Should I Stay or Should I Go: A Preliminary Case Study of Labor Migration Aspirations among Female Undergraduate Students at the University of Jordan

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Should I Stay or Should I Go: A Preliminary Case Study of Labor Migration Aspirations among Female Undergraduate Students at the University of Jordan

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“You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance.”

- Excerpt from “On Prayer” from The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran

The poet and author Khalil Gibran has been and remains a crucial figure in my life, specifically for his seminal work, The Prophet, which retains a special place in my family’s hearts. I found this line moving when considering how to thank people for their help and support. Often, we are caught in our despair and misery, praying for a time that would bring us happiness and joy. However, when we find ourselves in moments of abundance and splendor, we forget to display graciousness and gratitude for our gifts and fortune. In this way, I found his words pertinent as I acknowledge those who helped this project come to fruition.

I want to thank all the students who agreed to participate in my research and gave their time to speak with me. Without their generosity, this project would not exist. As they are why this project exists, I dedicate it to them. I hope it makes a small step toward telling their stories, lives, and experiences and drawing attention to the lives of Jordanian youth.

Secondly, I would like to thank the incredible staff at the Jordan SIT program, specifically Dr. Raed al-Tabini, Sakhaa, Ustadha Riham, and Feryal, for their assistance, guidance, and support throughout this project’s creation. Whether I needed advice on my project or someone to talk to, they always made themselves available and ready to help. They created an environment where I could thrive; I am forever grateful.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family in the United States. You molded me into the person I am; without you, I would not be the man I am today. I am forever indebted to you.

- Simon Khairallah
Abbreviations:
AB – The Arab Barometer
EMV – Economic Modernization Vision
ESP – The Education Strategic Plan (2018-2022)
ETF – The European Training Foundation
GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
GNP – Gross National Product
HJK – The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
ICMPD – International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ILO – International Labor Organization
IOM – International Organization for Migration (AKA. UN Migration Agency)
MENA – Middle East and North Africa
MOE – The Jordan Ministry of Education
MOY – The Jordan Ministry of Youth
NEEP – The National Employment and Empowerment Programme (2017-2021)
NYS – National Youth Strategy
OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UAE – The United Arab Emirates
UK – The United Kingdom
UN – The United Nations
UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNGA– The United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR – The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (AKA. UN Refugee Agency)
UOJ – University of Jordan
US – United States of America
WB – World Bank
WDR – World Development Report

*Note: Abbreviations were used throughout the report, including within in-text citations.
Abstract:

This preliminary case study investigated the composition, complexity, and presence of labor migration aspirations among female undergraduate students at the University of Jordan. The University of Jordan was selected as the research site due to its size and prominence in Jordan. The study sought to explore female participants’ perspectives on the current economic situation in Jordan, migration aspirations, and desired destinations. Interviews were conducted with undergraduate students at the University of Jordan. Of these ten participants, six expressed clear labor migration aspirations, three expressed aspirations to stay, and one expressed ambivalent migration aspirations. Nearly all participants expressed negative views of the Jordanian economy for various reasons related to high living costs and poor employment opportunities. Labor migration aspirations encompassed different economic and socio-cultural motivators, whereas aspirations to stay were defined by solid familial attachment and desire to pursue domestic employment. Regarding desirable destinations, most students cited the US and European nations, primarily characterized by the belief in better work opportunities abroad. Further research is required to provide a holistic picture of the topic.

Keywords: Social Sciences, Regional Studies: Middle East, Migration Aspirations, Aspirations to Stay, Ambivalent Aspirations, Labor Migration, Migration
Introduction

On June 7, 2018, the then-recently appointed Prime Minister of Jordan, Omar al-Razzaz, replied on Twitter to a young Jordanian student, Qutaiba F. Bashabsheh (Roya News, 2018). King Abdullah II had appointed Dr. al-Razzaz as the replacement for Prime Minister Dr. Hani al-Mulki, who resigned amid nationwide protests against IMF-backed measures such as increasing fuel prices and a draft law proposing higher income taxes (Ayyoub, 2019). Figure 1 displays Qutaiba’s tweet directed at the new Prime Minister, in which he implores, “Can our country become the Jordan we want soon? I mean, is there a possibility that we can get rid of the thought of immigration from our minds and love living in the country? Answer me honestly, and do not lie to me!” In his response, Prime Minister al-Razzaz tweeted, “Dear Qutaiba, yes, get the thought of immigration out of your mind... just be enterprising, and with everyone’s contribution, we will achieve what we want for ourselves and the upcoming generations; God willing.”

Figure 1

@qutaiba_f’s tweet and @OmarRazzaz’s response on Twitter on June 7, 2018

Note. Reprinted from Roya News (2018); view full citation in the References section.
In the following weeks, the tweet went viral in response to al-Razzaz’s plans for his new government, which notably retained 15 ministers from the previous government (Al-Salem, 2018). Jordanian activists and citizens who had called for the ousting of al-Mulki’s government were outraged by the Prime Minister’s actions and began commenting on the exchange between Qutaiba and al-Razzaz (Al-Salem, 2018). In response, the hashtag #هاجر_يا_قتبية (Hajar_ya_Qutaiba), meaning “Immigrate, O Qutaiba,” went viral, becoming the top-used hashtag in the country, as Jordanians began posting, retweeting, and sharing their thoughts on the socio-economic status of their nation and grievances with al-Razzaz. (BBC News عربى, 2018).

Notably, an image of a poem entitled “Immigrate O Qutaiba,” written by Muhammad Nusr al-Kalini, was frequently retweeted and circulated on social media platforms like Twitter, as shown in Figure 2 (BBC News عربى, 2018). Many connected with al-Kalini’s message, specifically the first line of his poem: “Rise and immigrate Qutaiba. Do not live in a land of disappointment.”

**Figure 2**

*A retweet of Muhammad Nusr al-Kalini’s poem, “Hajar Ya Qutaiba,” posted by @AlaaSFrehet*

Note. Reprinted from BBC News عربى (2018); view full citation in the References section.
Over five years removed from the incident, and despite al-Razzaz’s words, Jordanian youth have not removed the thought of immigration from their minds. In fact, according to data from the AB Wave VII Survey (AB, 2022), 48% of Jordanians, nearly half of whom were between the ages of 18 and 29, have considered leaving the country. Furthermore, among the 880 youth (18-29) respondents, more than 63% expressed having considered emigration (AB, 2022). These figures represent a significant increase in youth migration aspirations. By contrast, “37 percent of the country’s youth aged 15 to 29 expressed their desire to emigrate in 2010” (De Bel-Air, 2016, p. 7). While contemporary issues have complicated the situation, the foundation of Jordan’s current economic crisis and widespread migration aspirations appears rooted in the impacts of historical labor migration and issues transitioning from education to employment. This paper will review the extant literature to lay out a framework for exploring the perspectives of college students with the aim of developing a deep and rich understanding of these variables.

**Literature Review**

**Jordanian Labor Migration: A Brief Historical Overview**

Historically, Jordan has served as a significant importer and exporter of labor. Outbound migration began in the 1950s and 1960s, mostly comprised of technicians and college graduates bound for the Gulf in search of better-paying jobs (ETF, 2021). Magableh et al. (2010) noted that the rise in global oil prices in the mid-1970s led to a significant spike in migration to the Gulf as the labor demand for educated and qualified foreign nationals increased. The significant wage gap between local and external labor markets was the primary driver of labor migration. For example, in the 1980s, wages for a Jordanian employed in Saudi Arabia were “three times the local average wage rate” (Magableh et al., 2010, pp. 59-60). As a result, remittances sent by Jordanian workers in the Gulf, who accounted for roughly one-third of the region’s labor force at
the time, contributed to rapid domestic economic growth and development (De Bel-Air, 2008),
with net remittances accounting for 21.2% of Jordan’s GNP in 1979 (Kirwan, 1981). As De Bel-
Air (2016) noted, this influx of private wealth contributed to a growing consumer-based
economy, while the combination of Arab development aid, private funds, and remittances, which
comprised 50% of Jordan’s GDP in 1980, transformed the nation into a “rentier” economy.
Subsequent demands for services like domestic work and infrastructure developments increased
inbound low-skilled immigration, which enhanced Jordanians’ socio-economic status.

However, during the 1980s, Jordanians began gradually returning home due to the
decision in GCC nations to replace Arabs with Asian workers (De Bel-Air, 2016). This gradual
return precipitated the eventual collapse of the Jordanian rentier economy in the mid-1980s,
which was later exacerbated by the expulsion of nearly 350000 migrant workers from the GCC
area following the 1991 Gulf War (De Bel-Air, 2016). Notably, most migrants were Palestinians
from the West Bank and had Jordanian citizenship, while some were Palestinians who had
initially moved to Kuwait during the 1948 war before relocating to Jordan (Van Hear, 1995).
Migrant return significantly strained the deteriorating domestic economy. Unemployment spiked
to 25% in 1991, and “remittances fell to 10% of GDP in 1993” (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005, p. 10).

Following a period of geopolitical instability in the early 1990s, skilled emigration spiked
after the signing of the Jordan-Israeli Peace Accord in 1994 (De Bel-Air, 2010). Initially
rejecting moving to the Gulf, Jordanians opted to migrate to Australia, the United States, and
Canada. However, when emigration to these nations became more complex after 9/11, migrants
again turned to the Gulf, predominantly pursuing work in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

An investigation of the makeup of contemporary migration flows is noteworthy. As
documented by the ETF (2021), the total number of international migrants from Jordan
dramatically increased from 1990 to 2020. The total number of international migrants increased from 313,997 in 1990 to 814,909 in 2020, though the percentage of emigrants as a proportion of the population remained roughly 8%. Top destination countries included Saudi Arabia (240,606 workers), the UAE (168,968 emigrants), and the US (91,208 workers). Other top destinations included Palestine, Kuwait, and Qatar. ETF (2021) further outlined the demographic makeup of emigrants and the changes, specifically in gender makeup, of Jordanian emigrants from 1990 to 2020. Of the 313,997 Jordanians who emigrated in 1990, 40.3% (126,581) were women, and 59.7% (187,416) were men. In 2020, 36.6% (297,955) of the 814,909 emigrants were women, while 63.4% (516,954) were men. Despite slight downtrends in female migration, these figures demonstrate relative consistency in the composition of emigrant outflows and reveal desirable migration destinations for Jordanians, who historically tend to stay within the MENA region.

As a result of many Jordanians looking down on low-skilled activities (De Bel-Air, 2016) and aspiring to work in the public sector (Razzaz, 2017), inbound labor migration remains a critical part of the economy. As of 2020, roughly 5% of the total population were foreign laborers who immigrated from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and South Asian nations and worked in low-skilled jobs that “Jordanians are reluctant to take” (ETF, 2021, p. 7). The molding of the private sector around migrant labor has netted several effects: “…Business owners still favour foreign workers, who are also cheaper to employ. Immigrants are, therefore, seen as competing with local workers and the immigration of foreign labourers has become a political matter” (De Bel-Air, 2016, p. 1).

Large waves of refugees from regional conflicts, specifically the war in Syria, have further complicated the domestic situation. According to the WDR produced by the WB (2023d), one in 16 people in Jordan was a refugee as of mid-2022. Additionally, as of November 2, 2023, of the 730,117 UNHCR registered asylum seekers and refugees, 652,842 were Syrian (UNHCR,
Due to their status, many Syrians have faced barriers to entering the Jordan labor force, resulting in the emergence of low-paying jobs in an informal economy (De Bel-Air, 2016). De Bel-Air (2016) outlined that many refugees reportedly worked in retail, construction, restaurants, and service industries without permits. While granting work permits to Syrians has increased, many of those who work in “low-skilled” sectors will ultimately be competing with foreign Arab and Asian migrants for the same jobs. This complex amalgamation of Jordanian citizens, foreign labor migrants, and refugees creates a complicated economic landscape for youth to navigate.

**The Youth and Female Experiences in Jordan’s Economy**

Before outlining the issues specific to youth and female populations, it is essential to contextualize Jordan's demographic and economic makeup. According to Jordan DOS (2023), the Jordanian population is roughly 11,302,000. With youth making up an estimated 28.5% of the population (DOS, 2023), Jordan is a relatively young nation with a growing youth population, in part driven by the influx of Syrian refugees since 2011, who are predominantly young (UNICEF, 2021). Rapid population growth and shifts have strained the Jordanian economy and put pressure on domestic economic resources (De Bel-Air, 2019). As outlined in Al Tal & Husseini (2023), these demographic shifts have led to noticeable economic changes:

…the proportion of Jordanians of working age (15 years and above) jumped from 50% in 1979 to 60.2% in 2000 and to 70.2% in 2021, about half of them in the 15-39 age group.

In recent years, some 100,000-120,000 new Jordanian job seekers entered the labor market, compared to some 65,000-70,000 in the late 2000s. (p. 11)

Despite having a dramatically growing young labor force, Jordan’s domestic economy continues to struggle. For the first time since 2016, the WB categorized Jordan as a lower-middle-income nation for Fiscal Year 2024, a downgrade from its status as an upper-middle-income country.
Furthermore, except for 2020, annual GDP growth rates have remained between 1.8% and 2.5% since 2015 (WB, 2023a), which is insufficient to meet the employment demands of Jordan’s youth entering the labor market (WB, 2023c).

As a result, domestic unemployment, particularly among youth, is remarkably high. According to Al Tal & Husseini (2023), the national unemployment rate stood at 22.6% in the second quarter of 2022, a nearly 9% increase from the rate measured in 2000. Of that 22.6%, unemployment among youth aged 15-24 stood at “46.1% of the total (42.2% for males against 63.3% for females)” (DOS, 2022, p. 2), an almost 20% increase from the 26.6% of youth who were unemployed in 2000 (Al Tal & Husseini, 2023). Reviewing unemployment by educational level is also noteworthy. As Razzaz (2017) noted, most unemployed Jordanians have either less than a secondary degree education or a bachelor’s degree or higher. However, despite these figures, the percentage of the Jordanian population without employment and/or economically inactive is likely higher. The DOS conceptualization of domestic unemployment may not represent the actual percentage of the potential labor force without work:

Unemployment data must be carefully interpreted. On the one hand, unemployment rates may be underestimated because individuals who have given up looking for work are not included. On the other hand, unemployment rates may be overestimated because individuals who are unwilling to accept available jobs are included. (Razzaz, 2017, p. 25)

Since the DOS definition does not consider non-economically active individuals, including students and homemakers, unemployed, they are not considered in national estimates of unemployment (Al Tal & Husseini, 2023). Thus, reviewing economic activity among Jordanian men and women as a proportion of the total population provides a different picture. As per data from the DOS Labor Force Survey in 2015, “just over half of Jordanian men are working” and
“only one in ten Jordanian women are working” (Razzaz, 2017, p. 24). Razzaz (2017) further underscores how these rates are low when compared to fellow Arab nations, where “average employment rates are 81 per cent for men and 27 per cent for women” (p. 24).

Most Arab youth recognize the challenges they will continue to deal with as they seek future employment. According to the Arab Youth Survey Final Report, 57% of young Arabs in the Levant (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Occupied Territories, and Yemen) believe finding a job in their country would be difficult (ASDA’A BCW, 2023). Disproportionately, youth and women in Jordan find it increasingly difficult to get a job due to existing challenges during transitions from educational careers to employment. Barriers impeding these transitions are well-researched and include, but are not limited to, the quality of educational services, difficulty finding suitable employment, and sociocultural factors (Assaad et al., 2019; Barcucci & Mryyan, 2014; ICMPD, 2020; OECD Development Centre, 2018; RAND International, 2014; Tal & Husseini, 2023; UNICEF, 2021; USAID, 2015). Due to these barriers, labor force participation remains a resilient problem within the Jordanian economy. The labor force participation among Jordanians aged 15 years and older “is 33.5% (53.2% for males against 14.2% for females) for the second quarter of 2022” (DOS, 2022, p. 2). Poor vocational training and inadequate soft skills also disrupt youth labor force participation. As Al Tal & Husseini (2023) noted, the mismatch between necessary skills and employment remains “at the core of national unemployment,” with roughly 43% of Jordanian youth lacking sufficient soft/life skills needed to thrive in the workplace (p. 19).

Transitional challenges to suitable employment are evidenced explicitly in the time it takes college graduates to acquire their first formal job. A survey conducted by Barcucci and Mryyan (2014) found that, regardless of sex, over half of unemployed youth had been attempting to get a job for longer than a year. The survey also found that 41.5% of young men had acquired
stable employment compared to 9.7% of young women. Additionally, UNICEF (2021) found that, among youth, roughly 56% of men and only 6% of women acquire formal employment within five years of completing their tertiary education. Thus, critical challenges remain in addressing female mobility concerns, preparing youth for their careers, and creating suitable job opportunities, especially for highly educated youth.

**Governmental Policy Frameworks and Strategies: A Brief Overview**

The Jordanian government has enacted several policy strategies to combat economic challenges. In 2011, the kingdom outlined the NES (2011-2020) aimed at addressing poor job growth and high unemployment, yet failed to achieve a discernable positive outcome (ETF, 2020). The NEEP (2017–2021) sought to reduce reliance on foreign labor and encourage Jordanian workforce participation but failed to achieve its goals (ETF, 2020).

In 2015, the kingdom introduced the Jordan 2025 vision to improve civil engagement, private sector job growth, and government efficiency (HKJ, 2015). In particular, the plan improved vocational services, as evidenced in 2019 when the Jordanian parliament adopted a new technical and vocational skills law (ETF, 2020). In 2018, the MOE developed the ESP, which aimed to improve the quality of educational services by prioritizing equity and inclusivity (MOE, 2018). As of 2022, the plan had improved access to quality education for children and increased net enrollment in secondary schools to 77% (MOE, 2022).

In 2019, the Jordanian government rolled out the NYS (2019-2025), outlining a need for increased attention to young Jordanians. Pursuing the objective of “building a generation capable of creativity and innovation with high productivity,” the plan identified seven development areas: 1) Youth, Education, and Technology; 2) Youth and Effective Citizenship; 3) Youth Engagement and Effective Leadership; 4) Youth Entrepreneurship and Economic Engagement; 5) Youth Rule
of Law and Good Governance; 6) Youth and Community Security and Peace; and 7) Youth Health and Physical Activity (MOY, 2019). The plan represented a commitment of the Jordanian government to prepare their youth for the future adequately.

The kingdom recently introduced the EMV, a plan for the next ten years of economic development built upon three pillars: economic growth, quality of life, and sustainability (HKJ, 2022). Launched by King Abdullah II in June 2022, the Vision aims to achieve several objectives, including creating over a million jobs for youth (HKJ, 2022). However, more research and information is needed about these initiatives' potential feasibility and whether they can dissuade Jordanian youth from leaving the country if that is the government’s primary goal.

**Defining Migration: Inclusivist or Residualist?**

The definition of migration and, by extension, a migrant may be the most debated topic in contemporary migration literature, especially since there is no accepted definition of a “migrant” internationally (UNHCR, 2023a). Two prevalent definitions exist in the inclusivist and residualist models. The inclusivist model, used by the IOM, conceptualizes migrants broadly:

> “An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons” (IOM, 2019, p. 132).

In this definition, migration is seen as any movement from one place to another without restrictions on temporality, decision-making, or migrant destination. Migrants could be bound for internal or international destinations. Migrants could be pursuing better job opportunities, fleeing climate change, escaping political persecution, or seeking asylum from violence and war, among other reasons. Thus, no distinction is made between refugees and migrants in this model.
In contrast, agencies like the UNHCR emphasize the necessity of using a residualist definition that precisely differentiates refugees from migrants. Long (2013) noted that the 1951 Convention, in seeking to protect refugee rights, conceptualized the identity of a refugee as inherently distinct from that of a migrant; since then, the UNHCR has progressed the notion that “refugees are not migrants.” In their view, failure to differentiate between migrants and refugees “can risk undermining access to the specific legal protections that states are obliged to provide to refugees” (UNHCRa, 2023, p. 2). The residualist definition is visible in various UN resolutions, including the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which suggests that migrants and refugees are distinct groups (UNGA, 2016). However, some argue that the UNHCR definition “strengthened many states’ restrictionist migration agendas, and prevented refugees being included within migration-development discourses” (Long, 2013, p. 5).

Considering these definitions, the researcher utilizes the inclusivist lens to conceptualize all factors and temporal dimensions influencing labor migration aspirations. Recognizing that an individual can be a refugee and migrant at different points is also critical for this study, especially given Jordan’s history. When referring to the term “labor migration,” the researcher employs the IOM definition: “Movement of persons from one state to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment.” (IOM, 2019, p. 123)

**Drivers of Migration**

*Investigation of Prominent Theoretical Frames*

The beginning of research into the factors that influence migration is often attributed to the concepts of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ outlined in Lee’s (1966) *Theory of Migration*, who conceptualized migration decision-making as a process driven by factors that push migrants away from their home countries and pull them toward other nations. Associated with the origin,
push factors encompassed largely unfavorable domestic realities, while pull factors were viewed as favorable elements of destination countries, like job opportunities and higher wages.

However, due to the limitations and empirically obsolete nature of Lee’s (1966) theory, most contemporary research into migration desires is built upon the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Ajzen (1991) viewed intention as the direct antecedent to behavior, drawing from his theory of reasoned action in which “the individual’s intention to perform a given behavior” is a central element of the decision-making process to pursue a behavior (p.181). He argues that an individual’s intention is influenced by three interconnected factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Several researchers (Cui et al., 2016; Haase & Lautenschlaegar, 2014; Van Dalen & Henkens, 2008, 2012) have used the TPB model to map migration desires and intentions with empirical success.

The emergence of Carling’s (2002) ‘aspiration/ability model’ offered a new school of thought on the desire to migrate. The model conceptualizes migration in two steps, arguing that “migration first involves a wish to migrate, and second, the realisation of this wish” (Carling, 2002, p. 5). In Carling’s (2002) model, aspirations represent the wish to leave, while ability represents the factors that enable those with migration aspirations to migrate. To outline the individuals based on their differing aspirations and abilities, Carling (2002) conceptualized three categories of migrants: voluntary non-migrants (those who choose to stay), involuntary non-migrants (those who aspire to leave but lack the ability to do so), and migrants (those who have the aspiration and ability to leave). Carling’s (2002) identification of ‘involuntary non-migrants’ was a particularly notable addition to migration literature, allowing for a conceptualization of individuals with unfulfilled migration dreams who still live within a local or national context.
Several scholars made notable expansions to Carling’s (2002) model. De Haas (2014) built upon the ‘aspiration/ability model’ to introduce the aspirations-capabilities framework. In his framework, De Haas (2014) incorporated the concepts of negative liberty, or “the absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints,” and positive liberty, or “the ability to take control of one’s life and to realise one’s fundamental purposes” (p. 26). With these concepts, he claims life aspirations and capabilities “are affected by structurally determined positive and negative liberties,” whereby negative freedoms impact both aspirations and capabilities while positive freedoms affect an individual’s capabilities and access to “social, economic and human resources” (De Haas, 2014, p. 28). An individual’s aspirations and capabilities impact their mobility, and mobility, coupled with the presence, or lack thereof, of geographical opportunities, determines an individual’s decision to migrate (De Haas, 2014).

Further, Schewel (2015) notably reconceptualized Carling’s (2002) migrant categories by introducing a fourth category of acquiescent immobility “to describe those who are both unable to migrate but neither do they desire to do so” (p. 6). With this expansion, the author views immobility as encompassing people who cannot leave or view staying as a “voluntary (or acquiescent) preference” (Schewel, 2015, p. 7). Schewel’s (2015) introduction of acquiescent non-migrants represented the introduction of a new definitional frame and completed Carling’s (2002) migration categories by also considering the desire to stay as a vital theoretical element.

Research on the Migration Aspirations in the MENA and Jordan

Multiple studies have investigated youth migration intentions and the factors that encourage migration within differing MENA nations (Abdelwahed et al., 2020; Akl et al., 2007; Dibeh et al., 2017; Elbadawy, 2011; ICMPD, 2021). More specifically, other literature investigated the migration intentions of medical students in the MENA region (Akl et al., 2008;
Sawaf et al., 2018) and the determinants of migration within the MENA context (Farid & El-Batrawy, 2016; Sanchez-Montijano & Girona-Raventos, 2017). Furthermore, research into the drivers of irregular youth migration in the MENA region (Dibeh et al., 2018), the political elements of youth migration intentions (Etling et al., 2018), and the factors that impact forced migration intentions, specifically within the context of Iraq (Ozaltin et al., 2019).

Despite the extensive literature on the MENA region, research on the migration aspirations of Jordanian youth is significantly lacking, though several projects are worth noting. The most relevant project published is Omar et al. (2022), which surveyed the migration intentions of medical students throughout different years and universities in Jordan. The mean age of student participants was 20.84 (±1.77), over half of whom were women (55.9%), and most held Jordanian citizenship (90.7%). Of the students surveyed, roughly 85% stated their intention to pursue residency abroad, and nearly 30% indicated their intention to leave permanently. The study noted that students negatively viewed “low salaries, limited residency seats, high number of patients per doctor, favouritism and long working hours” associated with Jordanian residency programs (Omar et al., 2022, p. 859). Meanwhile, students were attracted to “higher salaries, better lifestyle, better education, reasonable number of patients and shorter working hours” associated with residency programs abroad (Omar et al., 2022, p. 859). Regarding desired destinations, survey data found that “37.4%, 22.3%, 16.6% and 10.1% of respondents chose the USA, the UK, Germany and Arabian Gulf countries, respectively” (Omar et al., 2022, p. 856).

As previously mentioned, the AB (2022) Wave VII survey collected data on youth migration considerations and found that, of the 880 youth respondents, more than 63% expressed having considered emigration at some point. The survey also noted a difference between male and female youth, with 69.8% of young males indicating they had considered migrating
compared to only 52.7% of young women. Descriptive data from the same survey revealed that, among the 1142 respondents who indicated they had considered emigrating, 93.3% identified economic reasons as their chief motivator. When adjusted for age, 83.1% of individuals aged 18-29 sought emigration for financial reasons, with the remaining 16.9% identified other reasons, mainly educational opportunities, corruption, and political reasons.

Other notable studies include Ramos (2019), who investigated migration aspirations and willingness among NEET (not in education, employment, or training) youth (aged 15-29) in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Tunisia and noted that “more qualified youth have more aspirations to migrate abroad in Jordan and Palestine than those in Egypt” (p. 11). Al-Nawafleh (2015) surveyed 1241 Jordanian nurses working in GCC nations on their migration motivations and future aspirations and found that 85% of nurses had migrated to obtain employment, and 94% had relocated for higher salaries and benefits. 87% of nurses in the study also identified salary and other financial benefits in GCC nations as migration incentives (Al-Nawafleh, 2015).

**Conceptual Framework: Aspirations to Migrate and Stay**

In this section, the researcher discusses his conceptualizations of migration aspirations, aspirations to stay, and ambivalent aspirations before exploring the importance of research investigating aspirations. Although this project is grounded in Carling’s (2002) aspiration/ability model, this researcher will only examine aspirations among students interviewed, as all participants are students who have yet to leave Jordan. The researcher’s definition of migration aspiration was inspired by Carling & Schewel (2017), conceptualizing such aspirations as the first step in the process of migration and defining them as “a wish, desire or preference to migrate” (p. 4). Using this definition as a model, the researcher envisions aspirations to stay as the opposite of aspirations to leave, whereby such aspirations are defined as wishes, desires, or
preferences to remain. This definition is grounded in the belief that staying in one’s country can be voluntary. As Carling (2014) noted, "Staying and leaving are not equal projects, since greater effort is required to migrate, than to remain. However, both can be an active choice” (p.6).

Understanding the presence of aspirations to migrate and stay, Carling (2014) argues that researchers must conceptualize the strength of aspirations with complexity:

We can imagine the strength of migration aspirations as a continuum, in which only people with attitudes near the extremes will give predictable answers…In the middle, there is a large segment of people whose attitudes toward migration will produce answers that are heavily dependent on the context and the formulation of the question. (p.4)

While many people express either strong desires to migrate or stay, there are some whose perspectives on migration could be more defined and precise, particularly to themselves. For this project, the researcher conceptualizes these individuals as people with “ambivalent aspirations.” In this context, ambivalence is defined as “simultaneous and contradictory attitudes or feelings (such as attraction and repulsion) toward an object, person, or action” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Using this definition, the researcher defines ambivalent aspirations as those held by individuals that are simultaneously contradictory to one another, such as aspiring to both stay and leave.

In comparison to other stages of migration, aspirations are relatively under-researched, often because of the belief that migration aspirations are “poor determinants of actual migration” and “do not translate into migration” (Carling, 2014, p. 5). Furthermore, migration aspirations are often seen as challenging to research because they “concern mindscape(s), ideas, and dreams, and as such are more difficult to quantify and operationalize” (Hallberg Adu, 2020, p. 28). However, aspirations are crucial to investigate because they provide insight into perspectives on migration that other models cannot, as Hallberg Adu (2020) noted:
If we only focus on those who are able to travel or migrate, we are only looking at the tip of the iceberg. This is because migration aspiration includes not just the (potential) migrant but the total population, including those who have migration aspirations but are unable to migrate—that is, immobile. (p. 28)

In this way, researching migration aspirations allows for investigating individuals who may or may not be able to leave, providing a more “holistic understanding of the issue” (Hallberg Adu, 2020, p. 28). Unfulfilled aspirations are also critical to research, particularly when researching societies where most people aspire to be elsewhere, and “this desire is a fundamental aspect of society that affects its life and development” (Carling, 2014, p. 5). In the context of the researcher’s case in Jordan, where prior literature has identified observably high rates of desire to migrate, investigating aspirations presents a necessary lens to understand the domestic situation.

**Research Purpose and Questions**

Understanding the historical and contemporary context of Jordanian migration, this preliminary case study analyzes the complexity of youth labor migration aspirations, specifically among female undergraduate students at the University of Jordan (UOJ). To achieve this, the researcher identified two questions: “What themes emerged from the examination of labor migration aspirations among female Jordanian undergraduate students at the UOJ?” and “What themes emerged from the examination of desirable migration destinations identified by female Jordanian undergraduate students at the UOJ?” Several sub-questions were also addressed:

1. What themes emerged from examining perspectives on the current economic situation among female Jordanian undergraduate students at the UOJ?
2. What themes emerged from examining the aspirations to stay in Jordan among female Jordanian undergraduate students at the UOJ?
3. What themes emerged from examining the ambivalent aspirations of female Jordanian undergraduate students?

Methodology

Statement of Intent and Positionality

This paper investigated the prevalence and composition of migration aspirations among undergraduate female students at the UOJ. In pursuing this project, the researcher was acutely aware of how Western beliefs about the lack of female agency and freedom within Arab and Muslim societies have been utilized in the past to legitimate regional violence. As this paper discusses divergent perspectives on Jordanian culture and Islamic religious beliefs and practices, the researcher underscores that the expressed intent of this project is to serve as a window into the experiences of a handful of undergraduate students who are either considering leaving or staying in Jordan and what influences their aspirations. This report avoids making claims about the appropriateness of the religious and socio-cultural beliefs and norms discussed in interviews. Furthermore, the project will not comment on what people should think or the validity of their beliefs; it will only discuss what they expressed and the significance of their perspectives.

In upholding the tradition of qualitative research, it is necessary to provide insight into the researcher's background. The researcher is a Lebanese-American man born and raised in the US. He is 20 years old and a full-time undergraduate student at Colgate University, studying Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Political Science, and Peace and Conflict Studies. His first language is English, but he has a limited capacity to speak Arabic and studies the language at his university. He was raised in a Christian family but is not practicing. He is his family’s eldest and has a younger brother, an 18-year-old first-year college student. His mother is a Caucasian woman of English and German heritage who was born and raised in the US. His father is a
Lebanese-American immigrant who was born and raised in Lebanon. His father relocated to the US in the 1980s to pursue his master’s degree, and he has since become a US citizen. He retains close ties with his family back in Lebanon and returns regularly to care for his mother.

The researcher is familiar with Middle Eastern culture, the Arabic language, and regional affairs and geopolitics. During his childhood, the researcher traveled to Lebanon multiple times. After starting to study Arabic at his university, he went to Lebanon in the summer of 2022, where he spent 2 ½ months visiting and taking care of his grandmother and practicing his Arabic. To pursue further language and cultural immersion, the researcher chose to study abroad in Amman, Jordan, for the Summer 2023 and Fall 2023 terms, engaging in Arabic language and international relations courses. Additionally, the researcher has taken extensive coursework on the MENA region and engaged in cocurricular activities outside his coursework to deepen his understanding of the region and culture. As an Arab man, the researcher is part of the racial group that he is researching. This identity provided the researcher with a perspective from which to understand the experience of his participant. Additionally, he recognized the potential biases he might have given his knowledge of the region and implemented steps to avoid biasing participant responses.

**Participants and Research Setting**

The researcher focused on investigating labor migration aspirations among Jordanian UOJ undergraduate students. As a result, all participants were Jordanian students aged 18-22, all enrolled in a UOJ bachelor’s program. In this context, “Jordanian” is defined as an individual with Jordanian citizenship. This definition recognizes the differences in the backgrounds and experiences of Jordanians, including those of Circassian and Palestinian origin and students born abroad who returned to Jordan with their families. Thus, defining “Jordanians” as those with Jordanian citizenship allowed the researcher to explore a broader group of students.
The researcher chose to interview undergraduate students at the UOJ because it is Jordan’s largest public institution, with a total student enrollment of 53,910 and 46,276 undergraduates (63.1% (29220) are women and 36.9% (17056) are men) (UOJ Registration Office, Personal Communication, November 28, 2023). Regarded for its prominence, students at the UOJ come from rural and urban areas nationwide and from various socio-economic backgrounds. The researcher believed the student body's diverse demographic and experiential makeup would provide distinct perspectives and allow for in-depth analysis of the research topic.

**Research Procedures**

The researcher relied heavily on convenience sampling and the snowball method to recruit participants. He first employed convenience sampling by communicating with individuals in Jordan he knew, including members of his program staff, who identified currently enrolled students at UOJ whom he could interview. To expand the research sample, the researcher utilized the snowball method by asking early participants if they would be willing to identify and connect him with their friends and other UOJ students. Using these sampling methods was a compromise made by the researcher, which came with notable benefits and limitations. These methods allowed the researcher to quickly and easily select and interview participants who matched predetermined demographic characteristics related to age, citizenship, and educational status. Furthermore, these methods allowed the researcher to request to meet with English-speaking students. Limitations related to creating a representative sample of undergraduate students.

Before interviewing students, the researcher created an interview protocol in Arabic and English. First, the interviewer wrote the English interview protocol by identifying essential demographic and experiential questions to ask participants. Then, the Arabic interview protocol was created by translating the English protocol into Modern Standard Arabic with the assistance
of a translator. The translator was the Arabic language program coordinator affiliated with his study abroad program. They were exclusively involved in the research project for translation. A copy of both interview protocols is available for reference in Appendix A.

Once participants were identified, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted wherever was convenient for the participants and interviewer. Locations included various buildings at the UOJ, student homes, and cafes. The researcher sought to conduct most interviews in English. However, some were carried out partially or wholly in Arabic as participants felt more comfortable expressing themselves in their native language. The researcher began all interviews by providing the interviewees with an informed consent form in their preferred language and answering any questions about the interviewer, project purpose, or participant rights. Ethical considerations are discussed later in this section, and copies of the informed consent forms in Arabic and English are available in Appendix B.

The researcher recorded the participants’ responses rather than taking field notes, using a simple electronic tape recorder to record and store audio tapings. Using the tape recorder allowed the researcher to review the audio recordings after the interview and analyze each participant’s exact words and quotes rather than the ideas he had deemed essential to note during the interviews. Given the researcher’s limited capability to speak and understand Arabic, recording interviews also allowed him to review statements expressed in Arabic to ensure he understood all collected data while allowing participants to express themselves freely. Finally, the interviewer believed this method, instead of taking field notes, would allow participants to feel as though they were having a conversation in which they were heard and respected. This method was viewed as a step to address historical power imbalances between researchers and participants.
Data Analysis

Upon beginning the project, the researcher planned to investigate undergraduate students' migration aspirations in general to form a holistic picture of the emergent themes in migration decision-making. In total, the researcher conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with students at the UOJ. After completing all scheduled interviews, the researcher observed an unbalanced sample, with a gender disparity of 15 female to 3 male participants, resulting from sampling methods and time limitations. As such, the researcher pivoted the project to focus on female students' perspectives, excluding data collected from interviews with male participants.

During data analysis, a further paring of participants occurred among the 15 female participants. Ten interviews were conducted utilizing the English interview protocol (View Appendix A, Document 2), with participants comfortable speaking with the interviewer primarily in English. Throughout these interviews, the researcher occasionally referenced the Arabic interview protocol to clarify a question or allowed participants to use Arabic to express their perspectives adequately. In contrast, five interviews were exclusively conducted using the Arabic interview protocol (View Appendix A, Document 1). As a result of the disparity between interviews conducted solely in Arabic and those wholly or primarily in English, the researcher chose only to include the ten interviews that utilized the English interview protocol. Limiting the sample was a compromise made by the researcher that allowed for more time for data coding.

To analyze the interviews, the researcher employed inductive reasoning to form themes. The researcher reviewed interview recordings by listening to each audio file and identifying significant statements, words, and phrases. This data was recorded verbatim and referenced to create themes from participant responses. The decision to analyze the data through auditory
encoding rather than transcription, as evidenced in traditional qualitative data analysis, is notable. This decision was another compromise made by the researcher due to time limitations.

Additionally, the researcher translated interviews conducted partially in Arabic with the assistance of the translator affiliated with his study abroad program. This translator was held to the same ethical standards as the researcher regarding confidentiality and privacy of participant information. The translation process was collaborative between the researcher and the translator. First, the translator helped the researcher identify the literal meaning of selected quotes, phrases, and ideas. Afterward, consulting with the translator, the researcher adapted quotes to align with the contextual, cultural, and implied meanings of participants' thoughts and ideas.

**Ethical Considerations**

The research process began in September 2023 when the researcher arrived in Amman, Jordan. During the researcher’s study abroad program, he enrolled in a Research Methods and Ethics course to learn about ethical standards for research and prepare to conduct research within the Jordanian sociocultural context. After identifying a research topic and conducting a thorough literature review, the researcher submitted a project proposal to a local review board, which was approved, and signed a binding Statement of Ethics. All interviews were conducted during a five-week research period, beginning in early November 2023 and ending in mid-December 2023.

The researcher ensured that his project aligned with ethical guidelines throughout that period. As discussed in the Research Procedures section, the researcher gave participants an informed consent form, answered any questions about his project or the informed consent form, and orally garnered consent to utilize a recording device at the beginning of each interview. The form clearly outlined the participant’s anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy rights and their ability to terminate the interview at any point in time if they felt uncomfortable. Furthermore, the
form outlined how the researcher would use the information at present and in the future, pending their consent. All signed informed consent forms were signed and stored by SIT Jordan.

Before conducting interviews, the researcher met with his program director, Dr. Raed al-Tabini, to ensure his interview protocol was respectful and sensitive to the cultural context. Dr. Raed outlined topics the researcher should handle delicately, such as conversations regarding socio-economic status. Further, the researcher sought to conduct interviews one-on-one with participants to respect their privacy, limit the impact of bystander influence, and ensure no social consequences would result from their responses. The researcher remained cognizant of Jordanian socio-cultural norms, such as attitudes toward a man and a woman sitting alone. Before each interview, he explained why he wanted to conduct one-on-one interviews and obtained oral consent from all participants that they were willing to speak to the interviewer privately.

Interviews were exclusively conducted with members of the target population. No minors or members of vulnerable populations were interviewed. During interviews, the researcher remained attentive and aware of the participant’s body language and emotional responses to provide support and comfort throughout the exchange. These practices aligned with ethical considerations outlined before beginning the research process.

Results

Ten of the eighteen semi-structured interviews conducted with undergraduate students at the UOJ were analyzed. Interview lengths ranged from 14:41 to 39:14, with an average interview length of 28:39. All participants were single women between the ages of 18 and 22, with an average age of 20. Half of the participants had a part-time or full-time job, while the remaining identified as full-time students. A wide variety of majors and specialties were reported, including, but not limited to, language studies, medicine, social work, and arts. Furthermore, interviewees
represented different UOJ graduating classes; the researcher interviewed one first-year student, four second-year students, three third-year students, and two fourth-year students.

The data sample also revealed diversity in experience and identity. Most participants were born and raised in Amman, but some students had relocated to Amman during their childhood or young adulthood from other cities or regions in Jordan, such as Irbid and Kerak. Other interviewees were born abroad and/or spent considerable time outside Jordan before returning to Amman with their families. Participants self-identified with one or more cultural, ethnic, and national groups, including Circassians, Jordanians, and Palestinians.

Although permission was garnered from all participants to use their names in this report in their informed consent form (View Appendix B), the researcher created codenames for each student to protect their identity and uphold confidentiality. Inspired by Nimegeer & Farmer (2016), the researcher gave each interviewee a codename in the pattern of Participant A1, Participant B2, Participant C3, etc. Additionally, when introducing participants for the first time in the results section of the report, a brief epithet was included, as in Nimegeer & Farmer (2016), with pertinent interviewee identifiers (Ex. Participant A1 (20 years old, Studies Math)).

**Student Perspectives on the Current Economic Situation in Jordan**

Five themes were identified from analyzing notes on the ten interviews to categorize students’ opinions and understanding of the economic situation in Jordan. The first theme pertains to student’s statements about the Jordanian economy. Nearly all participants viewed the domestic economic situation negatively, with varying degrees of frustration. The use of terms such as “bad,” “horrible,” “shitty,” and “worse” were observed consistently throughout participant responses to the question, “How would you describe the current economic situation in Jordan?” Other terms, including “challenges,” difficulties,” “struggle,” and “unstable,” were
often used to describe the economic experiences of people living in Jordan. Participant G7 (19 years old, Studies Applied English) underscored how the socio-political situation in Jordan had contributed to its rapid deterioration: “It started before Covid...like 2018, 2017, something like that. Before that, we were perfectly fine, everything was okay, but I think that it's due to political situations that Jordan became in debt to other (countries), so we are considered a broke country.”

The second theme is related to a sense of inequity between wealthier and poor individuals. Participant D4 (22 years old, Studies Art) identified that, despite hardship faced by people in the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic, the wealthiest Jordanians generally do not struggle: “I think the extremely wealthy people are doing fine. Other than that, especially since Corona happened, people have been struggling.” When asked if everyone experienced difficulty, Participant F6 (21 years old, Studies Business Administration) noted, “Not everyone. I feel like the rich people have it easy. They always do, anywhere, not only in Jordan.” Characterizing wealth inequity as a universal experience was particularly noteworthy within this context. Participant F6 also underscored the difficulty Jordanians experience opening a business without having lots of financial capital: “I don’t think it is a good idea to start any business here unless you are too rich and have the ability to do so.” Such sentiments are consistent with data collected in other research projects. Notably, the Arab Youth Survey Final Report found that roughly 66% of surveyed youth across the MENA region believed starting a business in their country would be difficult, even though 54% stated their intention to start their own business in the next five years (ASDA’A BCW, 2023).

High living costs and expenses encompassed the third theme. Participant D4 recounted a story of a girl she knew who had to withdraw from school to support her family:
...Some people I know, a girl, had to leave university because they could not afford the tuition, and they had to leave and work to be able to put food on the table for her siblings. So, I can say people are struggling to put food on the table. Especially people who come from...the more outskirts of Amman. They’re not doing well, I’d say.

Related to the second theme, inequity was described as connected to wealth disparities and where people lived in Amman. Participant G7 underscored the effects of inflation: “The inflation is quite...hard to deal with. The prices of things are going higher and higher, so a lot of families here in Jordan are not able to afford that lifestyle.” Participant I9 (19 years old, Studies English and Korean) echoed these sentiments, noting the disparity between living expenses and standards: “Although the living standard here is high, the living expenses here are higher.”

The fourth theme was related to poor wages, with several students outlining the disparity between the time people work and the money they make. For example, Participant E5 (21 years old, Studies Business Information and Technology (BIT)), who is currently employed in a full-time job, recounted her experiences working without a decent salary: “For the amount of work we do, we have to get at least 1000 [Dinars] a month. I got 350 last month, and I worked 56 hours in four days. Can you imagine working 56 hours? Just in four days? And imagine the other hours I worked throughout the months.” Throughout this story, the researcher noted that the participant was genuinely frustrated at her situation. Other participants, such as Participant I9, echoed Participant E5’s experiences, noting the importance of youth having university degrees to obtaining a suitable wage: “If you don’t have a university degree, there is a limit to the wage. Also, you will always be looked down upon. It’s something cultural.” It was particularly notable that the participant implied an intersection existed between experiencing difficulty in finding jobs that pay people adequately and Jordanian socio-cultural norms.
The final theme centered on Jordanians' difficulties in finding employment opportunities. Participants gave variant answers on the root causes of this issue and how it manifests within the Jordanian economy. Participant H8 (19 years old, Studies Applied English) underscored Jordan’s high unemployment rate as a critical issue. Other participants noted problems related to unemployment, notably Participant B2 (18 years old, Studies Medicine), who spoke about the struggle many people face when trying to find job opportunities, especially medical students: “People here…struggle because not many work opportunities are left, and there are many, many guys and girls…even men, like people in general, who are looking for jobs…they don’t find much. Even (medical) students here graduate and sit at home just waiting for jobs.”

Meanwhile, Participant E5 spoke about the challenges people face in finding suitable jobs and the mental strain some employees experience: “People can’t find jobs, (respectable) jobs, to actually make a living and make a life and buy a home or even pay their rent for it…Even when they do find jobs, it’s a lot of work. It affects your mental health. It affects your relationships outside of work, your social life.” She spoke about the difficulties she had encountered in her workplace, which included employers' lack of respect for employees' time and life outside of work. Further, participants noted having family members outside the country who have access to better job opportunities or left in search of them. Participant G7, while talking about her maternal uncle leaving Jordan, stated, “I think he wanted to find better job opportunities. He did not quite find that here in Jordan. So, he wanted to provide a better future for himself and his family.”

Thus, the lack of job opportunities was a critical concern and element of student’s aspirations.

**Analysis of Students with Clear Labor Migration Aspirations**

*Consistent Thematic Trends*
Six participants (Participant A1, Participant B2, Participant D4, Participant E5, Participant G7, and Participant J10) displayed clear labor migration aspirations. Four themes were identified throughout the participants’ responses—the first theme was the desire to leave Jordan as soon as possible. Most participants wanted to leave immediately after graduating, except for Participant J10 (20 years old, Studies Physical Education), who said she hoped to leave within the next two years. Several participants expressed a sense of urgency in their moves abroad, like Participant E5, who, when asked when she hoped to leave, stated, “If you gave me a ticket right now, I would go without packing, in the uniform, and just straight to the airport.” She underscored that she was working full-time to save money to leave and did not plan to search for jobs in Jordan. As such, student characterized their aspirations with temporal urgency.

The second theme is associated with the perception of better work opportunities abroad. Most participants believed they would obtain better jobs within their specialty abroad. Notably, Participant D4 highlighted how she thought people abroad would appreciate her art specialty: “Since I’m in arts, I feel like it would be better...abroad because there is no appreciation for the arts here. When people study art, people, usually their reaction is like, ‘Oh, so you learn how to mix colors?’” Some participants also articulated they believed they would find better salaries abroad. Notably, Participant J10 underscored how she would have much higher wages abroad for her specialty of physical education: “For two hours of work, I would get the same amount of money as I do for five hours of work in Jordan.” Thus, better-paying jobs, especially in participant’s specialties, were a central element of labor migration aspirations.

The third theme related to student’s educational aspirations. There appeared to be a relationship between aspirations to pursue higher education and aspirations to seek employment abroad, whereby higher education either served as a means for students to transition into their
SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO

life abroad or achieve better job opportunities. Participant A1 (19 years old, Studies Dentistry) identified that the main reason she aspired to migrate was for education, but that labor migration aspirations coincided with her educational goals, as part of her residency program would involve clinical work: “The master’s degree and Ph.D. for dentists, most of it are clinical. So, you don’t have a lot of theories to study, so you will have the time to work.” She noted that working abroad helps people become more competitive candidates: “Yes. When you work abroad, you will have better credentials. And for this, you will have much better job opportunities…So, if you seriously want to have the best work, you must have the best credentials.” Thus, the participant viewed working abroad as improving her credentials, especially given the high saturation of dentists in Jordan. Participant B2, who shared a desire to enroll in a medical residency program abroad, echoed these sentiments, noting how getting her master’s degree would help her obtain better jobs. Participant D4 outlined how she wanted to continue her life outside of Jordan and viewed a master’s degree as the next step in pursuing her goals: “Since I want to continue my life abroad, I’m thinking that studying would be the easiest transition for me.” The phrase “easiest transition” was noteworthy, as she viewed education as an element of broader labor and life aspirations.

Participant G7 outlined how she believed continuing her education would help her migrate, as she had heard about a university program that would fund her master’s degree: “I heard that if we graduate with a very high GPA, the university will send us on…a fully-funded journey to study a certain language, to fund our master’s and Ph.D. outside of the country.” She later agreed with the researcher that aspirations of working abroad drove her desire to leave, and the “vehicle” to achieve this was pursuing a master’s degree. To her, many students focus on their education for similar reasons: “That’s why you find a lot of people working on their education because (it) is the only way they can ever leave…If you want to go by your own
money, you will never be able to afford (it)... We really focus on studying to get that opportunity of building ourselves a future.” Thus, pursuing higher education was often exemplified as crucial to achieving better employment opportunities or realizing one’s aspirations of leaving.

The final theme was familial support for the participant’s aspirations to migrate abroad. All participants expressed that their parents, to varying extents, encouraged and supported their aspirations to migrate. Participant G7 recounted how her parents fully supported her aspirations because they never had the same opportunities she does, especially her mother, who the participant said wanted her “to build my future the way she wanted to build hers.” Participant D4 underscored that her father supports the idea because of his experience living abroad and that she felt she and her sister would “thrive” if they lived abroad. Some participants also articulated that certain family members did not support their aspirations despite others encouraging them. Participants A1 and E5 specifically identified their mothers, with Participant E5 stating, “Everyone in my family encourages the younger generation to just live abroad except for one member, and it’s my mom. My mom hates the idea.” In contrast, Participant J10 noted that, despite her mother’s approval, her father did not support her leaving alone because he believed he or her future husband should accompany her. She admitted feeling this was appropriate but thought her life would be more difficult if she stayed. Nevertheless, all participants shared that some, if not all, of their families encouraged and supported them to seek opportunities abroad.

**Unique Thematic Trends**

The researcher identified three additional unique thematic trends. The first theme is associated with the desire for independence expressed by Participants A1, B2, and D4. Participant A1 outlined how her aspirations were rooted in the desire to experience living independently, which was influenced by witnessing her brother learn to care for himself while
studying abroad in Russia: “But, I see my brother. When he came back to the home, he had to cook, clean the home, do everything. So I want to get this experience.” For Participant D4, the appeal of living alone abroad was tied to her belief that she could not do so in Jordan. Notably, this participant had spent a year studying abroad in Europe before returning to continue her studies. She noted how, as a single woman, her family would not allow her to live on her own because it was not “acceptable in the culture.” The participant stated how this reality did not align with her aspirations, as she did not intend on starting a committed relationship soon:

…it’s the culture…I will absolutely not live with my parents for longer than I have to, and you can’t leave the house by yourself, especially if you’re a girl in this country. And I don’t see myself getting into a relationship or marrying someone soon for me to be able to, let’s say, escape the house. So, my option would be to leave the country.

In particular, the researcher found the participant’s utilization of “escape” in this context. Thus, the desire to live independently for participants was tied for some to a desire to experience living alone, while for others, living independently represented something they wanted to reclaim.

The second theme is associated with several participants’ frustrations with Jordanian socio-cultural norms, specifically regarding women. Aside from her frustrations with being unable to live alone in Jordan, Participant D4 identified how she felt out of place in Jordan, especially returning from her experience studying abroad: “I would not imagine myself living my entire life in Jordan because I like to choose what I do and I believe I do not belong in this circle. In a way of the culture, in a way of the people, everything.” When asked to expand on what she meant, the participant identified personal frustrations with a lack of punctuality among Jordanians and societal expectations and pressures around getting married, especially as a woman. Regarding the latter, she underscored how she had experienced pressure to get married
and have children: “And the pressure of already hearing and listening to the words of ‘When will you get married and have children?’ I don’t want kids. I don’t want kids. Leave me alone, please.’” This statement was particularly noteworthy, given the participant’s apparent annoyance with being questioned about her marital status, exemplified by her saying, “Leave me alone.”

Participant E5 expressed similar frustrations with Jordanian social-cultural norms. In particular, she underscored the practice of mixing cultural and religious norms within Jordanian society: “They just mix religion into this culture, which I really hate because they are nothing alike.” To explain her point, she used the practice of smoking as an example, saying, “Let’s say a girl can smoke. They would say, ‘Oh, she doesn’t have manners’ and all…that kind of shit-talk.” She added, “Smoking is not haram, but they make it haram in our society, in our culture. This is culture, not religion.” The participants' distinction between religion and culture was noteworthy, identifying these beliefs and practices as categorically different from Islam or elements of the faith. She highlighted how she felt that these societal norms were “mentally exhausting” and emphasized the need for her to prioritize her mental health and future:

So, it [socio-cultural norms] actually affects one’s mental health, and it did affect mine. Honestly, I just prioritize myself and my mental health too much to even stay here. OK, I have relatives. I have my family and my friends, and I’m going to miss them very much, but, (in) the end, I have no one but me… I’m going to look after myself. I’m going to make money for myself, so I should take care of myself. I will prioritize my mental health. I will make myself happy and just not listen to anyone’s backtalk.

The researcher was particularly struck by the participant's outlining how such norms had affected her personally. Thus, a relationship was observed between Participant D4 and E5’s aspirations to work and live abroad and their frustration with Jordanian socio-cultural norms.
The final theme is related to the expressed aspirations of several students (Participants B2 and G7) to spread knowledge and understanding of Islam. Participant B2 outlined that she wanted to pursue a residency program in the US because she heard that “they pay good there.” She added that, with this money, she hopes “to build schools and organizations that actually teach Islam and what…Islam is. So, spread it there more because I think it’s not really worked on there.” She shared that the false perceptions of Islam within the West, along with a belief that many Muslims “don’t know the true meanings of [Islam]” and her passion for learning about her faith encompassed her motivations for working to spread the message of Islam. Participant G7 was more specific in her response, utilizing the Arabic word “داعية” (Daiya), which she explained refers to “a person who calls for Islam and religion.” The participant clarified her desire to be someone “who calls for action, to make a change in the world, to have the ideology that I’m currently working on be spread to other people, and to change lifestyles.” Participant G7 expressed that she believed many people had strayed away from the true path of faithful Islam:

I find that a lot of people are currently walking the path of self-destruction (unawarely), especially in the age of social media; we have become accustomed to the instant gratification that comes along with being addicted to social media. So, I find a lot of people lack self-cultivation, and they just become addicted to certain things that are doing damage to themselves.

When asked how she hoped to achieve this goal, the participant outlined how she had heard of several individuals with YouTube channels who were “affiliated with certain organizations” to spread awareness about the faith and that she hoped to become “that kind of person.” As such, labor migration and the financial benefits associated with it are viewed by some as a way of sharing their religious beliefs and spreading knowledge and awareness about Islam.
Analysis of Students with Clear Aspirations to Stay

Three participants (Participant F6, Participant H8, and Participant I9) expressed their aspirations to stay in Jordan. An analysis of participant responses revealed three central themes—the first was the desire to pursue domestic employment opportunities. Participant F6 expressed her desire to grow her business: “My plans after graduating…I want to be a (certified) makeup artist and open a studio, maybe, as a start. I’m already doing that, but they are coming to my house to do the makeup.” She expressed how her business, which she runs out of her home, has been quite successful; per appointment, the participant indicated she makes 25 JDs, which, according to her, is considered cheap. She also expanded on her decision to become a makeup artist: “I used to think my profession in makeup (was) my plan B, but (because of) the things that are going on in Jordan and the economy, I started putting it at plan A. Especially after seeing how many people are coming to me.” Thus, pursuing a personal passion, the success of her business, and adapting to Jordan’s economic issues encouraged her to stay and grow her business.

Meanwhile, Participants H8 and I9 expressed their desire to seek employment in Jordan. Participant H8 indicated that she felt she had a better future if she stayed, saying that her major, Applied English, was unique to the UOJ and students within this program often had an easier time finding jobs in Jordan: “We [language students] can find a lot of job opportunities much more than others because it is required that you can speak more than one language. It’s like a credit.” She underscored that “The University of Jordan is known for the employment” and that accomplished students at the UOJ often obtain suitable employment, making her feel she would likely get a job. Participant I9’s desire to stay arose from her desire to build a reputation in Jordan. She indicated that she believed that “Everyone has to work for his own country in order to flourish in this country. That is what I’m willing to do.” It appeared this sentiment was
influenced by a desire to follow in the footsteps of her grandfather, a former politician and doctor in Jordan. Thus, while Participant H8’s desire to stay and work appeared driven by the prospect of acquiring desirable employment, Participant I9 was more motivated by personal aspirations.

Attachment to one’s family and community encompassed the second theme. Participant F6 said she anticipated personal difficulty leaving her family: “I think it’s hard. I think I am going to miss my parents. I think my life here is a lot easier than going outside alone.” Participant H8 described herself as an emotional person who could not leave everything she loved behind: “I love my family…They can’t leave everything and go abroad with me, but I can’t feel satisfied if I leave Jordan and leave my family, leave my relatives, leave everything that I’ve loved for my entire life, and just to go abroad.” Notably, Participant I9 described the importance of her connection to her community and family, emphasizing their emotional and physical closeness: “We are a tight-knit community here. So, if I needed help, I’d go to my neighbor’s house, I’d go to my aunt’s house. My grandma lives in the apartment above us.” A sense of reliability and duty to one’s family were key elements of participants' aspirations to stay.

The final theme relates to the existence of variant migration aspirations. Participants H8 and I9 indicated they wanted to pursue education abroad but would only consider working abroad if the opportunity was perfect. Specifically, Participant I9 articulated clear aspirations to pursue her master’s in business at MIT or Seoul National University in South Korea: “I’m intending on working for two years, and then going to MIT or Seoul De to get my master’s degree.” However, the participant clarified that she intended to return afterward and continue her career in Jordan. Meanwhile, Participant F6 explained that she would only consider leaving Jordan with someone like her husband once she is married: “I don’t know. Eventually, my plans in the future, if I got married, we are not going to live here, anyway. That’s not our plan to live
here in Amman.” Thus, although these participants did not report labor migration aspirations, other aspirations were observed, including educational and migration aspirations.

**Ambivalent Aspirations: An Odd Case**

Participant C3 (21 years old, Studies Social Work) presented an interesting case for the researcher, as she displayed no clear aspirations to migrate or stay. Instead, Participant C3 appeared unsure of where she saw her future, often articulating aspirations to migrate and stay simultaneously. Her case represented an outlier within the researcher’s sample, thus encouraging him to examine it separately from all other participants.

Participant C3 expressed that her desire to leave was rooted in her frustrations with aspects of Jordanian socio-cultural beliefs and the prospect of better employment abroad. She articulated feeling out of place in Jordan: “I don’t find myself here, in Jordan, with all the cultural things that you have to go through, as a woman, living in Jordan.” Expanding on this point, she noted her inability to live independently as a single woman and the judgment she has experienced from many people. Further, Participant C3 connected her expectation of finding better job opportunities abroad to domestic socio-cultural attitudes: “I think I would have bigger opportunities, let’s say, because, especially here in Jordan, being a social worker is such a taboo thing to be.” She noted how social work is somewhat “taboo,” as many people are uncomfortable discussing their problems with a random person: “…To them [Jordanians], like, ‘Ok, so this is a random person. Why would I sit with this random person and tell her, ‘Oh, me and my husband, we fight all day long’ or like, ‘My father didn’t like me that much growing up.’” She believed that migrating and working abroad may provide her better future employment.

At the same time, the participant’s desire to stay appeared driven by two central themes: the educational challenges she would face abroad and her attachment to her family and
homeland. Regarding the first theme, Participant C3 outlined that her field heavily depends on studying and understanding the cultural context in which she would work. She articulated how she would have to relearn material on a different culture to study or work abroad: “So, really, it’s just a cultural thing. So, in order for me to study abroad, I’m going to need to relearn about the culture…or take more courses on social work in that specific country.” The participant also attributed her knowledge of the Jordanian culture and social work within this environment as valuable information she would not have if she were to work abroad, describing it as “powerful.”

The second theme of Participant C3’s aspirations to stay pertains to her connections to her community and nation. Discussing why it would be difficult for her to leave, the participant specifically noted her family and ethnic community, as she is Circassian. The participant expressed how most Jordanians know about the Circassians and said she would no longer experience the recognition and understanding she does in Jordan if she left. She underscored how her love for her country drove her desire to stay in pursuit of helping her community:

…Jordan is where I’m from, and I really love Jordan. I know that I am capable of doing a lot of things, so I feel like I would prefer to stay here and help the community here more than just to leave the country and help another community while knowing that my family is in that same community who I could’ve changed or…done something right about it.

She also noted that a familial crisis would discourage her from pursuing any aspirations to leave:

I think if God forbid, something happened in my family or a family member passed away or stuff like that, I think that would encourage me to stay, especially that I am very close to all of my family…I feel like if something happened…that would take me tens steps back, like, ‘No, I need to stay with my family. You never know what could happen.’
The convergence of these individual attitudes and beliefs and the challenges she would face getting work abroad formed the foundations of Participant C3’s expressed aspirations to stay.

Participant C3’s ambivalence appeared to be something she was aware of, often using the phrases “it depends” and “it is weird” to describe her situation. Notably, she defined her desire to work abroad and in Jordan with her local community in this manner: “It’s weird, it’s tricky, but I guess we’ll see what life has to offer.” The uncertainty in her response and presentation of her decision as contingent on “what life has to offer” underscored her ambivalence about her future. Thus, she represented a student with ambivalent aspirations, as defined earlier in this report.

**Destination Nation: Where and Why?**

**The United States and Europe**

Four themes concerning why participants want to migrate to the United States or Europe were identified. The first theme relates to better access to employment opportunities within the participants' specialty. Participant G7 noted that she felt she would have better job opportunities in the UK or the US, adding, “I think that it would be better for me because there are not a lot of job opportunities, especially in the translation field, here in Jordan.” Other participants expressed a belief that countries abroad cared more about their specialty. Participant C3 displayed this belief while discussing her desire to work in the UK: “…I know that (the) UK…they’re really looking for social workers, and they really appreciate, and they really know, they understand what social work is.” Participant J10 echoed this idea, stating that she preferred to work abroad “because, in America or any county…in Europe, I believe that they care about health more than in Jordan,” adding, “The people abroad…care about my field more, so my work will be better.”

The second theme was associated with a desire to explore other cultures. Participant A1 expressed that her interest in living in the US was rooted in prior interactions with Americans:
“(I’ve) met American people in my life, and they always told me about their lifestyle and their thoughts, so I want to get that experience to be in their lives there.” Participant B2 recounted a conversation with a Jordanian female resident in Germany, who outlined her experiences living abroad and her perceptions that Germans treat women respectfully. The participant noted that this interaction encouraged her to consider enrolling in a German residency program. Participant E5 discussed her pastime of watching YouTube videos of British vloggers as the root of her desire to migrate to the UK. Expanding on these vlogs, she said, “…I’m just seeing the places there, the people, the culture, the food. And it’s just so interesting. I just got so obsessed with it that now all I want to do is just graduate and go to the UK.” The participant’s use of ‘obsessed’ was noteworthy and interpreted to convey her interest in exploring British culture. When asked if another reason influenced this desire, she replied, “Actually, no. I don’t know. Maybe I just fancied the life that they lived.” Thus, interactions with people or media familiar with foreign nations influenced participants' aspirations and perceptions of desirable migration destinations.

Better educational opportunities within the US and Europe encompassed the third theme. Participants A1 and B2, who are studying dentistry and medicine, respectively, expressed a desire to seek post-graduate programs in the United States or Germany. Specifically, Participant A1 highlighted that she was “searching for a place where the dentistry degree is very good,” underscoring her belief that dentistry programs abroad were better in her pursuit of higher education. Participant D4 identified multiple European nations she had considered for pursuing a higher degree in jewelry design, indicating she believed European programs were better.

The final identified theme involved the importance of participants' familiarity with the local language of the destination country. Discussing her desire to pursue a residency program in the US or UK, Participant B2 noted, “Actually, one of the main things that pushed me into going
to America or England is the language because I already know English…Learning German would be a…challenge.” Though admitting her willingness to pursue any opportunity, Participant B2 clarified her preferences: “…As long as I have the chance to go to America or England or somewhere that speaks English, that would be a better choice for me.” Participant D4 elucidated the importance of linguistic familiarity in her selection of a master’s program in Europe: “It’s also a very important factor for me that it’s a language that I already have basics in. I already have basics in French, so it would be much easier for me to accommodate myself in France or Belgium since the primary speaking languages are…French.” She highlighted her desire to improve her French and her belief that learning a fourth language would be difficult.

Despite expressing largely positive views of these nations, several participants noted concerns about their safety, specifically in the US. Participant G7 noted she preferred moving to the UK because “the US has more islamophobia than the UK.” Participant E5, who currently has family in the US, echoed a similar sentiment: “The UK is nothing like the US. As much as the US sounds interesting…it has other downsides to it.” She believed issues regarding crime were more prevalent in the US than in the UK. Expanding on her point, she highlighted how she valued safety and her concerns that her identity would make her a target: “Safety is important to live a healthy life, so, as much as the US sounds interesting, it can get scary, especially for Muslims. I don’t look Muslim, ok? I’m not wearing the hijab. But, as soon as they learn it, it might be difficult for me a bit.” Further, she noted that her cousins in the US share this fear, implying this fear was rooted in the presence of anti-Arab sentiment and Islamophobia.

Participant E5’s response was particularly noteworthy. She expressed a greater desire to pursue employment and a future for herself and her children elsewhere out of fear of harassment based on her racial and religious identity. Despite having a family in the US, her second-hand
knowledge of the domestic situation discouraged her potential migration. Further, she connected these fears to the war in Gaza, which has seen a rise in hatred and anti-Arab sentiment. Thus, concerns related to safety and discrimination deterred some from aspiring to migrate to the US.

**Other Nations**

Participants also identified the following nations: Australia, Kuwait, South Korea, Turkey, and the UAE. Only one participant identified each nation; thus, each was evaluated separately to elucidate individual motives. Participant E5, an Australian citizen with two half-brothers who live in Australia, expressed an interest in Australia. She recounted her experience visiting her brothers, noting this trip was the beginning of her desire to leave: “And, I guess my love for living abroad started at that moment because, when I experienced it for a bit, I was like, ‘I want to leave.’” Further, while recounting her mental health struggles, Participant E5 expressed her frustration with Jordanian attitudes toward therapy, arguing that she believed Australians took therapy more seriously and cared about mental health. In this way, her desire appeared characterized by her appreciation of Australian societal norms and ties to the country.

Participant E5, who was born in Kuwait, lived there for twelve years, and still has family there, also identified Kuwait as a potential migration destination. When asked why she believed that Kuwait was better than Jordan, she highlighted better job opportunities, higher wages, and her connection to the country. She noted how, in her opinion, Kuwaiti socio-cultural norms were preferable to Jordanian, saying, “Everyone minds their own business. No one cares about others. They don’t talk shit about others.” However, it was evident to the researcher that, although the participant preferred living there to staying in Jordan, she considered Kuwait a last resort option.

Participant J10 identified the UAE, underscoring that she believed job opportunities in Dubai or somewhere in the US were the most desirable. Her opinions on the UAE appeared
SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO

primarily impacted by what she had heard and observed about common Jordanian migration patterns. This was particularly evident when she was asked why she wanted to go to the UAE and remarked, “I don’t know why, but I see (that) people always go there. It’s…better than another country, I think.” Participant C3 mentioned her desire to work and live in Turkey, noting cultural similarities as the main driving factor. Finally, Participant I9, who studies the Korean language, considered pursuing her master’s degree in South Korea at Seoul National University.

Discussion

This preliminary case study investigated the composition and prevalence of labor migration aspirations among ten female undergraduate students at the University of Jordan. In exploring this topic, the study sought to understand what motivates labor migration among students, where students want to migrate to, and their perceptions of the domestic economic situation in Jordan. The study provided a preliminary examination of the experiences and perspectives of a handful of undergraduate students. As such, it is not a comprehensive review of the topic, nor does this report claim to purport all Jordanian undergraduate students' feelings about their nation and migration, let alone female undergraduate students at the UOJ. Further research is needed into the makeup and complexity of labor migration aspirations and broader migration aspirations of female undergraduate students in the UOJ and other universities.

However, this study revealed several key findings. First, labor migration aspirations were often associated with other aspirations, such as educational or life aspirations. This finding is exemplified in the multi-faceted nature of expressed labor migration aspirations, including but not limited to desires to live abroad independently, pursue life goals, and escape specific cultural contexts. Second, encouraging familial beliefs and attitudes about migration significantly motivated students’ labor migration aspirations. Third, aspirations to stay had no observed
relation to the lack of migration aspirations, as participants who identified preferring to remain in Jordan also articulated desires to leave. Fourth, students often aspire to migrate to Western nations, such as the US and UK, to pursue job opportunities and future lives. However, concerns regarding their safety and the presence of Islamophobia were observed. Fifth, regardless of expressed aspirations, all participants viewed the current economic situation negatively, characterized by observations of people struggling and the lack of suitable employment.

Limitations

Time limitations primarily impacted this study. The researcher had one month to conduct all interviews and submit his final report. As such, the researcher made several compromises in utilizing specific sampling methods, using auditory encoding over transcription, and including a limited number of interviews in the final report. Given the inability to use random sampling methods, it is possible that participants were not representative of most female students at the UOJ. The project was further limited by the researcher’s inability to conduct all interviews in Arabic, which could have impacted the representativeness of the student sample.

The researcher was also aware of the impact of his positionality while collecting and reviewing data. The researcher's identity as a Lebanese-American male collegiate student with moderate Arabic speaking proficiency may have impacted the participant's responses. Some may have felt comfortable conversing with the researcher because of his background and familiarity with Middle Eastern sociocultural beliefs. Conversely, participants may have felt wary of fully expressing their opinions with someone they viewed as an outsider. However, the researcher has no reason to believe that his identity significantly impacted the participant’s responses.

Recommendations for Future Research
Given the need for published research on the topic, further investigation of the complexity of labor migration aspirations or, more broadly, migration aspirations is needed. As the researcher only reviewed interviews conducted with female undergraduate students, future research on the complexity of male labor migration aspirations is also warranted. Additionally, as this study specifically focused on collegiate students enrolled in undergraduate programs at the UOJ, investigations of students and youth at other universities in Jordan and those currently not enrolled in university are required to understand the complexity of migration aspirations within the Jordanian cultural context. Thus, an expansion of the data sample collected within the context of this study is recommended for any researchers interested in further investigating this topic.

A comment from Participant C3 may serve as a fascinating starting point for future research projects. The participant shared how she believed that most Jordanians were “just programmed” when discussing wanting to leave the country. This comment was noteworthy to the researcher, as it seemed to allude to the presence of migration aspirations as an overwhelming element of Jordanian society. Investigating the impact and influence of widespread desires to migrate on forming migration aspirations is recommended. Further, examining Jordanian’s differing capabilities to realize their migration aspirations would add to the existing literature and provide insight into inequities within Jordanian society.
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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (In Arabic and English)

Document 1 – Arabic Interview Protocol

Mention: Begin a simple conversation enhancing the discussion process and gain the participants' agreement on any questions related to the project and experimental equipment.

The section 1 – Information about the student

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your area in Jordan?
4. What is your nationality?
5. What is your family situation?

a. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
   b. How many children do your parents work with? If so, how many?
   c. How many family members have university qualifications? If so, how many and what qualifications?
   d. Are you married?
   e. Do any of your family members have relations who left Jordan? If so, where and why?

2. What year are you in university?
3. What is the reason for you to study in university?
4. How do you earn your living during your studies?

The section 2 – In case of your end of your university studies

4. What job do you think you can find after you end your studies?
5. How old do you expect to leave Jordan?
6. What do you anticipate if you move abroad?
7. What do you think about your family if you move abroad?
8. Do you have any plans to move abroad?
9. Who do you talk to about your travel wish? How do they feel? How do they respond?
10. Do you have any information about your travel wish?
ما رأيهم؟ + ماذا يعتقدون؟

ب. ما رأيهم بالأشخاص الذين هاجروا من البلد؟ كيف تعتقد أنهم سيرون رغبتك في الرحيل؟

17. هل تفضل مغادرة الأردن بشكل دائم أو أن تعود لاحقاً في المستقبل؟

ا. لماذا تود المغادرة للأبد؟

ب. كم من الوقت ستبقى قبل الرجوع إلى الأردن؟ + لماذا تريد العودة للأردن لاحقاً؟

18. هل تشعر/ي بأنه بمكنك مغادرة الأردن بسهولة؟

ا. لماذا تعتقد ذلك؟

ب. لماذا تعتقد أنه من الصعب الهجرة ومغادرة الأردن؟ ما هي العوامل التي تعيق قدرتك للهجرة؟

19. قبل الانتهاء، هل لديك أي إضافة؟ (نهاية المقابلة)

الجزء 3 - إذا كانت الإجابة على السؤال 10 بلاء استعمل الأسئلة من 20 إلى 25

20. هل فكرت مسبقاً بالهجرة في المستقبل؟

21. لماذا تود البقاء في الأردن؟

22. ما هي خططك بعد التخرج من الجامعة؟

23. ما رأيك بالذين يودون مغادرة الأردن؟ إذا أعتقد أهلك واصدقاءك عن الذين يغادرون؟

24. كيف تشعر بشأن إمكانية عملك عند بقاءك في الأردن؟

25. قبل الانتهاء، هل لديك أي إضافة؟ (نهاية المقابلة)
Document 2 – English Interview Protocol

*Note: I begin each interview by exchanging pleasantries, explaining the project, answering any participant questions about the project, testing the recording equipment, and signing the Informed Consent form.

Part 1 – Descriptive Information about the Students:

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from in Jordan?
4. What citizenship do you have?
5. Tell me about your family.
   a. Do you have siblings?
   b. Do both of your parents have jobs outside of your home? If so, what do they do?
   c. Do they have university degrees? If so, what level and from where?
   d. Are you married?
   e. Do you have family who have left Jordan? If so, to where and why? Are they still abroad?
6. What year are you in college?
7. What are you studying? Why are you studying this?
8. Do you currently have a job while studying at Jordan University?
9. How would you describe the current economic situation in Jordan?
10. KEY QUESTION: If you had the opportunity, would you want to leave Jordan for work after completing your undergraduate degree?

Part 2 – If the answer to question 10 is YES, continue with questions 11-19:

11. Why do you want to leave? How do you feel about your work prospects if you leave?
12. Where do you want to go to, and why?
13. When do you intend to leave? (Immediately, Within a few years, Longer, etc.)
14. How will you fund your move?
15. Have you spoken with anyone about your desire to leave?
   a. If YES: How did they respond? How would people feel about you leaving?
   b. If NO: How do you think they would feel about you leaving?
16. Does your family know about your desire to leave?
   a. If YES: What are their thoughts?
   b. If NO: What are their thoughts on people leaving the country? How do you think they would view your desire to leave?

17. Do you wish to leave Jordan permanently, or do you plan to return in the future?
   a. IF PERMANENT: Why do you wish to leave Jordan for good?
   b. IF PLAN ON RETURNING: How long will you stay before returning to Jordan? Why do you wish to return to Jordan one day?

18. Do you feel you could easily leave Jordan?
   a. IF YES: Why do you believe this?
   b. IF NO: Why do you believe it is difficult to migrate? What are the factors that impact your ability to migrate?

19. Before we wrap up, do you have anything else you want to add? (END OF INTERVIEW)

Part 3 – If the answer to question 10 is NO, continue with questions 20-25:

20. Have you considered leaving Jordan at any point in the future?

21. Why do you plan on staying in Jordan?

22. What are your plans after graduating?

23. What are your thoughts on many people wanting to leave Jordan? What do your friends and family think about people wanting to leave Jordan?

24. How do you feel about your work prospects if you stay in Jordan?

25. Before we wrap up, do you have anything else you want to add? (END OF INTERVIEW)
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form (In Arabic and English)

Arabic Informed Consent Form
English Informed Consent Form

Title: Where and Why?: A Preliminary Case Study of Labor Migration Aspirations among Jordanian Undergraduate Students at the University of Jordan

Your Name/Homeschool: Simon Khairallah (Colgate University)

School for International Training — Jordan: Geopolitics, International Relations, and the Future of the Middle East

1. Purpose:
This study examines the factors that impact decisions to work abroad, specifically reviewing the perspectives of Jordanian college students. Why do students want to work abroad? Where do students hope to work abroad?

2. Rights Notice:
If, at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to read the statements provided below carefully.

   a. Privacy - All information you share during the interview may be recorded and safeguarded. Please let the interviewer know if you do not want to be recorded.
   b. Anonymity - Any names and descriptive information may be used. If you wish to withhold any information, please let the interviewer know.
   c. Confidentiality - All information shared will be confidential and protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer the full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents and the right to use the information collected in these interviews for future writing and research purposes. To confirm their role, the interviewer will also sign their name below.

3. Instructions:
Please read the following statements carefully and mark your preferences where indicated. Signing below indicates your agreement with all statements and your voluntary participation in the study. Signing below while failing to mark a preference where indicated will be interpreted as an affirmative preference. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions regarding this consent form.

   a. I am aware that this interview is conducted by an independent undergraduate researcher with the goal of producing a research project on Where and Why?: A Preliminary Case Study of Labor Migration Aspirations among Jordanian Undergraduate Students at the University of Jordan.
   b. I am aware that the information I provide is for research purposes only. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study.
   c. I am aware that, upon request, I have the right to complete anonymity, and the researcher will omit all identifying information from both notes and drafts to protect my identity.
   d. I am aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any question and terminate my participation at any time during the interview and that the researcher will answer any questions I have about the study.
   e. I am aware of and take full responsibility for any physical, psychological, legal, or social risks associated with participation in this study.
   f. I am aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for participation in this study, but a copy of the final study will be made available to me upon request.

I [ do / do not ] give the researcher permission to use my name and position in the final study.
I [ do / do not ] give the researcher permission to use my organizational affiliation in the final study.
I [ do / do not ] give the researcher permission to use data collected in this interview in a later study.

Participant's Printed Name: __________________________
Participants Signature: __________________________
Date: __________________________

Researcher's Signature: __________________________

Thank you for participating!

Questions, comments, complaints, and requests for the final written study can be directed to:

Dr. Raed Altabini, SIT Jordan Academic Director
Email: raed.altabini@sit.edu