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Exploring the Socio-Economic and Environmental Determinants of International Migration Flows in Mongolia

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Abstract. During the socialist period, Mongolian citizens had limited rights to settle and travel abroad. The migration of the population was carried out only under the strict control of the state and for specific purposes. Since 1990, Mongolia has undergone significant political and socio-economic reforms, marking the beginning of a transition to a market economy with a free and democratic system. As a result, citizens of Mongolia have the opportunity to freely choose their place of residence; consequently, the number of Mongolian citizens moving abroad is not decreasing. Instead, international migration flows are significantly increasing year by year. Over the past thirty years, thousands of Mongolian citizens have left their native homeland for foreign countries seeking better lives. The mass migration of young people of labor-force age to foreign countries, who are an integral part of the country's social resources, has become a sensitive and pressing problem facing Mongolian society. This research is focused on large numbers of international migrants who have migrated to foreign countries and the reasons why people want to leave their homeland. This study illustrates how and why increasing international migration from Mongolia is occurring, and what social, economic, and environmental factors influence the flow of international migration. Factors such as economic instability, high unemployment and poverty rates, and environmental pollution are key drivers of their decision to migrate from Mongolia.

Keywords: International migration flows, economic conditions, unemployment, poverty, socio-economic and environmental factors, Mongolia

Introduction

Millions of people migrate from their places of origin to other regions, leaving their homeland in search of a better quality of life, and safety of their families, and improved futures for their children. As a result, the flow of international migrants around the world is steadily increasing.

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In 1995, 174 million people worldwide, or 2.8 percent of the world's population (IOM UN Migration, 2019), lived outside their home country. By 2020, this number had increased to 281 million people, or 3.6 percent of the world's population (IOM UN Migration, 2020). Global North countries are receiving migrants, while developing countries are the sending countries, providing low-cost labor in tight Global North labor markets.

In Mongolia, the government applied strict regulations to internal and external migration of the population during the socialist period (1921-1990), limiting the population's right to travel freely to foreign countries. At that time, the internal and external migration of the population of Mongolia was under strict state control, and there were no legal documents for citizens to voluntarily travel, travel or reside in foreign countries.

In the early 1990, due to the political and socio-economic reforms that took place in Mongolia, the strict control system ended, and opportunities opened up for citizens to freely travel, work, live, and study abroad. In 1992, Mongolia approved its new Constitution, declaring that it would establish a civil society that respects human rights, freedom, and justice. Article 16, Section 18 of the Constitution states that "people have the right to freely travel within the territory of their country, and to choose temporary or permanent residence, to go abroad, to reside, and to return to their homeland" (Great Congress of Mongolia, 1992). This is the legal basis for free voluntary participation in population migration. Therefore, thousands of people who previously could not go to foreign countries to work, live, and study took advantage of this opportunity to go abroad.

As of 2020, there are 3,296,000 citizens of Mongolia, of which 3,174,000 live within the Mongolian territory and 122,301 live in foreign countries (NSOM, 2021). This only includes citizens who live legally in officially registered foreign countries. The number of Mongolian citizens living abroad increased by 14.2 percent in 2020 compared to 2010 (NSOM 2021). As of 2022, 167,520 citizens of Mongolia live abroad in 87 countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, 2022). However, in addition to the impossibility of determining the number of illegal residents, there are unofficial figures that indicate some Mongolians settle illegally in foreign countries for long or short periods.

Significant social and economic reforms have occurred in Mongolia since the early 1990s. Increased unemployment, higher levels of poverty among the population, and growing income inequality were the consequences of these reforms. As a result, Mongolia's economy declined for four years from 1990 to 1994. The worst year of the economic downturn was 1993, when it contracted by as much as -9.3% (NSOM, 1996). The recovery of economic growth began in 1994, with an average annual growth rate of 3.8 percent between 1996 and 2000. After 2000, Mongolia encountered several challenges that had a significant impact on rural herdsmen and the agricultural industry. Between 2000 and 2002, agriculture, which is responsible for over 30% of Mongolia's economy, saw an average annual decline of 16%, which significantly hindered overall economic growth (NSOM, 2018). Increased unemployment and poverty caused thousands of rural herdsmen to lose their livelihoods. The population's quality of life declined significantly due to the negative impact on their access to employment, education, health, and basic social services. These challenges led to a significant migration of rural herdsmen. Numerous individuals migrated to the capital city of Ulaanbaatar from the countryside or sought work abroad in an attempt to enhance their living conditions. The trend of individuals seeking employment opportunities abroad has been increasing to this day.

This study of why Mongolians are migrating abroad in large numbers has become crucial for understanding demographic change, workforce structure, and socioeconomic development. The migration of the population has become a prominent and sensitive problem in Mongolian society, so it is necessary to examine it from a scientific perspective.

This paper seeks to evaluate three dimensions of the current international migration situation in Mongolia (1990-2020), to identify the factors affecting the various flows of migrants. Specifically, our research questions include:

1. Economic factors such as high unemployment and poverty rates, low wages
2. Social factors such as inadequate education, worse living conditions
3. Environmental factors such as air pollution and an increase in diseases caused by environmental pollution

International Migration in Mongolia: Theory and Previous Studies. Theoretical approaches to international migration: This research work explains the socio-economic factors affecting the external migration of the population (reasons for migration) in connection with the "push and pull migration" theoretical approach. In neo-classical migration theory, lack of job opportunities, limited, poor social services, high poverty, lack of housing, and unfavorable conditions in the place of residence are factors that 'push' people and individuals to move abroad (Lewis 1954, Lee 1969, Todaro 1974, Borjas 1989, Taylor et.al. 1996). On the other hand, the 'pull' theory emphasizes factors that attract people to migration: the availability of jobs, good living conditions, high wages, quality education, health services, political and religious freedom, a safe environment to live in, favorable economic conditions, developed industrialization, and favorable climatic conditions (Lewis 1954, Lee 1969).

It is believed that the foundation for the theory explaining population migration was laid by Ernest Gorg Ravenstein's Law of Migration, which was published at the end of the 19th century (Ravenstein, 1885). During this period, influenced by industrialization in England, there was a surge in both internal and external population migration. It was a time when a significant portion of the population sought employment opportunities in large numbers, thus contributing to the development of this theory (Ravenstein 1885). Population migration is an inevitable social phenomenon driven by factors such as economic development, living conditions, food supply, population density, as well as farmers transitioning from traditional agriculture to urban industrialization. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as population migration (Lewis 1954, Lee, 1969, Borjas, 1989).

Personal mobility decisions are often made with a great deal of thought, because leaving one's homeland, family, and culture for another country is a significant decision for anyone to take. The international migration of Mongolia's population is contingent upon numerous factors, including the purpose and underlying reasons for individuals' initial move abroad. Decisions regarding personal mobility are seldom made lightly, as leaving one's homeland, family, and culture for a foreign country is a profound choice. Individuals typically deliberate extensively, research thoroughly, and consult closely with their relatives before making such a decision. Regrettably, not all countries possess the economic resources necessary to ensure the emotional, spiritual, economic, and social well-being of their citizens. Consequently, many individuals are motivated to seek residence in places that offer better living conditions than their current locations.

The tendency to explain the reasons for people's migration in connection with economic factors has received substantial attention in academic research. According to the theories proposed by scholars, population movement is significantly influenced by economic factors, as seen in the Neoclassical theory. The primary factors that attract populations to migrate to new areas include the presence of ample job opportunities, favorable living conditions, well-paying employment, access to quality education and healthcare services, political and religious freedoms, a secure living environment, economic prosperity, industrialization, and favorable climatic conditions. These factors are identified as pull factors that attract populations to new destinations (Borjas 1989, Massey et al. 1993).

Researchers (Kapur & John, 2009) have conducted extensive studies on remittances sent by migrants to their families in their home countries. These studies have revealed that remittances have a profound impact not only on household economies but also on national economies. It is well-established that remittances sent from wealthier countries to economically disadvantaged ones constitute a substantial source of income, significantly contributing to the enhancement of recipients' quality of life. Furthermore, international migration has an effect on remittance prices (Kapur & John, 2009). It has been suggested that the developmental contributions of remittances can be greatly amplified through the implementation of certain macroeconomic policies and financial reforms in labor-sending countries' remittance transmission systems (Stuart, 2006). Additionally, the outcomes of international migration exert a significant influence on the financial and exchange rate policies of developing nations. Researcher David Singer (2010) collected data on remittances from 74 developing countries spanning from 1982 to 2006 and analyzed real exchange rate regimes. His findings indicate that remittances from individuals engaged in international migration reduce the costs associated with domestic monetary policy autonomy and foster economic development. Research has also demonstrated that remittances serve as a mechanism for risk-sharing among countries on the international stage. In light of these findings, it is evident that remittances sent by citizens living and working abroad offer substantial benefits.

Current Research on International Migration Related to Mongolia. There is limited research explaining the migration of the population of Mongolia in connection with the socio-economic changes over the past thirty years.

Enkhbaatar Ulziilhan (2016) conducted research on human security in Mongolian foreign policy, linking migration to key indicators of human trafficking and human security. Tricking citizens into forced labor abroad and crossing the country's borders is considered an organized human trafficking crime (Enkhbaatar, 2016) and has been widely studied from a legal point of view.

Tsuneo Akaha (2018) investigated how Mongolians are becoming subject to labor exploitation abroad and also examined problems faced by foreign immigrants in Mongolia, such as the refugee status, exposure to human trafficking, human security, involvement in crime, and illegal residence. The above studies (Ulziilhan 2016, Tsuneo 2018) did not study in detail the socio-economic factors affecting population migration, nor explain the reasons for migration in relation to theoretical approaches.

Researchers Altanchimeg Zanaabazar et. al (2021) article explores the factors influencing Mongolians' migration to South Korea. South Korea has been a prominent destination for

Mongolians seeking employment, business opportunities, education, travel, and residency since the early 1990s. The study reveals that economic factors, such as low wages and poverty, primarily drive Mongolians to migrate to South Korea. Additionally, it identifies high wages, quality of life, environmental factors, and certain socio-cultural attractions as the key factors that attract Mongolian citizens to South Korea.

Western scholars (Barcus H, Werner C, Emmelhainz C, & Brede N, 2006 and 2008-2009, Diener A, 2009, Barcus H, Shugatai A, 2015-2016) conducted large-scale ethnographic field research on the process of transnational migration of ethnic Kazakhs from Mongolia to Kazakhstan that began in 1991 in Bayan-Olgii and Khovd provinces. Their research explained the large-scale transnational migration process, and migration decision-making explained the factors influencing the migration decision-making by linking them with theories of transnational migration and ethnic migration. Barcus and Shugatai (2015-2016) also conducted a field study of Kazakh ethnic migration to the central region of Mongolia to determine the factors affecting changes in their localization. Their comprehensive field research program carried out from 2016-18 sought to explain the reasons for the migration of ethnic Kazakhs in relation to population, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, and historical factors (Barcus & Shugatai, 2018).

"One homeland or two? Territorialization of Identity and the Migration Decision of the Mongolian Kazakh Diaspora" by Diener A (2009) is a descriptive study of the migration of Kazakh ethnic groups in Mongolia based on concepts of kinship and cultural relations

The above studies have not investigated the process and reasons for international migration in Mongolia in relation to socio-economic and natural factors. Therefore, the present work is based on the main theories of migration, asking: from where to where, due to what factors, and when, in the context of the time and space system.

Materials and research methods

The purpose and reasons for the departure of people from Mongolia to foreign countries vary depending on many environmental and socioeconomic factors. It is not an easy decision for an individual to leave their native homeland, parents, and siblings and go to a foreign country. This study uses statistical data, theoretical approaches to migration, sociological survey questionnaires, and interviews to identify socio-economic and natural factors affecting the migration process. Human development indices, quality of life research, and health research report materials were also used in this research.

– *Statistical data:* Before 2010, statistics on population migration were not officially published by the National Statistics Committee of Mongolia (NSOM, 2011). However, the official statistics on population migration were released only twice in 2010 and 2020. The National Statistics Committee of Mongolia conducts the Population Housing Census once every 10 years. Therefore, a comparative analysis of the dynamic changes in international migration was made using the primary statistical data from 2010 and 2020. Also, in order to determine the availability of some numerical data and dynamic changes in the international migration of the population, an analysis of the figures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia and the General Directorate of Border Protection of Mongolia was carried out.

– *Sociological survey and interview:* Decisions to migrate are made at the individual or family level. To find out the reasons for citizens' migration and its consequences, sociological survey questionnaires were collected from 104 people from Mongolia who are currently living abroad. In addition, a sociological questionnaire was collected and processed from 80 people who returned to Mongolia after living and working abroad for more than 6 months. The study participants were classified by age, gender, education, and years of living abroad. Also, in-depth life history interviews were conducted with 16 people living abroad. Participants were informed that the interview and questionnaire responses would be used solely for research purposes. Once consent was obtained from each participant, a questionnaire survey was administered. The interviews conducted with participants have been incorporated into the study while using pseudonyms to protect the respondents' identities.

This research used an online survey program to administer two sociological surveys over a period of 2 months, from mid-January to the first week of March 2023. The first was a survey with 22 questions and a comment section for people currently living in foreign countries and who had been living abroad for more than 6 months. A total of 104 people participated. 102 people answered all questions.

The second survey was administered to 80 people who returned to Mongolia after living abroad for more than 6 months, with 19 questions and a summary section. 77 people answered all questions, and 3 people did not answer or skipped some questions.

Life history interviews were taken from a total of 16 people. 10 of them (in-person interviews) were taken from people who had returned to Mongolia after living abroad for more than 6 months.

In recent years, a large number of language centers and foreign placement bureaus have arisen in Mongolia. These centers focus on improving students' IELTS and TOEFL scores in anticipation of studying and living abroad. We went to two such training centers and interviewed students participating in the training.

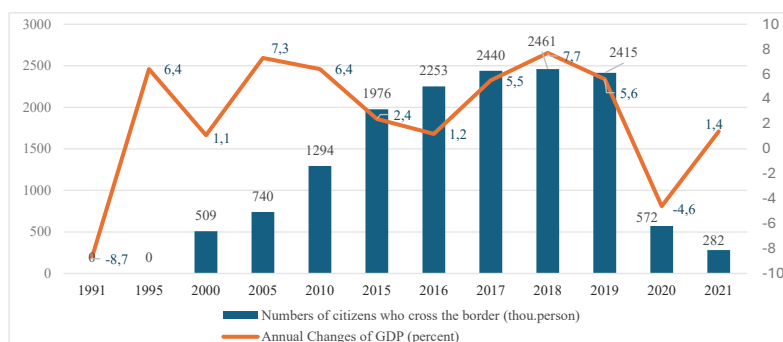
Reasons for migration are related to the socio-economic conditions of the country of origin and the country of destination. Due to the political and socio-economic changes that have taken place in Mongolia since 1990, unemployment and poverty have negatively affected the living standards of the population. Therefore, when determining the flow and intensity of international migration of the population, we tried to detect economic changes in Mongolia in the past thirty years (1990-2020), and unemployment, poverty, and environmental indicators.

Results and discussions

According to official statistics, 112.3 thousand citizens or 3.7% of the total population of Mongolia lived abroad as of 2023 (NSOM, 2021). However, in the data of the General Authority for Border Protection, between 1990-2023, there are more than 338,000 citizens living in foreign countries based on the difference between the number of Mongolian citizens entering and leaving the country's border (General Authority for Border Protection, 2023). In other words, due to certain factors such as the visa status of Mongolian citizens living abroad, it is difficult to determine their exact number.

Mongolia's economic changes have a certain influence on the intensity of population migration.

Graph № 2. Annual Changes of Gross Domestic Product 1991-2021 (percent)



Data source: Mongolian Statistical Information Service 2022, "Numbers of citizens who cross the border"

This graph illustrates the relationship between Mongolia's economic growth and the intensity of foreign migration. It is evident that during years of robust economic growth, there is a lower rate of population migration, whereas during economic downturns, the number of people migrating to foreign countries tends to rise. Mongolia's economy experienced a growth rate of 2.4 percent in 2015, 1.2 percent in 2016, 5.5 percent in 2017, and reached 7.7 percent in 2019, only to contract by -4.6 percent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Over the last two years, the number of people from Mongolia moving to foreign countries has increased sharply due to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. The number of people absent from Mongolia for more than 90 days increased from 30,683 in 2010 to 123,389 in 2022, an increase of 4.02 times (General Authority for Border Protection 2023).

The country where most Mongolians live and work is South Korea. As of 2022, there are about 53,038 Mongolian citizens residing in the country (Korea Immigration Service, Ministry of Justice 2023). In 2012, when Mongolia's economic growth reached 12.3 percent, the number of citizens living in Korea decreased to 26,461. However, in 2019, the year before the pandemic, when the economic growth was 5.6 percent, 48,185 people lived in South Korea, and in 2020, the year of the pandemic lockdown, when Mongolia's economy declined -4.6 percent, the number of citizens living in South Korea reached 42,511, (Korea Immigration Service, Ministry of Justice 2023) making Korea the country where most Mongolian expatriats live and work.

Most Mongolian citizens residing in foreign countries are actively employed and living abroad. When examining their age distribution, 10.6 percent fall within the age group of 0-14 years, 6.6 percent belong to the 45-64-year-old category, and a mere 0.3 percent are aged 65 and above. The most significant portion, constituting 82.53 percent, falls within the economically active population aged 15-44, which represents the working-age group (NSOM, 2021) or economically active population.

Compared to 2010 permanent residents abroad, the number of permanent residents aged 0-18 has almost doubled in 2020 (NSOM, 2021), indicating an increasing trend towards family residence. Regarding the family status of citizens residing abroad who participated in

our sociological research, 24.0 percent had 2-3 family members, 36.5 percent had 4-5 family members, 12.5 percent had more than 5 family members, and 26.5 percent were single. This indicates that there are many citizens living abroad for a long time with their families, working and studying. 46.3% of Mongolians living abroad are men and 53.7% are women (NSOM, 2021).

The labor force participation rate of the population living abroad is 63.5 percent. Labor force participation is highest in the 30-59 age group, with 80.3-90.3 percent for men, and 69.3-87.3 percent for women in the 30-54 age group (NSOM, 2021). This indicates that economic activity is the highest at these ages.

Mongolian citizens tend to live in foreign countries for a long period of time. Among citizens residing abroad, the number of citizens residing for 11 years or more is higher in European countries such as Great Britain, Ireland, Poland, Hungary, and Germany (NSOM 2021). Most Mongolian citizens residing in Russia, China, Japan, and South Korea stay for one year or less. About 50% of citizens living in India, Turkey, and Australia have lived there for 2-5 years, and about 30% of citizens living in Kazakhstan, France, and Canada have lived there for 6-10 years (NSOM, 2021). Considering the population of Mongolia living abroad for 6 or more months by country of residence, South Korea (32.7 percent), the United States (15.7 percent), Japan (7.2 percent), Kazakhstan (5.9 percent), the Czech Republic (4.9 percent), Australia (4.5 percent), and China (4.2 percent) have the most (NSOM, 2021).

In order to develop an appropriate population migration policy suitable for the current conditions of Mongolia, which has a vast territory with a small population, it is appropriate to study it in conjunction with the features of the population's territorial location. When Mongolian citizens living abroad are studied according to their location of origin in Mongolia, there are significant differences.

According to the labor force survey (NSOM, Labor 2021), there is a high risk of unemployment or long-term unemployment among the residents of provinces other than Ulaanbaatar. In line with this, unemployed rural people with no income tend to actively participate in international migration. Considering the citizens who migrated from local to foreign countries by province, 94.9 percent of the citizens who migrated to foreign countries from Bayan-Olgii province and 63.7 percent from Khovd province live in Kazakhstan (NSOM, 2021). In the western region of Mongolia, Bayan-Ulgii aimag, 88 percent of the total population is ethnic Kazakh. In Khovd aimag, about 10 percent of the total population is ethnic Kazakh.

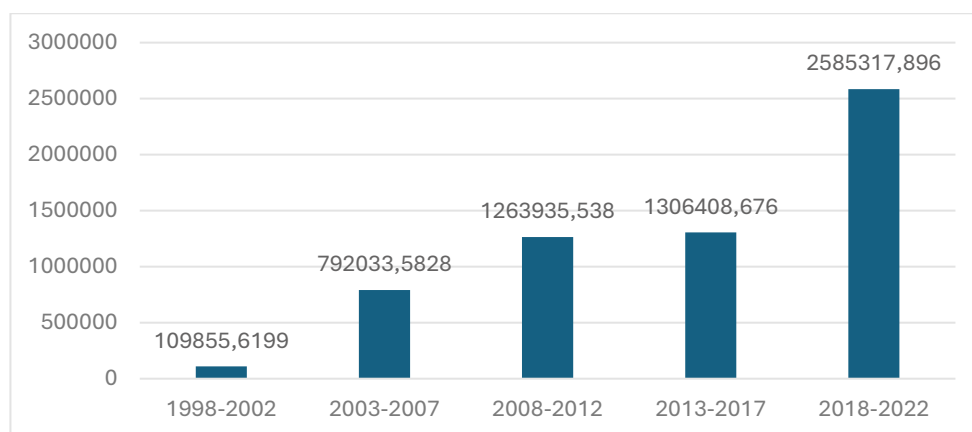
31.7 percent of the total population living abroad from Ulaanbaatar lives in South Korea, 19.1 percent in the United States, and 7.7 percent in Japan (NSOM, 2021). In South Korea, Japan, and China, 16.4 percent from Sukhbaatar province, 15.3 percent in Dornogovi province, 10.4 percent in Gobi-Altai province, 11.5 percent in Dornod province in Russia, 10.8 percent in Uvs province, 12.7 percent in Uvurkhangai province in Japan, 12.3 percent live in Uvs province, 11.9 percent in Dundgov province, 10.5 percent in Central and Khuvsgul provinces, 12.3 percent in Sukhbaatar province in the Czech Republic, and 12.2 percent in Zavkhan province in India. However, 15.8-57.7 percent of the provinces except Bayan-Olgii are studying, working and living in South Korea (NSOM, 2021).

The majority of expatriates who moved to foreign countries originated in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar or the provinces of Darkhan, Orkhon, Tuv, and Selenge, which have developed

infrastructure and communications and large populations relative to other provinces. The pattern of migration from large urban areas to foreign countries is changing. The pattern of migration from urban areas to foreign countries is changing, and the migration of rural areas to foreign countries is increasing. This is because the telecommunications sector is developing in rural areas of Mongolia, and the rural population is becoming more informed about foreign countries. This is leading the rural population to seek out opportunities to study, work, and live abroad.

Mongolian citizens go to foreign countries to improve the livelihood of their families, and thus make a significant contribution to the country's economy. This is shown by remittances sent by Mongolians living abroad to Mongolia. In the mid-1990s, Mongolian citizens sent money to their home country through individuals who did not have the knowledge and opportunity to send their earned money through the banking system, so there is a lack of statistics on foreign remittances at that time. Since 1998, Mongolians living abroad have transferred money to Mongolia through the banking system. In 1998, 5.8 million US dollars were sent to Mongolia. From 2001 on, the amount of foreign remittances sent to Mongolia has increased every year. In 2021, remittances worth 536.5 million US dollars or 4.2 percent of GDP were sent to Mongolia (World Bank, 2022). This remittance is equivalent to approximately 1.75 trillion MNT at the official exchange rate of the Bank of Mongolia in December 2022, or 3444.6 MNT.

Graph №3 Remittances from abroad to Mongolia, 1998-2021 (million USD)



Data Source: World Bank 2022, "Personal remittances, received (current US\$) – Mongolia", World Development Indicators

Approximately 66.3 percent of the survey research participants said that they send remittances to Mongolia. 45.9 percent of those who send remittances said that they send remittances every month, 23.5 percent send remittances to their home country once every six months, 14.0 percent once every six months, and 16.6 percent send remittances to their home country more than three times per year. According to this data, remittances sent by Mongolian citizens living abroad not only improve the livelihood of that person's household but also have a certain positive effect on the country's economy.

This research shows that the main component of Mongolian young people who can work and have a strong desire to go abroad is for a long time. This is due to the low value of labor in

Mongolia, which makes them less interested in working and living in their country of origin. One of the major reasons for the international migration pattern is a push to earn more money in foreign countries.

Socio-Economic and Environmental Factors Influencing the International Migration Pattern. International migration flows are driven by high unemployment and poverty rates. Prior to 1990, during the socialist system, the aid of the Soviet Union, which was equivalent to $\frac{1}{3}$ of Mongolia's GDP, disappeared, and the country faced a severe economic crisis. During the transition to the market economy, $\frac{1}{3}$ of all households were affected by unemployment and poverty due to the failure to establish a proper labor value and social security system (Batkishig 2020). The factories and enterprises that were working at that time lost government subsidies and went bankrupt, leaving thousands of workers unemployed and without income. Thousands of unemployed people were left with no choice but to go to Russia, China, or other foreign countries to make a living or to work abroad.

Economic recession, rising inflation, unemployment, and poverty have negatively affected the quality of life, pushing Mongolians to move abroad. The poverty rate among the entire population of Mongolia was 36.3 percent in 1995 (NSOM, 2001), 39 percent in 2000, 38.8 percent in 2010, and reached 27.8 percent in 2020 (World Bank, 2021). This shows that approximately 903.4 thousand people live in poverty in Mongolia. Although the poverty rate here appears to have decreased slightly, it remains high among the population that has not declined sharply.

In response to the survey question, "If you had the opportunity to study and work in a foreign country, what would be your choice?" 35.2 percent said they would leave Mongolia permanently, while 53 percent said they would leave temporarily. In the last two years, due to the impact of the pandemic, the living standards of the middle class have decreased and the poverty range has expanded, which has increased the desire of people to go abroad to work. The main reason for the increase in the price of goods is the fluctuation of the exchange rate and the increase in the price of fuel. Since Mongolia obtains most of its products from foreign markets, there is an unwritten law that the prices of goods rise sharply due to fluctuations in the exchange rate and fuel prices, but the prices never decrease. According to statistics, between 2017 and 2021, the prices of some consumer products increased by 57.5 percent (Statistical News Tentsver, 2022, NSOM 2021).

The quality of life of Mongolians has been negatively impacted by economic indicators, unemployment, inflation, price increases, and insufficient wages. In 1991, the first year of transition in Mongolia, the unemployment rate was 6.3 percent. The highest level of unemployment reached 9.9 in 2010 (Table №1).

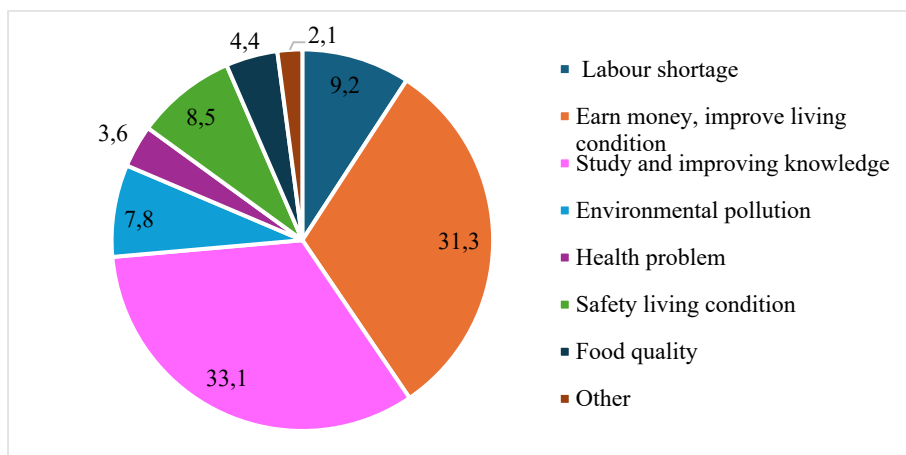
Table № 1. Unemployment, Inflation rates (percent 1991-2022), and average wages (thou. ₮)

	1991	1995	2000	2005	2010	2012	2018	2022
Unemployment rate, %	6.5	5.5	4.6	3.3	9.9	8.2	7.8	5.3
Inflation rate, %	52.7	50.5	8.1	9.5	12.9	14.0	8.1	13.2
Average wages, thou. ₮	0.6 1990	22.7	62.3	101.2	341.5	557.6	1002.9	1157.4

One of the main indicators of the standard of living of the population of Mongolia is the

People of working age with low educational levels and little work experience are affected by

Among those living abroad, 33.1 percent of the participants in the survey answered that they



oods have increased several times, the

stable employment or full-time work. For example, *while they want to work in their acquired education and profession, their salary expectations are equal to the actual salary (LH_11_p.04)*. However, 41.6 percent of the respondents expressed that the value of labor in Mongolia is very low, and it is difficult to find a stable job. If the economic instability in Mongolia continues for a long time, there is no doubt that Mongolian expatriation will continue unabated.

Among the participants of the study, young people who have a profession and are just starting life after graduating from university mentioned that there is no opportunity to live adequately in Mongolia by working in their profession and they have no confidence in the future. As one respondent stated, *"In Mongolia, it is impossible to build a life by working all the time. There is no opportunity to live in Mongolia with your own house or car. Therefore, if I go and live in a place where my work will be appreciated, I think that the standard of living and everything else will improve a little faster"* (LH_06_p.04).

The difference in wages in Mongolia, the lack of stable jobs, and the desire to improve their living conditions by saving money are among the reasons that push people to foreign countries. *"Since the employer pays for the accommodation, food and transportation of contract workers, it is quite possible for them to save 80% or more of their salary if they are financially disciplined, committed and stable"* (LH_05_p.02).

The minimum monthly salary in South Korea is 1,795,310 won as of 2020, which is equivalent to about 7 million Mongolian MNT (Korean) at the 2020 exchange rate. However, if the monthly minimum wage in Mongolia is 420,000 MNT and 110 dollars, the average wage with 13.2 percent of inflation is 1.15 million MNT (NSOM, Average Wages Data 2020) or 310 US dollars. In Mongolia, although the prices of goods have increased several times, the real wages still do not increase, which is a factor that pushes the population to foreign countries: *"In Mongolia, the government does not control the increase in the price of goods; it is interpreted as a market of free competition. The seller arbitrarily increases and increases the price of goods every day."* LH_04_p.02.

When asked whether the income of their family had increased after moving to a foreign country, 81 percent of participants answered yes, while 19 percent answered no. When asked why otherwise, 87.8 percent said they study, and the rest use it for household needs. From this, it can be observed that most expatriates manage to increase their income and improve their living conditions after moving to a foreign country.

Research has shown that there are quite a few Mongolians who are working while studying abroad. Mongolians participate in the study-work and travel-work programs for students in Australia. *"A student in the program: earned \$15 an hour for three months to pay for tuition. But in Mongolia, if a student works for three months in the summer, he cannot even earn tuition fees. This is because most of the hourly wages in Mongolia are 3,500-4,000 MNT, which is equivalent to \$1.1 an hour. Moreover, it is rare to find a job even with such a salary in Mongolia (LH_12_p.04)"*.

It can be seen from this that the international migration made a positive contribution to the well-being of the household and family.

In developed countries, the number of elderly people in the total population is increasing. In this regard, the number of deaths is increasing year by year, the birth rate is decreasing, and the number of young people is decreasing, creating a labor shortage and increasing demand for labor. One of the reasons is the attraction of cheap labor to developed countries in the form

of young people seeking to improve their lives. Because young people in foreign countries are not interested in doing heavy industrial and agricultural work, this void in the labor market is filled by cheap foreign workers. This is because some developed countries, which are expected to have a large labor shortage in the labor market in the future, have officially announced to the world that they will receive a large number of foreign immigrants in the coming years (Canada, Australia, the Czech Republic, Belgium, South Korea, and Japan). For example, the Canadian government plans to receive 500,000 immigrants annually from January 2023 until the end of 2025 (Colin Singer, 2023), and it is believed that receiving a large number of foreign workers will play an important role in strengthening the country's economy (OECD, 2022). It is also believed that the young people's relatives' expectations of immigrants contribute to the country's population problem and fill the workforce shortage.

Education seekers drive international migration flows. In 1990, with the change in the political and social system, the education sector also changed, and it was no longer the case that students were sent only to countries with a socialist system for education and vocational training. Mongolian students are now enrolled in the scholarship programs around the world and student-student exchange programs have started to take place in foreign universities.

Quality education is the guarantee of Mongolian youths' future lives. They strive to master high culture, rapid development, and new advanced technology, and the desire to improve their knowledge and skills through quality education is one of the reasons for international migration (Ulaanbaatar Youth Development Center, 2018). According to statistics (NSOM, 2021), the number of people living abroad for study has increased from 37 percent in 2010 to 46.7 percent in 2020.

Year by year, the number of Mongolian students participating in government scholarships as well as the competitive scholarship programs of other foreign countries and universities offering fee discounts is increasing. Many talented young people who have received a doctorate or master's education in Mongolia go abroad, and a significant part of intelligent and intellectual young people are working and living abroad.

Some wealthy citizens travel to study abroad at their own expense. Also, it has been observed that there are many young people who are interested in successfully studying at world-renowned universities and working productively in well-known international organizations, banking, technology, and software companies. There is a tendency for students who have graduated from foreign universities to stay in the country where they graduated and work with an official permit.

"Studying and working abroad changes your perspective to a certain extent. Instead of being stuck in one place, you look at other outsiders, get inspiration, or learn about your own truth, so you strive to grow and progress even more" LH_11_p.02".

Also, among the young people studying for language training, there are young people who want to study in countries like South Korea, the United States, Australia, and Germany.

Mongolian citizens who pursue education abroad enjoy the advantages of immersing themselves in a new environment, cultivating professional networks, experiencing diverse cultures, witnessing rapid development, and gaining exposure to advanced technologies. Additionally, they benefit from the process of learning and self-assessment, allowing them to identify and enhance their strengths while addressing their weaknesses. Notable examples of this can be found in initiatives such as the "Silk Road Foundation" and the "Insider" online television

program, both of which are part of the "Mongolian People - Mongolian Wealth" (Mongol khun-Mongoliin Baylag) initiative. These platforms showcase the accomplishments and insights of Mongolian expatriates who have earned global recognition for their knowledge, talents, and intelligence. The interviews with numerous young Mongolians living abroad highlight the significance of these opportunities. These Mongolian youths have studied at world-renowned universities, and some of them are currently employed at the United Nations, its affiliates, and other international organizations such as Google, Yahoo, the World Bank, and Silicon Valley.

Citizens living and working abroad create invaluable intellectual and labor wealth, learn modern management, and transfer new ideas and technologies to their homeland, contributing to the development of the country. Therefore, an important challenge for the government is to implement policies to effectively and realistically use the skilled labor force to participate in the development of the country. In light of these observations, it becomes crucial to formulate policies that create pathways for highly skilled professionals and academics abroad to contribute to their country's development from afar. Simultaneously, attracting skilled personnel back to their home country should be a priority. Such policies can play a pivotal role in advancing the nation's growth and progress.

Lack of safe living conditions drives international migration flows. Recently, the world has avoided the approach of measuring the level of development only by economic growth, and has paid special attention to the issue of human development. There is a trend toward the belief that the main wealth of a nation, the power of development, and the values that determine its future are its people.

According to the human development index, Mongolia ranks 92 out of 189 countries in the world, which is below average. This human development index is expressed in three main dimensions: living a long and healthy life, acquiring knowledge, and living in decent living conditions (Human Development Report, 2021). In line with this, the balance of the environment affects people's ability to be born and live in a safe and peaceful environment.

Factors such as chaos around human habitats, traffic jams, lack of guarantee of safe life, poor environment for children, lack of schools and hospitals, quality of public transportation, air pollution, and noise influence the migration of the population. When asked:

"Has your life changed since you moved to the country where you currently live?" 14.2 percent of participants answered that they could live in a peaceful and safe environment, 11.8 percent could eat healthy food, and 4.2 percent could get access to quality health and social services.

In many foreign countries, people's living conditions are comfortable and clean and children and the elderly have the opportunity to live in a safe environment, which is one of the factors that attracts expatriates. Some citizens living abroad have expressed that they miss their homeland and sometimes feel like going back to live there, but they cannot return to Mongolia because their quality of life has not changed and is getting worse. They explained why Mongolians live happier, healthier, more peaceful, and better lives abroad because the social and economic policies are more people-oriented there, justice is established there, people can be valued according to their hard work, and people are respected there. They answered that

"...everything was arranged so that they could spend time at home, because they already understood that children and young people are their future there, people live more peacefully and better there (LH_11_p.03).

According to the definition of the researchers, the concept of "quality life of the population" (Batbaatar 2016) means personal success of an individual, having a healthy body, and living in a peaceful, safe and worry-free environment. The researchers defined that quality of life does not depend on the individual, but is especially related to the social protection provided by the state. However, in Mongolia in recent years, the conditions for comfortable living of the population have become more and more narrow, and the increasing stress and frustration in the society leads to the conclusion that it is a push factor that stimulates the population to go out to live. 28.6 percent of the surveyed citizens said that Mongolia is not comfortable for people to live in, the living conditions are not good enough, and they suffer a lot from stress and anxiety. *"... We live in different time schedules, but most of us spend time in traffic jams in the circle of home – children's school – work, which is the main factor causing stress and frustration LH_14_p.04"*.

We live in the midst of a lot of sounds created by society, such as car horns, construction, workplace and household noise. People expressed that traffic congestion, lack of parking spaces, and that most the people waste time looking for vacant parking spaces. As of 2020, there are 615,622 registered vehicles in Ulaanbaatar city with a population of 1,499,140, or one out of every 2 people is using a vehicle. The better a country is developed, the better its society and the better its living environment is for individuals. If people in their home country were given a fair appreciation for their work and were given the opportunity to spend their non-working hours in their personal lives instead of spending them in traffic jams, no one would be tempted to live abroad.

International Migration flows caused by Environmental Pollution. Environmental problems are no longer a problem of rural herdsman, but have become one of the pressing problems facing urban citizens. The population of large urban areas of Mongolia has become completely dependent on smoke, soil, water, and environmental pollution for their health and life, and environmental pollution in large urban areas has affected the sustainable settlement and migration of the population to a certain extent.

In the past 20 years in Mongolia, the deterioration of the environment due to the influence of human activities has become more widespread, becoming an issue of concern for citizens. 7.8 percent of the respondents said that they went abroad due to environmental pollution, and 3.6 percent due to health reasons. As one respondent said:

"Our children go to kindergartens and schools on an equal footing with local children, get a good education, work and live in an environment where the air is clean and the food is healthy. LH_11_p.02"

In Mongolia, 66 percent of Mongolia's total population lives in urban areas, while 48 percent of the country's population lives in the capital of Ulaanbaatar, which occupies 0.3 percent of the country's territory (NSOM 2022). Ulaanbaatar is home to half of Mongolia's population and is one of the most polluted capital cities in the world. On the coldest day of the year, the daily average of PM2.5 pollution reaches 687 micrograms per cubic meter, which is 27 times higher than the safe level recommended by WHO (UNICEF 2020). This emerged in our interviews and surveys as a clear reason for migration. Common air pollutants have a direct effect on the respiratory system, cardiovascular system, immune system, and nervous system. In the selection of the countries with the most PM10 particles, which cause various types of cancer, Mongolia took the lead, and in 2015, Ulaanbaatar became the leading city in the world for air pollution.

In the past 10 years, respiratory diseases among the residents of Ulaanbaatar have increased rapidly, and the number of respiratory infections per 10,000 people has increased 2.7 times.

As of 2020, respiratory system diseases are the top 10 categories of diseases of Ulaanbaatar city hospital patients per thousand people (Ulaanbaatar City Health Department, 2021). Cardiovascular disease and cancer are the leading causes of death in Mongolia, and both are affected by air pollution and environmental pollution. According to health research, 9-15 percent of deaths recorded in Ulaanbaatar city are somehow related to air pollution (Ulaanbaatar City Health Department, 2021). According to statistics on the causes of death of the population, 29 percent of deaths due to heart and respiratory system diseases, and 40 percent of deaths due to lung cancer in Ulaanbaatar city were caused by air pollution, which accounted for 10 percent of all deaths (Ulaanbaatar City Health Department, 2021).

The residents of large cities cannot be provided with comfortable and healthy living conditions, and the level of air pollution is reaching dangerous level. This contributes to pushing the population to move to cleaner, safer countries.

Conclusion

Over the past three decades, international migration has increased continuously due to social, economic, and environmental factors in Mongolia

Despite the gradual growth of Mongolia's economic indicators, the flow of population towards foreign developed countries has not stopped, in part due to the failure to raise the standard of living of the population, reduce poverty, and increase employment. In the future, it is expected that the outflow of the population will further increase, depending on factors such as unemployment, poverty, wages, quality education, social stresses, and environmental pollution caused by the economic needs of the population.

People are the wealth of any nation, so it is important that the goal of government policy is to create a favorable environment for people to live long, healthy, and creatively.

The high percentage of women, children, young people, educated, working-age age and experienced people among the people living abroad has made it challenging for the Mongolian population to stabilize and flourish economically. It shows that there is a lack of demographically oriented government policies that balance the income inequality of households and create a balanced natural and ecological environment for human life.

By addressing these factors, the conditions for the population to settle and live in the country will be improved, leading to a less disruptive flow of international migration.

Contribution of the authors.

Shugatai A. – collection and analysis of materials, compilation of a scientific article in accordance with the requirements, collection and analysis of theoretical materials;

Barcus H. – definition of the goals and objectives of the scientific article, work with the use of research materials and methods; work with literature, work on systematization of research materials.

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Монғолиядағы халықаралық көші-қон ағымдарының әлеуметтік-экономикалық және экологиялық себептері

Аңдатпа. Социалистік кезеңде монғол азаматтарының шетелге қоныс аудару және саяхат жасау құқықтары шектеулі болды. Халықтың көші-қоны тек мемлекет қатаң бақылауында және нақты мақсаттар үшін жүзеге асырылды. 1990 жылдан бастап Монғолияда саяси және әлеуметтік-экономикалық реформалар жүргізіліп, нарықтық экономикаға және еркін, демократиялық жүйеге өту кезеңі басталды. Нәтижесінде, монғол азаматтары өз тұратын жерін еркін таңдау мүмкіндігіне ие болды; соған сәйкес, шетелге қоныс аударушылар саны төмендемей, керісінше жыл сайын айтарлықтай өсуде. Соңғы отыз жылда мыңдаған монғол азаматтары жақсы өмір сүруді көздеп туған жерінен шетелдерге қоныс аударды. Еңбекке жарамды жас ұрпақтың шетелге жаппай көші-қоны, ол елдің әлеуметтік ресурстарының маңызды бөлігі болып табылады, монғол қоғамы үшін сезімтал әрі өзекті мәселе болып табылады. Бұл зерттеу шетелдерге қоныс аударған халықаралық көші-қонның үлкен ауқымына және адамдардың туған жерден кетуді қалайтын себептеріне назар аударады. Зерттеу Монғолиядан халықаралық көші-қонның неге және қалай артқанын, сондай-ақ халықаралық көші-қон ағымына әсер ететін әлеуметтік, экономикалық және экологиялық факторларды көрсетеді. Экономикалық тұрақсыздық, жоғары жұмыссыздық пен кедейлік деңгейі, экологиялық ластану сияқты факторлар олардың Монғолиядан көшу шешімінің басты қозғаушы күштері болып табылады.

Түйін сөздер: халықаралық көші-қон ағымдары, экономикалық жағдай, жұмыссыздық, кедейлік, әлеуметтік-экономикалық және экологиялық факторлар, Монғолия

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Исследование социально-экономических и экологических факторов международных миграционных потоков в Монголии

Аннотация. В период социализма граждане Монголии имели ограниченные права на переселение и поездки за границу. Миграция населения осуществлялась только под строгим контролем государства и с определенными целями. С 1990 года в Монголии произошли значительные политические и социально-экономические реформы, ознаменовавшие начало перехода к рыночной экономике с свободной и демократической системой. В результате граждане Монголии получили возможность свободно выбирать место проживания; соответственно, число монгольских граждан, переезжающих за границу, не уменьшается. Напротив, международные миграционные потоки значительно растут с каждым годом. За последние тридцать лет тысячи граждан Монголии покинули свою родину в поисках лучшей жизни. Массовая миграция молодёжи трудоспособного возраста – важной части социальных ресурсов страны – стала чувствительной и

актуальной проблемой для монгольского общества. Это исследование сосредоточено на большом количестве международных мигрантов, переехавших в другие страны, и причинах, по которым люди хотят покинуть родину. В работе показано, как и почему происходит рост международной миграции из Монголии, а также какие социальные, экономические и экологические факторы влияют на ее потоки. Такие факторы, как экономическая нестабильность, высокий уровень безработицы и бедности, экологическое загрязнение, являются ключевыми причинами принятия решения о миграции из Монголии.

Ключевые слова: международные миграционные потоки, экономические условия, безработица, бедность, социально-экономические и экологические факторы, Монголия.

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