however, skilled young people in Sri Lanka also favor migrating to South Korea without matching their education qualifications to the work that they must do, due to job satisfaction and guaranteed quality of life. Consequently, some male graduates of the country's public universities simultaneously learn the Korean language and migrate to South Korea.

"I left Sri Lanka for South Korea because I couldn't find a job there. And both the private and public sectors paid low wages that weren't enough to live a good life. Not all there is to do in life is eat and drink. But we need to be happy. Sri Lanka is a nice place, but we need more money to fulfill other needs. Most of my friends moved to South Korea, and they inspired me to do the same by showing me how I could be successful by moving." (Yahapath)

"I got a general degree from a Sri Lankan public university. But I realized that with that degree, I wouldn't be able to get a job that paid enough. So, while I was in college, I took Korean classes in addition to what I was learning in school because I wanted to move. Now I'm happy because I earn a lot and live a happy life compared to most of my graduate friends in university" (Pasan)

These narratives demonstrate that migration is a temporary choice made by young Sri Lankans to facilitate life in their homeland. On the other hand, earning money and achieving financial stability is understood as a mandatory means to SWB. Therefore, there is a trend among Sri Lankans between the ages of 20 and 35 of migrating to South Korea. Even some 19-year-olds have migrated to South Korea, demonstrating a strong desire to build their lives through labor migration. Though it is impossible to generalize, young men from rural areas frequently view migration to South Korea as a viable option for future happiness. Therefore, neither education nor employment within the country is considered by those young people. The lack of opportunities for educated people within Sri Lanka is another significant factor preventing many young men from pursuing higher education or vocational training. Instead, they seek to join the migrant network and relocate to South Korea as an appropriate opportunity. Repercussions of COVID-19 and economic recessions of the country exacerbated the frustration of young men in rural Sri Lanka, and they are motivated to migrate to South Korea by discussions on social-networks among migrants because their mindset is arranged and shaped by the experiences shared by migrants. Potential migrants are able to compare their current state of life to the desired state of life that can be attained in the host country through social media or by talking to those who have already migrated.

"I can work hard now because I have the ability to. But I wouldn't be able to work hard in ten or twenty years. Even though I can work hard in Sri Lanka, I can't make much money from it. But if I work hard in South Korea for ten years, I can make between 5 and 6 million rupees. That would be enough to start a business in Sri Lanka, like a service center or something else. South Korea is a better place to work than Sri Lanka." (Pasindu)

A comparison of the advantages of working in both countries strongly persuaded the young Sri Lankans who were interviewed to view migration to South Korea as a favorable option. As the preceding quote indicates, some university students and government employees have migrated to South Korea due to the numerous benefits available including attractive salaries there. Some have stated that they have dreamed of migrating to South Korea since their school days. Agents of the information network that disseminate South Korea-based experiences to other potential young migrants are social media platforms and individuals with ties to the migrant network. The migration process towards South Korea is systematic, and potential migrants must complete a series of steps in order to become South Korean immigrants, including language instruction, skill acquisition, and acculturation in the host country. According to in-depth interviews, many young Sri Lankans eagerly enroll in language classes in order to work in South Korea. Lack of language skills and lack of access to the migrant-network are the two most significant barriers to migrating to South Korea. Anyone who passes the Korean language exam for migration purposes is given the opportunity to migrate after a brief training program, provided that all stages of migration are facilitated in a variety of ways by the members of the migrant network.

"I know that some young men came to South Korea on their own, but they are very few in number. Without the help of other experienced men, it is very hard to come here and stay." (Geetha)

The "reasons to migrate" category generated by axial coding reveals several reasons that promote migration to South Korea. Furthermore, it illustrates the way in which social networking promotes South Korean migration within the Sri Lankan context. For the dissemination of credible experiential information to potential migrants, social networks between and among migrants are crucial. Instead of relying on information obtained from the internet, potential migrants are more likely to rely on what they hear from members or related individuals of the migrant network. The information obtained by the migrant-network enables potential migrants to comprehend the advantages of migration and compare them to the situation in their home country. Sri Lankans form favorable opinions regarding occupational success in South Korea as a result of a comparative examination of the occupational advantages of both countries.

In South Korea, occupational success is not only correlated with economic benefits, but also with the quality-of-life standards guaranteed for immigrants. Coupling success in occupational life with the assurance of the quality-of-life standards encourages migration to South Korea, as occupational life in Sri Lanka is generally perceived as difficult and detached from job satisfaction and quality of life. This complex mentality generates a desire for migration. A migrant describes this

mentality as follows:

“In Sri Lanka, most jobs take up all of our time and energy without giving us much in return or making us happy at all. But my friends and family told me that working in South Korea would be fine. Life at work is easy. When I need help, my boss is always there for me. And I think things are going well in my life.” (Aravinda)

Now, before migration, the dreamland (South Korea) is perceived as a destination for their desired happiness on the basis of testimonies provided by the migrant-network. However, in the past, Sri Lankans’ migration to South Korea was viewed as similar to women’s migration to the Middle East which brought about several unfavorable situations for migrants. Nevertheless, migration to South Korea was promoted because the first generation of migrants was able to ensure their desired outcomes of migration.

Participants indicated a number of reasons for their decision to migrate to South Korea, including low wages in the country, the inability to obtain housing and investment loans, the inability to repay previously taken loans with their current salary or income, the lack of job satisfaction, and the lack of job opportunities. Excluding these economic motives, it is acknowledged by the participants of the study that the need to achieve the utmost happiness in life in a short period of time is ingrained in the life world perceptions of young Sri Lankans, particularly among men in rural areas of the country. Through social networking facilitated by individual and group ties and connections constructed via social media, young rural men in Sri Lanka are imbued with negative feelings about their home country’s life opportunities and positive feelings about South Korea’s favorable life opportunities. Social media groups and personal pages of migrants provide essential information about the dreamland, which influences the migration decisions of young men from rural areas of Sri Lanka who are experiencing financial hardships.

“I have a brother, and now I’m helping him take language classes so he can easily move here without wasting time and life in Sri Lanka. Not only that, but I also helped a lot of my friends come to this country and settle down.” (Sarath)

“I didn’t really know why I wanted to come here. But I saw that many of my friends had moved to South Korea and become very wealthy there. So, I decided to go to South Korea, and my friends helped me get there. There are a lot of language classes, but the best one is chosen with the help of people who have already moved abroad after passing the test.” (Pasindu)

Chain migration, or connecting one potential migrant to another, promotes migration to South Korea from Sri Lanka. When all existing routes to perceived success are compromised, “South Korea” becomes a destination of aspiration. On the other hand, as evidenced by the preceding sections of the narratives, migration to South Korea as laborers cannot be viewed as a decision to escape unfavorable conditions in the home country; rather, it has become a decision taken to live a desired way of life. Consequently, without considering how to avoid the unfavorable conditions of Sri Lanka, many young people initially construct a mindset to work in South Korea as their primary life goal. They are able to concentrate on selecting jobs and settling in the host country due to social networking. The social network diagram in Figure 4 demonstrates how a migrant network was constructed to encourage migration. Migrant networks are essential for the growth of social capital and migrant clusters. The abstract network diagram in Figure 3 depicts a selected migrant network and its complex organizational structure. The decision taken to move to South Korea is often influenced and motivated by migrants, who thus promote further migration. However, a migrant network is only advantageous if its members are connected on the basis of trust and cooperation. Kasun describes:

“My brother and several friends encouraged me. My brother assisted numerous migrants. We are a five-person group of friends who all decided to migrate to South Korea, where we took Korean classes and also worked together.”

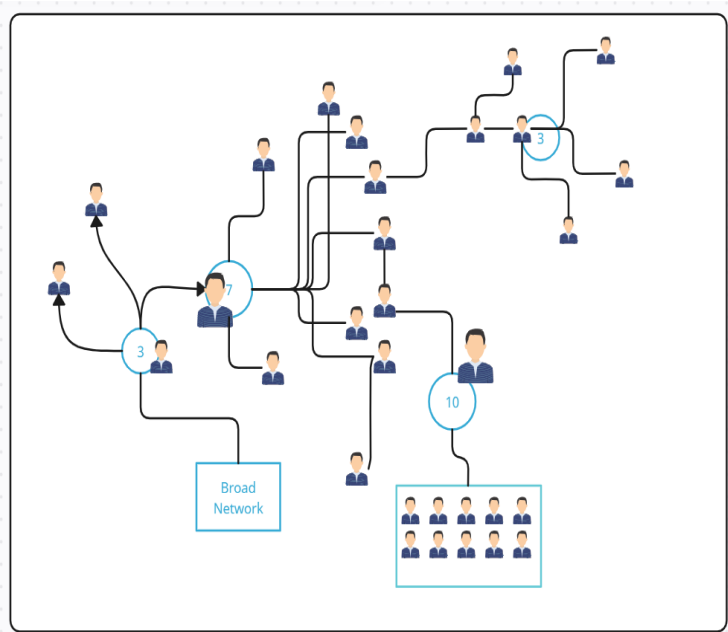


Figure 3: Migrant-network and clusters of migrants (Source: the authors)

Men dominate migration to South Korea because a majority of jobs offered by the Korean government are in the manufacturing, agriculture, and fishing industries, which prefer to hire men (Shaw, 2010). Therefore, the migration of women to South Korea is not encouraged by the South Korean government. Only a small number of women migrate as care workers. Women are often viewed as unsuitable for working in harsh environments, and employers do not prefer to hire them; as a result, the care work sector is reserved for women but not widely open to foreigners as indicated by the participants. The case study of a young Sri Lankan female immigrant demonstrates (Geetha), however, that women are welcomed in the country and able to achieve their desired standard of living when they are supported by the migrant-network.

“My first job was really hard. No services were given that were good enough. There were so many problems because the boss didn’t care about what the workers had to say. So, to solve my problems, I had to talk to a lawyer, and Sri Lankan brothers helped me a lot. Now I work with a group of five male immigrants who are all very helpful. They help me just as much as my own brothers do. I passed the TOPIC 5 exam and am now preparing to get an A7 visa. I couldn’t have done this without the help of those brothers.”

As the 29-year-old lady explained, even women can achieve success provided that they receive support from the migrant-network. Even though the government has provided certain facilities to immigrants, those services are difficult to accessed individually without the support of other immigrants. For instance, certain administrative regulations can be challenging for new immigrants to understand, and in such situations, migrant networks provide valuable assistance. The migrant-networks that rely on mutual trust and cooperation reinforce the decision to migrate. Without a connection to the network of migrants, access to the migration process is difficult. Social capital or trustworthy social networks facilitate migration. Migration to South Korea has been promoted not as an alternative to existing solutions, but as an effective method for enhancing life satisfaction. Consequently, some young people in rural Sri Lanka aspire to become labor migrants while still in school, prior to considering other options. Before considering existing paths to happiness within the country, migration to South Korea has been prioritized and viewed as a viable option to achieve life goals.

Employment success and social networking

Social networks are vital ingredients of social capital that can lead to overall well-being of immigrants (Bankston, 2014). Young rural Sri Lankans migrate to South Korea primarily in search of employment opportunities, and their employment

success is likely to be determined by their connections to the migrant network. The migrant network in the host country is a crucial factor affecting the overall well-being of individual migrants. In addition to the facilities provided by the South Korean government, the migrant-network facilitates and supports selecting an employment opportunity, switching to a different employment sector, achieving a balance between work and private life, and resolving certain workplace issues. Therefore, findings indicate that the desired success of employment in the host country is primarily determined by the intensity of migrant-network relationships.

Social networking among migrants begins prior to the migration process, as potential migrants are informed of several details about the migration procedure by those who have already migrated to South Korea. Consequently, potential migrants initiate relationships with clusters of the migrant network. This determines when people migrate from the same village, within the kin groups or peer groups. Figure 3 illustrates the connections between migrants, the main migrant network, and specific clusters. People who migrated from Ambilipitiya (a rural area of Sri Lanka) and surrounding village areas, for instance, have formed a migrant cluster that is connected to other clusters to form a vast migrant-network as participants indicate (Bimal, Sunimal and Ranjith). The connection to the network and the placement of migrants in a vast network structure provide them with a sense of belonging, which is an essential element for employment success. A migrant describes:

“If something goes wrong, our boss is there to help us. But there are friends from the same village who help each other out when things go wrong. We sometimes throw parties at night to take a break from working all day. We plan tours when we’re on vacation, so we feel like we’re part of the community and not alone.” (Nimal)

Isolation and loneliness are negative emotions that have a negative impact on employment success because they decrease motivation to work. Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea do not experience feelings of isolation and alienation from their cultural group, as the migrant network provides a sense of belonging as Nimal showed. Networking among immigrants cannot exist in isolation, and it is facilitated by the friendlier attitudes of native Koreans toward immigrants. By virtue of South Korea’s cultural structure, xenophobia is less prevalent and immigrants are warmly welcomed (Han, 2022). Without this welcoming attitude, networking with migrants would be undesirable. Moreover, migrant-networks have been formed as a result of the overall migrant mindset that has developed in the host country through acculturation or the absorption of South Korean cultural elements. Without this hospitable environment in the cultural context of South Korea, the opportunity to develop migrant-networks and reap its benefits would be remarkably difficult.

“This country has very high living standards. We are treated the same by Koreans, who are very friendly. The government treats Koreans and Sri Lankans the same. We try to get our friends to come here because of this. Even though our jobs are hard, we have time to unwind and enjoy our lives. In Sri Lanka, jobs aren’t too hard, but there’s never enough time to enjoy life. Here it is different.” (Amara)

Employment success is not solely relied on the support received from the migrant-network, but the support received from the workplace and government is crucial. Moreover, the migrant-network acts as a facilitator within the system. For example, based on the marks received by potential migrants in the Korean language examination, they are placed in different employment sectors (Shaw, 2010). Fisheries sector employment is often allocated to those who score low marks near the cutoff mark. Compared to work in the agriculture and manufacturing sector, work in the fisheries sector is identified as difficult. If somebody intends to leave the fisheries sector and move to another sector, the responsible officials in the Korean government must be consulted. However, it is going to be systematic and a long process. But if that person seeks help from the immigrant-network, a desired job can be found in another sector easily. Social media groups publish vacancies in different sectors, and migrants are encouraged to find a place they would like. Therefore, it is clear that in addition to the supportive environment of the host country, migrant-networks play a crucial role in elevating occupational well-being. A migrant demonstrated:

“I got this job because of a post I made on Facebook. And now only I know that the Buddhist temple in South Korea helps a lot of people change jobs and find new ones.” (Sunimal)

Career success and occupation well-being are intertwined, with career success referring to a combination of a reasonable level of financial stability and doing work that the individual enjoys in order to feel that their life and job are satisfying. Compared to Sri Lanka, migrants’ subjective evaluations of career success and life satisfaction are viewed favorably in South Korea, resulting in a significant improvement in their career success as Pasan and Nimal indicated. Financial stability is inherently assured for migrant workers. However, this will be compromised when they become irregular workers. Uvindu show that:

“After visa period expires migrants have to work illegally. They become irregular workers. Some company owners like to hire visa-expired workers, because they can be given low wages and they are not legally binding”.

The level of occupation satisfaction and subjective happiness in accordance with the meaning of life are also determinants of employment success. For immigrants in South Korea, the cultural organization of the country and migrant-networks have ensured that their life satisfaction and happiness are unaffected by their financial stability.

“I didn’t belong to many groups set up by immigrants, but I knew that their help is very important. The Korean Buddhist Temple is one of the main places that help Sri Lankans on a spiritual and social level. The Buddhist monks at this temple help us find jobs and solve many problems.” (Yahampath)

Employers are responsible for ensuring the employment rights of Sri Lankan immigrants due to the fact that bilateral agreements provided legal assurances. However, this trend has changed as Sri Lankan immigrants attempt to break the rules, including visa code violations. Immigrants whose visas have expired become irregular workers whose employment rights may be violated. Irregular workers are not legally attached to a particular company or institution, they just work on a daily basis. However, when their financial rights are secured, migrants tend to prioritize life quality and life satisfaction.

Moreover, participants show that a guaranteed basic salary of LKR 210,000 (900,000 South Korean Won) is provided for immigrant employees. While daily earnings can vary between companies, the hourly wage stands at 2550 LKR as Kavindu indicated. Typically, an 8-hour workday allows for a daily earning potential of 25,000 LKR. In the production sector, individuals can surpass the average, earning over 700,000 LKR. With a year of service, their monthly earnings can exceed a million. In the Fisheries sector, an average of 500,000.00 LKR is attainable. Such wages are often tenfold or more compared to typical salaries in Sri Lanka. The high level of earnings provides immigrants with ample of opportunities to pursue their life goals leading to overall well-being.

Even though the migrant network is not a mandatory social arrangement, it is a mechanism without which the lives of migrants would be in jeopardy. Despite government and workplace support, migrant networks and related social capital improve immigrants’ SWB. For example, when an immigrant died from an injury, members of the network raised funds to send the body to Sri Lanka, which was facilitated by the Buddhist temple in South Korea. This Buddhist temple is also managed with the support of Sri Lankan migrant networks in South Korea. On another occasion, a Sri Lankan immigrant was able to undergo surgery thanks to the contributions of his fellow migrants as described by Amara. Thus, the “employment success” category includes how social networking among migrants contributes to employment success.

Immigrants benefit from a multifaceted support system that greatly enhances their well-being and integration into the host country. This support encompasses several key elements. Firstly, immigrants receive ongoing assistance to address workplace challenges and are encouraged to seize new opportunities, fostering their professional growth. Additionally, immigrants are empowered to make well-informed decisions, and their choices are reinforced by the strong social network they have access to. The migrant network not only aids in job placement and settlement but also plays a pivotal role in maintaining work-life balance through informal arrangements like dinner gatherings and organized tours. Moreover, it serves as a bastion for preserving the immigrants' home country culture and identity, as exemplified by their activism, such as the Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea protesting against their home country's government during the 2022 youth uprising. Lastly, the migrant network contributes significantly to reducing workplace insecurity by providing vital support and a sense of security.

Employment success is not only ensured by bonding social capital or strengthened social ties within migrant networks, as described. However, linking social capital or connections to the country's existing institutions is crucial for ensuring employment success. Typically, migrant networks collaborate with established institutions, such as the Sri Lankan embassy in South Korea and other community organizations. This makes it easier for immigrants to negotiate between social networks and legal institutions such as immigrant registration office and the police.

Role of migrant-networks in emergency situations

Work in the dreamland should not be overly admired, as the case studies of this study demonstrate that some immigrants face intolerable obstacles, and their lives are in danger without the assistance of migrant-networks. A Sri Lankan immigrant who worked as a fisherman on Jeju-do Island found his first job to be unbearable due to poor working conditions and a cruel employer (as Janaka explains). Consequently, he became an irregular worker. Employers in South Korea tend to hire irregular migrants as laborers, even though this violates the rights of immigrants to a guaranteed wage and union membership (Park, 2022). Under the employment permit system, one can only switch jobs three times per year, which forces immigrants to seek employment outside of the system. Some respondents note that they are irregular workers and that they are aware of peers who are also irregular workers.

“Even a swimmer like me has trouble getting used to the water in Korea. When sailing, the lives of our employees are in danger if they don't have life jackets. My boss also doesn't let us wear life jackets because he thinks they make it hard for us to move around and do our jobs well.” (Janaka)

He stated that there were discrepancies between his contract and the actual work performed.

“Working long hours and night shifts is required of me. In addition, I must serve tea and perform housekeeping tasks. We did not travel to Korea in order to work as slaves. We provide a service for which we are compensated. In such instances, my friends helped me overcome these obstacles” he continued.

As they are not legally bound, there is a high risk of exploitation when immigrants work illegally. For fear of being detained and deported, irregular employees cannot seek assistance from the Korean government, including labor officials and the police, during a crisis. In such instances, it is difficult to refer to the migrant network, as immigrants who violate legal conditions are less likely to be supported due to the lack of support from the government and the native community as described by Ravindu. He said “Visa expired immigrants are not cared or considered well by the natives. Therefore, helping them would cause other issues on us”. Thus, the findings show that the migrant network is only strong when immigrants are both legally and morally obligated to the work they perform. However, clusters of the migrant-network provide support in some situations when their members are in jeopardy due to certain reasons such as the expiration of visas. The employment culture developed throughout the past decade in South Korea is more fundamentally influential than the legal codes, and hence some employers may hire visa-expired employees in order to exploit them, knowing that these immigrants cannot claim their rights. Authenticity of the immigrant is one of the main qualities that helps immigrants to reap benefits from migration. However, when authenticity collapses – for example, by visa expiration or doing illegal activities – immigrants are vulnerable to exploitation and other severe problems. Most of the time, when a visa expires, it is the migrant-cluster that helps immigrants to find jobs and stay securely in South Korea.

“My visa had run out. I know that fifteen of my co-workers have the same problem as I do. But right now, we’ve been here for more than two years, even though our visas have expired. If we are caught, we will be sent back home. That’s fine, as long as we don’t get caught. We work here. This is not the time to go to Sri Lanka.” (Bimal)

Participants of the study show the range of challenges that confront them upon their arrival, and migrant support networks play a vital role in helping them to overcome these obstacles. These prevalent issues include the initial sense of isolation stemming from family separation, excessive workloads, and extended hours

without sufficient compensation in certain cases, the provision of accommodations irrespective of nationality, limited free time throughout the month, health concerns related to the nature of their work, instances of ill-treatment by employers, and working conditions that are often harsh and inhospitable. In such situations, these migrant support networks provide invaluable assistance, offering a lifeline for immigrants navigating these challenges.

In addition to organized migrant-network support systems, informal arrangements are essential for the social and emotional well-being of immigrants. For instance, weekly gatherings and dinner parties provide a forum for immigrants to express their emotions and offer support to other members. When job satisfaction declines, new employment opportunities are discovered with the aid of networks. It is widely believed that social media is an essential platform for finding employment and sharing information about new openings. Social media is important not only for economic reasons but also for sharing Korean life experiences with members of the migrant network and Sri Lankans. When it is difficult to live with people of other nationalities in the same apartment, migrant-groups negotiate with the employer and are allowed to live with like-minded people in the same migrant-network cluster. Pasan shows:

“Once I was with a Nigerian man, I could not live with him. So I asked one of my friends who was close to the boss to negotiate this issue. He discussed the matter with the Boss, and I was allowed to rent another apartment with Sri Lankans”.

Overall, it is evident that migrant networks play a crucial role in addressing emergency situations faced by Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea.

Subjective well-being, community-based organizations, and migrant-networks

The apex of SWB for migrant workers is a feeling of refuge or belonging in the host country (van Praag et al., 2003). The facilitation of migrant-networks in South Korea affects immigrants’ SWB in addition to their financial security. Migrants create formal and informal community groups to represent their migrant clusters. For instance, those who migrated from the same village or through the same agent may form informal groups. In addition, during their time in Korea, several national organizations, such as the Korea-Sri Lanka Association, were founded. In South Korea, religious institutions, such as some Buddhist temples (Korean-Sri Lankan Maha Viharaya), play an important role in community organization and enhancing the well-being of Sri Lankan immigrants.

Social media groups are developed to showcase certain details about community organizations. The Lanka-Korea Association is one of the nation-wide

organizations that assist immigrants not only in emergency situations but also to improve their SWB. Individuals' perceptions of their situation in life in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns within the context of their culture and values comprise one of the primary components of SWB. Except in a few instances in which financial stability is diminished due to unfavorable working conditions, the quality of life of immigrants is first guaranteed by the financial stability of the host country. Additionally, the overall quality of life is further ensured by the assistance provided by organizations with migrant-network-based social capital. Through a variety of activities, the Lanka-Korea Association as an organized body assists immigrants in maintaining a high quality of life.

As evident from interviews with Pasan and Sarath, the activities carried out by these migrant support networks encompass a diverse range of services and initiatives. These include their efforts to refer immigrants to suitable job opportunities and act as intermediaries to address workplace concerns with employers. They also play a crucial role in advising immigrants on visa-related matters and resolving workplace issues. Beyond these practical assistance services, these networks contribute to the immigrants' overall well-being by organizing various events, such as games and festival celebrations. Moreover, they provide a vital platform for open discussions on common issues, fostering a sense of community among immigrants. These networks extend their support to facilitating access to healthcare facilities when needed, engaging in social responsibility initiatives both in Sri Lanka and South Korea, offering counseling support, arranging motivational programs, and even granting scholarships to the children of immigrants. These multifaceted activities serve as a testament to the comprehensive and essential support provided by migrant networks to enhance the lives of immigrants.

The Lanka-Korea Association's primary purpose is to provide a forum for constructive dialogue among immigrants, so that they may achieve SWB. Quality of life among immigrants can only be ensured through a collaborative effort between migrant networks and South Korean government's services as findings reveal. For instance, in an unknown and unfamiliar country, it is difficult for immigrants to access health care and obtain services without the support of migrant networks, as they are first novice to the procedures. Therefore, the network of immigrants is an important factor in ensuring that immigrants receive better healthcare. A female immigrant explains:

"I am the only Sri Lankan woman who works for this company, but there are a lot of Sri Lankan men who also work there. They help me get to the health center whenever I need to. On the other hand, there are six of us in our group, and we all help each other because we can't trust anyone else." (Geetha)

“Hewana” (The Shadow) is another significant activity organized by the Korea-Lanka Association, which provides a service for immigrants to resolve their problems at any time (24/7). “Hewana” is a resource for any immigrant who requires assistance.

Korean Sri Lanka Maha Viharaya (a Buddhist temple in Korea) is an important organization that serves as a community organizing hub. This Buddhist temple was built with the assistance of Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea, and its primary purpose is to support immigrants spiritually. However, beyond the traditional function of a Buddhist temple, the Korean Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple assists immigrants in numerous ways, including community organization. Community organizing involves bringing together dispersed members of a network to construct a common dialogue for the common good. Numerous Sri Lankans are Buddhists, so this Buddhist temple can facilitate the subjective happiness of these immigrants by bringing them together. In addition to the quality of life, life satisfaction and a low level of depression are two additional important aspects of SWB, all of which are effectively promoted by the temple through innovative activities that go beyond its traditional religious practices. They organize religious activities to cater to the spiritual well-being of their members. Additionally, they extend their services to provide social welfare support for immigrants and their families back in Sri Lanka. Recognizing the importance of mental health and guidance, these networks offer counseling services to aid immigrants in their personal and emotional journeys. They go a step further by offering free Korean language courses to facilitate better integration into the host country. Collaborations with the Sri Lankan Embassy in South Korea strengthen their outreach and support network. Furthermore, their partnership with the “Dhamma Friends” organization, an informal group of immigrants dedicated to philanthropic endeavors, underscores their commitment to fostering a sense of community and social responsibility among immigrants.

In addition to being a religious institution, the Buddhist temple in South Korea is also a social capital institution that assists immigrants and their families in achieving SWB. For instance, counseling support and religious activities assist immigrants in reducing their level of depression and remaining calm. Importantly, as indicated by the participants in this study, the support received from the Temple is immense in order to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The linking social capital or the connections built with legal organizations is another significant factor that improves the quality of life among immigrants, as they are able to reach out to these organizations with the assistance of the temple. As participants indicate that the temple is an integral part of their lives as immigrants.

“Temple is one of the main places where we gather for community activities. It is not just a religious location, but a platform to have a community gathering. We share our thoughts with other Sri Lankans

within the temple. Without the Buddhist Monk, no body can organize such events not limited to religious celebrations". (Kamal)

Thus, findings of this article show that formal organizations constructed from existing migrant-networks provide migrants with a common platform for dialogue that contributes to their SWB. It is the responsibility of these organizations to connect migrants with country-established administrative authorities (the linking social capital), such as the Sri Lankan embassy in South Korea.

Conclusion and recommendations

In the past decade, more research has been conducted on migration and social networking for the purpose of understanding migrant experiences for policy-making. However, the relationship between social networking and subjective happiness has not been adequately studied. Therefore, the present article developed based on the research findings to show how social networking contributes to the SWB of Sri Lankan immigrants in South Korea. Social capital emanating from migrant-networks is the primary determinant of migrants' SWB, and the desired outcomes of migration are contingent on the capacity for social networking, according to the theory developed in this study. Prior to migration and even after the return to the country of origin, social networking plays a crucial role.

The constructed migrant-network provides migrants with a long-lasting sense of belonging and attachment to the extensive migrant network. Individuals who feel a sense of attachment are better able to secure not only their financial stability but also their quality of life and life satisfaction. Significantly, the migrant-network facilitates the reduction of depression levels among migrants as indicated by several immigrants who encountered emergencies. In addition, theory demonstrates that migrant-networking or constructing relationships with migrants is ineffective if these connections do not result in mutually beneficial bonds of trust and strength. Overall, the present article indicates that the entire migration process is influenced by migrant-networks, which can provide migrants with positive benefits

Primarily, migrant-network is essential for fostering a mindset that incorporates a general understanding of the contemporary situation in the home country and the host country. A comparative analysis of the experiences of these two nations encourages potential migrants to develop a strong desire for migration. When existing economic hardships in the home country prevent people from achieving their desired life goals, labor migration is encouraged. In contrast to tourism migration, labor migration has been conceptualized in this study as a significant life decision undertaken to improve overall happiness by comparing the subjective experiences of the current situation with the desired subjective happiness elsewhere. When potential

migrants receive experiential information from members of the migrant-network, their capacity for comparison grows. Referrals to migration are typically promoted through the migration-network. This is further motivated by the fact that potential migrants recognize that the occupational life in the host country is integrated with the quality of life, whereas the occupational life in the home country is not.

In addition, the present study found that migrants' SWB is ensured not only by the bonding social capital within the migrant-network, but also by the ties between organized groups of migrants and legal authorities. Linking social capital is thus a crucial component of immigrants' SWB, particularly in a regulated work environment. Moreover, migrant networks play a crucial role when an emergency disrupts the normal living conditions of immigrants. The presence of migrant-networks should not be viewed as a mere social arrangement, but rather as a supportive system that helps migrants to achieve their desired goals. In order for migrant networks to be active, the host country must provide an enabling environment.

In light of the present article's findings, it is suggested that social network ties between migrant organizations and legal authorities in the host and home countries be strengthened in order to improve the well-being of migrants. Embassies are able to identify the potential capabilities of migrant-network organizations and consult with them to arrange certain migrant welfare facilities. In addition, the potential philanthropic capacity of migrant-networks is high but is not widely recognized. This is one of the areas in that future research is needed. In addition to their philanthropic capacities, organizations can recognize their potential for entrepreneurial activities, which can be facilitated by government agencies.

Data availability statement

The qualitative datasets used and/or analysed during the current study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

Ethical approval and consent to participate

The present study was conducted in line with the provisions given in the WMA declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the data collection. Consent for publication was also sought from the participants where necessary. Anonymity of participants were ensured in the presentation of data.

Conflict of interest

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

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