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Identification of the most affected areas by emigration and return migration in Albania: profiling of returning migrants

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Abstract

Title: Identification of the most affected areas by emigration and return migration in Albania: profiling of returning migrants

Migration in Albania appears in three distinct forms: internal, international, and return migration. However, there is significant overlap across these processes. In other words, at one point in time an individual and his/her family may decide to better their living conditions by moving from one prefecture to another and later, that individual may decide to emigrate abroad and possibly return after few years of residing in a destination country.

International migration has affected each and every region in Albania. However, it is difficult to examine population changes within each prefecture while isolating internal and international migratory experiences because often times, these are interrelated processes. Furthermore, identification of prefectures mostly affected by international migration becomes a difficult undertaking when taking into consideration the fact that international migration often transcends individual parameters and affects the entire family. Prefectures near south and southeastern borders (e.g. Korca and Gjirokastra) appear to be the least affected by international migration. However, this finding is study-specific because the survey section of the study revealed that entire families in these regions had migrated abroad and field interviewers were unable to contact head of households or other family members to gather information about the migratory experiences of these families.

Key words: *international migration*

II. Aims of the Study

The overall objective of the study was to depict the characteristics of international and internal migration in Albania and identify regions mostly affected by these phenomena. Furthermore, this study is based on a two-fold goal. First, we wanted to identify and review relevant literature accumulated on the topic of Albanian migration. Secondly, we wanted to answer some research

questions deriving from the desk research phase through a household survey approach. Conversely, the field-based portion of the study sought to outline a profile of the returned migrants and identify key characteristics of this cluster of migration such as reasons for return, migration experiences, and reintegration opportunities upon return. Findings emerging from desk research and field-based components of the study are used to draw conclusions and draft recommendations about strategies and interventions that can facilitate return migration processes.

III. Methodology

As mentioned earlier, this study consisted of: (1) desk research, and (2) household survey methodologies. Combination of these approaches allows triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data offering a better understanding of Albanian migration and generation of conclusions and recommendations emerging from findings.

The field-based section of the study used a household survey approach to gather information on three major phenomena: internal migration, international migration, and return migration. The survey used a comprehensive questionnaire comprised of four modules: (1) demographics; (2) internal migration; (3) international migration; and (4) return migration (**Appendix A.1**). Additionally, a focus group approach was used to understand the experiences among return migrants and to develop an in-depth profile of return migration. The protocol for the focus group can be found in **Appendix A.2**.

The sampling phase of the survey consisted of two parameters, primary selection units (PSUs), and households within those units, respectively (Table X). Primary selection units were selected based on the demographic indices of each prefecture (n=12) and they were adjusted to be approximately equal in terms of number of households. Selection of these units reflected rural-urban ratios, gender, and age characteristics of each prefecture that they represented.

After identification of primary selection units, the study proceeded to identify households within these units. This process was based on random selection with 10 households representing each PSU. Inclusion criteria for this study consisted of selecting households where the head of the family and other family members had migrated abroad and/or recently returned home.

Prefectures	Total		Urban		Rural	
	Percentage	Number of PSUs	Percentage	Number of PSUs	Percentage	Number of PSUs
Berat	5.48%	8	2.28%	4	3.21%	4
Diber	4.61%	6	0.87%	3	3.74%	3
Durres	9.51%	13	5.46%	7	4.04%	6
Elbasan	10.87%	15	4.01%	6	6.87%	9
Fier	11.83%	17	3.89%	6	7.94%	11
Gjirokastr	3.30%	5	1.38%	2	1.91%	3
Korce	8.14%	11	3.32%	4	4.82%	7
Kukes	2.56%	4	0.58%	2	1.98%	2
Lezhe	5.00%	7	1.6%	3	3.40%	5
Shkoder	7.82%	11	3.08%	4	4.73%	7

Tirane	24.32%	34	17.74%	25	6.58%	9
Vlore	6.57%	9	3.84%	5	2.74%	4

Interviews were conducted with the head of household and when that person was absent (i.e. living abroad), interviews were conducted with other family members. Questions about international, internal, and return migration were asked to all members of the household who participated in the study. Selection of participants in the study was based on random sampling, specifically, the random route household selection method which allows for a homogenous representation of all PSUs the country. This sampling method reflected the following criteria: geographical location (mountainous, coastal, central, and Tirana); age (adult individuals); gender, family income, (low/middle/upper class), social status.

Questionnaires were administered by 26 trained interviewers from the Institute of Public Opinion Studies (ISOP). Four supervisors monitored the field work of this project which took place in four weeks. Interviewers met with supervisors upon the completion of interviews to discuss potential issues raised during the interview. Discussions and debriefings were provided as needed.

The overall sample of the study consisted of 1,400 households yielding a total number of 2417 respondents. These respondents were either the head of the household or another family member who met enrollment criteria mentioned above (i.e. currently a migrant living abroad). Initially, family members were interviewed about experiences of migration among their relatives and neighbors but this source of information was removed from the analysis given the large sample that was obtained from head of households and immediate family members alone. The analysis phase of the study was based on 1,400 households with a 5% margin of error allowing placement of 95% confidence intervals around the obtained estimates from data analyses. Data was entered, cleaned, and analyzed using a statistical software package, (SPSS, version 15.00).

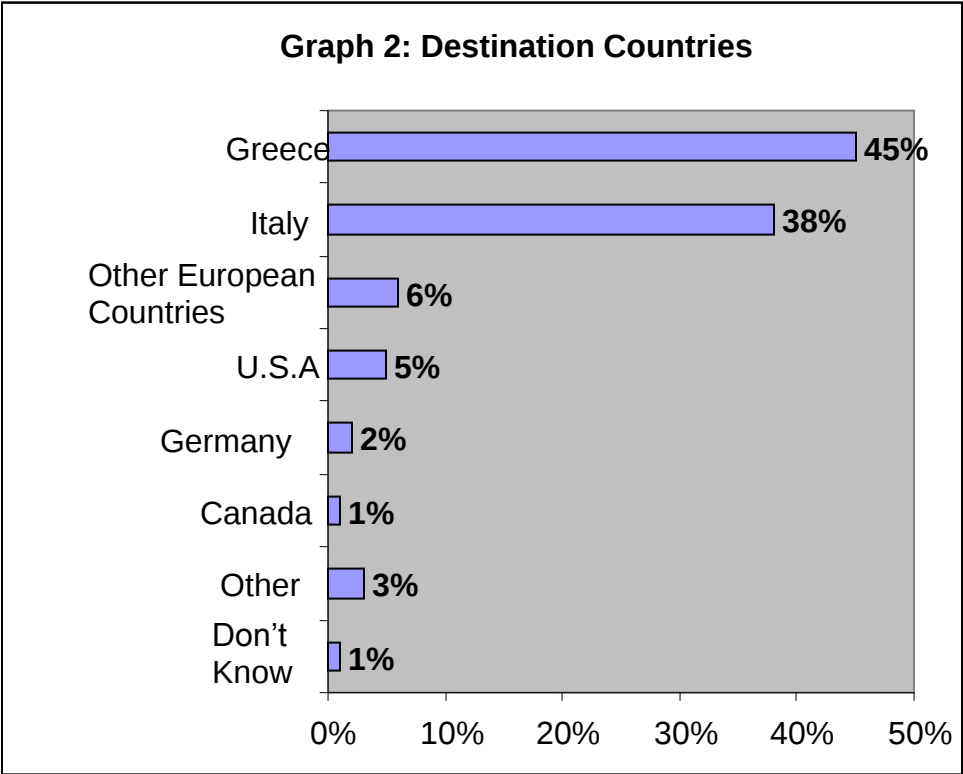
V.2. International Migration

The section of the survey on international migration sought to highlight characteristics of Albanian international migration such as identification of destination countries, pull and push factors, tendencies to migrate across age-groups, forms of migration, and remittances sent home. The sample for the international migration section of the study was 1097. This statistic included respondents who either they or their immediate family members at the time of the study were migrants living in various destination countries. Both groups of participants are considered respondents in the survey section of the study. Furthermore, **Appendix C** offers a visual of the distribution of international migration across prefectures highlighting the areas that are mostly affected by this phenomenon.

V.2.1. Destination Countries

Respondents in this sample identified neighboring countries such as Greece (45%) and Italy (38%) as primary countries of destination. Other destinations were the United States (5%) and

other Western European countries (6%). This finding confirms previous studies that have identified neighboring countries such as Italy and Greece as main destination countries for Albanian emigrants (Vullnetari, 2007; IOM, 2005). From a historical standpoint (since 1990s and onward), Greece and Italy were the main destination countries since Albania became a democratic society and often times these destinations serve as trampolines for final moves to other countries in Western Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia.



V.2.2. Reasons for Leaving (Push Factors)

Another study objective was to identify reasons for leaving the country (push factors) among participants. Table 5 displays information about the primary reasons for leaving. The most important factor that led to emigration abroad was the economic factor, where 67% indicated that economic difficulties were the primary reason for leaving. Other important factors were poor living conditions in the country (9%), reunification with other family members (7%), and better prospects of living in Western Europe and other countries (7%). These findings mirror the results that originated from the desk research section of the study which showed economic reasons as main predictors of international migration.

Table 5: Reasons for Leaving (Push Factors)		
	N	%

Economic difficulties	730	67%
Family reunification abroad	82	7%
Ethnic conflict	1	<1%
Poor living conditions in Albania	103	9 %
Medical reasons	10	0.9%
Perceived lack of safety in Albania	49	4%
Political reasons	1	<1%
Education	32	3 %
Better prospects in destinations countries	78	7%
Personal conflict	2	< 1%
Other	9	0.8 %
Total	1097	100%

V.2.3. Distribution of Push Factors across Destination Countries

Additionally, the study identified similarities in push factor trends between and within countries of destination (Table 6). For example, the majority of respondents who migrated to Greece, Italy, Germany, and other Western European countries identified economic difficulties as the primary reason for leaving their country. However, reasons for migrating to Canada are somewhat different where 54% of the sample stated that they chose this destination country based on the opportunities it has to offer. As noted in the literature review, migration to Canada is primarily based on a skills-ranking system which confirms this finding that only those who are qualified to migrate consider other options such as seeking better prospects for their future.

Table 6: Push Factors by Country of Destination							
	Greece (n=489)	Italy (n=407)	Germany (n=21)	Other European Countries (n=75)	USA (n=57)	Canada (n=11)	Other (n=36)
Economic difficulties	78%	60%	81%	57%	44%	18%	53%
Family reunification abroad	4%	9%	5%	7%	19%	9%	11%
Ethnic conflict	0%	<1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Poor living conditions in Albania	7%	11%	5%	12%	10%	9%	11%
Medical reasons	1%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Perceived lack of safety in Albania	3%	5%	5%	8%	7%	0%	6%
Political reasons	0%	<1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education	<1%	6%	0%	4%	2%	0%	8%
Better prospects in	6%	6%	5%	10%	12%	54%	11%

destinations countries							
Personal conflict	<1%	<1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	<1%	1%	0%	0%	5%	9%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

V.2.4. Reasons for Choosing Destination Countries (Pull Factors)

Another important area of exploration in the study was identification of reasons for choosing countries of destination (pull factors). Table 7 shows that the most important factors for choosing the country of destination was contact with the others who lived in the country (46%), followed by coincidence (15%), and family reunification (11%). Similar to what was found in the desk research section of the study, migrants choose their countries of destination based on prior connections that they already have which allows them to better navigate the new environment adjust to living abroad. The finding of coincidence as a choice for destination countries can be sample-specific and can be attributed to the early migratory experiences (1990s) where individuals did not have prior knowledge of or connections with individuals in prospective destination countries.

On the other hand, family reunification is another important finding from this study which shows that international migration often transcends the individual dimensions and becomes a family-based process for Albanian migrants.

Table 7: Reasons for Choosing Countries of Destination (Pull Factors)		
	N	%
Contacts with others living in that country	506	46%
Simply Coincidence	167	15%
Transitional destination until permanent move	32	3%
Rumors about positive asylum policies in that country	25	3%
Positive support for asylum seekers	18	1%
Family reunification	122	11%
Person who helped recommended this place	90	8 %
Others	96	9 %
Don't know	41	4%
Total	1097	100 %

V.2.5. Distribution of Pull Factors by Destination Countries

The study also looked at the presence of pull factors across destination countries to examine similarities or differences within and between these countries. Table 8 shows that contacts with others already living abroad remains an important pull factor across destination countries. Similarly, coincidence, and family reunification are two other pull factors that mirror the

argument made in the section above. Whereas coincidence led to choosing a destination country in the early beginnings of migration experiences where migration was “the road not taken” and represented the unknown, family reunification has emerged as an important pull factor in recent international migration where family members join each other while living abroad.

Table 8: Pull Factors by Country of Destination							
	Greece (n=489)	Italy (n=407)	Germany (n=21)	Other European Countries (n=75)	USA (n=57)	Canada (n=11)	Other (n=36)
Contacts with others living in that country	52%	45%	62%	40%	21%	46%	29%
Simply Coincidence	14%	16%	14%	15%	24%	0%	10%
Transitional destination until permanent move	3%	2%	0%	10%	3%	0%	3%
Rumors about positive asylum policies in that country	1%	1%	14%	10%	3%	8%	13%
Positive support for asylum seekers	1%	1%	5%	6%	5%	8%	6%
Family reunification	10%	12%	0%	10%	17%	0%	10%
Person who helped recommended this place	6%	11%	5%	6%	2%	0%	19%
Others	8%	8%	0%	3%	22%	23%	10%
Don't know	5%	4%	0%	0%	2%	15%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

V.2.6. Pull Factors across Different Age Groups

Similar to findings mentioned above, contact with other Albanians living in the same country was the leading pull factor even when age was used as a means for comparison (Table 9). The second and third most important factors affecting choice of destination are coincidence (15%) and family reunification (11%), respectively. When looking at reasons for choosing a destination country across age (16-20yo; 21-30; 31-40; 41-50; 50+), it appears that reasons are proportionately distributed across the age groups.

Table 9: Pull factors by Age					
	16 to 20 (n=41)	21 to 30 (n=381)	31 to 40 (n=350)	41 to 50 (n=237)	51 or More (n=88)
Contacts with others living in that country	46%	46%	48%	42%	47%

Simply Coincidence	10%	15%	15%	16%	17%
Transitional destination until permanent move	0%	3%	2%	4%	4%
Rumors about positive asylum policies in that country	7%	2%	3%	2%	0%
Positive support for asylum seekers	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Family reunification	10%	13%	11%	8%	11%
Person who helped recommended this place	7%	8%	7%	10%	8%
Others	17%	8%	9%	9%	8%
Don't know	0%	3%	4%	5%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

V.2.7. Ways of Departure to Destination Countries

Another focus of this study was to examine the forms and means of departure to destination countries. The desk research part of the study identified several alternatives that characterized movements to destination countries. Analysis of the survey data (Table 10) showed that 43% of respondents in the sample indicated that they left their country of origin on their own while 25% left with a family member and 21% left with one or more friends. This finding shows that the departure process of international migration can be an individual endeavor as well as a collective undertaking which includes migrants' support systems such as family and peers.

Table 10: How Did you Leave the Country of Origin?		
	N	%
Alone	472	43%
With a family member	277	25%
With one (or few) friends	233	21%
With people I did not know	86	8%
Others	12	1%
Don't know	17	2%
Total	1097	100%

Additionally, as Table 11 shows, the majority of individuals in the sample indicated that they used transportation by land (46%) and by sea (35%) as primary means of transportation to arrive in destination countries. This finding replicates prior research that shows that two primary

destination countries for Albanian migrants have been the neighboring states where migration occurred by land (Greece) and by sea (Italy).

Table 11: Means of Transportation Used to Arrive in Destination Countries		
	N	%
By Land	507	46%
By Air	193	18%
By Sea	383	35%
Don't Know	10	.9%
Other	4	.4%
Total	1097	100%

V.2.8. Sources of Help during Migration Process

When asked about sources of help during the migration process, 39% of respondents stated that they migrated on their own, 24% stated that they moved with friends, and 22% stated that they moved with other family members (Table 12). This finding portrays the process of international migration as an individual- and group-based process where friends and family members play a vital role during the early stage of migration (e.g. decision-making, choosing a destination country, and the actual move). Examination of both the beginning and the actual process of migration are also very important in understanding whether migration is perceived as a solitary or a group-based phenomenon. This finding will later be compared and contrasted with perceptions of return migration to consider differences and similarities between these two phenomena.

Table 12: Who Helped You Migrate?		
	N	%
Self	426	39%
Trafficants	97	9%
Friends	272	24%
Family	244	22%
Travel Agency	20	2%
Other	31	3%
Don't Know/refuse	7	1%
Total	1097	100%

V.2.9. Regular and Irregular Status in Destination Countries

The desk research part of the study highlighted the fact that international migration unfolds in both regular and irregular forms among Albanian migrants. The survey section of the study attempted to explore the nature of regular and irregular migration among participants in the sample (Table 13). More than half of the sample stated that they entered their country of destination through a visa (62%). However, due to the temporary nature of the visa one can expect that status can become regular or irregular after the visa expires. Another finding showed that 19% of respondents stated they did not have regular documentation since arrival in their country of destination and a small percentage in the sample (4%) indicated that they were in the process of seeking asylum.

Table 13: Current Status in Destination Countries		
	N	%
Without documents since arrival in this country	207	19%
Entrance through a visa	676	62%
Rejected asylum application	5	1%
Asylum seeker	41	4%
Don't know	17	<1%
Others	151	14%
Total	1097	100%

V.2.10. Ways of Obtaining Migration

The study sought to further explore the question of status in destination countries by looking at migrants' choices to pay (bribe) someone in order to facilitate the migration process (Table 14). When asked whether they had paid money to migrate to a country, 67% of respondents in the sample reported that they did whereas 29% asserted that they did not bribe someone in order to migrate to their destination country. This finding poses the question whether bribing someone in order to migrate can be associated with status in the destination country.

Table 14: Did You Pay Someone to Migrate to this Country?		
	N	%
Yes	742	67%
No	321	29%
Don't Know	34	4%

Total	1097	100%
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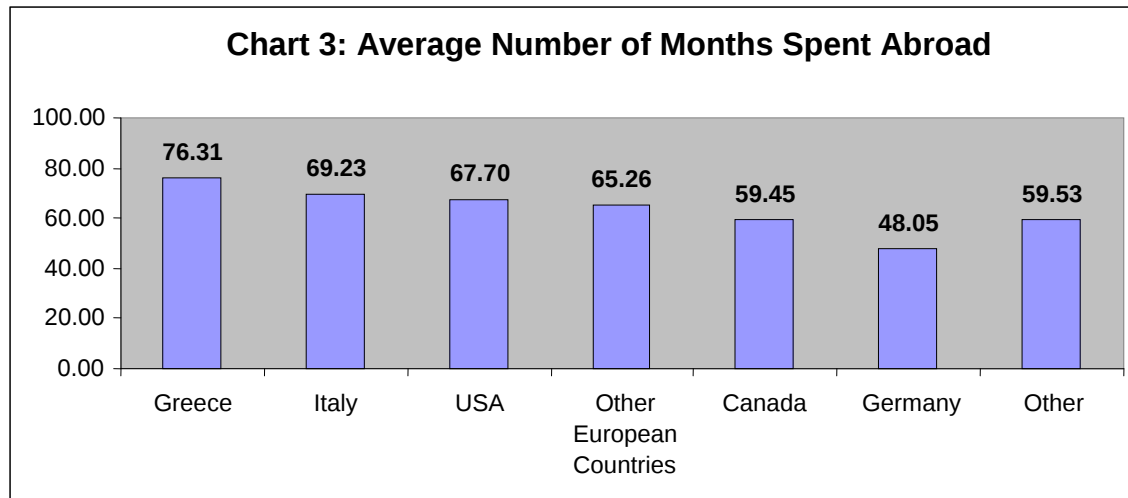
V.2.11. Ways of Obtaining Migration and Status in Destination Countries

In order to explore whether bribing someone in order to migrate influenced outcomes of migration, the analyses looked at the percentages of those who stated that they bribed across status in destination countries. Table 15 shows that payment in order to emigrate is more prevalent among those who sought asylum (88%), arrived in the country of destination without documents (73%), or through a visa (64%). This finding suggests that bribing can facilitate migration to a country of destination (short-term results) however, it can hinder the process of obtaining regular status in that country (long-term impact).

Table 15: Bribing in order to migrate by actual status in destination countries						
	Without documents since arrival in this country (n=207)	Entrance through a visa (n=676)	Rejected asylum application (n=5)	Asylum seeker (n=41)	Don't know (n=17)	Other (n=151)
Yes	73%	64%	60%	88%	47%	74%
No	23%	33%	40%	12%	24%	25%
Don't know	4%	3%	0%	0%	29%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

V.2.12 Average Duration of International Migration

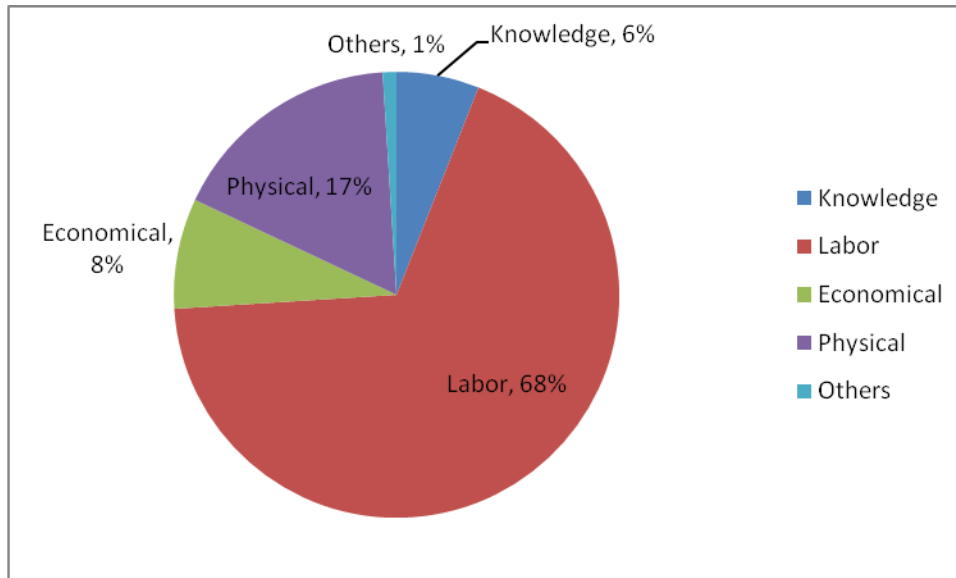
The desk research component of the study highlighted the importance of understanding the impact of time spent abroad in migration. The survey analyses showed that the average duration time for participants in this sample was 71 months (approximately 6 years) as shown in Chart 3. Furthermore, the country where participants resided for the longest period of time was Greece (76 months), followed by Italy (69 months), the United States (67 months), Canada (59 months), and Germany (48 months). This finding confirms what was identified in the literature review phase of the study in that, Italy and Greece were the first destination countries for Albanian migrants in the early '90s.



V.2.13. Forms of Exploitation

Given the fact that irregular migration emerged as a topic of concern in both desk research and the survey section of the study, it was important to examine the existence and prevalence of exploitation among participants in the sample. Chart 4 shows responses of 430 participants from the international migration sample (n=1097) who stated that they felt that they were exploited as migrants living abroad. Furthermore, when asked what forms of exploitation that thought that experienced, they listed labor (68%) as the most common form. Other forms of exploitation reported were physical (17%) and economical (8%). This is an important finding because it highlights the fact that exploitation is prevalent among international migrants and it occurs in settings where labor, knowledge, or physical abilities are subject to exploitation.

Chart 4: Forms of Exploitation 1



V.2.14. Perceptions of Exploitation and Country of Destination

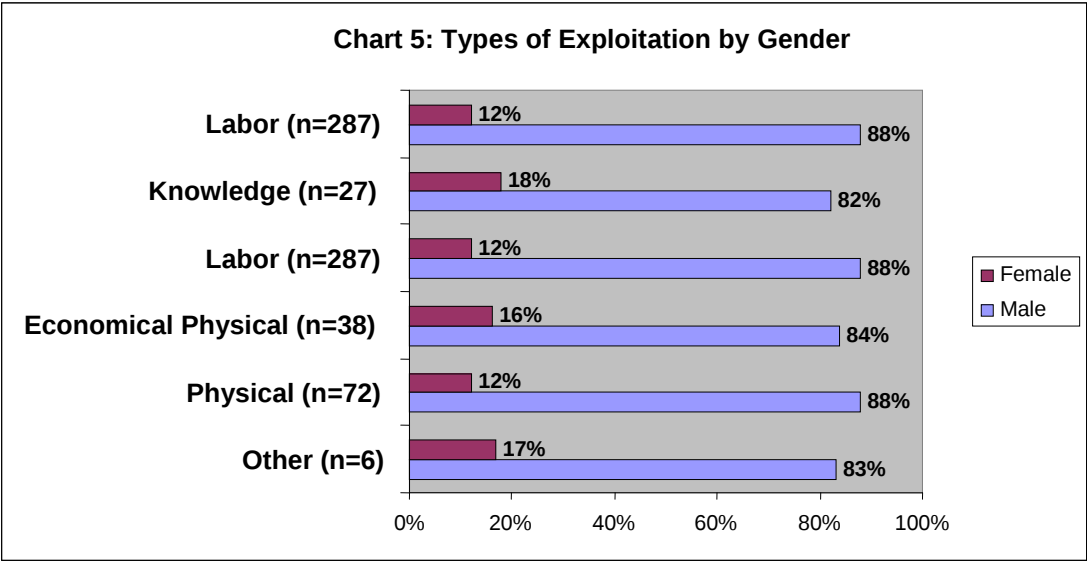
Furthermore, the study analyses examined perceptions of exploitation and types of exploitation (knowledge-based, labor, financial, economic, physical) among migrants across destination countries (Table 16; n=430). One reason for exploring the exploitation occurrence pertains to whether there is a relationship between exploitation and tendency to return home (the more exploited one feels, the more s/he is considers returning home). When asked about perceptions of exploitation in the country of destination, 79% of respondents who migrated to Greece stated that they experienced exploitation in areas of labor and physical abilities. Additionally, individuals who migrated to Italy stated that they experienced similar levels of exploitation in areas of knowledge and economical

(32%) as well as labor and physical abilities (16%). This finding may be partially explained by the fact that a significant portion of irregular migrants choose these as countries of destination, hence the risks for exploitation are higher among irregular migrants.

	Knowledge (n=27)	Labor (n=287)	Economical (n=38)	Physical (n=72)	Others (n=6)
Greece	48%	78%	55%	79%	50%
Italy	33%	17%	32%	16%	17%
Germany	4%	<1%	8%	0%	0%
Other European Countries	4%	3%	0%	3%	17%
USA	11%	<1%	5%	1%	17%
Other	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

V.2.15. Perceptions of Exploitation and Gender

The study also examined the prevalence of experiences of exploitation among male and female migrants. As Chart 5 shows, it appears that males are perceived to experience more exploitation across all types (knowledge, labor, financial, physical) than females. From this sample, 87% of males reported experiencing some form of exploitation and only 13% of their female counterparts shared a similar belief. Again, a source for partial explanation of this phenomenon is that males tend to migrate more than females in both regular and irregular routes of migration.



V.2.16. Level of Education and Perceptions of Exploitation in Host Countries

To better understand the phenomenon of exploitation among migrants, the study also looked at education as a variable that could partially explain this prevalence (Table 17). When experiences of exploitation are examined via the educational status of migrants who were the targets of such experiences, it can be noted that exploitation occurs more often among those who have completed high school (47%) and 8 years of education (41%). This is an interesting finding because it shows that the risk to become exploited is higher among those who have some education versus those who do not have formal education. One partial explanation could be attributed to the fact that expectations for better jobs are higher among individuals who have some form of education and when these expectations are not met, individuals are more prone to identify sources of exploitations as barriers to obtaining better goals. Furthermore, this finding shows that individuals with college training are at lower risk to become subjects of exploitation compared to their other counterparts.

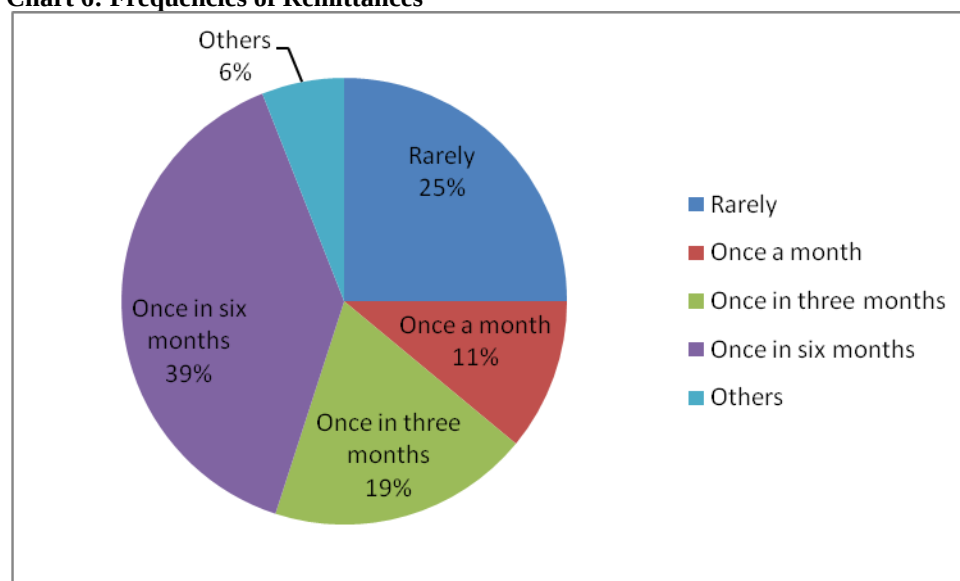
Table 17: Levels of Education and Forms of Exploitation					
	Knowledge	Labor	Economical	Physical	Others

	(n=27)	(n=287)	(n=38)	(n=72)	(n=6)
No Education	4%	4%	5%	0%	0%
Elementary School	0%	2%	5%	4%	0%
Finished Eighth Grade	44%	43%	40%	35%	33%
High School	41%	46%	47%	53%	67%
College	11%	4%	3%	8%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

V.2.17 Remittances and their Frequency during Migration

As noted in the desk research section of the study, remittances are a vital feature of Albania's international migration. Through the survey component, the study sought to examine the prevalence of remittances among respondents in the sample. 564 respondents in the sample stated that they sent money home while living abroad (Chart 6). When asked about the frequency of these remittances, 39% of participants stated that they sent remittances once every six months whereas 25% of participants stated that they rarely do so. Other participants stated that they sent money home one a month (11%) and once every three months (19%). This finding shows that more than half of migrants sent remittances to their families of origin and this aid has significant impact for the well-being of the recipients as well as the society as the whole.

Chart 6: Frequencies of Remittances



V.2.17. Perceived Importance of Remittances

Furthermore, the study sought to examine perceptions on the importance of remittances among respondents. As Table 18 shows, 49% of the respondents (n=642) viewed remittances as very important to their families. Only 4% of respondents did not consider remittance as salient to their family of origin. This finding shows that overall, remittances are viewed as salient by both recipients and senders. Finally, examination of frequencies and perceptions of importance of remittances demonstrates that migrants remain connected to their family of origin and this closeness yields positive outcomes for the living conditions of the family and the country as a whole.

Table 18: How Important Were Remittances to the Family		
	N	%
Not important	26	4%
Don't Know	90	14%
Important	208	32%
Very Important	318	49%
Total	642	100 %

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