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Demoralization-led Migration in Bangladesh : A Sense-of-Insecurity-Based Decision-Making Model (Book Review : AKM Ahsan Ullah & Ahmed Shafiqul Huque).

Abstract: Migration in Bangladesh has historically been influenced by economic, environmental, and social factors; however, recent studies emphasize the significant impact of demoralization and perceived insecurity on mobility decisions. This review article evaluates Demoralization-led Migration in Bangladesh : A Sense-of-Insecurity-Based Decision-Making Model by AKM Ahsan Ullah, placing it within the wider context of forced migration, vulnerability, and human security. The review utilizes recent empirical evidence and secondary literature to assess how feelings of powerlessness, social exclusion, and institutional failure create a psychosocial push factor that is separate from conventional economic or environmental explanations. The model enhances comprehension by connecting individual perceptions of insecurity to group migration choices, especially within marginalized rural and urban populations. Preliminary observations indicate that demoralization intensifies migration patterns, altering household approaches and impacting community resilience. The review highlights the theoretical implications for migration studies alongside the practical considerations for policymaking within the fragile socio-political and climate-vulnerable context of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Demoralization, insecurity-based migration, displacement dynamics, Bangladesh.

Review Article: The article "Demoralization-led migration in Bangladesh : A sense of insecurity-based decision-making model," written by AKM Ahsan Ullah and Ahmed Shafiqul Huque and published in the Asian Journal of Comparative Politics (2020), presents a framework that reinterprets specific migration patterns from Bangladesh as results of a demoralization process driven by a widespread

feeling of insecurity. The authors prioritize psychological and normative disaffection—specifically a form of moral and civic erosion they term “demoralization”—over traditional push–pull economics or structure-only explanations (such as poverty, labor demand, and environmental shocks) in understanding migration decision-making. The conceptual shift is significant as it highlights the role of emotions, symbolic threats, governance legitimacy, and perceived dignity in influencing migration patterns. This review assesses the article's conceptual contribution, empirical strategy, evidence, and policy implications, while contextualizing the thesis within the framework of more recent statistics and scholarship on migration, internal displacement, and the various drivers at play in Bangladesh through 2024–2025 (Alam & Mamun, 2022).

The model essentially argues that insecurity related to political antagonism, poor governance, victimizing repression, or structural inequity can cause a sense of demoralization. This discouragement further weakens attachment to place and augments the likelihood of migration. Through the analysis of qualitative interview data and secondary sources, the authors chart a process of “demoralization migration” in which emotional exhaustion, trusting less in institutions and moral disillusionment constitute more immediate triggers for one’s decision-making and actions related to migration (Randolph & Storper, 2023). This reconceptualization enriches studies of migration by bringing hitherto largely neglected emotional dynamics to the fore and by linking civic culture and governance to choices regarding mobility. This model of dynamics is especially useful in places like Bangladesh where political contestation trims against state-society friction plus episodic violence, all crossed with economic precarity and creating decisions that are influenced in complex, non-bearing-to-strict-income-gradients or cost-of-environmental-damage ways. The articulation of demoralization as an intervening psychological state is one of the important strengths of the study, enriching a multi-level causal account which encompasses structural as well as agency levels.

The article applies a methodological framework that is primarily qualitative and based on interview data; together with what the authors said 32 interviews and interpretive synthesis of secondary materials. The small size of the interview sample is acceptable in relation to the aim of exploratory theory-building; the aim is not to work toward large generalization but to the development of a believable decision-making procedure. Among the sampling methods used by the authors, such as snowball and purposive, and the in-depth content analysis of respondents’ stories, the subjective findings such as demoralization are especially well illuminated. But the empirical ground, doesn't allow to be fully convinced about this causality. Subjective demoralization is potentially embedded in classical determinants like unemployment, loss of land or environmental degradation. If anyone want to get its independent effect, mixed-method validation method was used, ideally analyzing longitudinal data linking changes in civic trust, mental health, or perceptions of safety to migration-related outcomes. The 'probably' used by the authors suggests a lack of touch with reality and the need for more tests; this humbleness is a methodological effectiveness (Lin & Zhu, 2022).

The study provides a valuable normative and political analysis of migration that states migration must not be simply reduced to an account of economic calculation, devoid of considerations of dignity and civic confidence. Incidence of political polarization, unrest and governance inadequacies in Bangladesh can challenge the feeling of security among common people. The demoralization proposition finds support in a substantial body of literature on human security and migration that emphasizes the role of threats to bodily selfhood, dignity, and civic agency as independently important predictors of mobility. The set of studies deals with human

security frameworks, as well as some recent literature linking governance quality to migration flows. The authors situate their analysis in narrative field, where respondents discuss how they describe symbolic violence—fear of being randomly incarcerated, social degradation, targeted policing, exclusion— as reasons for emigration. Such stories help us to understand how political contexts can produce migration imperatives that are not restricted to specific, economic factors. The model helps researchers and policy makers to realize that strategies to reduce emigration pressure should not only focus on economic opportunities but also take into account governance legitimacy, rule-of-law concerns and psychosocial recovery.

However, the reform fatigue model raises both empirical and theoretical concerns that deserve close scrutiny. It is sometimes difficult to apply this division between demoralization and more direct causes like threats on life, life-ruining poverty, and dislocation due to the environment. In multiple migration stories, those interviewed list joblessness, familial pressures, climate shocks, fear of violence, among other concurrent factors. Understanding the relative importance of demoralization vis-a-vis economic compulsion requires careful, ideally long-term, measurement. Second, there is a possibility of logical fallacy if psychological breakdown is inferred from migrants' narratives without independent evaluations of civic trust or pre-migration psychosocial status. Third, the fact that demoralization may be generated exit externally from the migration process itself (through pre-migration shocks leading to demoralization, which is further impacted by migration experiences) complicates the simple assumption of causal relationships. The authors acknowledge some limitations though the next steps would be empirical exploration with measures of demoralization that have been validated through psychosocial measures in association with hard governance indicators. Hybrid study types would enable direct statistical modelling of the unique predictive effect if demoralization on migration-related outcomes.

This argument must be placed in perspective with existing empirical evidence. Migration data at international and national levels up to the early 2020s show a number of interrelated trends in Bangladesh: high, and relatively stable rates of international labor migration, growing urbanization and internal migration, and displacement by disasters, and a heavy dependence on remittances (Bocquier et al., 2023). Bangladesh ranks among the top countries of origin for migrants according to several measures. According to government, remittance inflow was nearly US\$21.9 billion in 2023 continuing a labor migration trend, particularly to the Gulf and other countries in Asia. The macro-patterns in this study suggest an enduring production of a labor migration culture bound to livelihood strategies and demography-driven forces, implying that explanations of migration as produced primarily out of demoralization may be simplistic. The demoralization model does not claim monopoly, but it adds a motivational dimension explaining when and why in some situations people choose to leave, even when economic gaps are modest or when other local means of coping are also there to be used. At the same time, the burden of internal displacement in Bangladesh, mostly triggered by disasters and climate hazards, has been considerable and growing. Global monitoring indicates that disaster and weather-related displacement also made up a substantial proportion of new internal displacement around the world in the early 2020s (Selod & Shilpi, 2021). Bangladesh, one of the most disaster-prone and densely populated countries in the world, faces an even higher threat of forced displacement in the years ahead. By mid-century, projections say about a million could be affected by climate-highlighted mobility. The linking of environmental mobility to governance and livelihood failures is also important – those that regularly confront dispossession of land and of the means for living can (cumulatively)

experience demoralization. Thus, the demoralization model meshes well with the literature on climate-mobility that focuses on compound vulnerabilities: environmental shock can engender humiliation, precarity of livelihood, and marginality in the civic sphere that all compound senses of insecurity. Statements such as “not feeling safe anymore” that are made by people in flooded areas, or complaints that politicians and public administrators have not done enough to deliver recovery means that express the inadequacy of institutions to deliver recovery, contain a symbolical meaning of profound demoralization that differs from people material losses (Spaan & Van, 2020).

This intersection is where the importance of policy relevance shows. When migration is triggered on the basis of demotivation due to institutional collapses and social insecurity, then policy should not be based solely as an economic incentive, or job creation. Re-building trust in institutions, increasing the transparency of relief distribution, guaranteeing access to the rule of law, and providing psychosocial support are all cutting-edge areas of a governance agenda that is attentive to migration. The article closes with the assertion that state activities to restore dignity and guarantee civic security should also accompany counter-migration programs, such as those aiming to retain skilled labor and anti-human trafficking programs. This entails fair policing, equal justice, non-discriminatory social protection and responsible local government. In those cases where governments had developed measures that target a reduction in arbitrary fear (i.e., interlocutory protections, improved aid transparency, and grievance redress mechanisms), as well as ongoing structural deprivation, the incentive for escape may fall. This policy lesson is congruent with the broader human security approach being promoted in international policy discussions.

The study should consider the geopolitical and socio-economic factors that govern the expression of demoralization in Bangladesh. Periodic political contestation, outbreaks of violent protest, and government crackdowns, increased by moments the sense of insecurity in some communities; partisan or selective policy responses can add to the experience of alienation. There is also the two-facedness of the male migrant labor market in the Gulf, intertwined with the roads to degradation and detestation. Many migrants leave in search of dignity – in a sense, chasing better wages – but they face an added indignity of discrimination or lack of workplace rights in their new home. The interaction of the two makes normative recommendations challenging: improving governance from within may reduce some outflows, but just as important is addressing abuses in places where people go, to reduce cycles of despair and trauma in return migration. Recent global analyses of migration and remittances highlight the dynamics of parallel policy choices in host countries in the form of labor rights and visa regimes, and in sending countries, leading to complex forms of mobility. Performing honestly with your abilities and shortcomings is key. The article’s bright spots are that it coins new concepts to name and think about demoralization, it contains subjective tales that are often overlooked in the migration econometrics, and it is policy-focused in that it shows how bad governance is associated with mobility. I’m glad the writers up here raised the issue of honor and public morale as policy levers; recasting one-dimensional economic models along this axis is invaluable. And framing the model in terms of conversations with people in the field also makes the otherwise abstract claims seem real-world relevant.

The limitations of the article are mostly related to the piece's reliance on a narrow qualitative sample and limited method to operate demoralization for broad empirical consideration. Further investigation should specifically operationalize demoralization with psychometrically validated scales, including scales of civic trust, perceived institutional

legitimacy, humiliation and psychosocial well-being. It would also be valuable to link these instruments with panel data tracking migration outcomes. Mixed-method designs could enable researchers to test the differential importance of demoralization compared to conventional determinants such as income, employment, and environment shocks, and assess interaction effects, e.g., if demoralization exacerbates the migration response to economic shocks. Researchers can take advantage of already available large-scale migration and mobility surveys, and add components on perceptions of safety, trust in governance and dignity. Nationally representative surveys can be triangulated with administrative data on displacement—administrative data that can be cross-triangulated with remittances data and community case studies for a cross-level validation. Quasi-experimental designs, for instance comparisons between communities before, and after, public sector reforms, or the use of exogenous variation in quality of governance, can help to identify causal pathways which will simply not appear in open-ended interviews. Theoretical considerations developed in this article suggest research questions for further investigation and provide lessons for a research agenda at the intersection of political sociology, migration studies, and public policy (Erdal & Hagen-Zanker, 2022).

The review should be located in the larger debates on the root causes of global migration but should have a lens on the demoralization model. Recent international findings suggest that decisions to migrate are shaped by a combination of economic, environmental, social and political variables. Global data show the long and complicated reach of mobility: international migrant stocks increased in the early 2020s, remittances remained a crucial and stabilizing flow to sending countries, and internal displacements due to disasters went up around the world. Official remittance inflows to Bangladesh soared in 2023, upholding the country's long-time position as a major labor-sending country (Alam & Mamun, 2022). Concurrently, the fallout from disasters, including major flooding in the 2020s, have affected millions, amplified vulnerabilities and triggered local displacement (Czaika et al., 2021). The macro realities are that demoralization tends to work in concert with a number of other factors, meaning that policies must take account of this multifaceted causation.

What might a policy package sensitive to demoralization look like in practice? To concentrate on providing clear and accountable governance—e.g., digitalized aid registers, independent monitoring of aid distribution, easy access to grievance redress. The idea is to reduce the appearance of inequity, which can be a source of demoralization. *Secondly*, integrate psychosocial assistance into disaster-recovery and community-resilience efforts; mental health services and support from leaders within the community can mitigate the emotional fallout that often dictates migration decisions. *Thirdly*, strengthen the rule-of-law safeguards and fair law enforcement approaches to restore citizens' trust in public security. *Fourthly*, blend livelihoods programming through 'dignity-centered' design: ensure that aid is delivered in ways that respect and empower beneficiaries, and eschew paternalistic models that actively re-impose forms of indignity. *Fifthly*, engage diaspora and returnee communities in participatory governance to both tap into the potential of such agents of change and signal institutional openness. The interventions targeted the pathways presented in the paper and were in line with international suggestions related to human security and resilience. *Finally*, the normative implications of the article should be taken into account. When migration is seen as a possible response to demoralization, the moral universe shifts, and migration becomes something to do rather than simply a response to a bar against entry; more than just a way of life, it is a way of avoiding betrayal by institutions. This moves invites scholars and policymakers to consider migration decisions as indicators of government performance. Sustained out-migration because of

hopelessness would be a further indication that the state is failing to meet basic human security needs and thus at a minimum that out-migration trends can be seen as an early warning of problems in governance.

Finally, Ullah and Huque's piece on "Demoralization-led migration" is an important and provocative addition to a literature that too easily breaks apart migration's personal dimensions of insecurity and dignity (Randolph & Storper, 2023). The theoretical novelty, policy implications on demoralization, with methodological limitations detailed, are to be addressed in forthcoming research with broader mix-method and longitudinal examination on demoralization. Despair is likely to play a role in certain migration patterns in Bangladesh, particularly in a setting characterized by governance problems and a series of crises, contributing to a sense of precariousness. But it works in combination with existing economic and ecological dynamics. For those in power, the message is clear: to deal with migration pressures, one needs not just jobs and climate-proofing, but a form of governance that engenders trust, dignity, and security — at odds with the forces of demoralization.

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