Drivers of Libyan students' desire for emigration: A cross sectional study.

Abstract

The Libyan revolution that overthrew Gaddafi's regime in 2011, did not result in social, political, and economic development for the people of Libya. For the youth who played a vital role in the old regime's downfall, the revolution brought frustration, insecurity, unemployment, disruption of education, uncertainty, and a lack of freedom. This paper aims to develop an under-researched field of youth migration by exploring the factors that influence desire for emigration amongst the youth in Libya, by using a sample of 500 university students. Modelling the data through binary logistic regression, we found that gender, family, satisfaction with life, outlook of the country, and conflict and war were key factors influencing the Libyan students' desire for emigration.

Key words: Emigration, Libya, Youth, Conflict, Satisfaction with life.

Introduction

There are approximately 281 million people living outside their country of birth (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). Currently, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years, which accounts for 16% of the global population (United Nations, 2023). Today, more than 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 25. By 2030, young Africans are expected to constitute 42% of global youth (world economic forum, 2022). The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has the largest proportion of young people in the world, whilst simultaneously, it holds the world record for the highest rates of youth unemployment, undermining economic growth and productivity (Dibeh et al., 2019; Fakih & Ghazalian, 2015; Nauffal & Skulte-Ouaiss, 2018). The participation of females in the labour market in MENA is amongst the lowest globally (Fakih et al., 2020). Challenges faced by young people across the world, such as access to education, employment, etc., are multidimensional. The youth are increasingly demanding fair treatment and solutions to these challenges (United Nations, 2023).

The youth in developing countries are expanding their opportunities progressively through both domestic and international migration (McKenzie, 2008; Yaqub, 2009). The phenomenon

of youth migration, which comprise a sizeable portion of migrants, has been to a large extent under-investigated (Irudaya Rajan & Sivakumar, 2018). Much of the literature on youth migration depicts the youth as either dependent on their parents or as labour migrants (Heckert, 2015; Tienda et al., 2007). The social and economic conditions of both the origin and destination countries influence the opportunities available to would-be youth migrants (Heckert, 2015). According to Belmonte and McMahon (2019), studies on youth migration present it as either a problem or an opportunity. Studies that associate youth migration as a problem or challenge typically concentrate on the Global North, focusing on rural urban migration, often associated with socio-economic, mental, and personal adversity. By contrast, another body of scholarship focuses on the Global South which links spatial mobility with social mobility and presents youth migration as an opportunity for education and employment. Belmonte and McMahon (2019) go on to propose a model of youth migration as a form of mobility 'which is part of ongoing, formative personal transitions and embedded within broader familial and social transformations' (Belmonte & McMahon, 2019, p. 5). Perceiving youth migration in this way also involves a recognition that the youth also move both physically and personally "between ages, social groups and statuses, and places" (Belmonte & McMahon, 2019, p. 5). Skeldon (2012) suggests that social and physical transitional processes are permeated by change and states that youth transitions must be placed within the broader context.

The overthrow of the Gaddafi regime by the Libyans in 2011 did not end in peace, democracy and prosperity for the people of Libya. The country became engulfed in various forms of conflict and violence, which has impeded the economic, social and political development of the country. The root of the Libyan conflict lies in a multifaceted and divisive sequences of events, where local political affairs have been deeply affected and led by external factors (Pedde, 2017). Libya has been divided and plagued by insecurity and conflict

since 2014. The continuing conflict between the rival groups has caused widespread destruction to home and public infrastructure, resulting in 425,714 internally displaced people. Libya remains politically divided and the situation remains unstable and changeable (Home Office, 2020).

The forcibly displaced population from Libya escaping to other countries increased from 2,855 in 2010 to 160,326 in 2011, then declined in 2012 and reached its peak in 2015 (512,119). The number of forcibly displaced people declined in 2016 and peaked again in 2019 (473,019). The total estimated number of forcibly displaced Libyans escaping to other countries in 2022 was 158,930 (Migration Policy Institute, 2023).

The number of refugees from Libya in other countries increased from 2014 and reached its peak in 2021 (19, 090) (Migration Policy Institute, 2023). Asylum applications rose from 2011 and remained steady till 2014 and reached its peak in 2017 (6,842). There were 6,076 asylum seekers from Libya in other countries in 2022 (Migration Policy Institute, 2023).

Young Libyans who constitute the largest age group in Libya had hoped, by taking part in the uprisings against the old system, they could change their conditions and would no longer be frustrated by a lack of employment opportunities, political freedom and marginalisation. Instead, the youth in Libya are struggling with complex challenges caused by years of insecurity, which results in unemployment, disruption in education and uncertainty about the prospects in their country (Khalifa, 2022).

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), youth unemployment in Libya is amongst the highest in the world, standing at 51.5% in 2022 (ILO, 2022). The labour market in Libya does not offer much employment opportunities for the youth, especially for the well-educated. In addition, there is geographical unemployment, which does not provide much employment for the youth in rural areas, and structural forms of unemployment, which is

caused by a disparity between the skills brought to the labour market by the youth and the jobs on offer. The informal sector offers precarious employment opportunities for the youth. For the females, access to jobs is even harder because of the existence of social and cultural norms which inhibit their full labour market participation (ICMPD, 2021).

This paper aims to explore the factors that influence desire for emigration amongst the youth in Libya. As such our main focus is on key demographic factors (gender and class), family decisions, the use of the internet and social media, subjective wellbeing (life satisfaction, freedom to make decisions, feeling stressed, the outlook of the country, and happiness), challenges faced by Libyans (economic situation, corruption, internal stability and security, foreign interference, trust in the government and conflict and war), and finally finding employment and good quality education.

Theoretical and conceptual Issues

Much research on youth migration concentrates on their lived experiences (Knapp & Krall, 2021; Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot; 2015 White et al., 2011). These experiences are both enabling and constraining (Lems et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014). Veale & Dona (2014) explore youth migration in an era of globalisation which represents a more complex form of mobility, whilst others focus on the less fortunate young refugees who are subject to immigration controls and, on occasion, perceived as criminals (Chase & Allsopp, 2021).
It has been argued that the motives for youth migration are different from the other age groups (Global Migration Group, 2014; Zenteno et al., 2013). Young people migrate for a host of reasons, such as acquiring higher education qualifications, employment (Dibeh et al., 2018; Global Migration Group, 2014; OECD, 2017) and marriage (Ali, 2007; Bertolani et al., 2012; Timmerman, 2008). Many youths also choose or are forced to migrate to escape poverty (Eroğlu, 2022; Nwosu, 2022), violence, war, and conflict (Coutin, 2016; Hanson,

2018; Mussi & Bianchi, 2018; O'Malley, 2018), or are displaced due the effects of war or climate change (Gosh & Orchiston, 2022; Perkiss & Moerman, 2018). As such, the youth are worryingly visible amongst refugees, asylum-seekers and as unaccompanied minors (United Nations, 2016). The young people who desire to migrate are typically single, with higher levels of qualifications, live in cities and feel their lives are getting worse. Just 40% of the world's young migrants live in low and middle-income countries, compared with 87% of the world's youth population (Belmonte et al., 2020). Youth migration differs from other generations as commonly, youths do not emigrate solely for economic gains

but also, to support their families and for personal freedom. Their migration paths are continuing, vibrant and evolving, which determines their socio-economic status, relationships with others and their identities (Belmonte & McMahon, 2019).

Men and women are said to migrate for different reasons: men tend to seek jobs or better education abroad while women usually migrate to join their spouse (Birchall, 2016; ILO, 2018). However, gender differences are more complex than this, as Gosh (2009) explains, there are different migration trajectories for both men and women, women make up almost half the international migrants, dispersed over the world unevenly (Rubiano-Matulevich & Beegle, 2018).

It has been claimed that economic inequality is one of the reasons why people decide to emigrate (Marsella & Ring, 2003). Globalisation has widened the inequalities between the developed and developing countries, resulting in an increase in volumes of migrants (Marsella & Ring, 2003). Contrary to popular belief, migrants are not poor or uneducated people who leave their countries for better lives elsewhere. The majority come from middle and upper-class backgrounds in their country of origin (Segal et al., 2010). To be able to

emigrate to another country, one must have some measure of financial stability and access to funds to afford the cost of migration (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Migration is not an individual decision as proposed by neo-classical theorists (Gubhaju & De Jong, 2009; Massey et al., 1998; Todaro, 1976). Migration is mostly a family decision rather than an individual one, even when an individual decides to migrate, they feel obliged to support their families who are left behind. Migration is an outcome of family decisions to maximise income and employment opportunities for the household and other family members (Bauder, 2019; Mazzuccato, 2011). Migration is a household decision-making process, which is associated with the family life cycle and significant events in the life of immigrants, without being directly related to labour market opportunities (Kofman, 2018). The relative status and positions of family members and their responsibilities within the hierarchy affects who can migrate (Bonizzoni, 2009).

Mobile internet has a direct relationship with desire and plans for migration; the impact of mobile internet on the desire to emigrate is higher in high-income countries, whereas in lower-middle-income countries, only those individuals whose income is above the median are affected (Adema et al., 2022). Access to mobile internet reduces the cost of acquiring information on the destination country (Pourmehdi & Al Shahrani, 2020). Grubanov-Boskovic et al. (2021) found the same relationship but stated that the effect of internet access is higher for preparation for migration compared to the desire for migration. Nevertheless, they found a higher effect of internet access on the desire to emigrate for low and lower-income countries.

Chatting to family and friends who have already settled abroad through social media, creates a social network, which acts as an important vehicle in prompting individuals to migrate (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Park et al., 2014). Dekker and Engbersen argue that social

media provides a platform for communication with migrants who are already settled abroad, which acts as a powerful source of knowledge about the host country, whilst strengthening family and friendship ties. Migrants tend to pursue their connections; they are inclined to follow the beaten paths (Castle & Miller, 2003; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Pourmehdi, 2020).

Subjective well-being signifies a wide spectrum of phenomena that 'include people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions and global judgments of life satisfaction' (Diener et al., 1999, p. 277). It is also defined as 'a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life' (Diener, 2002, p. 63). Chindarkar (2014) found evidence to support that life satisfaction is an important factor in the intention to emigrate. Controlling for other factors, high life satisfaction was negatively related to wanting to emigrate abroad. In addition, Chindarker reported a consistent relationship between life satisfaction and education, implying that the more educated people are, the more satisfied they are with their lives and the less likely they are to desire emigration. Ostrachshenko and Popova (2014) found that individuals are more inclined to emigrate when they are dissatisfied with their lives.

Happiness is a significant factor that influences emigration decisions. People who wish to migrate are more likely to be unhappy (Brzozowski & Coniglio, 2021; Ivlevs, 2014). Graham and Markowitz (2011) found a negative relationship between happiness and the desire to emigrate in Latin America. Polgreen and Simpson's (2011) study of happiness and international migration found similar results. 'In countries with lower human development and higher gender inequality, individual life satisfaction will act as an enabler to move' (Karabchuk et al., 2022, p. 349).

The reasons for migration are varied and take different forms. Pessimistic views about the outlook of a country could increase the desire for emigration. Political pessimism regarding

democracy is associated with the intention to migrate (Brym, 1992). In addition, individuals' assessment of local economic conditions, and dissatisfaction with different elements of local services, facilities, and current life conditions appear to be significant factors in determining migration decisions (Cai et al., 2014; Chindarkar, 2014; Dustmann & Okatenko, 2014; Migali & Scipioni, 2019).

Analysing Arab Barometer (VII), we found that 20% of the respondents had thought about leaving Libya, of whom 25% were 18 to 25 years old and 23% were 26 to 33 years of age. 55% of the respondents stated that they wish to leave because of economic reasons (Arab Barometer, VII). This does not come as a surprise as obtaining secure employment is the primary motivation for the youth in Libya (ICMPD, 2021). Here, migration is influenced by push and pull factors, which reflect the negative conditions in the sending country. Noticeable push factors include high youth unemployment, population growth, economic stagnation, civil war and conflict, internal displacement (Redlin, 2022), absence of professional opportunities, poor quality of education, family ties, and corruption (ICMPD, 2021). The main pull factors for wanting to emigrate to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (OECD) include higher wages, existence of social security systems, safety and security, and the proximity to the country of origin (Redlin, 2022).

The recent literature has identified corruption as a main driver of migration, especially for highly educated individuals. Indeed, there is a positive correlation between corruption and migration (Cooray & Schneider, 2014; Poprawe, 2015). According to Cooray and Schneider (2016), most labour emigration is from less developed to developed countries. The migration of highly skilled/educated people would result in a shortage of skilled people, which will lead to slower economic growth, creating higher unemployment rates that cause further migration.

Corruption results in allocating revenues to sectors other than health and public spending which are vital for lower skilled workers, hence acting as a driver for emigration.

Conflict and emigration are intricately linked: conflict forces people to leave their country of origin and seek refuge in other countries. Conflict, wars, and other forms of violent conflict such as ethnic cleansing, genocide, state formation, and revolution, whether involving state or non-state actors, produce refugees and forced migrants (Hanson, 2018; Mussi & Bianchi, 2018; O'Malley, 2018). Different types of violent conflict with differing severity generate different migration paths (Lubkemann, 2008). Ostensibly, when the conflict begins, those with financial and social capital can plan their exit before the situation gets worse. The less fortunate people with fewer resources will follow later (Segal, 2021). The ferocity of the conflict and its location explains some of the variance in the proportion of asylum and refugee applications. People not only escape war and violence but also the violence and insecurity that follows in non-affected areas, committed by various criminal actors and groups (Conte & Migali, 2019).

When it comes to trust in the government, a recent survey conducted in selected countries in Middle East and North Africa (Arab Barometer VII) shows that 68% of respondents surveyed did not have trust in their government. Looking at Libyans in the study (n=2505), we found that 80% stated that they do not trust their government compared to 20% who trusted their government. There was a relationship between trust in the government and wanting to emigrate. There is a general lack of citizen trust in governmental institutions in the Middle East and North Africa (Darwish, 2019). Most citizens have trust in civil society organisations and local religious institutions but not the politicians and the government. People put more trust in local and municipal government authorities than other political organisations (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2021).

For the youth, educational achievement is an important means of achieving social mobility, and as a result, the number of higher education institutions has increased since the 2011 revolution, particularly during the conflict and civil war, without attention being paid to quality standards. The poor quality of education and the lack of professional opportunity act as emigration push factors for the youth (ICMPD, 2021). Currently in Libya, there are 24 universities, 114 higher technical and vocational centres, and 8 accredited private universities (Elkhouly et al., 2021). Based on a 2018 ministry of education report, there were 450,883 students studying at graduate level, and a further 9,299 studying at postgraduate level (Elkhouly et al., 2021). The poor standard of education has resulted in emigration or a desire to emigrate to other countries for better education (ICMPD, 2021).

Education is not a primary cause of migration except in which a deliberate decision has been made to move abroad for the sole purpose of studying for an internationally recognised qualification. Those who can afford the cost, invest in their children's education as a form of family investment (Bakewell & Bonfiglio, 2013). Young middle-class people are most likely to emigrate for education purposes compared to other groups (Punch & Sugden, 2013). It has been argued that most universities in developing countries do not provide a good standard of education (Syed et al., 2007).

Data and Method

To explore the factors that influence Libyan students' desire for migration, we used a cross-sectional survey of students at the University of Tripoli, which is the highest-ranking university in Libya, with 68,723 students, and 20 faculties at the time of the study in 2022. In this cross-sectional study, a proportional stratified random sampling method (Table 1) was used to select 500 participants from the student population of the university, using the

university register, which includes information on the number of students enrolled in each faculty.

Table 1. Proportional Stratified Random Sampling of Students by Faculty.

University Faculties	Male	Female	Student Total	Rounded up % of the total	Proportional number of students	Number of students in the study
Faculty of Science	566	1086	1652	2.4	24	12
Faculty of Engineering	7027	2438	9465	13.8	138	69
Faculty of Agriculture	362	144	506	0.7	7	4
Faculty of Medicine	2756	4356	7112	10.3	103	51
Faculty of Pharmacy	606	524	1130	1.6	16	8
Faculty of Vet Medicine	101	86	187	0.3	3	2
Faculty of Physical and Sport Sciences {PESPS}	1251	158	1409	2.1	21	11
Faculty of Fine Arts and Media	681	924	1605	2.3	23	11
Faculty of Dentistry	3275	1340	4615	6.7	67	33
Faculty of Economy	8110	1865	9975	14.5	145	72
Faculty of Law	888	2078	2966	4.3	43	21
Faculty of Medical Technology	22	16	38	0.1	1	1
Faculty of Arts Tripoli	6420	1306	7726	11.2	112	56
Faculty of Education Janzour	6859	316	7175	10.4	104	52
Faculty of Education Bin Ghesheer	1010	895	1905	2.8	28	14
Faculty of Nursing	334	648	982	1.4	14	7
Faculty of Education Tripoli	219	2550	2769	4	40	20
Faculty of Information Technology	1442	236	1678	2.4	24	12
Faculty of Languages	1622	3278	4900	7.1	71	35
Sharia Scienes College - Tajora	400	366	766	1.1	11	7
Sharia Sciences Faculty - Soug Aljuma	162	0	162	0.2	2	2
Total	44113	24610	68723		997	500

Dependent Variable

We asked the respondents the following question: ‘as you know, some people leave their country and emigrate to another country. Which of the following best describes you?’ The respondents were asked to select one answer from the following four options: 1. I am actively trying to emigrate to another country 2. I have considered emigrating to another country, 3. I have not considered emigrating to another country, 4. I would never leave my country. The

answers to this question were recoded as considered emigrating coded (1) and not considered emigrating coded (0).

Independent Variables

The independent variables for this study were as follows: family thinking about emigration coded as (1) and reference group as (0), frequency of internet use throughout the day coded as (1) and reference categories were coded as (0). Chatting to family and friends in other countries was coded as (1) and the reference category coded as (0). Feeling free to make decision for myself coded as (1) and reference category coded as (0). The outlook of the country as optimistic coded as (0) and pessimistic as (1). Feeling stressed often coded as (1) reference category coded as (0). The most important challenge faced by Libya today was measured on a nine-item scale, which were dummy coded to the economic situation of the country, financial and administrative corruption, internal stability and security, conflict and war, and foreign interference. Lack of trust in the government was coded (1) and the reference category was coded as (0). Worrying about finding a job after graduation was coded (1) and reference category coded (0). Overall happiness was measured on a four-item scale and was coded happy (0) and unhappy (1). Lack of good quality of education was coded as (1) and reference groups (0).

Control Variables

These include gender, with male coded as (1) and female coded as (0). Social class measured on a three item-scale and subsequently dummy coded into working, middle, and upper middle class.

Findings and discussion

Descriptive statistics of the variables in the study are shown in table 2 below. The total number of students in the sample was 500.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables. Libyan Students Survey *(N= 500)*

Variables	N (%)	M	Minimum	Maximum
Emigration				
Yes	186 (37.2%)	0.37	0	1
No	314 (62.8%)	0.63	0	1
Male	206 (41.2%)	0.41	0	1
Female	294 (58.8%)	0.59	0	1
Working-class	64 (12.8%)	0.38	0	1
Middle-class	190 (38%)	0.13	0	1
Upper-middle-class	225 (45%)	0.49	0	1
Lack of employment opportunity				
Yes	287 (57.4%)	0.57	0	1
No	213 (42.6%)	0.43	0	1
Family thinking of emigration				
Yes	150 (30%)	0.7	0	1
No	350 (70%)	0.3	0	1
Frequency of internet use				
Several times a week	101 (20.4%)	0.20	0	1
Throughout the day	394 (79.6%)	0.80		
Chat to family & friends abroad				
Yes	193 (61.4%)	0.39	0	1
No	307 (38.6%)	0.61	0	1
Feeling about life				
Not satisfied	47 (9.4%)	0.09	0	1
Satisfied	453 (90.6%)	0.91	0	1
Control over life				
No	49 (9.8%)	0.10	0	1
Yes	451 (90.2%)	0.90	0	1
Outlook of the country				
Optimistic	266 (53.2%)	0.53	0	1
Pessimistic	234 (46.8%)	0.47	0	1
Stressed most of the time				
Yes	95 (19%)	0.69	0	1
No	405 (81%)	0.31	0	1
Economic situation				
Yes	65 (13%)	0.13	0	1
No	435 (87%)	0.87	0	1
Corruption				
Yes	178 (35.6%)	0.36	0	1
No	322 (64.4%)	0.64	0	1
Security				
Yes	92 (18.4%)	0.18	0	1
No	408 (81.6%)	0.82	0	1
Foreign interference				
Yes	56 (11.2%)	0.11	0	1
No	444 (88.8%)	0.89	0	1

Note. Means for categorical (dummy coded) variables represent proportion of persons in a category relative to all other categories combined).

In terms of the desire for emigration, 37% of those who took part in the study were thinking about migration. There were more females in the study (59%) and most students identified themselves as belonging to the upper middle class (45%). Lack of employment opportunities was seen by the majority as a major problem facing young people in Libya. Only 30% of students stated that their families had thought about migrating. More than three quarters of the sample used the internet throughout the day (80%), and 61% used the internet to chat to their families and friends abroad. A considerable number of students (91%) felt satisfied with their lives whilst 90% felt that they have control over their lives. When asked about the outlook of Libya, 47% of the students were pessimistic. 81% of the students did not feel stressed most of the time compared to 19% who did. A large majority (87%) did not consider the economic situation of the country as being a problem. For 36% of the students in the sample, corruption appears to be a more significant issue and challenge for Libya.

Security (18%) and foreign interference (11%) do not seem to be of high importance for the students.

Gender and desire for emigration

Are there significant differences between male and female students in terms of their desire for leaving Libya? Initial investigation showed that there is no difference between male and female students in relation to desire for emigration, as 41% of males in the sample stated that they wished to emigrate compared to 34% of female students. Despite having more females in the sample (59%) compared to 41% males, only 34% had a desire to emigrate. However, further analysis showed that gender is indeed a contributing factor ($\beta = 1.548$, $P < .05$, C.I [1.015, 2.362]). Male students were 1.5 times more likely to have a desire to emigrate compared to female students. The findings from Arab Barometer (VII) also shows a higher proportion of males (22%) compared to females (17%) who thought about

migrating. Women and men motives for emigration are said to be different as men are more likely to leave in order to secure better employment and education, whilst female emigration is largely related to family reunion and marriage (Birchall, 2016; ILO, 2018; Rubiano-Matulevich & Beegle, 2018), but we have to be mindful that gender differences are much more complex (Gosh, 2009; Rubiano-Matulevich & Beegle, 2018). In MENA, traditional values influence social and gender roles, and cultural norms which in turn effect the desire for emigration for both sexes (Bouchoucha, 2012).

Does satisfaction with life increases the desire for emigration?

We found that 35% of students who stated that they were satisfied with their lives wished to emigrate compared to 65% of satisfied students who did not wish to emigrate. By contrast, 60% of students who were not satisfied with their lives had a desire to emigrate. Therefore, dissatisfaction with life increases the likelihood of emigration ($x^2 = 2.05, df\ (1), p < .01$). Indeed, dissatisfaction with life was a major contributing factor that influenced the desire for emigration amongst the students in the sample (β = 0.384, P< .01, C.I [0.192,0.767]). Therefore, we conclude that satisfaction with life is negatively related to desire for emigration. Those who are satisfied with their lives are 62% less likely to want to emigrate to other countries. Although, the existing literature supports our claim, a causal relationship has not yet been established (Cai et al., 2014; Chindarker, 2014; Graham & Markowitz, 2011; Ivlevs, 2014; Ostrachshenko & Popova 2014).

Wanting to emigrate because of conflict and war

It come as no surprise to find an association between wanting to leave Libya and the continuation of the conflict and civil war. 42% of the students who wished to emigrate stated that they wished to leave the country because of the conflict and war compared to 34% who wished to leave for other reasons. Conflict and war increase the desire for emigration ($x^2 = 3.92, df\ (1), p < .05$). Students were 1.5 times more likely to emigrate as the result of

conflict and war (β = 1.544, P< .05, C.I [1.021, 2.337]). The continuation of the conflict and instability, and forcibly replaced people explains the asylum and refugee applications that are currently lodged in various countries by Libyan nationals (Migration Policy Institute, 2023). Conflict and emigration are linked as conflict pushes individuals to abandon their country of origin and find safety in other countries (Conte & Migali, 2019; Hanson, 2018; Mussi & Bianchi, 2018; O'Malley, 2018).

The influence of family on desire for emigration

Desire for leaving Libya was influenced by the family decision. 58% of students who wished to leave Libya stated that their families were thinking about emigrating, compared to 28% who wished to emigrate, but their families did not think about emigration. The family desire to emigrate is linked to the individual desire for emigration ($x^2 = 39.684, df\ (1), p < .001$). Family thinking about emigration is a significant predictor of desire for emigration (β = 3.57, *P*< .001, C.I [2.302, 5.537]). Students whose families were thinking about emigration, were 3.6 times more likely to want to emigrate. This finding challenges the neo-classical theories of migration and supports the view that claims migration is a household decision making process (Bauder, 2019; Bonizzoni, 2009; Kofman, 2004; Kofman; 2018; Bragg & Wong, 2016).

In addition, we found that for both females (β =3.374, *p* <.001, C.I [1.890, 6.024]) and males (β = 4.589, *p* <.00, C.I. [2.08, 10.085]), family thinking about emigration remained a significant predictor of the desire for emigration, but the influence of the family was greater for males. This could partly be explained by the fact that Libyan society is largely patriarchal and socially conservatist. The public sphere largely belongs to men, as they are culturally responsible for going to work and earning an income, whilst women occupy the private sphere and look after the home and family. Social conservatism seeks to preserve traditional

values, and it challenges any forms of social change, which undermines these values (El Abani & Pourmehdi, 2021).

Do pessimist students have more desire for emigration?

48% of students who wished to emigrate expressed pessimistic views about the outlook of Libya, compared with 27% of students who were optimistic but desired to emigrate. There was an association between pessimism and desire for emigration ($x^2 = 23.159, df\ (1), p < .001$). Students with pessimistic views about the country were 2.2 times more likely to think of emigrating compared with others (β = 2.18, P< .001, C.I [1.448, 3.283]). However, further analysis showed that this only holds for male students. This comes as no surprise because other studies have shown an association between pessimism about current life conditions and the desire for migration (Brym, 1992; Cai et al., 2014; Chindarkar, 2014; Dustmann & Okatenko, 2014; Migali & Scipioni, 2019). Decades of conflict and instability following the demise of the Gaddafi regime has resulted in a political deadlock. Libya's history of conflict reveals a reason why almost half the sample were pessimistic about Libya's future.

Feeling stressed and desire for emigration

The literature on migration has, to a large extent, dealt with post migration stress, that is the pressure that the migrants feel to adjust to new society and its complexities. For example, learning a new language while experiencing social, psychological, and cultural change when adapting to their new environment (Demes & Geeraert, 2015; Heine, 2016; Smart & Smart, 1995). The literature does not pay attention to whether stress itself is related to desire for emigration. Feeling stressed most often was associated with emigration, as 48% of students who wished to leave Libya felt often stressed compared to 35% who wished to leave but did not feel stressed most of the time ($x^2 = 6.321, df\ (1), p < .05$). However, further analysis showed that feeling stressed most often was negatively associated with desire for emigration for females and did not have effect on males. Stressed female students were 49% less likely

to desire to emigrate (β = .507, p <.05, C.I [.274, .939]). It has been found that people who are stressed might not be happy and satisfied with their lives, hence, having more desire to emigrate (Ostrachshenko & Popova, 2014; Polgreen & Simpson, 2011) but our finding does not support this.

Revisiting gender differences in desire for emigration

Initially, when we explored the factors that influence desire for emigration amongst the youth in Libya, we found that class, the use of the internet and social media, freedom to make decisions about one's life, happiness, economic situation of the country, corruption, internal stability and security, foreign interference, trust in the government finding employment and good quality education, did not have a significant influence on students desire for emigration. However, when we explored the data further by gender, we found that females who chatted to family and friends living abroad were 51% less likely to desire emigration (β = .490, p <.05, C.I [.269, .891). Several studies report that social media influences people to desire and plan for emigration as well as the selection of destination (Ihejirika et al., 2021; Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2014). It is not clear why in our sample chatting to family and friends abroad negatively impacts the desire for emigration for women.

For female students in the study, being able to decide about how to run one's life was negatively related to the desire to emigrate (β = .349, p <.05, C.I [.143, .852]). Females were 61% less likely to desire emigrating if they had control over their lives. This is an interesting finding as 90% of female students stated that they can decide how to run their lives, but only 32% had a desire to emigrate. For some this could be the case that they are more satisfied with their lives. It has been shown that life satisfaction is negatively related to desire for emigration (Chindarkar, 2014; Ostrachshenko & Popova, 2014; Polgreen & Simpson, 2011). Although, having control over one's life enables individuals to choose whether they wish to emigrate or remain in their own country, nevertheless, given the social conservative nature of

Libyan society, this ability or freedom to choose may be constrained. Finally, for females, a good quality education was negatively related to the desire for emigration. Only 20% of females stated that they would emigrate for good quality education compared to 46% of male students. Female students were 61% less likely to desire leaving Libya compared to their male counterparts (β = .388, p <.05, C.I [1.58, 9.57]). Education is not a main reason for migration, but it is often a kind of family investment (Bakewell & Bonfiglio, 2013). This could be attributed to social construction of gender, which historically views men as the main decision makers and leaders in society combined with other social and cultural inequalities.

Frequency of internet use was a significant factor influencing male students' desire for emigration. Male students who used the internet regularly throughout the day were 2.8 times more likely to desire emigration compared to others (β = 2.821, p <.05, C.I [1.20, 6.63]). Internet use has a direct relationship with the desire and plans for migration and reduces the cost of finding relevant information (Adema et al., 2022; Grubanov-Boskovic et al., 2021).

Conclusion

This study explored the factors influencing the desire for migration amongst Libyan students using a proportional stratified sampling technique. It was found that gender, family thinking about migration, the outlook of the country, dissatisfaction with one's life, and conflict and war were significant predictors of the desire to emigrate. For females, being able to make decisions about their lives, chatting to family and friends abroad, being stressed often, and good quality of education were significant predictors of the desire to emigrate. For males, frequency of internet use, the outlook of the country and satisfaction with life were significant predictors of wishing to migrate.

This study contributes to empirical studies that explore the correlates of the desire for migration amongst the youth, however, there are limitations to this study, notably, because of

limited resources available to the researchers as we could only explore the desire for migration amongst students, but a future study should include other Libyan youth from different walks of life whose migration desire might be affected by other factors. In addition, future research would massively benefit from using a mixed-methods approach.

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