

MIGRATION, REASONS AND MOTIVES IN KOSOVO SOCIETY (Pristina Case)

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Abstract

The 1999 war in Kosovo put its citizens in a crisis for life. A large number of the population had to leave their homes in Kosovo. The relocation was temporary, mainly to the neighbouring countries, but there were also many who migrated to more distant countries. After the war, most of the population returned to Kosovo, but a part of them continued to live in emigration. In the meantime, twenty years after the war, emigration is still an actual topic in Kosovo. This is though due to completely different reasons. Today, many young men and women are considering leaving Kosovo, in particular Pristina, for various reasons, while a part of them have already left. But what are the causes that makethese citizens leave their country now? Seeking a better life, higher livingstandard, better and more stable economy, better education or reasons related to welfare in general? In this paper, we will analyse emigration as a concept and the reasons that push people to emigrate, especially the reasons that push Kosovars, more specifically citizens of Pristina region, toemigrate after the war.

What are the reasons for leaving or why do they want to leave, and what are the consequences of leaving? This quantitative survey using a structured questionnaire collects data from a combined sample of people of different social status to find out the latest trends of leaving Kosovo.

Keywords: Kosovo, immigration, standard of living, economy

1. Introduction

“Throughout the known history of humanity, we can follow the continuous movement of individuals and groups from their homes, their homeland to another geographical and social area. This movement of individuals and groups is defined as migration. Since the era of movement of people up to modern-era migration, we see this continuous trend of the human beings and that constitutes a geographical and social movement” (Berishaj, 1998, p. 119). According to the international migration definitions and standards, “a person is considered an emigrant if she/he has left her/his country of birth with the intent of settling permanently in another country no matter if she/he has a special status in the country where she/he has emigrated” (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2014). A person settled in the country where she/he has migrated is the resident of that country (the country where the person lives, meaning the country where she/he has a place to live and where she/he normally spends the period of rest (Ibid). According to IOM, emigration is the process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement (IOM, 2019).

So, migration is the process of change of usual residence with another place of residence (municipality, region, country) or relocation from one place of residence to another place respectively to another municipality, region or country. In territorial-administrative terms, migration is divided into emigration–national/ international and immigration – national/

international (KAS, 2014). According to Oxford’s Dictionary, “emigration is the act of leaving your own country to live permanently in another country” (Oxford Dictionaries).

Today, more people than ever live in a country other than the one in which they were born. In 2019, the number of migrants globally reached an estimated 272 million, 51 million more than in 2010. International migrants comprise 3.5 per cent of the global population. Compared to 2.8 per cent in 2000 and 2.3 per cent in 1980, the proportion of international migrants in the world population has also risen (United Nation).

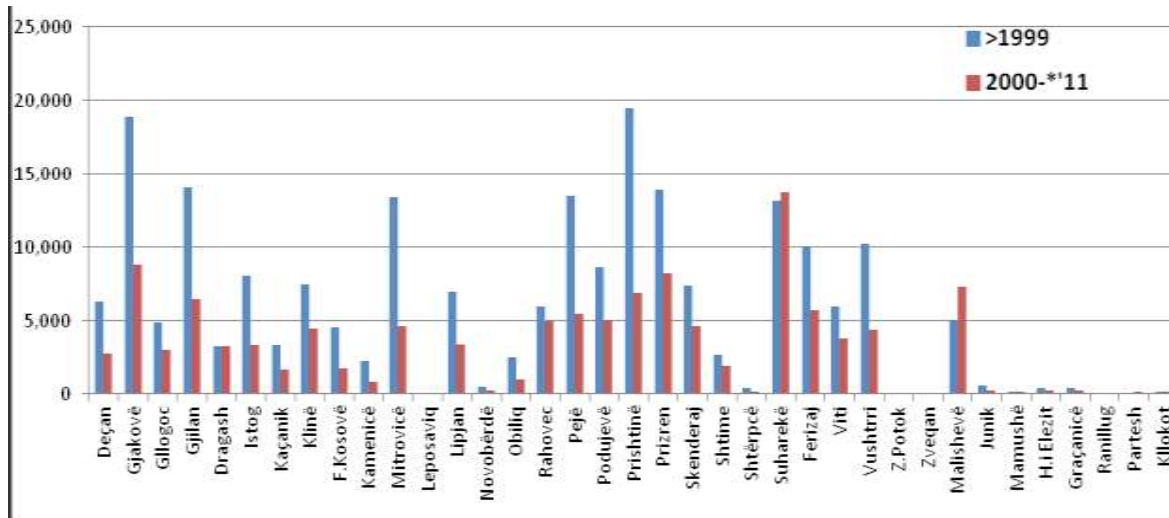
Why do Pristina citizens emigrate today?

“The main driving factor, as far as I could tell, is always linked to money. People are looking for better opportunities abroad. On the other hand, when we see the unemployment level in Kosovo, then this is definitively linked to migration, so that the main reason for leaving Kosovo is directly linked to economic issues. Yet, this study found that family reunion is the main reason why people leave Kosovo,” Baca Vaughan (Chief of Mission of the International Organisation for Migration - IOM), (KAS, 2014).

The 2014 Kosovo Agency of Statistics official research in the Republic of Kosovo found out that majority of emigrants left Kosovo due to family reasons, respectively 46%, and a relatively high number left Kosovo for work, respectively 35%. Regarding the question about the main reasons for emigration of their family members, the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) found that strong family ties of the Kosovar families were among the most significant reasons for emigration; with almost half of the respondents emphasizing that the main reason for emigration was family (usually marriage or family reunion). The following reason mentioned was work with 35% of the total answers. It is quite important to note migration that occurred because of the war itself (about 8%) (KAS, 2014).

Table 1. Main reasons of international migration (percentage), source: KAS

Reasons of migration	%
Family reasons	46%
Work	35%
During war 1998-1999	8%
Education and training purposes	1%
Other	4%
No evidence	6%



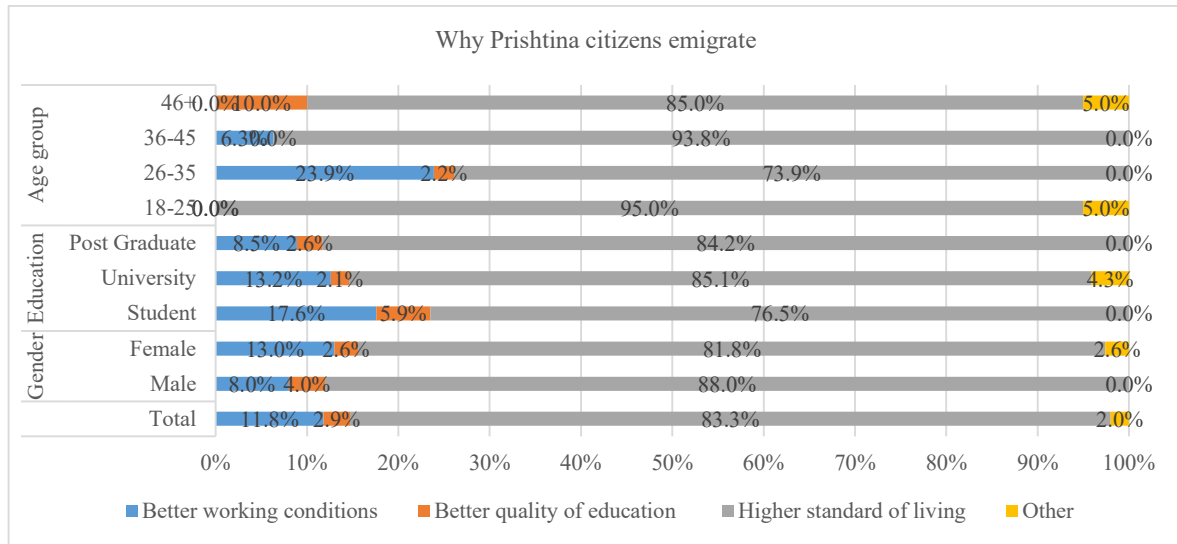
Graph 1. Emigration according to time period (before and after 2000), source: KAS

2. Methodology

This is an empirical, quantitative research study and target of this study are Pristina region citizens. There was a total of 580 randomly selected respondents as the sample for this research paper. The questionnaire includes the demographic and questions parts, measuring Prishtina citizens' stances towards emigration in general and the reasons and causes that would push them to emigrate if they would do so. The questionnaire's main questions were: "What do you think, why the citizens of Pristina region emigrate?", "Have you ever thought of emigrating?", "If yes, why? What are the reasons?", "Do you currently plan to emigrate?", and "If you are planning to emigrate, what are the reasons?" Statistical techniques, such as frequency and cross tabulations were used for results. *Statistical Package for Social Science* (SPSS) programme was used for data analysis and calculation. Citizens of Pristina region of both genders and of various age groups participated in the questionnaire. Results show that average age of the respondents is 32.5, with 275 men and 305 women. The main instrument used is a non-standardised questionnaire designed specifically for this research. The question "What are the main reasons of migration?" is the only standardised question, piloted by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics in 2014, and this serves as the comparative basis of this paper. The main hypotheses of this paper are:

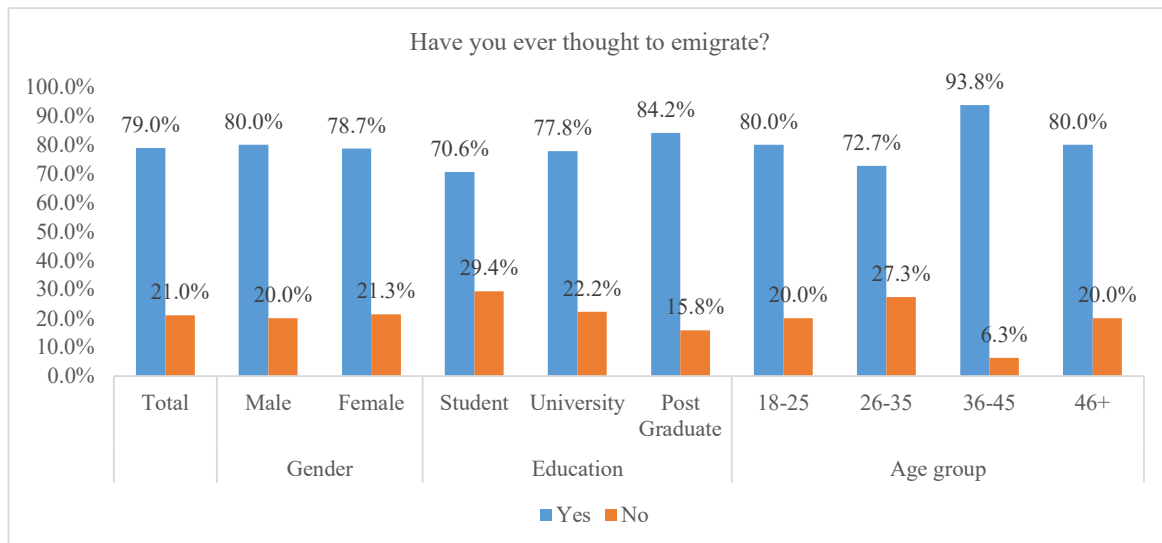
- H1: Unemployment and poor standard of living as main reasons of emigration
- H2: Emigration in pursue of a better standard of living

3. Results



Graph 2. Why Pristina citizens emigrate?

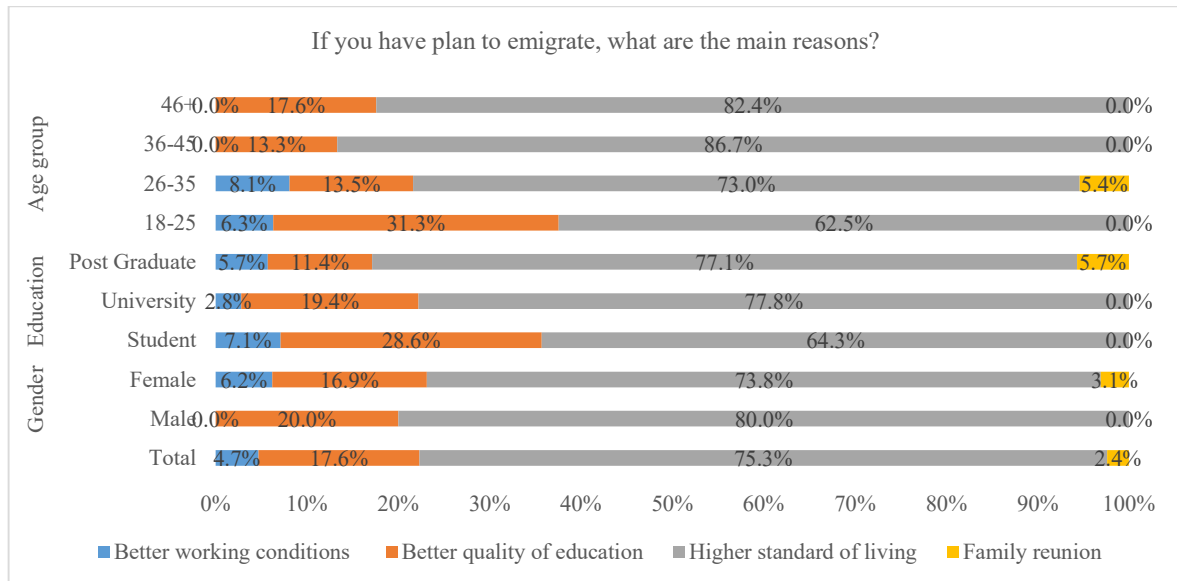
Asked why Pristina citizens emigrate, an overwhelming majority of respondents said that they emigrate because of a higher standard of living. Translated in figures, 93.8% of the age group 36-45 and 73.9% of the age group 26-35 gave this same answer. And 95.0% of the youth 18-25 said that their main reason for emigration would be a higher standard of living. 84.2% of respondents with a university degree think that they would like to emigrate because of a higher standard of living. For almost all, women, men, of various ages and status, the higher standard of living resulted to be important, followed by better working conditions, better quality of education and then other reasons.



Graph 3. Have you ever thought to emigrate?

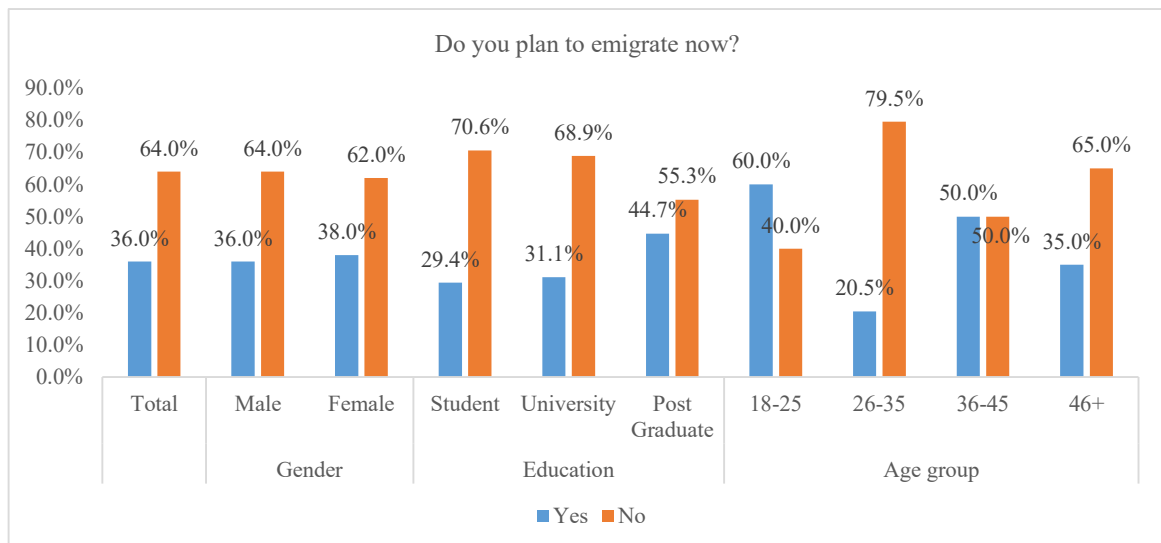
Asked have you ever thought to emigrate, an overwhelming majority responded positively, that they have thought about that. 80.0% of men have thought about this compared to 78.7% of women. Also, 77.8% of respondents who have graduated from university have thought of

emigrating, and the age group that thought mostly to emigrate are men 36-45, with a figure of 93.8%. Women between 36-45 are less interested to emigrate, respectively 6.3% compared to all other age groups.



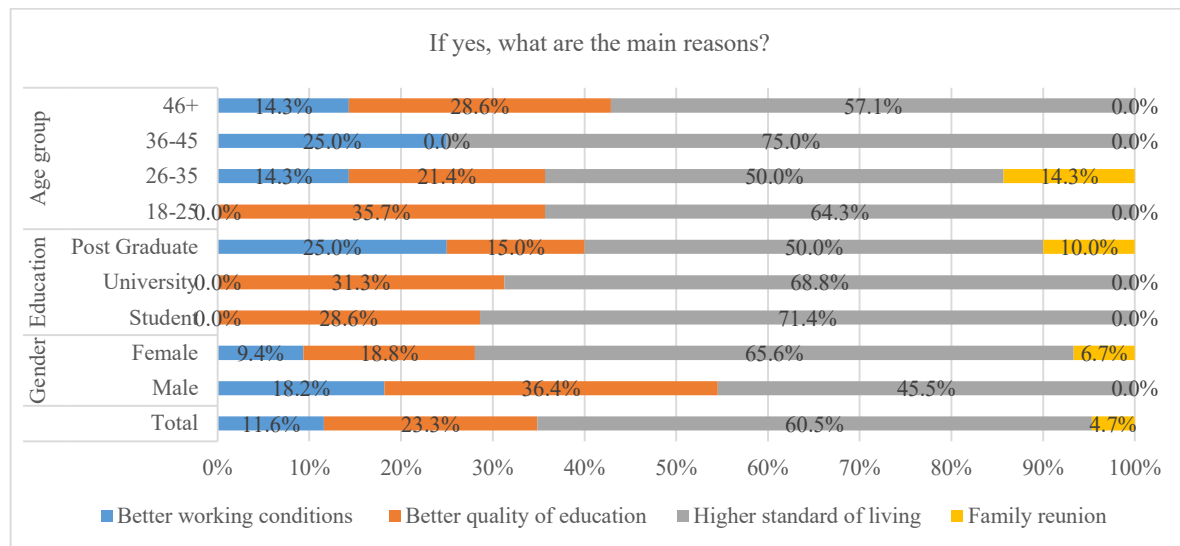
Graph 4. If you have plan to emigrate, what are the main reasons?

Hypothetically, if they were to emigrate, then the main reason would be because of a higher standard of living, with 73.0% responding so from the age group 26-35. 73.8% of women and 80.0% of men said so. The second most prevailing reason for emigration remains better quality of education, followed by better working conditions and finally family reunion.



Graph 5. Do you plan to emigrate now?

The table presenting the question: Do you plan to emigrate now? Majority of respondents said no, 64%, while 36% saying that they plan to emigrate. Based on this data, it is noted that respondents who expressed the wish to emigrate are young, respectively between the ages of 18-25 with 60% of them saying that they would want to emigrate. This age group is considered as the generation most likely to emigrate due to numerous social factors, but particularly because of economic reasons and quality of education. Majority of respondents from age group 26-35 said that they do not plan to emigrate and this includes several reasons or factors that affect their decision. This age group could be considered to have already finished their studies, they may already be employed or already creating a family –in these circumstances, this age group is considered to be in the beginning of their career. However, the study shows that the wish to emigrate is present again among the age group 36-45. The results show that they want to emigrate because they want a better standard of living.



Graph 6. If yes, what are the main reasons?

For the respondents who currently plan to emigrate, the most prevalent reason remains better standard of living, and they cite better quality of education as important, too, whereas the third reason is better working conditions, with the family reunion listed as the last option. 36.4% of men consider leaving the country because of better quality of education compared to 45.5% who consider leaving for a better standard of living. 50.0% of the age group 18-25 also consider leaving the country because of a better standard of living.

4. Conclusion

Emigration is a phenomenon that is, in general, widespread among Kosovo citizens. Disregarding the distant past, respectively decades of the previous century, when majority of reasons for emigration were of political nature, emigration now is due to other reasons. Nevertheless, in another way, the reasons for emigration even now are of the same nature, the political one. The difference is just the manner of manifestation of this state policies. Therefore, it could rightfully be concluded that the reasons for the current emigration are political, but they are expressed in a twisted way, including through lack of overall wellbeing.

Also, in this regard and in connection with objective circumstances, among the reasons for emigration of Kosovo citizens is the imbalance between expectations and reality, which are expressed in particular in the beginning of 2008, respectively after the Declaration of Independence, when the gap between the expectations for a better life on one hand and circumstances within Kosovo on other hand deepened. Transition that Kosovo society is going through created an anaemic state, which, among others is manifested also through people leaving the country.

This paper on emigration in Kosovo, specifically in Pristina, was conducted through a survey technique, with 580 people surveyed, men and women of various ages and of different level of education. The method of random sampling was used. Survey questions were: “What do you think, why do Pristina citizens emigrate?”, “Have you ever thought of emigrating?”, “If yes, why? What are the reasons?”, “Do you currently plan to emigrate?”, and “If you are planning to emigrate, what are the reasons?” Answers provided reveal that the main reason for emigration is poor conditions, poor level of the standard of living and the wish for a better quality of life. The wish for a better level of education resulted to be amongst the most specified reasons for emigration. The third reason for emigration was family reunion. Therefore, based on the respondents’ answers it could be said that the hypothesis presented in the introduction of this paper *Unemployment and poor standard of living* was proved. Also, based on the respondents’ answers, it could be said that the second hypothesis *Emigration as reason to pursue a better standard of living* was also proved.

Thus, it could be said that the emigration reasons have not changed compared to the most recent research conducted by the 2014 Kosovo Agency of Statistics.

As said above, it can be concluded that the current emigration and an eventual emigration are directly linked to economic reasons, which inevitably derive from politics. As a continuous and increasing social process, emigration is accompanied by dynamic and diverse changes. In such conditions, and if depopulation of Kosovo continues with the same dynamics, consequences will be unavoidable. Among others, this is also due to the fact that the geographical situation of the country, its position in the Balkans, suitable climate and its natural wealth, could also cause demographic changes in the near future, which consist in changes within the population. More accurately, since Kosovo has a suitable territory, the current dynamics of migration towards the European continent, the chances for Kosovo citizens to be “replaced” with others are more than realistic. Therefore, the country should immediately take serious appropriate measures to prevent the emigration. Furthermore, these measures should be undertaken regarding the wish of youth, in particular, who on masse look forward towards leaving Kosovo. The country should realise this by implementing a meaningful, well-planned social policy irrelevant of its financial cost.

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