



Comparative Profiles of Pull and Push Factors of Albanian Emigration

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Abstract

Unmet needs push emigration from the country of origin. New opportunities attract immigration to the host country. In this paper, the goal is to evaluate and compare the push and pull factors that have encouraged the emigration of Albanian citizens abroad over the years. It is used qualitative method and it is carried out literature research to answer the research question "Why do Albanians make the decision to emigrate through years?" It turned out that the main driving factors of Albanian emigration are: poverty, unemployment, lack of security and better opportunities for living and education. The main attractive factors are better opportunities and standards of employment, payment, education and living. Over the years, 'economic factors' have been replaced by 'best opportunities'. The profile of Albanian emigrants has changed from 'emigrants in black', not very qualified and not very educated, to those who are regular, qualified and well educated. The desire of educated and qualified Albanians to emigrate has increased. The high figures of potential migration remain constant. The findings help to assess the needs of Albanians, to design policies and measures for not abandoning their country, and to improve policies for the inclusiveness of Albanian emigrants in the host countries.

Keywords: Albanian emigration, comparison, push factors, pull factors, profiles

1. Introduction

Migration occurs when people decide to move rather than stay and where it appears that will be rewarded as they expected. Each person is constantly exposed to factors in a settlement, some of which inhibit movement and others that promote it (Kosinski & Prothero, 2023, p.21). To explain the mechanism of migration, we must consider the decision-making process and the push-pull factors. The mechanism of migration is based on five questions that are commonly asked in migration studies: Who migrates?; How many?; Why?; What are the concerns of migrants and the directions of movement?; What are the consequences? (Pooley & Whyte D., 1991, p. 18).

In this paper it is aim to get analysis and discussions regarding push and pull factors of Albanian emigration through years. Their networks, otherwise called the “Albanian diaspora”, are one of the largest in Europe and wider. Migrants who leave their country of origin always build their networks in the host country. “Albanian diaspora” includes: the early Albanian communities in the world; any person who was born in Albania and lives outside its borders; any person of Albanian origin, who was born outside the borders of Albania, maintains and/or have desire to mantain continuous linguistic, cultural and traditional ties with Albania (Republic of Albania. *Low for Albanian Diaspora*, No. 16/2018. Article 2).

People may or may not be satisfied with their current situation but new information would convince them to move elsewhere toward new opportunities. These are known as ‘pull’ factors and may include better employment opportunities, higher wages, higher standard of living, higher security of living, attractive social and health services, comprehensive access to education, career opportunities, etc. Otherwise when people believe that their needs cannot be met in one country, they seek to move to another country and experience psychological strain. Suddenly ‘push factors’ appear like loss of employment; racial, religious or political persecution; social, cultural or personal alienation; social or natural disasters (Kosinski & Prothero, 2023, p. 29).

Push and pull factors are related to culture and environmental conditioning, to nature of the move (normal or unusual), to the reaction of the social group and family, to certain life situations (for example graduates, people who are completing their education, people changing marital or professional status are more likely to move than others), to other individual characteristics and perceived barriers such as costs, fatigue from moving, personal anxiety, the social environment and legal restrictions (Kosinski & Prothero, 2023, p. 21).

The main push factors of population emigration from Balkan countries are: conflicts, ranging from threats to life to ethnic conflicts; poverty, consisting of low and insufficient income; desire to earn more money; high unemployment, poor infrastructure and low level of trust in public services; political unrest, social instability and the search for a more orderly life, not simply for a richer life (Council of Europe, 2010).

While the main known push factors of Albanian emigrants to live their country are: the economic factor, related to the lack of employment opportunities, income and difficult living conditions, such as the lack of electricity, water and housing; public security, related to the insecurity of living as a result of the unrest in the country; weak institutions contributed to the lack of trust among citizens; the tradition of "blood feud", which has a special social and cultural burden in the northern areas of the country (National Strategy of Albanian Diaspora 2021-2025, 2020, p. 17). In the following there will be presented general and chronological analysis of comparative profiles of Albanian emigration and emigrants, by highlighting the changes they have undergone.

2. Methods

This paper presents theoretical arguments and explanations about the research question: 'Why do Albanians decide to emigrate?'. It is used a qualitative method, by conducting literature review, especially strategic documents, statistical reports, studies and Albanian Legal Acts. There are also realised forty-five in-depth interviews with Albanian emigrants who live in the country of Italy and Germany, with the purpose to evaluate their reason of emigration from their origin country. Twenty-two of them were conducted with Albanian emigrants who live in Italy and twenty-three with those who live in Germany. All interviewees are selected regarding two conditions: They have to be long-term immigrants, more than 18 years. Long term emigrant

is a person who stays away from the country for a period exceeding twelve months (IOM, key migration terms).

The interviewers are from different categories (regarding education, qualification, ages, gender, job, position in hosting society, etc.) because of the need of more diverse opinion. There are selected Albanian emigrants who lives in Italy and Germany because of statistical and historical information that considers high numbers of Albanian emigrants. Italy it is known as a country with a historical rate of massive flows of Albanian emigrants from 1990 to nowadays and Germany is considered as one of the main destination countries of Albanian emigrants in the last ten years.

In-depth interviews were realized in 2 ways: by direct meeting and talking with emigrants and by online meeting and talking with emigrants. The interview's model was semi-structured and its duration was approximately one hour.

3. Literature Review

Migration theories attempt to explain why people make decisions to move and how they integrate into their respective destinations. Classical migration theories explain migration in terms of economic and labor factors. According to them, economic needs and employment are the factors that drive people to move from their country of origin to the host country (Douglas, 1999, as cited in Hirschman et.al., p. 35). Also they explain that mostly prevailed individual emigration than family emigration.

After 1990 till 2000, prevailed individual Albanian emigration dominated by men, for mainly economic and security needs or employment opportunity. There were also prevailed iredular Albanian emigration, notably in Greece and Italy. After 2000 predominate familiar Albanian emigration, according to which people make decisions together with their respective family group, rather than individually, to emigrate and the families that migrate are called 'transnational families', as transnational perspective emphasize. While living in host societies, Albanian immigrants maintain contacts with their country of origin through social and family networks and contract an integrated identity (IOM, 2020, pp.1-2.).

Especially from 2010 and ongoing the numbers of illegal or undocumented immigration have dropped significantly, being replaced by regular immigration with work visas, student visas, regular seasonal or long-term employment, family reunification etc (Resolution no. 1008. (2015). *The approval of the expaned national immigration profile for 2014*, p. 14533)

According to researcher Bogue, three groups of variables can be identified that drive this displacement: socio-economic conditions that influence migration; situations stimulating migration and important factors in choosing a destination (Bogue, 2023, as cited in Kosinski & Prothero, p. 29). According to researcher Lee, migration is driven by push and pull factors. The main push factors are poverty, unemployment, instability and insecurity. While pull factors attract immigrants to host societies offering them good economic conditions, employment opportunities and self fulfillment (Lee, 1996, pp. 47-57). These coincide with the main factors that have motivated Albanians to leave their country of origin over the years. An Albanian analytical research report (Mema et al., 2019, p. 63) describes that some of the push-pull factors of Albanian emigration are: low economic growth combined with a visible inequality in the distribution of income and its administration, overpopulation of some areas, unemployment, great pressure on property and functional division, armed conflicts, human rights abuse, discrimination and degrading treatment as well as natural disasters or ecological destruction. Meanwhile, pull factors are related to security and economic development in the country of destination as well as employment opportunity and the possibility of institutional integration

and adaptation. In this research report, was emphasized that Albanian migration is not only connected with economic issues, but also with injustices and dissolution of the systems value (Dervishi, Z. 2019, as cited in Mema et al., p. 63).

The construction of strong social ties or large networks in host countries, especially in Italy and Greece, have served as both push and pull factors to increase the number of Albanian emigrants. According to the Theory of Social Capital and Coleman's (Coleman, 2015, as cited in Oschiai), social ties are what push or pull migratory movements. The larger, stronger and more consolidated they are, the more attractive and motivating the desire and the decision to migrate. The same logic is translated in the case of Albanian emigrants. Strong networks are the one that push potential emigration to be continued. Other reasons are better integration policies and procedures. This is precisely explained through the analysis of networks that deals with the connections between groups and assesses the position of an individual or groups in society (Dahinden, 2011, p.43).

The social change and political factorization of migration has also brought about qualitative changes in Albania's relations with host countries, especially with Italy and Greece, but with other development countries in Europe and beyond. Albanian migration and diaspora affect bilateral relations between Italy and Greece, playing the role of 'mediator. (National Strategy of Albanian Diaspora 2021-2025, 2020, p. 24).

Before 1990 the most favorite countries chosen by Albanians to emigrate were the USA, Australia, Italy, Greece, etc. In the years 1990-2010 they were mainly Greece and Italy, followed by the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, etc. After 2010, and especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, the most selected countries of Albanians emigrants has turned out to be Germany, followed by the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the USA, Canada, etc.

4. Typology of Albanian Immigrants: From Uneducated and Unqualified, to Well-educated and Highly Qualified

Over the years, the typology of Albanian immigrants has also changed. From uneducated and unqualified people who were simply looking for work and quick amount of money after 1990, to educated, qualified and professional people who aim for well-being and a career, after 2018. Most educated and qualified Albanian emigrants are moving to Germany, North America or Western countries, including an increased number of engineers, IT specialists, doctors and nurses (Resolution no. 380. (2012). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2010*, p. 55 & p. 3487). While in the past, less educated and less qualified Albanian emigrants moved to Greece and Italy because of easy ways based on social networks to find unqualified jobs in the informal sector (Gedeshi & King, 2018, p. 45). Before 2010, data show that the lower the educational level, the higher the desire to emigrate (2007 Potential Migration Survey, 2018, as cited in Gedeshi & King, p. 41). After 2020, data show that the higher the educational level, the higher the desire to emigrate (2020 Potential Migration Survey, 2020, as cited in IOM et al., pp. 42-44).

5. Profiles of Push and Pull Factors of Albanians Emigration Regarding Literature Review Over the Years

During the 14th and 15th centuries, there was a massive migration of Albanians to Greece and Italy as a result of wars and invasions, especially the Ottoman invasion of the Balkan Peninsula. Many christians Albanian fled to Italy to escape Ottoman attacks. Especially after the death of

the Albanian national hero, Skanderbeg, there was a massive migration of Albanians to the southern part of Italy and Greece (Vullnetari, 2007, p. 9). The main push factors of Albanian emigration were ethnic discrimination, conditions of extreme poverty, misery condition of Albanian people, especially those from rural areas. And the main pull factors were safety life and favorable economic conditions in host countries (Vullnetari, 2007, pp. 8-10).

During the communist regime period (1944-1989) Albanian emigrants left their country for mostly political reasons (Vullnetari, 2007, p. 61). The destination countries were United States, Latin America, Australia and Turkey (Resolution no. 380. (2012). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2010*, p. 3462). Other push factors are lack of freedom and poverty condition. The pull factors are related with gaining freedom to talk, to think and to be yourself in host countries and the lack of prejudice.

The period after 1990 coincides with the fall of the communist regime in Albania and the establishment of the new democratic order. There were huge flows of Albanian emigrants who settled in Italy and Greece through illegal emigration, crossing over the sea and land routes (King and Vullnetari, 2003, pp. 27-32). In those years, Albanians have carried out three migratory cycles which can be considered intensive, irregular and evolving (Resolution no. 1008. (2015). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2014*, p. 31 & p. 14530):

- winter-spring 1990–1991, when mass emigration to Italy and Greece occurred;
- august 1991, when mass emigration to Italy occurred;
- spring 1997, when mass emigration to EU countries occurred due to high insecurity in the country. Many Albanians seek for azil in Germany or others.

5.1 Comparatives Profiles of Push and Pull Factors of Albanian Emigration Through Literature Research and Albanians Interviewers: Period 1990-2000

Regarding literature review this period corresponded with the beginning of democratic system with a high flow of emigration. The main push factors of Albanian emigration were political factors (the fall of communist system); protection and security; extreme poverty (which justifies illegal emigration and Pyramid schemes of 1997) and the loss of family savings (Resolution no. 380. (2012). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2010*, p. 3462). The main pull factors are political area, life security, employment and insurance of income in host countries. Albanian emigrants were mainly poor and uneducated men of all age groups. Qualified and intellectual emigrants were few in number.

From opinion of Albanian emigrants, fourteen of forty-five interviewed or 31%, ranked reason to emigrate as well as chaotic condition, economic difficulties, lack of security, internal band wars, fear, the collapse of pyramid scheme.

5.2 Comparatives Profiles of Push and Pull Factors of Albanian Emigration Through Literature Review and Albanian Interviewers: Period 2000-2010

Regarding literature review the period between 2000-2010 is corresponded with a lower intensity of Albanian emigrants' flows because of the improvement of Albania's economic performance and established Albanian diaspora with higher social networks, especially in Greece and Italy (Gedeshi & King, 2018, p. 22). The main push factors of Albanian emigration are lack of income; unemployment and education. The main pull factors are growth of social networks of Albanian emigrants in host societies; more job opportunities and higher incomes.

From opinion of Albanian emigrants, seven of forty-five interviewed or 15.5%, ranked reasons to emigrate as low-paid jobs, unemployment, family reunification and education.

5.3 Comparatives Profiles of Push and Pull Factors of Albanian Emigration Through Literature Research and Albanian Interviews: Period: Over 2010 - on Going

Regarding literature review this period corresponded with visa liberalization process of Albanian country, the reduction of irregular emigration, higher rates of economic asylum requests and higher numbers of educated and qualified Albanians emigrants.

From mid-2010, the number of irregular migration decreased due to strengthening of borders control, the visa liberalization processes within the EU for Albanian citizens, as well as the increasing access to more information regarding those processes (Resolution no. 380. (2012). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2010*, p. 3486). Those factors improved the position of Albanian emigrants in European countries (IOM, 2022, p. 7). For example, in order to have a residence permit, they try to find regular work from Albania, or by staying for up to 90 days with a tourist visa in Italy or Germany (IOM, 2022, as cited in Germany and Italy Destination Guide. p. 2). Between 2010-2019 years, the flow of Albanian emigrants was revived. The number of Albanian emigrants through asylum seekers, student visa or work visa increased significantly.

Especially in the years 2012-2014, the number of Albanian citizens who sought asylum in EU countries increased significantly from 16 to 409 (Resolution no. 1008. (2015). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2014*, pp. 14528-14529). Also in those years there was an increasing trend of Albanian citizens with irregular residence in EU countries. As a result, there were high numbers of returns of Albanian immigrants, forced or voluntary, which was also related to the global economic and financial crisis of 2009. The data showed that 133,544 Albanian immigrants over the age of 18 returned to Albania in the years 2009 - 2013 (INSTAT & IOM, 2014, p. 34). Meanwhile the highest number of Albanians residence permits in 2013 results in Italy (502,361) and Greece (340,841) (Resolution no. 1008. (2015). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2014*, p. 14533). In 2014-2015, around 66,000 Albanians registered as asylum seekers in several EU countries, mainly in Germany. These new and high migration flows reflect the continued high level of potential migration of the Albanian population (Gedeshi & King, 2018, pp. 22-23).

In the years 2015-2018 there were an increase of qualified immigrants and asylum seekers for economic reasons. (Resolution no. 1008. (2015). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2014*, p. 14531). Meanwhile the number of unaccompanied Albanian minors decreased (Resolution no. 222. (2020). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2015-2018*, p. 3102). The most selected destination countries of Albanian emigrants were Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France, Canada and the USA, where there are better economic prospects and opportunities for legal immigration or naturalization (Resolution no. 380. (2012). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2010*, p. 3462). In Italy and Greece, the intensity of migratory flows began to decline, but the Albanian community was very large and solid regarding regular residence permits, naturalization processes or regular visas. At the end of 2014 in Italy resulted around about 503 thousand regular registered Albanian immigrants, while in Greece about 800 thousand (Resolution no. 1008. (2015). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2014*, p. 3099 & p.14528).

In the years 2012-2018, except of economic reasons, many Albanian emigrants left their country due to security and tranquility factors, to their children's education, to get a better and secure

future, to housing problems, unemployment, insufficient income to live, etc., (Resolution no. 380. (2012). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2010*, p. 3485). At the end of 2014, unemployment was around 17.3%, while youth unemployment (age group 15–29 years) was 32.5%. As the data shows, 84 percent of Albanian citizens live their country because of ‘employment opportunities’ and 4.2 percent because they have lost their job. They intended to emigrate through regular ways (INSTAT, 2018, p. 19).

In years 2019–2022 there were significant decrease with 7.54 percent of regular Albanian emigrants residence permits. It predominated regular migration for employment reasons (temporary and or permanent works and seasonal or long-term staying), for family reunification, for studies, for qualifications and training, etc. Also, the number of Albanians ordered to leave the territory of an EU country has decreased by 25.7 percent over the last four years (Resolution no. 50. (2024). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2019-2022*, pp. 2561-2565). The number of Albanian minors asylum seekers has increased by 6.2 percent in 2019, while the number of asylum applications from Albanian immigrants has decreased from 17,300 in 2019 to 10,735 in 2022 (Resolution no. 50. (2024). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2019-2022*, p. 2566). The main reasons for requesting asylum are mainly economic, which has led to a large number of rejections of asylum applications by host countries. In the meantime the most selected countries for Albanians to emigrate resulted to be France, Germany, Greece, Sweden and Belgium. (Resolution no. 50. (2024). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2019-2022*, p. 2573).

In the years 2020-2022, which coincides with the Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic periods, the main driving factors for Albanian emigration remain employment opportunities, followed by family reunification, and ‘better opportunities’, mainly for education and for living standards. Pull factors are also employment and professional growth opportunities, better quality education opportunities, improved family reunification practices and improved integration foreigners laws. Regular residence permits for Albanian emigrants are also increasing (Resolution no. 50. (2024). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2019-2022*, pp. 2568-2569). Data shows that there result 155,411 Albanian residence permits issued by EU countries during 2019–2021. 52 percent of them were issued for family reunification, 24.7 percent for other reasons, 19.4 percent for employment and 3.4 percent for education. (Eurostat, 2023, as cited in Resolution no. 50. (2024). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2019-2022*, p. 2569).

After 2020, the naturalization rates of Albanian immigrants in European countries have increased. Italy and Greece continue to remain the main European countries for granting citizenship to many Albanians living there (Resolution no. 50. (2024). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2019-2022*, p. 2570). Men continue to dominate more than women in emigration. During the years 2011–2022, the emigration rates of men turned out to be higher than those assumed in previous projections. While for women, the situation was the opposite, with emigration rates several times lower than those assumed previously (Resolution no. 50. (2024). *The approval of the Albanian expanded national immigration profile for 2019-2022*, p. 2579).

To summarize, based on the literature recommended, the main push factors of Albanian emigration during 2010 and ongoing, were difficult economic condition, lack of meritocracy, lack of trust to institutions, higher rates of perceived inequality. And the main pull factors were social networks, high standard of living condition, career opportunities, more job opportunities, higher payments, higher quality of education, better future of children, better politics, laws and practices of integration of immigrants.

From opinion of Albanian emigrants, twenty-four of forty-five interviewed or 53.3%, ranked reasons to emigrate as ‘better opportunities’, better prospects, lack of meritocracy and trust in institutions, better family reunification procedures and education.

Related to forty-five Albanian emigrants interviewed, “better opportunities” means *‘better...: living condition; career opportunities; education quality; meritocracy and respecting law and institutions; practices and possibilities of raising children’s; life (more peaceful and less stressful) and easier ways to find a job; paid jobs; benefiting from social and health packages and developing in all aspects of life.*

Also, fifteen Albanian emigrants interviewed or 34%, ranked education as one of the most important reasons they have emigrated, not only for engaging more quality education, but mostly for considering *‘education, as...:*

a regular and safe way to move and live outside their country;

a secure way to find a job with a better salary in host countries;

a key factor to integrate faster and in long term in host societies;

a key factor to create more social networks with foreigners or locals;

a key factor to acquire citizenship in easier way;

a key factor to better knowing local language.

6. Conclusion

Before 1990-year factors like wars, political reasons, lack of freedom and economic factors, push and pull Albanians citizens to live their origin country. From 1990-2010 years Albanian emigration was mostly irregular, applied in individual form and caused by political and security reason, economic difficulties and poverty. From year 2010 onwards there are some important facts that impacted Albanian emigration.

Literature research indicated higher rates of Albanian asylum requests for economic factors, especially in years 2012-2015; educated and qualified Albanian emigrants; unaccompanied Albanian minors; Albanian social networks in host countries; naturalizations of Albanian diaspora, especially in Italy and Greece; emigrants’ employments based in regular procedures and agreement and also higher rate of male emigration. After 2019, a high level of family emigration and qualified Albanian emigrants continued to prevail. There were also legal changes to integration policies and the family reunification process, which facilitated the entry and integration of emigrants into host societies. Also there are registered changes in migration behaviors regarding gender structure of the population.

In response to the research question in this paper ‘Why do Albanians emigrate through years?’, it resulted that over the years, ‘economic factors’ have been replaced by ‘better opportunities’. Also, the profile of Albanian emigrants has changed from ‘irregular emigrants’, partly qualified and educated, to those who are mostly regular, qualified and well educated.

This paper findings help to assess the needs of Albanians, to design policies and measures for not abandoning their country, and to improve policies for the inclusiveness of Albanian emigrants in the host countries.

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