

Return Migration of Highly Skilled Professionals in Bangladesh: A Study on Private Sector Professionals Returning Home

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Economics and Social Sciences in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Social Sciences in Anthropology

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Approval

The thesis titled, “Return Migration of Highly Skilled Professionals in Bangladesh: A Study on Private Sector Professionals Returning Home” submitted by Masuma Warda Khan of Fall 2024, has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelors of Social Sciences in Anthropology at BRAC University.

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Declaration

I, hereby, declare that:

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing my degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where it is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degrees or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of information and help.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to my beloved parents and siblings for their unwavering support towards my academic endeavors. Without their love and encouragement, I would not have been able to come where I am today. My father, who inspired this paper from his difficult yet fulfilling lived experiences; thank you very much for making me your ‘mini me’ despite the many times I complained about your rough training. My mother, who gave me all of her love, affection and advice when I was in the midst of confusion over social relations in university; thank you very much for being by my side whenever I called out to you. My siblings, my ultimate support systems- even if I have no one in this world for me as a peer, you three are my best friends and I will always flaunt the golden lawyer-doctor-engineer trio who are my siblings. My dear family, you know me best and I pray that this paper fulfills the trust you have given me these past four years as an up-and-coming, young social scientist in the family.

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| Abstract

In the early 1970s, Bangladesh used its population to its advantage as a major migrant labour force. There have been numerous studies conducted on lesser skilled migrant workers which concern topics related to their departure through formal government institutions, livelihood conditions in their host countries and the lifestyle conditions of their family back home. Unfortunately, studies on return migration in Bangladesh have been a topic outside of mainstream migration discourse. Most of the available reports on return migration have shed light on the lesser skilled due to their massive population. This resulted in a profound limit to comprehensive studies on the highly skilled migrant counterparts. Although existing papers have covered the return of academic professionals and provided an overview of highly skilled migrants; these papers do not reflect the portion of returnees (i.e. private sector professionals) who may simply return and seek employment opportunities unless they belong to a particular social network. In this context, this thesis focuses on the return of private sector professionals and their overall social position as senior returnees in Bangladesh. Due to the evident lack of sufficient research in the field of return migration, particularly of highly skilled professionals, this paper took an exploratory and qualitative approach by referring to primary data collected from local migratory research units along with international migratory and global labour organizations. This study obtained its primary objectives through the narrative analysis of twelve in-person interviews followed by one Key Informant Interview (KII) with a local migratory expert. The findings of this research indicate that most private sector professionals return due to factors such as updated national policies which seek to advantage locals of the country of employment, unforeseen circumstances such as the corona virus pandemic and lastly, a rare but personal desire to retire. To analyse the aforementioned findings, theories of George Gmelch and Jean-Pierre Cassarino on return migration have been employed for the conceptual understanding of a migrant's decision to return home. As a result, the following thesis contributes to not only the existing return migration discourse but also creates an intellectual scope surrounding the highly skilled professional migrants of Bangladesh, followed by the potential for new reintegration policies to generate positive attraction towards homecoming, which will facilitate a continuous migratory cycle in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Return Migration, Highly Skilled Professionals, Reintegration, Economic Development

Chapter 01| Introduction

1.1 Background

Migration is a complex phenomenon which depends on the interaction of multiple variants such as labour, family, inequality, education, practice of human rights, environment and climate change (IOM 2021). Income generated by labour migrants is often sent back home to their families in need, allowing the families to receive financial livelihood assistance. Hence, remittance is one of the major sources of capital for developing countries such as Bangladesh (Sarkar et. al 2018). Utilizing its population to its advantage as a massive labour force, Bangladesh has been one of the largest remittance recipient countries through the export of manpower to the Middle East and Southeast Asian countries since the early 1970s (Sarkar et. al 2018). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially, acts as the most important source of remittance for the country (Islam 2010). According to the statistical reports of the Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has provided an immense percentage of remittance that sums to a total of USD 5,778,634 from the years 1976 until 2023 (BMET 2023). Additionally, Saudi Arabia has been the principal destination for the Bangladesh labour migrants accounting for 612,418 workers (Siddiqui et. al 2023).

Unfortunately, most available research on labour migrants in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries cater towards the less-skilled and semi-skilled labourers regarding their lives abroad as well as the lives led by their families back home (Blaydes 2023, Hammer and Adham 2022, Mosly and Makki 2021, Human Rights Watch 2020, Ewers et. al 2023, Al-Bouwarthan et. al 2019). Research on the highly skilled professionals, however, is limited to the academic field concerning brain drain (Rahman 2018). This is because it is very common for less-skilled and semi-skilled labourers to pursue work in the Middle East.

Yet, amidst these labourers, the richest forms of remittance come from the highly skilled professionals. Although these professionals cover about 3% to 4% of the migrant workers' population, they manage to produce a significant amount of income individually. For instance, in 2003, the 3% professionals managed to generate USD 15,862 alone while the 50% less-skilled labourers generated USD 134,562 in total (Islam 2010). Unfortunately, this data remains the most recent and precise about the division of remittances sent home based on labour category. Other

sources on the matter seek to provide holistic amounts of remittances generated every fiscal year rather than an individual breakdown of accounts from the unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled and professional groups. For instance, it is recorded that approximately USD 21.9 billion was sent back to Bangladesh through official remittance channels as of 2023 (Farhana & Mannan 2024). Amongst the many countries, Saudi Arabia has been the largest origin of official remittances to Bangladesh, with an account of USD 4.1 billion in 2022 along with the other GCC member states (Farhana & Mannan 2024). As recent as these statistical accounts may be, they are solely holistic in nature and do not account for critical analysis on the types of remittances sent home by the varying categories of migrants.

Today, Bangladesh is reportedly suffering from a critical shortage of skilled workers and managers in both private and public sectors (Rahman 2022). Research suggests that with the rates of youth migration abroad, the country is faced with a gap in its skilled workforce across a majority of its running sectors (Rahman 2022, Debnath 2023, Mumu 2022). However, it would be inaccurate to assume that the country is dealing with an incredible loss from the lack of ‘skilled’ professionals when there are numerous eligible individuals who sought retirement upon return.

As briefed thus far, we are aware that Bangladeshi migrants live abroad and a vast majority of them live in the Middle East. We have studies on these migrant workers that concern topics such as their departure process via TTCs (Technical Training Centres) or other relevant government organizations, the living and workplace conditions abroad, along with the lives of migrant families in the homeland and more. However, there still remains a noticeable lack of discourse surrounding the return of such migrant workers. Although we can find studies on the return of the lesser skilled migrants, there is almost no work concerning the return of highly skilled migrants (i.e. their lives abroad and after return). Then again, it is crucial to know about the return journey of such professionals because it allows us to reflect on the subtle implications when making policy-level decisions for all migrant workers in Bangladesh. In the beginning of this section, it was mentioned that there are nuanced reasons why a migrant may return. Thus, the broad focus of this thesis is to study the return of professional migrants by understanding their lives abroad and breaking past the mainstream analysis of returning migrants.

1.2 Research Questions

To achieve the broad objective of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Why do such accomplished professionals decide to return home?
2. Are there any particular reintegration challenges faced by professionals upon return?
3. What are they currently doing as returnee migrants?

1.3 Objectives

In response to the research questions, the objectives of this thesis are:

1. To establish push factors in the country of employment which may initiate the return of long-term employed professionals.
2. Acknowledge impact of lost social networks, financial uncertainty and cultural disorientation upon return.
3. Measure the strategies by which returnee professionals have adapted to their country of origin.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Studying the return of highly skilled professionals is important for various reasons. Although it is common knowledge that one's return may be voluntary or involuntary due to situations that are unique to the migrant (i.e. completion of their labour contract, global pandemics or the termination of existing contracts due to injury and more), one might assume that the return of highly skilled professionals would be mainly due to their desire to fully retire. However, due to the lack of adequate research behind the motivations why professionals come back, there is no legitimate proof of retirement being the sole reason for return. According to the IOM (2018), returning migrants must be regarded as a huge asset to Bangladesh due to the vastly improved skills in various sectors from the grassroots to service sectors.

Unfortunately, there are numerous challenges behind developing successful reintegration policies. Firstly, most migrants do not plan their return beforehand, therefore, they do not find employment due to the lack of mechanisms that can help them locate opportunities, assess and certify the skills they acquire abroad (Khan 2018). Additionally, returning migrants are unaware of the avenues and

options for savings, investments and the productive use of remittances due to the frequent use of remittances for consumption purposes only (Khan 2018). Given that investment options for migrants are limited to land ownership, migrants often remain oblivious towards turning that land into something profitable or productive (Khan 2018). This is because they do not necessarily possess the skills for agricultural output after working in different sectors abroad for a prolonged period of time (Khan 2018).

Secondly, returnee migrants are often faced with the devastating reality of not having access to financial, social or overall services due to the categorical nature of support mechanisms in Bangladesh (Khan 2018). There might be initiatives such as the Universal Pension Scheme 2023; yet, the specific requirements make it difficult for existing returnees beyond the age of 60 to gain access to this form of pension. For example, the pension scheme suggests that beneficiaries between the ages 18 to 50 pay a subscription until 60 years of their age to withdraw their ‘pension’ (Universal Pension Scheme 2023). The amount one may withdraw is limited to 50% of their deposit, which will be viewed as a loan taken from the scheme (Universal Pension Scheme 2023). Given that the notion of ‘pension’ acts as an ‘allowance’ for senior citizens, senior expatriates would rather deposit their personal savings in a bank and generate interest instead. Resources to deal with complaints or concerns of returnee migrants are highly limited as well (Khan 2018). This issue expands further when returnee migrants are not registered or tracked by the local authorities, further challenging their ability to access support services on arrival (Khan 2018). Subsequently, Bangladesh does not have a database to withhold information on location, occupation and skill sets (existing and acquired) for migrant workers to be tracked or welcomed back into the economy in a coordinated, integrated and comprehensive manner (Khan 2018).

Thirdly, educated yet mid-skilled workers may become highly skilled in sectors that they have worked in for decades. The transitional point from being a temporary worker (for 6 months to a year) to a permanent worker (over 10 years) is not found in literature concerned on the reintegration of Bangladeshi migrant workers. Thus, finding any academic reports on financially and extremely successful expatriates is limited, making it a bigger challenge for a policy to reintegrate professionals into local sectors in Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh does an excellent job at reintegrating expatriates such as researchers or academics by opening pathways to work as professors for private schools and universities (Rahman 2010); there is no equal accessibility for

private sector professionals from the Middle East to utilize their skills in the private corporate sector of Bangladesh. A few reasons such as age, remuneration or physical and mental working capacity may be used to justify this lacking; however, it is possible to provide these senior professionals the opportunity to work as a company advisor or consultant, depending on their expertise in the private sector.

Bearing in mind the extremely hardworking nature of migrant workers, senior professionals are likely to have the drive to keep working (even if it is lightweight) rather than become sick from a static retirement lifestyle. In conclusion, migrants contribute to the national economic growth and their individual household security (Khan 2018). Not only should they be respected and have their rights ensured, their reintegration process must be facilitated in the most meaningful way because of their asset-generating capacity (Khan 2018). Thus, the Bangladeshi government must consider strengthening the existing legal framework to protect returnees (Khan 2018) and provide for them as much as they continue generating the country's foreign currency.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

This dissertation studies the return migration of highly skilled professionals from the private sector of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The organization of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter 02 introduces the existing migration discourse in Bangladesh followed by a brief rundown on the return migration phenomenon, defining highly skilled professionals as an individual category, and the scope of economic development through reintegration. Due to the dynamic nature of how return migration may occur, a graphical representation of the return migration theories by George Gmelch (1980) and Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2004) have been used to define the particular aspects of return migration this dissertation refers to.

Chapter 03 provides an overview of the methodologies by which this thesis was made possible. It includes the research design, research focusing areas, data collection methods, analytical methods and ethical considerations during fieldwork.

Chapter 04 analyzes the decision to return home by the professional migrants. It begins with the decision of leaving the homeland, to the overall life in the Kingdom, a plausible plan to return home followed by the actual return decision and experience. Chapter 05 continues the story by

discussing the encounters with the homeland as senior citizens. It covers the personal experiences a migrant faces with the state, local community, personal network and oneself upon return. Chapter 06 concludes the tale with the navigation strategies acquired by these returnee migrants to overcome possible social, cultural and economic challenges in the homeland. The chapter starts with a brief discussion regarding the views of former expert migrants on economic reintegration via work opportunities or pension schemes in Bangladesh. This discussion leads to the inevitable reality faced by these migrants followed by their personal navigation strategies adopted in the local environment.

Given the analysis in Chapters 04, 05, and 06, Chapter 07 presents the general implications of the findings based on the research questions of this study followed by the findings in relation to the theoretical framework. Chapter 08 moves forward with the policy implications that are generated from this study for the overall Bangladeshi migrant population. It begins with the core indications found through the findings of this research, the existing policy structures related to return migration in Bangladesh followed by potential policy outcomes. The goal of this chapter is to provide food for thought at a policy-making level should returning migrants be considered for the development of Bangladesh.

Chapter 09 concludes this thesis with a reflection on its key findings, recommendations, limitations of the research and lastly, the future directions for research in the field of return migration. Referring to all of the materials used in this research (both cited and inspired papers), a bibliography was prepared. The Appendices complete this paper with the consent form and questionnaires used for this study.

Chapter 02| Return Migration: The Known & Unknown Genre

There is a lot of existing literature on migration in the context of Bangladesh. Yet, return migration remains as one of the known yet significantly unknown genres of migration discourse. Below, the following components discuss available findings on migration, return migration, highly skilled professionals, and economic development through reintegration processes (if implemented). The chapter also provides a theoretical framework on the topic of return migration. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, return is subjective to the migrant; therefore, it cannot be defined in universal terms. Thus, the theories of Gmelch (1980) and Cassarino (2004) help construct grounds by which this paper may define return migration. To conclude this chapter, a brief overview on the unexplored areas of research is covered for further insight on the relevance of this study.

2.1 History of Migration in Bangladesh

Migration has been in practice within the subcontinent for a long time. To define the history of migration in Bangladesh, one must view the generational changes as individual phases.

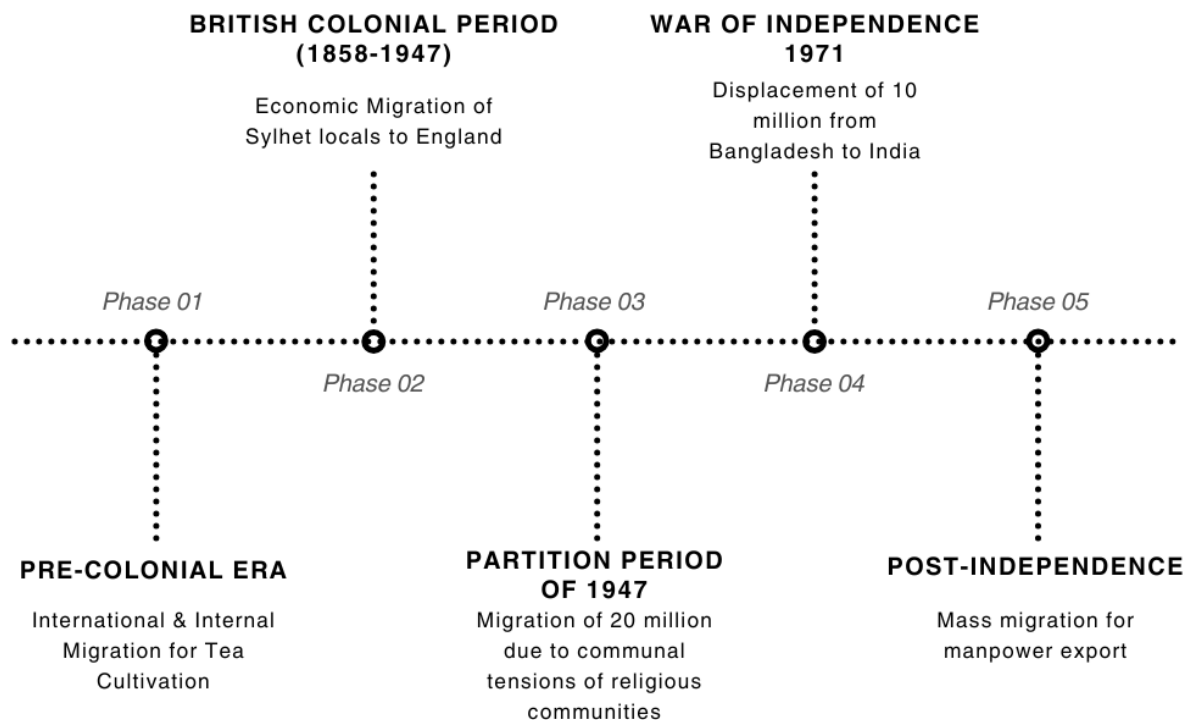


Figure 01: Phases of Migration in Bangladesh | (Farhana & Mannan 2024)

According to Farhana and Mannan (2024), the first phase of migration began during the precolonial era, when international and internal migratory practices resulted in the popularization of tea cultivation. The British colonial period had introduced the second phase of migration. People from the northeastern district of Sylhet had been recruited to work in the British shipyards and other relevant sectors by moving all the way to England (Farhana and Mannan 2024). Between the partition period of India and Pakistan in 1947, the third phase of migration had occurred with the movement of 20 million people- all driven by religious solidarity (Farhana and Mannan 2024). The 1971 war of independence had triggered the fourth phase of migration, leading to the displacement of approximately 10 million people from Bangladesh to India as a means of seeking refuge (Farhana and Mannan 2024).

The fifth phase is currently ongoing as the phase that began after independence (Farhana and Mannan 2024). Bangladesh, working with the scraps of wartime, had an extremely fragile economy with limited work opportunities (Farhana and Mannan 2024). This resulted in the mass migration of semi-skilled and skilled male workers to move temporarily (as intended) for employment in the Middle East, particularly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Farhana and Mannan 2024). Much of these migrants began their major shift to the Arab nations around 1973 and with increasing prospects of economic stability, several Gulf countries had introduced rapid demand for a foreign labour workforce to facilitate new infrastructural growth (Farhana and Mannan 2024).

In short, Bangladesh has been a country of migrant origin. While it does have its major economic sectors of agriculture and ready-made garments today, all of these sectors were facilitated by the movement of skills through migrant populations. The migratory nature of Bangladesh is still prevalent in its citizens today. For example, most Bangladeshi youth pursue overseas employment or tertiary education as a means of economic and livelihood sustenance. While there is a matter of glorifying certain countries over others (such as choosing Western regions over the Eastern regions), the notion of going abroad is still quite prevalent and much preferred by the population at present. Due to such preferences, there are many formal institutions such as Technical Training Centres, Migration Agencies, NGOs, iNGOs and many more, operating to support the departure

processes for interested migrant workers for overseas employment. Unfortunately, any information on the return of the Bangladeshi migrant population remains unheard of.

2.2 Return Migration

To justify the value of a returnee or returning migrant, there is a need to establish a foundational definition of return migration itself. According to Sora (2015), return migration may refer to repatriation, removal, deportation, assisted return or even the return on an individual's own accord to their country of origin. This is often labeled as either forced or voluntary return, depending on the circumstance by which the migrant had entered their native land (Sora 2015). Research in this category includes studies on readmission policy, deportation, theories of return, and experiences of return, reintegration and development (Sora 2015).

There is no universally accepted definition for return migration due to its dynamic nature of being purely situational (Migration Data Portal 2023). However, in brief, it is the act or process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure (Migration Data Portal 2023). Even within voluntary definitions of return migration, it can be spontaneous (i.e. personal desire to return and unsupported by any State), assisted voluntary return and reintegration (i.e. administrative, logistical or financial support to migrants who may not return to their country of employment) or voluntary humanitarian return (i.e. return and reintegration as a live-saving measure for prosecuted migrants) based on the circumstances (Migration Data Portal 2023).

All of these definitions suggest return migration as a phenomenon that takes place when a migrant returns back to their home country (Migration Data Portal 2023). Unfortunately, there exists a large gap on post-return data due to both the lack of a strict definition and established indicators for measuring return and reintegration (Migration Data Portal 2023). Additionally, records on return are scattered across different data sources and remains incomplete or partially available (Migration Data Portal 2023).

2.3 Highly Skilled Professionals

While Bangladesh has classified its migrant workforce as the unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled and highly skilled professional, the absence of formal data sources prevents access to in-depth definitions of such classifications. However, in migration studies, highly skilled migration refers

to the stream of migrants sharing specific characteristics and qualifying for a particular visa category (Weinar & Koppenfels 2020). A review of academic literature indicates that there is no consistent definition or measurement of “highly skilled.” Additionally, the variety of conceptualisations used for this term are often not necessarily connected to available data (Weinar & Koppenfels 2020). Even so, highly skilled labour is generally characterized by advanced education (college and higher), possession of knowledge and skills to perform complicated tasks, having the ability to adapt quickly to technological changes and creatively applying knowledge acquired through training in the workplace (ILO 2014). These labourers are branded as Highly Skilled Professionals because they generate large amounts of income single-handedly with their individual contributions to companies and workplaces abroad.

The concept of remittance in Bangladesh, growth of GDP, working conditions of migrant workers (both male and female) along with the overall study of return migration have been touched upon by research institutions such as the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU). In their annual report, “Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2022: Achievements and Challenges,” the authors discuss a range of topics regarding the flow of migrants, total remittances earned over the years, incentives to increase remittance flow, improvements to Technical Training Centers (TTCs) along with the Wage Earners Welfare Board (WEWB) and more (Siddiqui et al. 2023). Unfortunately, most of these written concerns are for the lesser skilled and female workers due to the extensive pressure they face abroad while attempting to provide a better lifestyle back home (Siddiqui et al. 2023).

The RMMRU report states that the percentage of professionals was the lowest among the 4 categories of migrant workers by standing at 0.34% compared to the 73.08% of less skilled migrants (Siddiqui et al. 2023).

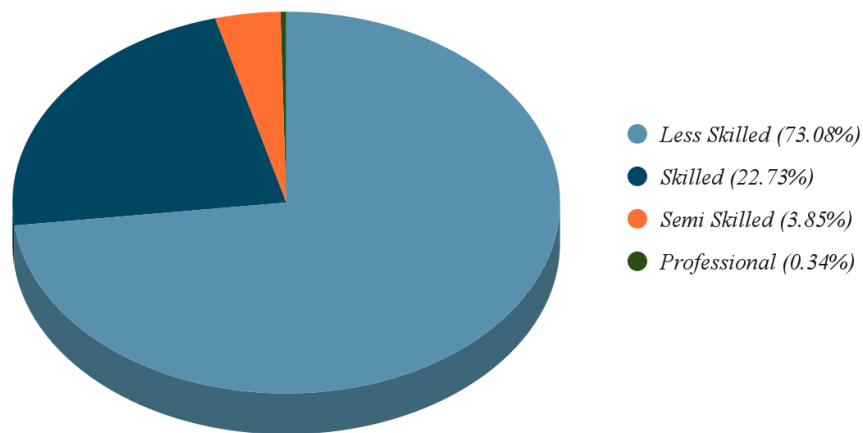


Figure 02: Skill Composition of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in 2022 | (Siddiqui et al. 2023)

If Bangladesh intends to receive higher amounts of remittances from skilled labour, it will need to consider the lived experiences of returnee professionals to up skill their labourers sent abroad. Similarly, it must provide a space for returnee professionals to act as advisors for the next generation of migrant professionals.

2.4 Economic Development through Reintegration

Sustainable reintegration is intrinsically linked to the development of the country of return (IOM 2019). An individual's reintegration depends on various factors such as environmental and structural capabilities followed by development and economic opportunities available in their country of origin (IOM 2019). Additionally, returning migrants can be drivers of development by bringing their human capital and skill sets acquired in host countries; investing in local economies with their accumulated wealth, utilizing their transnational linkages to facilitate innovative business partnerships and act as social change makers in their home countries (IOM 2019). Thus, a holistic approach would be desirable by which the home country introduces migrant reintegration into its development plans and national policies with favourable incentives (IOM 2019).

An example of a successful and sustainable reintegration scheme, which implemented nationwide development followed by an attractive pull of locals towards the homeland, would be China's Thousand Talent Programme (TTP) of 2008 (Li et. al. 2022). With a top-down recruitment initiative to hire the world's 'best and brightest' talents, China had attracted over 8,000 highly skilled academics, entrepreneurs and other professionals with lucrative incentives along with research and development funding in its first decade alone (Li et. al. 2022). Most scholars would argue that the success behind China's brain gain strategy comes from its institutional framework such as its general market factors, individual human capital investments, career considerations, overall attachment to the homeland and more (Li et. al. 2022). Yet, evident by its current growing position in the world today, the Chinese recruitment policy had managed to sustain a consistent flow of international migrants but most importantly, returnee local citizens of all variants.

Therefore, considering the Chinese model, strategies by which a country of origin may foster development through return and reintegration would be: (a) sensitization, (b) scoping exercises, (c) goal setting, (d) action planning, (e) implementation and (f) monitoring (IOM 2019). As of 2023, the Bangladesh Government (through the Economic Relations Division (ERD)) and International Labour Organization (ILO) had signed an agreement to enhance policies, capacities and systems for inclusive and sustainable reintegration of migrant workers. The objective of this project was to ensure that workers returning from abroad can smoothly transition into the Bangladeshi job market and utilize their skills along with their experiences to contribute towards economic development (ILO 2023). According to the EDR Secretary, Mr. Md. Shahriar Kader Siddiky, "Migrant workers from Bangladesh have been building the economics of destination countries and contributing to Bangladesh's growth through remittances" (ILO 2023). He further elaborates that with proper support for returning migrants, their skills and savings can also be important assets for the Bangladesh economy (ILO 2023).

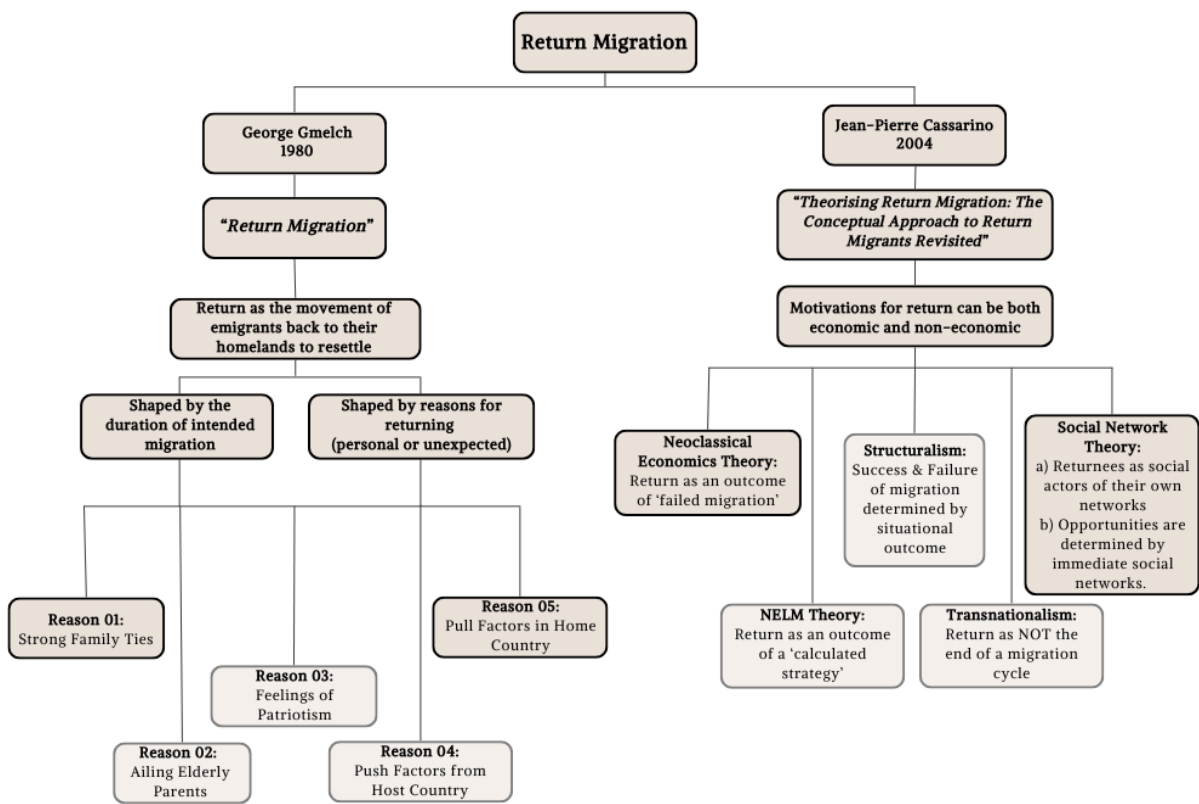
During 2021, Bangladesh had become the top labourer sending country in Asia with about 617,000 people migrating abroad- which doubled in 2022 to 1,136,000 people (ILO 2023). In the words of ILO Country Director, Mr. Tuomo Poutiainen, "Returning migrants require a conducive policy environment, recognition of their skills acquired abroad, information on employment and business opportunities followed by financial support, social security and psychosocial support to

successfully reintegrate into their homeland” (ILO 2023). That being said, the importance of returning migrants (regardless of short-term or long-term duration of stay), is of immense value due to the profits reintegration schemes may generate as evident from the Chinese example.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

As mentioned earlier, return migration cannot be defined as a precise phenomenon because of how circumstantial and dynamic the reasons for return may be (Migration Data Portal 2023). However, George Gmelch’s theory on return migration and Jean-Pierre Cassarino’s revisit to conceptualizing return migration (displayed in Figure 03) allows this thesis to revise theoretical motivations by which a returnee may come back to their country of origin. Whether this motivation is economic or non-economic can be determined by the ways in which return migration is theorised.

Figure 03: Theorising Return Migration | (Gmelch 1980, Cassarino 2004)



According to George Gmelch (1980), return migration can be defined in a wide variety of terms. Following the usage of the works reviewed in his paper, Gmelch views return migration as the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle (Gmelch 1980). The anthropologist

explores return migration as typologies shaped by two dimensions: the length of time migrants intended to remain abroad and their reasons for returning (Gmelch 1980). If the first dimension (duration of intended migration) is determined by the accomplishment of specific objectives, then the second dimension (sudden or unexpected return) would be due to various unpredictable circumstances interrupting the goal to settle somewhat permanently (Gmelch 1980). Gmelch also identifies five specific reasons for return: (a) strong family ties and desire to be in company of one's own kin/long-term friends, (b) ailing elderly parents obligating eldest children to return, (c) feelings of loyalty or allegiance to the home society, (d) negative push factors in the host country (i.e. racial prejudice and discrimination), and lastly, (e) positive attributes in the home society itself (i.e. new industries back home) that attracts a migrant to return (Gmelch 1980).

On a similar yet economic note, Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2004) provides context to the contrasting approaches of return migration theorised by neoclassical economics (return as an outcome of “failed migration”), the new economics of labour migration (NELM; return as an end outcome of a “calculated strategy” with the planned intention to come back), structuralism (return determined by situational or contextual factors in countries of origin), transnationalism (return as a key component of a global migration cycle) and the social network theory (return migrants as social actors who determine their opportunities through their wide social networks post-return).

Gmelch's definition of return migration is heavily tied to a migrant's kinship relations followed by possible push and pull factors between their respective host and home countries. On the other hand, Cassarino's comparative analysis of return migration theories helps shed light on ways by which reasons for return can be both economic and non-economic. Regardless of how return migration has been theorised, both theorists sought to identify the concept as the movement of emigrants from their host countries to their home countries due to reasons tied strictly to the outcome of their intended travel duration or simply the unforeseen circumstances by which they had made a prompt return.

2.6 Unexplored Areas of Research

The literature review above provides a general overview of existing studies on the matter of defining return migration, highly skilled professionals and economic development through sustainable reintegration schemes. Although most of these studies do an exemplary job of explaining migrant employment, the process of returning and how reintegration policies work, it does not elaborate too much regarding the return of highly skilled professionals. This is because it is common knowledge that migrant workers cover an outstanding majority as unskilled, semi-skilled or skilled workers. Furthermore, professionals remain in their country of employment for much longer than the average unskilled to skilled labourer.

The closest papers that match the theme of this study come from “Return migration of highly skilled professionals in Bangladesh” by Rahman (2010) and “Re-integration of Highly Skilled Return Migrant: The impact on the development of Bangladesh” by Ting (2015). Both studies have been extremely informative towards the return of highly skilled academic professionals with ‘brain drain’ as a central area of discussion followed by an in-depth study on the return migration phenomenon for the highly skilled migrants in Bangladesh. While Rahman (2010) ensured a keen understanding on the return of academics, Ting (2015) provided an overview of the phenomenon, which may appear, unfortunately, quite vague due to the over-generalizing nature of her study.

As one of the most important generators of remittance, the highly skilled professionals continue to be overlooked and this is what strengthens the ambition of this thesis. Given that there is existing research on academic professionals, this paper shall reflect on the private sector professionals instead. Utilizing the considerable research gaps prevalent in existing literature, this study intends to explore the reasons for such an evident neglect and the possible changes required to involve returning professionals into contemporary migration discourse. Before critically analyzing the findings of this thesis, Chapter 03 covers the specific methodologies adopted to make this research paper possible.

Chapter 03| Methodology

This study was designed to provide an evidence-based understanding of the highly skilled professionals in Bangladesh, who have contributed significantly to the economies of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh, with the use of qualitative methodology. Engaging in qualitative research is not merely a methodological preference but it is a commitment method of exploring the depths of social phenomena, which enables researchers to connect with the individual subjective experiences of their participants (Lim 2024). Under the qualitative method, research data was collected in the form of both in-person interviews and Key Informant Interviews (KII). The rationale behind the use of such a method comes from the need to clearly understand the subject matter from the perspective of the highly skilled professionals themselves.

Unlike a quantitative survey that may generate accurate statistical input, the qualitative method of interviews allows this research to dive deeper into the ‘human’ element of what makes the inclusion of returning highly skilled professionals in Bangladesh so important for migration discourse today. The fieldwork was conducted from May 2, 2024 to December 18, 2024. This chapter discusses the research design, research focusing areas, data collection, data analysis, and lastly, the ethical considerations made for this paper.

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Method of Study

The method of study selected was qualitative because the paper will consider the use of in-person interviews to design individual stories. This is to understand the lived experiences of the target participants of this paper.

3.1.2 Type of Study

This paper is an exploratory study that will provide new insights on the subject matter; therefore, the type of study will be exploratory.

3.1.3 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed to understand the initial reasons why the expatriates went to Saudi Arabia, the duration of their stay, the time period they had returned, the reason for returning, whether they still have the drive to continue working (if opportunities were available), views on pension schemes and their current occupational status.

3.1.4 Target Respondents

The target respondents were retired professionals from the Middle East, particularly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

3.2 Research Focusing Areas

This study focuses on three research areas to address its key research objectives. The research areas are as follows: (a) the decision to return home, (b) encounters with the homeland as senior citizens, and lastly, (c) navigation strategies adopted in the local environment. All three areas were determined upon reviewing existing literature on the subject matter. Reflecting the goal of this study, an overview of each point has been provided below.

Research Area 01: The Decision to Return Home

Firstly, this study analysed the initial decision that resulted in the return of professionals. Compared to the lesser-skilled migrants, experts are usually expected to live in their countries of employment with longer contracts. Thus, to gather feedback on this field, the research focused on the following attributes associated with return decisions made by most migrant workers:

- (a) Whether the return decision was initiated by strong family ties and/or the personal desire to be with one's own kin.
- (b) Whether feelings of patriotism towards the home country prompted a desire to return.
- (c) Whether old age brought about the desire to return and rest in the homeland.
- (d) Whether changes to national policies in the country of employment posed a threat to one's employment position.
- (e) Whether positive attributes in the home society inspired the return decision of the professional.

Research Area 02: Encounters with the Homeland

Secondly, after determining the reasons for return, the research aimed to understand the initial round of encounters that may be faced by long-term returnee migrants. The following points were arranged based on the analysis of the data collected through the respondents of this study:

- (a) Whether the return to a 'new' home society brought about feelings of unfamiliarity due to lost social networks.
- (b) Whether the return to the homeland led to any adverse mental and/or physical health issues.

- (c) Whether the economic situation in the home society introduced feelings of financial uncertainty for the returnee.
- (d) Whether there were any stark cultural differences between the locals in the homeland and the country of employment.

Research Area 03: Navigation Strategies Adopted in the Local Environment

Thirdly, the final area required to conclude the discussion of returnee professionals, this research proceeded to study the navigation methods by which the respondents were able to adjust to the local environment in the homeland. To determine the responses, the following were considered:

- (a) Whether the homeland provided any economic schemes for returnee senior migrants through the means of a pension.
- (b) Whether the homeland permitted economic reintegration of senior migrants in advisory or consultant positions relevant to their fields of expertise.
- (c) Whether the professionals themselves had personal means of financial sustenance.
- (d) Whether the country of employment provided any support in the readjustment of professionals in the homeland.

The table below provides an overview of the broader objectives of this study, its themes/sub-themes and the methods by which the information was acquired.

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-Themes</i>	<i>Methodology</i>
Studying Returnee Highly Skilled Professionals in Bangladesh	Mapping out discourse on return migration and the highly skilled professionals in Bangladesh	Contextual understanding, and exploring existing resources	Literature Review KII Secondary Sources
Selection of study elements for returnee migrants in relation to criteria of respondents	Selection criteria of study elements for returnee migrants Selection Criteria of Respondents (as per section 3.3.4)	Reason for leaving the homeland, life abroad, return, encounters with homeland (socioeconomic challenges), and navigation strategies adopted as returnees Long-term migrants, senior citizens, tertiary education completed, and senior authority in occupation abroad	In-Depth Interviews Observations

Analysis of selected case studies (the term "case" referring to the stories of the individual respondents)	Reasons for Return	Contextual analysis and identify subjective reasons for departure and return	Narrative Analysis with Qualitative Data Collected
	Encounters with Homeland	Exploring individual social, cultural and economic challenges	KII
	Navigation Strategies Adopted	Relationship between long-term migrant and home society	

Table 01: Research Design

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 The Main Subjects of this Study [In-Depth Interviews]

This study conducted in-depth interviews of twelve participants to recognize the factors behind the return of highly skilled professionals in Bangladesh. The stakeholders were men of the private sector profession such as: directors, executive secretaries, financial controllers, accountants, electrical engineers, mechanical engineers, managers and lastly, physicians (who are also medical professors). With in-person interviews arranged according to the convenience of the respondent, every session was conducted for, on average, 45 minutes. Ten of the respondents arranged interviews within their homes while the remaining two respondents had invited me to their examination rooms during lunchtime to make room for a brief session.

3.3.2 The Key Informant [KII]

Due to the lack of open access to various migratory and labour organizations (local and international) in Dhaka, only one expert was referred to on this topic. This expert was a Project Manager for the Reintegration of Migrant Workers' Project in one of the largest global labour organizations. To gain access to this particular informant, an email was sent to the general inquiry email address on the organization's official website. An authorization letter from my supervisor was attached and my message was directly forwarded to the project manager. Upon their response, an interview call was arranged via mobile, which was conducted for about 52 minutes total.

3.3.3 Personal Observations [In-Field Observations]

While I was conducting the interviews, some interesting observations were made. This included the living conditions, lifestyle preferences and overall body language of the respondents. For a migrant worker of their calibre, most of the households I had visited were not as extravagant as one would expect to be. The furniture, decorations, equipment, tools and supplies along with their choice of clothing or accessories etcetera, were all based on their consumptive practices in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Not only were these items from abroad, but their personal purchases in Dhaka were highly reflective of the taste they had developed in the Kingdom. Additionally, they sought out groceries or other goods based on the availability of Arab products in their local supermarkets. For example, instead of buying cheese made by the brand ‘Aarong,’ the migrants sought out imported cheese made by the brand ‘Almarai.’

In terms of overall body language, all of my respondents were very humble in nature. They spoke about their achievements but did not appear to be ‘bragging’ about their successes. For instance, one of my respondents spoke about overthrowing their British colleagues in the 1980s and positioned himself as chief in his line of work. However, he immediately gave credit to those who facilitated his promotion because of his hard work. One key observation I had personally made was the sudden shift in demeanour when it came to discussing whether our country would provide resources for returnees of their level. With comments such as “they will not do it because they do not care” or “I would rather silently watch my children succeed than fight for my rights at this rate,” most of the migrants preferred to be a silent witness of the existing system in our country despite being rather ‘broken’ for them. Yet, a contrasting opinion would soon follow after all negative inputs that they still wish to have an impact for their offspring, who will become future returning seniors themselves.

3.3.4 Justification & Selection Criteria of Respondents

The justification to select the following respondents was on the basis of their duration of stay in the country of employment, their profession in the Saudi Arabian private sector followed by their age and educational background. Additionally, this research applied a snowball approach after the researcher was acquainted with an assistant warehouse and logistics manager through a familiar social network.

Ideal respondents were those who worked in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for over 30 years in total. In terms of age, they were expected to be above 60 years old. A common feature across the panel of respondents included the need to be experts who left in the late 1970s to early 1980s range, making their return towards the mid 2010s to early 2020s. There was an appropriate divide between 08 respondents being completely retired and 04 respondents continuing to work. An overview of the selection criteria of the respondents is stated in Table 02 below.

Place/Country of Employment	Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ideal Age (current)	Over 60 years old
Year of Departure	Late 1970s to Early 1980s
Educational Qualification	Bachelor (lowest) to Master (highest)
Occupation (prior to return)	Must be in position of leadership
Year of Return	Mid 2010s to Early 2020s
Reasons for Return	Saudization Policy 2011, Age Restrictions or COVID-19
Occupation (after return)	Retired or Working

Table 02: Selection Criteria of Respondents

All respondents were expected to be graduates from university prior to their leave- none of whom pursued education in their country of employment unless they were placed in training programs. This is because highly skilled professionals, as explained in Chapter 02, are those who migrate with existing skills and education for the sake of further economic enrichment. Thus, students do not fall under the demography that this research aims to study.

In regards to the reason for return, ideal respondents would be amongst those who were compelled to return due to changes in national policy, age restrictions and/or the global pandemic. This is because the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had undergone strict policy implementations such as the updated Saudization Policy in 2011 (Al-Abdulkareem et. al. 2011). The goal of this policy was to ensure that the workplace had a majority of Saudi-born employees (Al-Abdulkareem et. al. 2011), resulting in the sudden termination or silent removal of expatriates. In short, if these indicators were satisfied, it would fulfill the target demography required to make this research successful.

3.3.5 Demography

A detailed demographic layout of all respondents can be analysed below (in Table 03). One of the advantages of this respondent group was their internal connection as close friends or workplace peers in Saudi Arabia. This had thoroughly helped with the snowball approach I had attempted starting from my first respondent, Migrant A (Table 03).

<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Where did they migrate?</i>	<i>Former Occupation (prior to return)</i>	<i>Duration of Stay</i>	<i>Current Occupation (after return)</i>
Migrant A	65	Bachelor (unspecified)	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Assistant Warehouse & Logistics Manager	35 years (1986-2021)	Retired
Migrant B	69	Master of Economics	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Director of Marketing & Procurement	37 years (1984-2021)	Retired
Migrant C	72	Bachelor of Electronics (USSR)	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Electrical Engineer, Supervisor of Radio Communications System (Jeddah Airport)	36 years (1985-2021)	Retired
Migrant D	74	Bachelor of Science in Mathematics	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Accounting Analyst (Ministry of Civil Aviation)	36 years (1978-2014)	Retired
Migrant E	67	Bachelor of Commerce	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Executive Secretary	34 years (1985-2019)	Retired
Migrant F	66	Bachelor (unspecified)	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Mechanical Engineer	40 years (1981-2021)	Retired
Migrant G	71	Bachelor of Commerce	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Chief Accountant	39 years (1982-2021)	Retired
Migrant H	65	Bachelor of Electrical Engineering	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Electrical Engineer, Senior Production Manager	35 years (1981-2016)	Retired
Migrant I	65	Bachelor of Science	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Branch Manager	32 years (1979-2011)	Vice-President (own company)
Migrant J	60	Bachelor of Management	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Financial Controller	31 years (1991-2022)	Financial Controller (remote employee)

Migrant K	68	Master of Philosophy	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	General Physician	4 years* (2004-2008)	Head of the Department for Community Medicine, Professor & Physician
Migrant L	64	Doctor of Medicine (MD)	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Specialist in Ophthalmology	4 years* (1997-2001)	Professor of Ophthalmology & Physician

Table 03: Demographic Layout of All Respondents

*The following physicians were migrants who had intended for a long-term migration (approximately 10 years) but were asked to return by the government of Bangladesh for a posting in the government hospitals.

3.3.6 Data Collection Challenges

With an initial goal of interviewing 15 participants, this study falls slightly short due to the sudden lack of participation by the target respondents. For three cases, the interviews were not secured because of last-minute appointment cancellations. However, a bigger challenge encountered during the data collection process was the poor response rates of local experts in migration institutions such as the International Office of Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU). While I was provided with a response from the Project Manager for the “Reintegration of Migrant Workers Project of ILO” and the National Programme Officer of IOM, both respondents remained unreachable- pushing the deadline of my paper later than intended. Fortunately, there was a last-minute connection with the ILO Project Manager, allowing me to prepare a separate chapter inspired from that conversation alone. Then again, possible reasons to justify such a lack of communication would be the outcome of the recent state of affairs in Bangladesh, resulting in the focus to shift towards more urgent matters such as refugee crisis management, labour migration governance, reintegration of skilled migrants and more.

3.4 Data Analysis

By gathering the completed transcripts of the interviews conducted for this study, data was analysed by categorically organizing the points required for the findings in the upcoming chapters 04, 05 and 06. A step-by-step guide through my analytical methods has been elaborated below.

Step 01: Data Collection and Initial Cleaning

The first step of finding my researchers began with my attempt at connecting to any online platform or database on returnee migrants. Unfortunately, the closest form of any ‘database’ I had found was information on the number of migrants traveling abroad by destination or skill profile. This made me seek out existing local and international migratory as well as labour organizations. However, due to the lack of responses from my in-person and email correspondence, I had to change my approach. Fortunately, I was able to connect with my first respondent because of a shared social network between my parents and a mutual family friend. It is from this respondent that I was able to apply a snowball approach and seek out returnees within their social network, expanding my selection of respondents in the process.

Upon collecting the interviews of each respondent, transcripts were prepared, and data was collected based on three focus areas. These areas (elaborated in section 3.2) were formed based on the initial research questions of this paper. For example, the reason why a professional may return connects well into their initial decision to leave the homeland, lifestyle choices abroad followed by their plans to return. Similarly, the breakdown of the remaining two research questions helped with the selection of necessary data for this research.

Step 02: Transcription of Interviews

Due to the in-depth interviews lasting for, on average, 45 minutes, the responses were transcribed based on the method known as, ‘intelligent verbatim.’ This form of transcription cleans up redundant speech while collecting the main messages as they are initially stated (Oberoi 2024).

By removing filler terms, repetitions, stutters and other speech-base hesitations, the transcript is more legible due to containing content-focused data only (Oberoi 2024). Thus, with the use of

intelligent verbatim, the transcriptions were neatly arranged and provided easier access to important information along with detailed quotations from the respondents.

Step 03: Coding and Categorization

To arrange all of my findings in a more systematic manner- in other words, my ‘blueprint’ for this research, an excel sheet was prepared to categorically design my research findings. Examples include age, reason for leaving, duration of stay, occupation in the country of employment (before return), reason for return, occupation in the country of origin (after return) and other relevant categories to code my qualitative findings. Once these categories were arranged, similar responses were highlighted. These responses were made into sub-categories which coded into individual responses as evident in the findings chapters ahead.

Step 04: Narrative Analysis

Following the categorization and coding of my information, I had to ensure that there was some individuality regardless of how similar the responses may appear. Thus, based on the research questions and research focusing areas, the sub-categories were collectively used as a means to generalise the data amidst the respondents by using the terms ‘majority,’ ‘most’ or ‘some,’ ‘a few’ to describe holistic narratives on certain data. In terms of individuality, quotations and independent case studies were arranged to describe the personal experiences of the participants.

Step 05: Interpretation and Synthesis of Data

While most of my respondents were extremely direct with their feedback, the coding process had helped me arrange much of my data into a single overview. By summarising the responses from the transcripts and coding them together, an overall interpretation of data was made possible. For example, views on having an exclusive pension scheme for returnee senior citizens had a major mix of opinions. To interpret the main arguments, common feedback was gathered and collectively used to divide positive and negative opinions into two separate categories. Further elaboration was made for those who had positive feedback (i.e. reasons and the underlying meaning) as well as those who had negative feedback (i.e. reasons and justifications).

It is important to note that because this study is a narrative analysis, there is a need to allow subjective interpretations for individual cases. With the use of in-person interviews and intimate questionnaires about one's livelihood experiences, data analysis was catered towards a study of personal narratives of the respective respondents. Therefore, the subjective element of responses allowed some flexibility in the interpretation of data.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

As stated earlier, this study was conducted through interview sessions according to the convenience of the selected participants. With ethical considerations in mind, consent forms were prepared (which included the signatures of both researcher and respondent) along with a copy of the questionnaire. Copies of both documents were provided to every participant. Due to the use of audio recordings, when requested, the participants were given a copy of the audio via Microsoft OneDrive with free access.

Although the construction of this thesis was met with some challenges, the overall outcome of its data collection was ideal. The next few chapters highlight the key findings of this paper.

Chapter 04| The Decision to Return Home

With most of the structural elements of my research well-designed by Chapter 03, the following chapters dive into the central outcome of this study. This chapter takes a thorough look into the main decision to return home. To understand why a migrant may return, it is important to study their initial reason for leaving the homeland, their life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whether they had any plausible plans to return, and lastly, the actual return they had undergone.

4.1 Leaving the Homeland

After declaring independence from Pakistan, Bangladesh was a country in shambles until the development of its three major sectors: Ready-Made Garments, Remittance and Agriculture. Ting (2015) suggests that the employment disparity between English Medium and Bangla Medium students resulted in the mass migration of highly skilled professionals around the early 1980s. However, the respondents of this study were well-beyond their schooling years as they completed their Bachelor's degrees (a Master's degree being the highest level obtained) in the late 1970s, allowing them to make solely career pursuits toward the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

According to eight respondents, their main reason for leaving Bangladesh had to do with the lack of good income sources in the country. One of the respondents, a retired chief accountant, stated that there was a need to build savings because his existing job was purely consumptive. Another respondent, retired HR manager, worked for the UN office in Niger before moving to the Middle East because of a sudden halt in their development projects during wartime conflicts. The remaining two respondents, both physicians, claimed that they were facing personal frustrations over promotions in the country; therefore, they had left for the Kingdom in hopes of returning with enhanced social statuses that would contribute to their promotion in the workplace. Regardless of how or when these men had left the country, their goal remained relatively connected: income security.

4.2 Life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The average timeline of the respondents' departure was 1984 (1979 being the earliest and 2004 being the latest). During this time, most participants claimed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia lacked about 70% of the development that we see today. Coincidentally, the global reputation of a

freshly independent Bangladesh made institutions abroad regard migrants from the homeland as ‘mid-skilled’ workers at the entry-level.

According to Migrant B (2024), *“It is only after we went to the Kingdom and worked with their economy for about a decade that we qualified to be the ‘highly skilled professionals’ in your research. If not for our educational backgrounds and skills to quickly acquire as well as apply knowledge, we would remain as ‘mid-skilled’ professionals instead.”*

Two other respondents discussed a view that Bangladeshi migrants had an initial impression of being ‘dirty South Asians’ compared to their Indian and Pakistani counterparts- who were the majority in the workforce at the time. While each respondent had their own tales about their successes in the Arab Kingdom, there was a mutual agreement that the naturally hard working attitude of a Bangladeshi migrant is what made them leaders in the workplace and gain the trust as well as respect of their Saudi colleagues. This had also resulted in their status shifting from being contractually employed staff to permanent residents with a professional employment status.

4.3 A Plausible Plan to Return

Interestingly enough, a handful of the respondents had sent their families back to Bangladesh once their children had completed their high school education. It was said that they wished to ensure a positive environment and good higher education for their children. While they did not describe their decision in much detail, they did agree that with the arrival of their wives and children in the homeland, they had intended to follow up after a year or two with their own return. Due to such decisions, private property had been purchased and with the access to income generated through house rent, the migrant families made their way back to Bangladesh in the mid 2010s.

One might ask, “Why was Bangladesh the target destination when the migrants could easily afford a lifestyle in the West?” Well, the other portion of the respondents had done just that. They had sent their children to countries such as the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Malaysia and Australia. These respondents had returned to the homeland only after they were faced with situations compelling them to leave their country of employment. While most of these respondents purchased private property as a means of productive usage of their income, some

respondents did not do the same. Thus, due to not investing in Bangladesh prior to their return, there was much stress involved in the process of purchasing a flat or home when they had arrived. Such encounters will be covered in the upcoming chapter. Regardless of the intentions involved, these findings suggest that professional migrants may have the tendency to plan a plausible return by sending their families back to Bangladesh first.

An important point to note is that Saudi Arabia has had existing policies that refused to grant permanent residence to applicants under the age of 18 years (Premium Residency Centre 2024). Additionally, young daughters were expected to remain single as a prerequisite for residency access (Premium Residency Centre 2024). However, amidst such rules lie the family-based privileges that come from being related to a 'Premium Residency' status holder- all of whom were the respondents of the study (Premium Residency Centre 2024). Although it was made crucial to change sponsorship once a child came of age at some point, the 'Premium Residency Program' in Saudi Arabia suggested that there was no particular limitation to the number of family members a premium resident may sponsor individually- regardless of whether it was their adult sons or daughters (Premium Residency Centre 2024). Using such methods one might claim as being a 'clever loophole,' the respondents of this study had the ability to plan ahead and sustain the residence status of their children without having to send them outside of the country to seek new sponsorship contracts through an Arab local (Premium Residency Centre 2024).

4.4 The Actual Return

Then again, the actual decision to return may still appear rather perplexing and unexpected. Not only did these men live in their country of employment for over three decades, they were in positions that ensured the livelihood of their families (both immediate and distant). They also had access to the inflow of sustained income security. So what makes a professional return despite enjoying the riches of their flowing income? Well, some might claim that they had a personal desire to retire, but after asking several questions on whether they were content with complete retirement, their feedback managed to waver. A few respondents confessed that they suffered from family detachment during the corona virus pandemic and a sudden sense of loneliness from being completely alone. As mentioned earlier, about 60% of the respondents had sent their families back to Bangladesh as a means to secure proper education for their children. Therefore, when the

pandemic struck, most respondents were struck with immediate fear and isolation from their loved ones.

Another portion of respondents were unfortunate victims of a new national policy, which was the Saudization Policy in 2011. The main objective of this policy was to make sure that 70% of the employees in a company were Saudi-born citizens. In other words, it was a quota-based incentive to make locals enrich the economy with local efforts rather than international labour. Instead of suddenly terminating contracts, companies sought to simply not renew the visas of their expert employees, which led to their inevitable return to the homeland. Following this strategy of not renewing expert visas, retirement age (which is the age 60 in Saudi Arabia) was also used as a means to send professionals back home.

Only one respondent out of the twelve in this study was faced with a termination letter, and the reason for that was because he belonged to the Human Resources Department of the Jeddah Airport. Everyone else simply did not get a renewal of their visas or (in the case of the pandemic) they did not submit their documents for a renewal. An important point to note here is that because of the highly skilled calibre of each expert, their respective companies only proceeded with these strategies due to the corona virus pandemic. According to the respondents, it was supposedly a chance to ‘clean out’ senior employees, promote juniors and hire new employees.

While the stories of the respondents were collected in a comfortable environment, the senior migrants still spoke with subtle feelings of bitterness clouding their hearts. Accepting defeat against their circumstances, these professionals returned home and were faced with a few specific encounters with the homeland as senior citizens. The upcoming chapter shall reflect on the possible social, cultural and/or economic challenges faced by these returnees.

Case Study: Hello, My name is Migrant C

My age is 72+ and my family comprises of four members: me, my wife and my two daughters. Both of my daughters are working abroad. One is in the United Kingdom and the other is in the United States of America. I left for Saudi Arabia around 1985 because Saudi Arabia paid a lot more than Bangladesh at the time. And I was there for about 35 years as a Supervisor for Radio Communications in the Jeddah Airport.

My workplace was called the Ground Mobile Radio Communications Network System. I did not work for the Jeddah airport itself because it is actually run by various contractors. The King Abdul-Aziz International Airport Project is what the Saudi airport runs but the main work is done by the contractors. I just worked for one of these contractors but there are almost more than 40 contractors working for the airport. Our company worked on the electronics side. I first joined as the Supervisor of the Radio Workshop. My company was called M Company. Then, after nearly 6 years, they lost the contract so D. A. Company took the contract. After I worked outside, I was transferred to D.A. Company for maybe 4 to 5 years until they lost the next contract. S Company got the contract instead which was around 1995 and I continued working with them until my return. My position prior to coming here was of a Supervisor. We call it a Radio Workshop but it is actually the Ground Mobile Radio Communications System.

I worked until 2021 and came back. It was nearly the end of the corona virus pandemic. I thought that enough is enough, 35 years is not a matter of joke. That was my first reason because the company did not have an age bar for me. Normally, it is 60 years of age but some of the experienced workers are kept back for as long as they want to stay. The company also requested me to sign for another three years but I thought this corona virus had taken a lot of my friends and family from me. So I thought that if I had to die, I would rather die in Bangladesh. I love my country better than any other country so I want to die here. Really, this was my main goal so that is why I do not want to stay in any other country. Moreover, old age is also a factor. My memory is going down, day by day, and technology is improving every single day. It is changing and modernizing, all of which you have to remember. This was very hard for me as well- coping up with the advanced system.

During our time, whenever new equipment was brought in, we would be sent abroad for training. Well, most of the time, it was the Saudi employees who could go to these programs. Whether we went or not, we would always do one thing, which was reading the manuals. Right before the equipment was sent, we would be sent the specifications so we would discuss with our supervisors or bosses about whether this equipment would be suitable for the Jeddah airport. We could not go to these training programs, it was always the Saudi employees and we compensated by studying manuals at work. Instead, many representatives would come to train us as well but that is quite different from training at the company itself, right? Our approach was to study manuals, discuss and make a recommendation to the project managers.

Everything now has most likely changed. Think of a walkie-talkie as an example. For us, it was just a button and we could perform direct communication, this changed as our devices were issues while being connected to a computing system where assigned numbers would show once someone spoke. Now, the device can not only show the issued number but it can also show the name of the individual and can be tracked. In the rare case you fall unconscious, as long as you activate the device; they can track you and find you within 10 minutes. This is what I mean by modernization. Everything keeps changing. Thus, given our age, this is a major challenge for us to keep up with and without adequate training; we cannot help contribute to a company at our best capabilities.

Upon my return, I did not struggle much mentally but physically, I was seriously ill due to the food. The food in Bangladesh is really... What should I say? My body really broke apart after consuming the food here. Mentally, I have no stress because I came back intentionally so I was mentally prepared to enter my retired life. My health deteriorated due to food but otherwise, I was fine. My current source of income is mainly house rent and I have some wage earners' fund. I have some annual fixed deposits in the bank. There is a lot of interest generated there but I do not take this money, I just give it to the poor. I do not want to take this interest. House rent is my main source of income as it is enough for me.

When it comes to having an exclusive pension scheme, I think it is a very good question. As you know, we earn a lot and all we send to Bangladesh has remittance generated- be it dollars or pounds; foreign currency. But after we come back, we do not get anything or any help. Even as a senior citizen, we do not get any respect from the government. It is hardly anywhere. It was only that one day, when I went to the passport office that they said they had a queue for senior citizens. This is the only form of respect I got. Other than that, there is nothing. From the government side, there is absolutely nothing. And I think that there should be something. Either we make a society or community to help each other or receive help from the government. It would be much better if we could do something like this. But who will bell the cat?

For me, I do not want anymore. I just want complete rest in my retired life. But those coming back at 50 or 60 years old, they should be allowed to work- be it at an NGO or somewhere else. If I try, I might get work but I do not want to anymore. What I have is enough. No thinking, no worries. Both of my daughters are already settled so I do not have any other obligations. It is just me and my wife in this house and I get income from my three other flats.

Still, I think that if one is physically fit, they can work until the end of their life. In my personal opinion, if you are physically and mentally fit, you can work anytime. I can still work myself. It all depends on whether you are physically fit and mentally okay. You can definitely keep working. Age does not necessarily matter. Rather, this will keep you fit. I just think that if I have the motivation and capacity to work, I can work anywhere. I do not necessarily need highly technical work because that requires a specific level of dedication but simpler tasks can be easily handled by people like me.

Regardless, there are many internal practices rooted in our culture that create an obstruction for potential change. For example, if we talk about the internal power struggles within our society, be it political or simply within the workplace, it stands as a core problem in our country. No one wants to tolerate another person's success here. Specifically, the most active working group here would not welcome our contributions too much. But there are some areas where we can work. For instance, someone I know is part of an international firm as an advisor. This is because they (international employers) know who they want. They do not think about this entire notion of power struggles, they just want competent workers. International projects will take experts. They will not think too hard about these things such as background or social network etcetera. They just need people they can put to work.

That being said, I still love my country. I was born here and this is the land that raised me. I have done my end of contributions for it as well. Both of my daughters are settled now, so all I seek is to rest and retire with my wife in Bangladesh.

Chapter 05| Encounters with the Homeland

By now, this thesis has made two things very clear: (a) decisions to leave the homeland are tied to economic enrichment while (b) decisions to return can be subtly planned but not immediately implemented by the migrants themselves. This chapter discusses the ways by which a returnee professional may encounter possible challenges from lost social networks, financial uncertainty (if applicable) and cultural disorientation upon their return as senior citizens. To determine such challenges, this chapter closely studies the personal encounters with the state, local community, personal network and oneself upon return.

5.1 Encounters with the State

With their bags packed and service benefits in their bank accounts (some of whom did not even receive their rightful severance pay), the first round of encounters in the homeland struck cold. From the honest, organized and systematic life abroad, they had to work with a dishonest, messy and poorly planned system in the homeland. While a majority did not suffer from economic or financial distress, there was a mutual agreement that the reason for that was because they had already secured a safety net prior to their return.

“There is no scope of any financial support... unless we have anything prepared. Those of us who maintain ourselves through house rent are doing better than most returnee migrants and those who are doing better than us invest in businesses that are relevant to our local industries such as garments and equipment supply... industries. This is for those who are doing better than us. However, the best strategy done by individuals such as ...myself and our friends is that we managed to have a financial safety net through house rent.”

- Migrant A (2024)

Only one respondent had claimed that the sudden termination of his contract resulted in much distress. Not only was he deprived of his rightful service pay, he was simply expected to work with his personal savings because he did not invest in private property beforehand. However, because of having a good social network around him, his returnee peers had helped him purchase a flat in the Bashundhara area. This had allowed him to move and return safely to Dhaka.

Interestingly enough, local documentation such as the National Identity Card (NID), driving license and others, were already in possession of the respondents. This is because these

professionals did not simply abandon their homeland and go to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Rather, they would visit annually to check in with their family and the state of their private property. Additionally, their bond with their family members and local peers was strong enough to ensure the security of their private accumulation. That being said, even if some returnees lacked certain paperwork, their personal network helped ensure the smooth collection of local documentation.

5.2 Encounters with the Community

With a comedic yet straightforward tone, all of the respondents agreed to be somewhat of a ‘newborn baby’ after coming back. While they did visit Bangladesh every year, they did not stay long enough to understand the overall community around them. After all, these migrants usually visited home as guests compared to the average local. This meant that their permanent return would result in starting from scratch and learning about the place they had called their homeland once again.

“See, when I initially came back to Bangladesh, I was like a newborn baby... The situation under which we worked for 36 years in Saudi Arabia was under strict discipline. In Bangladesh, I cannot seem to find such discipline...”

- Migrant B (2024)

When asked about any particular challenges they had faced after their return, the respondents agreed that their personal experiences have made them seclude themselves at home. These experiences ranged from financial loss, cultural disorientation, a poor quality of life (i.e. food, environment etc.) and an overall sense of dissatisfaction from the homeland. For example, most of the respondents were deeply disappointed by the dishonesty of the locals, poor attitude of the youth and general mistrust amidst the people.

As mentioned earlier, the respondents of this study were amongst those who had fully retired or continue to work today. The retired respondents had independent children, therefore, their encounters were centred around personal readjustments within Dhaka. On the other hand, the working respondents had some dependent children, who were still attending school. Thus, their encounters included the experiences of their children. According to one of the respondents, his children refused to move initially due to the many rumours they heard of Bangladesh back in Saudi

Arabia. To convince his disapproving children, he had invested in various facilities such as a fully furnished apartment with air conditioners, a house lift, generator, parking space and a car.

He added, “I reassured them that all of the facilities they enjoyed in Jeddah will be ensured in Dhaka equally, if not, more. To this day, none of my children- my eldest being 33 years old- are expected to go to the bazaar and bargain the prices to buy goods. They would rather go to a proper shopping mall to purchase goods at a fixed price and come back home with ease. They simply were not raised that way. All they were expected to do is follow the idea that “honesty is the best policy” and to avoid conflict with others if matters can be resolved in a more civil manner. It is because they are well, that I believe I am also doing well.”

- Migrant I (2024)

Additionally, the community in which these returnees belonged to were not as approachable as they had expected. In Saudi Arabia, the migrants were said to have communal gatherings in the form of monthly parties, school picnics and overall outings with their neighbours. There was a strong communal bond which made these migrants feel welcomed whenever they had to move to another apartment. While some respondents lived in a housing complex that hosted occasional gatherings, most respondents claimed to prefer their own seclusion with their family members alone. This was because they did not find themselves being approached by their local neighbours- regardless of whether they were formerly acquainted or not. Not only did the migrants remain private, their children were said to maintain a distant relationship with their local peers, despite living in Bangladesh for a much longer period than their fathers.

5.3 Encounters with Family & Friends

In terms of their social networks, the respondents appeared to be more family-oriented and preferred peers within their existing returnee circle. They claimed that meeting their returnee friends was more pleasing than seeking friends who have possibly left the country for the Western world or have a different social circle now. Although it was subtle, most respondents appeared to have lost social networks due to their returnee statuses. Possible reasons for such loss would be a reduction in their ‘prestige’ as a highly skilled professional abroad. After all, when these migrants visited the homeland, they did not appear empty-handed.

Unfortunately, many of the respondents found themselves in an awkward position with their personal networks upon return. It was these networks that took care of their private accumulation,

therefore, there was a subtle reluctance to let these assets simply go from their care. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to invest in shares/businesses with their personal networks, which only resulted in financial losses.

“See, I did try to start from scratch but I just ended up in losing rather than gaining from my efforts. To be precise, I invested about BDT 1,000,000 (Taka Ten Hundred Thousand Only) around January 1st, 2022. When I withdrew the total amount on February 1st, 2023, I noticed that I had BDT 200,000 (Taka Two Hundred Thousand Only) missing from the total. If I left the total until today, I would have lost BDT 400,000 (Taka Four Hundred Thousand Only). This would be a loss of about 40%, whereas, if I kept that initial amount in the bank, I would have gained BDT 200,000 (Taka Two Hundred Thousand Only) instead. So I believe we would probably try to avoid these kinds of risks when it comes to starting from scratch.”

- Migrant A (2024)

The statement above is simply one scenario out of many occurrences. Although the migrants were disappointed by their losses, they did not hold it against those who led them into the situation. However, the outcome of such financial loss was the inevitable loss of a close social connection. It is due to these circumstances that most of the migrants sought to refrain from associating with locals they had once closely befriended.

5.4 Encounters with Self

The following sections above covered the ironic outcome of being supported by private networks but also being betrayed by these close networks at the same time. However, over time, these encounters resulted in a growing desire to be acknowledged by the local government. The locals who fueled the losses for the migrants were able to get away with their actions simply because they were more familiar with the local environment. The migrants, on the other hand, would be losing further if they had attempted to confront their local counterparts. Thus, they came to a personal conclusion that if the government had support mechanisms for returnee professionals, they would be able to occupy their attention elsewhere.

Regardless of whether this support came in the form of exclusive pension schemes or workplace opportunities in the private sector, all respondents agreed that Bangladesh requires a system by which long-term migrants can feel more secure about their return. After years of sending

remittances and generating foreign currency, the respondents believed that a support mechanism was the least effort the government could make for them.

“As you know, we earn a lot and all we send to Bangladesh has remittance generated- be it dollars or pounds: foreign currency. But after we come back, we do not get anything or any help. Even as a senior citizen, we do not get any respect from the government. Hardly anywhere. It was only that one day, when I went to the passport office, that they said they had a queue for senior citizens. This is the only form of respect I got. Other than that, there is nothing. From the government side, absolutely nothing. And I think that there should be something. Either we make a society or community to help each other or receive help from the government. It would be much better if we could do something like this. But who will bell the cat?”

- Migrant C (2024)

The notion that Bangladesh does not have anyone to ‘bell the cat’ was profound in the responses collected in this study. In fact, this paper was the only time they had encountered someone interested in their welfare. When inquired about whether they had faced any physical or mental challenges, everyone had agreed that the lack of facilities to recognize them as retired seniors was a core factor that made them unwell- be it mentally depressed or physically ill. One of the most surprising accounts from the respondents came from their views on the local welfare systems in the country.

According to one of the migrants, “We, the expatriates, did raise this issue during our (personal) reunions. See, we do not have any Welfare Management Systems in our country. We contributed a lot to the country so there is a need for such a system. The way in which our country has developed over the years, we have the largest contribution with our remittances and foreign currency. However, in comparison to that effort, our government does not have a support system for us.”

- Migrant E (2024)

It appeared that the migrants had no access to welfare services from the local government. This comment was further supported by the misconception that all returnee professionals are affluent and are able to spend their retirement with their own savings. Now, regardless of whether they can afford an expensive lifestyle in wealthy neighbourhoods, the returnees are still senior citizens of Bangladesh. However, the respondents humbled themselves because they claimed to know the various strategies by which the local government had operated. Therefore, their desire to ‘fight’

for their acknowledgement and recognition was not as passionate as their comments may suggest. A comment that really stood out regarding this matter was by one of the physicians.

He stated, *“What do you really expect to obtain when the governmental system in our country is broken? If you look at our government servants, they are essentially the ‘Jack of All Trades, Master of None’ because of their jobs being purely transferable. So who will take the time to diligently approach matters on returnee migrants? Most of the profits are generated by the departing, active migrants anyway.”*

- Migrant L (2024)

As harsh as this statement may sound, all of the migrants agreed to understand the implications behind such comments. Nonetheless, the respondents appeared to be very optimistic about a possible future in which their children may return and encounter a welfare system from the government to sustain their returnee statuses.

After an in-depth discussion, it was concluded that the returnee professionals had attempted to work with their lifestyle conditions in a neutral manner. While they were very disappointed by their personal networks and lack of support systems in Bangladesh, the respondents had chosen to remain silent witnesses to a neglectful and rather ‘broken’ system. This meant that they had gone from trying to make their returnee statuses fulfilling to full-time retirement. For the working respondents, they planned an immediate retirement plan upon the end of their careers. The next chapter discusses factors that led to this change in motivation by studying the navigation strategies adopted in the local environment by the senior returnees.

Chapter 06| Navigation Strategies Adopted

Oddly enough, each respondent showcased strong feelings of either negativity or neutrality when it came to discussing their encounters with the homeland. Upon closer examination, it appeared that the responses were driven by whether the returnee had made a planned or unplanned return decision. Those with a planned return decision had more neutral opinions or ones of acceptance while those with an unplanned return were more likely to sound bitter about the homeland. This chapter discusses their views on economic reintegration via work opportunities, pension schemes, followed by the inevitable truth they had faced and the methods they had adopted to navigate and accept their current realities.

6.1 Views on Economic Reintegration via Work Opportunities

As mentioned in the previous chapter, despite the decision to return and encounters with the homeland, the participants were keen on remaining silent as senior citizens. When asked about their desire to keep working with light-weight employment opportunities or having access to financial support from the government, everyone agreed that it was something desirable. In terms of employment opportunities, the respondents acknowledged the weaknesses that may come from their old age. However, they believed that the desire to keep working was far more energising than the unavoidable fragility that may appear from their senior age.

As stated by Migrant B (2024), “Returnee seniors should work for companies as consultants. The normal 6-8 working hours are feasible as long as the returnee has the drive to work. Seniors love to work on things that they enjoy (regardless of the sector).”

Most respondents agreed that keeping up with the rapid development in their individual sectors may be challenging; yet they knew that there was great potential for integrating their long-term knowledge and skills through various roles of consultancy. Not only would such opportunities distract them from awkward occurrences with their private networks, but they would also be healthier due to their love for routine, productive labour.

“Returning seniors must be consulted regarding their personal experiences and the government must utilize these skills for the economy. It will help keep the returnee healthy as they would be able to spend their time more productively. A returnee is able to work prolonged periods as long as they have the drive to keep going.”

- Migrant C (2024)

Given that two of the respondents in this study were physicians, they both agreed that the mental and physical health implications of neglected migrants were far more challenging to diagnose compared to average ailments. This is because these migrants keep working until their return, therefore, the sudden halt in their activities may prove to have adverse effects on their health. It is either the worsening of physical ailments resulting in poor mental health or vice versa.

“Returnee seniors are met with mental and physical issues due to the sudden halt in their activities.”

- Migrant L (2024)

6.2 Views on Economic Reintegration via Pension Schemes

On the other hand, when asked about having an exclusive pension scheme, there were a surprising number of mixed opinions. The respondents viewed the possibility of a pension scheme as either a generous gesture from the government or something to critically judge the feasibility and likeliness of such a system.

“An exclusive pension scheme would be good as a polite gesture in return for all the taxes we paid as working migrants.”

- Migrant D (2024)

“An exclusive pension scheme would be very good. Government-led initiatives such as these would motivate the return of returnee offspring in a cyclic order. Not everyone does the same work and earns the same riches. So this would be highly important for the government to consider, of course.”

- Migrant K (2024)

It is important to note that feedback on the matter of pension schemes was taken in consideration of the existing ‘Universal Pension Scheme’ which was enacted in 2023. Details on this scheme can be found in the upcoming Chapter 08. However, it is because of this scheme that the feedback towards exclusive pensions was viewed with great negativity. The migrants had thoroughly

criticised the government's ability to ensure financial support without having the migrants invest their own savings.

“An exclusive pension scheme might be good but it may not be favoured by returnees due to the possibility of the government collecting their remittances and providing the returnee ‘interests’ in the name of ‘pension.’”

- Migrant B (2024)

“An exclusive pension scheme is pointless. There is always hidden profit involved everywhere. Our government is not alright. We need to fix that first before introducing anything. We are willing to accept anything but there is no point.”

- Migrant H (2024)

Additionally, they had doubted the funding bodies which would generate pension for migrants due to the possibility of generating interests from remittance dollars and providing that as their ‘pension.’ The reason for such reluctance in consuming interest would be due to the fact that these returnees had lived the majority of their lives in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, making them religiously more inclined. Therefore, considering a financial support scheme would require the approval of various internal aspects (i.e. the people behind these initiatives, whether it will be an honest system and more) prior to being accepted by returnee seniors.

6.3 The Inevitable Truth

Judging by the feedback on both work opportunities and pension schemes, senior migrants appear to accept both options regardless of what is provided to them (with some critique). However, whether the government of Bangladesh would consider to cater to their senior returnees brings significant doubt and lack of trust as displayed by the contrasting views on pension schemes. According to six respondents, they had attempted to start their own businesses or work in collaboration with their immediate social network (non-migrant) but failed to do so. A few reasons for such failure had to do with: (a) the immense demand of large investments to simply establish the business idea and (b) the demand of investing one's time into joining the correct entrepreneurial channels to make ends meet for their business. In other words, to be regarded with value, the migrant was expected to display their wallet and local networks.

It is important to note that these migrants had planned to establish businesses based on general supplies trading, pharmacies, air conditioner supply, electrical equipment/parts and many others. Their aim was to introduce products of the quality they had been accustomed to in the Middle East. Yet, when they conducted feasibility studies based on their own business plans, it appeared that the cost, profit and maintenance margins were much higher than they were expecting. The demand in the market followed by their ability to compete against such marginal odds was something that prevented returnee migrants from proceeding forward. In a blunt manner, all six individuals agreed that they would be unable to conduct an honest business; therefore, they took a step back immediately.

“I do not know who says what regarding this but I believe that because I have knowledge about my country’s situation, I did not dare do anything. I just wanted to live a peaceful life. I got many suggestions from my well-wishers and one of the main suggestions was, “If you want to live in peace, do not do anything.” I have seen the situation around me everywhere and so, I, myself, decided not to do anything.”

- Migrant G (2024)

While it is true that the opportunistic landscape in the Bangladeshi workplace is quite a battle, it does not take one a Google search to identify the ways by which one might struggle in a competitive workplace. Almost all of the respondents mentioned that the only downside or disadvantage they may face in the Bangladeshi market is the severe ‘internal power struggle’ which makes it challenging to remain truly honest.

6.4 Navigation Strategies Adopted in the Local Environment

Despite all the negative feedback regarding the homeland, all of the respondents agreed to love their birthplace. They knew that the country they helped develop was one that was doing its all to sustain its economic position, making it rather competitive in nature. They also understand that all of this internal competition is to sustain economic resilience in a country where most successful sectors are currently overpopulated. Every neighbourhood has a pharmacy at every corner, and every local industry has multiple general supply trading vendors under them. Embracing the reality of it all, the respondents have developed a few navigation strategies to adjust into their local environment.

6.4.1 Focus on Private Accumulation

Whether it is the family land, self-acquired land or simply real estate, some of the respondents sought to look after their private accumulation to occupy their time.

6.4.2 Focus on Recreation

Other respondents have pursued recreational activities by gardening, going on picnics with their loved ones, visiting parks for exercise and more. Given that the social networks of these respondents are quite similar, most of them meet one another and spend a casual get-together to enjoy pleasant yet reflective conversations.

6.4.3 Focus on Offspring

Interestingly, there was an equal divide between the respondents: (a) those who had independent children and (b) those who had dependent children. While very few of the migrants had children still in high school, a decent majority of them had adult children who were either self-sufficient abroad or required their support for their tertiary education. As much as looking after the children is their natural duty as fathers, it currently stands as a great distraction mechanism for the migrant because they are able to observe and advise their offspring regarding their future careers.

Due to the severe lack of interest shown by the government over the many years of remittance generation in Bangladesh, the retired professionals chose to watch over the household and their children in retirement. The working respondents also agreed to do the same when they, themselves, choose to take an official break from their careers. With a common statement of “going to the bazaar, buying groceries, playing with grandchildren, eating their wife’s cooking and praying to God,” the retired professionals refused to verbally admit but portrayed a subtle sense of lost purpose. After all, they were the main breadwinners of their respective households.

When questioned about their current positions or whether they have any future plans, they simply concluded by stating that they initially began with the hope to start a business but ended up altering their navigation strategy to adapt to the local environment. In other words, if they are not needed, they will not make themselves known. The overall implications of these key findings discussed until now shall provide context towards moving forward, which will be covered in the following chapters.

Chapter 07| Discussion & Analysis

The last three chapters, as brief as they may be, provided an overview of mutually consistent lived experiences. In other words, the participants of this study shared their experiences from their initial departure to the host country all the way to their eventual return back to Bangladesh- most responses matching one another unanimously. This chapter considers the underlying implications of these research findings in relation to the research questions of this study and whether the theoretical framework relates to the lived experiences of senior returnees in Bangladesh.

7.1 General Implications of the Findings

7.1.1 Homecoming after Decades

Considering the feedback collected from the respondents, it is evident that most professional returnees decide to come home due to circumstantial occurrences. While some migrants may claim that their desire to return was connected to their internal wish to retire, it was made certain that retirement was selected due to the compelling circumstances around them. An example of this would be the coronavirus pandemic. Almost all of the respondents agreed that they had returned due to the dire global situation in the year 2021 followed by the isolation they had experienced away from their family, who were living in Bangladesh. Although the changes in national policy in Saudi Arabia (i.e. Saudization or age restrictions) played a role, the respondents mostly sought to return and retire when the global pandemic had led to major lock-downs, resulting in the terrifying confinement of the masses in the name of social distancing. Keeping Chapter 04 in mind, one might conclude that the reason for the return of accomplished skilled professionals was heavily tied to their personal circumstances, which made them seek retirement or simpler work opportunities that suited their individual capacities.

7.1.2 Familiarizing Oneself to the New Homeland

When it comes to the various reintegration challenges a returning migrant may face, the respondents of this study were quick to acknowledge that their social position as a local had significantly altered due to their long-term stay abroad. For example, the loss of local social networks may have introduced some regret for these individuals, however, it was not something of dire need. Upon further inspection, it appeared that these respondents were among the first in their families to perform economic migration. Not only did they provide financial support back

home, but they also introduced work opportunities for their younger relatives and generated migrant workers within their household. Thus, when these senior professionals returned, they were accommodated by their returnee relatives, who went to the Middle East on a contractual basis. That being said, the loss of local social networks for such professionals was more akin to the feeling of losing friends from high school. In regards to the other encounters stated in Chapter 05, the respondents were found sharing their thoughts and opinions rather than strictly condoning the ‘evident lack of support’ because they appeared to have expected such weak institutions in the overpopulated home country. As a result, the ways in which the respondents had faced their personal reintegration was mainly the pursuit of familiarizing oneself to the new version of the homeland with the help of locals- be it family or peers.

7.1.3 Reintegrating and Adjusting Back Home

Throughout this study, it was made evident that highly skilled professionals are among the most aware and assertive migrant categories. To explain, I believe that highly skilled professionals are those who can acquire and apply their knowledge right away. In other words, their critical thinking skills place them at an expert-level category, allowing them to openly share their feedback in a workplace filled with international competitors. By having this free will and sense of workplace agency, all of my respondents were able to obtain respectable positions of authority. Hence, the notion that there are systematic areas of improvement required in their home country was acknowledged by the respondents but it was not something they would be fighting for. Regardless of whether they are discussing strategies for economic reintegration through work opportunities or pension schemes, these returnee seniors have adopted the leisure activities of overseeing private accumulation, recreation and the care for offspring in their inner social networks. Considering the feedback from Chapter 06, they would much rather stay away from the hungry, competitive eyes in the local job market and tend to the flowers in their gardens because they sincerely admit that their failed attempts at doing something in Bangladesh was enough for them to change their reintegration strategies to adjust back home.

7.2 Implications of Findings via Theory

7.2.1 George Gmelch (1980), “*Return Migration*”

Going back to Chapter 02, the theory of return migration by George Gmelch (1980) considers the kinship relations of a migrant followed by situational push and pull factors between the host and home countries. Gmelch (1980) defines return as the movement of emigrants back to their homeland to resettle. He provides five possible reasons for a migrant’s return such as having strong family ties, caring for ailing elderly parents, feelings of patriotism, evident push factors from the host country and lastly, attractive pull factors in the home country. Based on the discussion in this study so far, the highly skilled professionals would ideally return due to the push factors in their host country. This is because their purpose to travel was for economic enrichment, which meant that their sudden return would result in a major financial gap for the family in Bangladesh. The respondents claimed that their goal was to stay and provide for their family for as long as they were physically capable. Interestingly, they were met with a sense of belonging in the Arab nation, which further fuelled their desire to remain in Saudi Arabia for much longer than they had expected.

While Gmelch (1980) provides an overview of five particular motivations for return, the only reason that aligns with the highly skilled professionals of this study is the inevitability of being pushed out by their country of employment. In regards to the lack of strong family ties or desire to care for ailing parents, it is important to note that these professionals married locally and took their wives with them abroad- establishing their own nuclear family they were responsible for. While this may fall under another element of research, most of these respondents were migrant sons with fathers who did not burden them with the care of the family back home. Instead, financial support was viewed as sufficient because these migrants had other siblings capable of catering to the needs of their elderly parents. In terms of patriotism and pull factors back home, again, these professionals had created their own space and sense of belonging within their country of employment- distracting them from the need to resettle in Bangladesh.

7.2.2 Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2004), “*Revisit to Conceptualizing Return Migration*”

While Gmelch neatly sets the motivations for return into five categories, Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2004) describes such motivations for return migration as both economic and non-economic in nature. Cassarino (2004) refers to existing economic theory and prepares a conceptual framework that helps one understand the transitioning phases of return migration over time. For instance, the neoclassical economics theory and the new economics of labour migration theories refer to return migration as an outcome of a migration cycle. One refers to return as a failed outcome while the other refers to it as a component of a calculated strategy. On the other hand, theories made from structuralist and transnationalist perspectives view return migration as a situational outcome that completes the migration cycle and continues it in a generative order. Separated from the four theories, the social network theory provides a unique aspect to return migration. It claims that returnees are social actors within their own social networks. Thus, their choice to return is of their own accord and the decision is highly connected to the opportunities determined by their immediate social networks. That being said, for this study, the respondents would ideally belong to the structuralist and transnationalist frameworks due to the situational motivations for their return. Not only did they return because of their position within the host country at the time, but they have observed their offspring depart abroad- carrying forth the migration chain within the household.

The question of whether their return had resulted in a successful migration story is highly subjective. However, almost all of the respondents would agree that their life in the Middle East was fulfilling enough for them to simply take a step back and watch the generations after them complete their stories. Nonetheless, returning to the homeland is something that every migrant may have to undergo at some point in their lives- regardless of whether the return is temporary or permanent. Thus, it is important for the home country to consider mechanisms by which long-term migrants may adjust with their motherland. The next chapter provides subtle policy-based implications which may holistically apply to senior returnee migrants in Bangladesh for the future.

Chapter 08| Moving Forward: The Policy Implications

Public policy is a complex area of study. Not everything can be given justice through government policy nor can everyone be included in policy initiatives. While micro perspectives provide insight into lived realities, policy can only be rationally generated via macro lenses that cater to the needs of the majority. Even so, there is a potential for this study to be looked into at a policy-making level. To ensure this, there is a need to carefully analyze the subtle implications of the feedback collected from the participants of this study in relation to the existing policy structures enacted for the migrant workers of Bangladesh.

This chapter discusses the core indications found in the findings of this study, the existing policy structures for returnee migrants and lastly, potential policy outcomes. The policy suggestions at the end of this chapter were inspired by a semi-formal discussion with the Project Manager of the ILO Reintegration of Migrant Workers' Project followed by a personal experience at a workshop on Sector Mapping and Business Case Development for the ILO Reintegration of Migrant Workers' Project, hosted by the Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and supported by Switzerland.

8.1 Core Indications by the Findings

There were 12 senior returnee professionals involved in this study. Eight out of the twelve respondents were fully retired. They had the motivation to be self-employed or join a shared business enterprise, however, due to the heavy financial burden associated with their former migrant titles, the respondents failed to achieve their personal goals. All eight respondents, therefore, took a step back from everything and currently pursue full-time retirement.

The remaining four respondents, on the other hand, are still working. Two of them are physicians and professors, one of them is a vice-chairman of a company he had invested prior to his return and the other respondent currently does remote work for the company he was previously employed in. While they still make an active income and have more accessibility than their retired counterparts, all twelve respondents had the same answers to most of the questions asked in this study.

All of the respondents spoke about retirement as a phase that they had expected to enter but did not think of it being so blank. In other words, there is an evident desire to be cared for. For instance, a newborn baby is provided with mandatory vaccinations as per the EPI schedule to ensure their survival and safety. Similarly, a senior citizen is provided with a pension to respect their decades' worth of services in the workplace and provide them financial support from the government. While the children of migrant workers complete their immunization schedule in the hospital they were born in, the returnee senior migrants are nowhere near to receiving any form of financial support through pensions.

Even if a migrant desires to be self-employed or work lightweight jobs after their return, a returnee senior citizen is still a senior citizen. They may have the drive to work but the overall desire is actually to be cared for and acknowledged. Being away from home for over 30 years can be exhausting. Upon return, one may feel lost or like a 'newborn baby' which may disorient them for a while before they can fully adjust. Thus, there is a need to introduce a mechanism by which returnee senior migrants can be occupied while being catered to by the homeland.

8.2 Existing Policy Structures

Bangladesh has always focused on its active migrant population. It only acknowledged return migration and reintegration once the corona virus pandemic led to the influx of returning migrants from all over the world. To control this sudden change in migration patterns, bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), International Office of Migration (IOM), BRAC, the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) have introduced various reintegration projects which currently help resettle Bangladeshi returnees with employment or business opportunities. Unfortunately, these projects only apply to the skilled migrants alone. Additionally, international organizations such as the ILO and IOM may only act as an advisory body for the government of Bangladesh to consider when it comes to taking policy initiatives.

Yet, amidst these projects, the government of Bangladesh had introduced the Universal Pension Scheme in 2023. The way this scheme works is that the beneficiaries must be within the age range of 18 to 50 years, pay a subscription until they reach the age of 60 and then withdraw their 'rightful' pension once they retire (Universal Pension Scheme 2023). For those who have already reached

the age of 50, the scheme considers a subscription payment for 10 years before the citizen is able to withdraw their pension (Universal Pension Scheme 2023). Contributions made toward this pension scheme will be viewed as an investment, making it eligible for tax concessions; however, the monthly pension will be free from income tax (Universal Pension Scheme 2023). To help the insolvent and those of low income threshold, the government will pay part of the subscription (Universal Pension Scheme 2023).

This scheme includes 4 types of subscriptions: (1) Probash (Bangladeshi Expatriates), (2) Progoti (Officers/Employees of Privately Owned Institutions or NGOs), (3) Surakkha (Self-Employed Citizens) and lastly, (4) Samata (Self-Employed, Underprivileged Citizens) and each subscription has individual payment rates by which a citizen can store their income to generate pension for their retirement (Universal Pension Scheme 2023). A subscriber may withdraw only a maximum 50% of their deposit as loan before refilling the subscription (Universal Pension Scheme 2023).

8.3 Potential Policy Outcomes

The Universal Pension Scheme had displayed great potential when it was first enacted, however, it lacked the proper arrangements that may apply to returnee migrants. The biggest problem with this Universal Pension Scheme is the very branding of it as a governmental ‘pension’ plan when its requirements appear to be similar to that of a governmental ‘insurance’ plan instead. Given that a migrant provides many years’ worth of remittances from sending money to their families in Bangladesh, there must be other strategies by which a migrant may receive pension at a senior age by not directly paying a taxable subscription fee. As the focus of this study caters to the highly skilled professional returnees, there are three policy suggestions which may be considered in a broader context. The following options were inspired by personal engagements with experts in the field of reintegration.

8.3.1 Migrant Insurance Scheme

Firstly, a senior migrant may receive some lightweight insurance plans for when they visit hospitals for monthly check-ups, pharmacies for medicine or even grocery stores for regular or monthly purchases. This insurance will provide minor discounts to everyday purchases, which may act as a support mechanism for the retired professional.

8.3.2 Exclusive Migrant Pension Scheme

Secondly, a pension scheme is meant to be a ‘free-for-all-seniors’ scheme. Therefore, senior migrants may receive a monthly pension once they declare their complete retirement to the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment. This pension scheme will be divided into three main tiers as shown in Table 04. In order to be eligible for these pension tiers, the migrant must have their latest salary/wage certification from the company they were employed in. The legitimacy of the certification will be ensured by the companies themselves once the returnee announces their retirement and intent for pension allocation at the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment. Additionally, the pension generated within these three tiers will be highly dependent on the wage/salary itself. For example, if a person earned SR 25,000.00 as his basic salary and another person earned SR 7,000.00, the two returnees will receive a pension based on their individual wages rather than the same amount with an unrealistic, universal approach. Withdrawal of these pensions can be through a ‘migrant card,’ which can only be used by the senior returnee and their spouse.

Exclusive Migrant Pension Scheme	
Tier 01	Last salary over Saudi Riyals 5,000.00
Tier 02	Last salary over Saudi Riyals 1,500.00
Tier 03	Last salary below Saudi Riyals 1,500.00

Table 04: Exclusive Migrant Pension Scheme | Sample of Pension Tiers

8.3.3 Migrant Recreational Facilities

Thirdly, senior migrants who register into the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment for pension can be given a special privilege of internal networking. In other words, registered migrants can be put into categories based on their specializations and these categories can be connected through social media channels such as Facebook or WhatsApp. By doing this, various picnics, excursions, district tours or simply group gatherings can be organized. Not only will this occupy leisure time for the seniors but they can be a major advisory group for national projects or fieldwork for international organizations such as the UN developmental bodies. Instead of hiring senior migrants with a high salary, this recreational group can simply provide advice on various fields of skills and overall development. After all, senior returnee migrants would much

prefer to use their creativity and workplace experiences to help their country occasionally rather than start from scratch and compete with locals at a level-playing field.

8.4 Central Integrated Database & Funding Bodies

While the suggestions above may appear rather attractive, every policy initiative requires a systematic method by which it can be implemented. Two main concerns in this regard, as displayed by the returnees and experts, are: (a) having a central, integrated database and (b) source of funding. Without going into much detail, there are a few possible methods to consider.

8.4.1 Central Integrated Database

To create a central database, it is necessary to start at the doorstep: the expatriate immigration desk. Upon arrival, the returnee migrant may fill in a basic form that asks for their name, age, specialization (government or private sector) and duration of stay (in simple ranges i.e. < 5 years, 5-10+ years, 20+ years or 30+ years). After filling in the form, the migrant shall provide the form to the immigration officer, who shall fill in the relevant details into their own desktop database that shall connect directly to a central database in the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Legitimacy of documents matter, therefore, returnee migrants must display their 'exit' stamp or relevant document to represent the cancellation of their long-term visa. To prevent confusion between visiting and returnee migrants, the immigration officer may ask the migrant prior to providing the form to them. For visiting migrants, their residence's permit shall be used to determine legitimacy.

Once the immigration procedures are complete, the returnee will be asked to visit the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment to either have their personal details registered into a central registry as an employable migrant or a retired migrant to gain access to their 'migrant card' for pension. With this type of database, the migrants may gain access to local employers or seek their rightful monthly pension if they are well into their retirement age.

8.4.2 Funding Bodies

Being the main recipient of remittance dollars, Bangladesh Bank may introduce their own funding body to assist returning migrant workers. The bank may also seek funding from large local traders and merchants, who import/export goods using remittance dollars. Other suggestions include providing incentives to big conglomerates and industries to provide monthly inputs in exchange for something positive. Seeking support from major NGOs or international migratory/labour organizations may prove to be quite helpful as well. Regardless of how the funds come in, these examples have been used to simply prove that there are existing sources the government of Bangladesh may seek assistance from.

The purpose of this chapter is to revisit the underlying policy implications of the key findings in this study. In doing so, I was able to identify some policy initiatives which may facilitate returning to the homeland as more attractive to long-term migrants. The next chapter concludes the overall thesis discussion by identifying the key findings in brief, recommendations to consider, limitations to the study and future direction of studies on return migration in Bangladesh.

Chapter 09| Conclusion

There are many areas to consider for the effectiveness followed by efficiency and consistency of the suggestions made in the previous chapter, but we must start somewhere. For instance, the immigration officer providing the first round of information to the central database must be someone with a background in Computer Sciences or with high technological literacy to ensure a fast yet efficient pace in the airport. Other aspects to consider would involve the need for increased encouragement towards specialization in Bangladesh, being transparent with successes and failures and many more. However, due to the natural limitations of writing an undergraduate thesis, this chapter shall bring the discussion to an end with a reflection on its key findings, limitations and the future areas of research in the context of return migration.

9.1 Key Findings

This thesis was designed to introduce the Highly Skilled Professionals of Bangladesh from the private sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Upon closer inquiry, it was found that the decision to return was tied to circumstantial outcomes such as the coronavirus pandemic, updated Saudization policy 2011 and lastly, the stricter implementation of age restrictions. Prior to reaching that initial conclusion, the reasons for leaving, life in the Middle East and plausible return plans were all discussed in Chapter 04. With respondents ranging from 08 fully retired individuals to 04 actively employed yet returnee migrants, all 12 respondents agreed that without the situation(s) that facilitated their return, they would have never planned to come back whatsoever.

Following the return decision, came the round of encounters in the homeland for the senior returnees. With questions centred around their personal experiences and views on returning after three decades abroad, the migrants shared their personal culture shocks followed by their desire to be recognized by the state. Whether it was through pension schemes or economic reintegration, they would voluntarily join whichever initiative was available to them. However, the only setback they identified was the dishonest and untrustworthy environment amidst the locals in Bangladesh. The discussion takes an in-depth look at the respondents' feedback in Chapters 05 and 06. Although it may appear that the senior returnees were complaining about the desolate state of returnee migrant policy, Chapter 07 provides the underlying implications of their words and turns them into policy suggestions.

As much as the respondents spoke from a personal place of bitterness, I was a witness of the lack of interest in this field during my visit to a workshop on the matter. Despite the efforts of many brilliant minds, the workshop of “Sector Mapping and Business Case Development” for the ILO Reintegration of Migrant Workers’ Project, hosted by the Bangladesh Employers’ Federation (BEF) appeared to focus solely on finding migrant workers through surveys. Rather than surveys, I believe effective solutions may be identified through qualitative methods. After all, migrant workers have stories with hidden meaning. It is only those of the social sciences who may identify these meanings and produce policy-level indicators. While the findings of the workshop were rather intriguing the objective of connecting skilled returnees to local employers in a district-based mechanism was somewhat redundant.

With this reason, a question may arise: What about the other labourers of Bangladesh? Well, if the return is welcoming to its migrant citizens, the rates of economic migration will flow more consistently across all skill categories- regardless of unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled or highly skilled professionals. Not only will it ensure income security for those who may be struggling in Bangladesh due to unemployment or expensive living standards, Bangladesh will be able to place its migration sector in a similar playing field as its ready-made garments sector. After all, systematic care towards returnees will produce scope for upskilling local migrants and producing a stronger, skilled migrant workforce for the future.

9.2 Recommendations

The previous chapter had initiated a detailed analysis of the implications found from the findings of this study. Although that section of this thesis revolves around inspired thinking and mere suggestions, my recommendations for the topic remain on a similar line of thought. Even if I do not attempt to revolutionize the field of return migration in Bangladesh, my recommendations on the matter are as follows:

- (1) Acknowledge senior returnee migrants as senior citizens of Bangladesh
- (2) Establish a formal, digital database for returning migrants in Bangladesh
- (3) Identify ‘Highly Skilled Professionals’ as an individual category of migrants & spread awareness on their importance in local migration discourse
- (4) Avoid generalizing the masses through surveys or quantitative methods of data collection
- (5) Acknowledge the need for long-term migrant knowledge and skills into the local economy

The following recommendations may barely scratch the surface for what is required, however, there must be a starting point. I believe the points above simply suggest the need for a database, discourse generation on the highly skilled migrants and lastly, the acknowledgement of the returnee professionals as an independent and important category.

9.3 Limitations

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, an undergraduate thesis is more limiting than that at a Master or Doctoral level. However, aside from word limits, this thesis faced very specific limitations. The biggest limitation and challenge was the number of respondents. While I managed to gather 12 extremely talented returnee professionals, a higher number of respondents would allow for decreased generalization of data. Additionally, I was only able to connect with one local expert on the topic. Fortunately, I was able to access more experts in the workshop I had attended last-minute; however, I was unable to have an in-depth interview in regards to my own topic. Lastly, I would have preferred more open access to resources such as ministries and migration organizations (local and international) without having to wait for email responses or phone calls. Apart from such challenges, most of my research was conducted rather smoothly- especially when considering the main data I wished to compile for my introduction of the highly skilled professionals from the private sector.

9.4 Future Research Directions

When conducting this research, the area of return migration proved to be rather dense and an extremely potential topic for growth. Some future research directions to consider are as follows:

- 1) Study on the Reintegration of Highly Skilled Professionals (more in-depth research for reintegrating skilled migrants with the help of retired professional migrants)
- 2) Study on the Returning Housewives/Homemakers (a study on the stronghold of the domestic unit, which had allowed the professionals to succeed abroad)
- 3) Study on the Offspring of Highly Skilled Migrants: Is Social Reproduction Sustained in a Cyclic Order? (a study on whether the migrant children seek a similar lifestyle by socially reproducing a migrant identity)
- 4) Study on Breaching the Social Stigma of Economic Migration (a study on breaking past the idea that all economic migrants are blue-collar workers)

In essence, the corona virus pandemic has introduced a growing academic field in Bangladesh, therefore, studying return migration with a critical eye would introduce substantial developmental growth, progression and fuel further advancements within the country.

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Appendix 01 | Consent Form



Participant Consent Letter

Research Project Title:

Return Migration of Highly Skilled Professionals: A Study on Reintegrating Private Sector Professionals in Bangladesh

Purpose

The objectives of the project are:

1. To determine the forces that drive professionals away from their stable jobs abroad.
2. To determine the current status of these professional returnees in Bangladesh.
3. To determine whether international and long-term professional skills can be reintegrated to further economic development in Bangladesh.

Research Institution: BRAC University

Donors: N/A

Consent

I confirm that I have freely agreed to participate in this research project. I was told what was involved, and had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my conversation may be recorded and I agree to the use of my information in this research project. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without reason or cost. I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential. As long as my information is carefully anonymized, I give my permission to use my information for research. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Name:

Name:

Date:

Date:

I confirm that I agree to be bound by this communication.

Appendix 02 | Questionnaire

Set for Retired Highly Skilled Professionals

Demographic Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age? What is your gender?
3. Where do you live? What sorts of assets/capital do you have in the country?
4. How many members are there in your family?
5. Do you have any family members working abroad?

Research Question 01: Why do such accomplished skilled professionals return home?

1. Why did you initially go to Saudi Arabia?
2. What was the highest degree of education that you obtained before you left?
3. How many years did you stay in the Middle East for?
4. When did you return back to Bangladesh?
5. What was the main reason/factor behind your return?

Research Question 02: What are some of the reintegration challenges faced by professionals upon return?

1. If any, what were some of the social challenges you faced upon returning?
2. If any, what were some of the economic challenges you faced upon returning?
3. If any, what were some of the cultural challenges you faced upon returning?
4. Have you ever considered applying for any jobs? If so, in which sector? If not, why not?

Research Question 03: What are they currently doing as retired migrants?

1. What is your current occupational status?
2. What is your current source of income?
3. If the opportunities were available, would you continue to work?

Research Question 04: Can their skills be positively reintegrated into the Bangladesh economy?

1. Which sector do you think can help with the reintegration of returnee migrant professionals such as yourselves?
2. What form of work would be best suited for your age group?
3. Until which age should returnee professionals be allowed to work?
4. Can returnee professionals choose when to retire or should there be a set age limit?
5. Which sector would best profit from returnee reintegration?
6. Do you think that there might be some challenges in making this reintegration process successful? Please elaborate on some examples.
7. What are ways in which we can ensure a smooth reintegration process?

Set for Key Informant Interviews

Demographic Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age? What is your gender?
3. What is your current occupational background?
4. Have you worked abroad before or considered working abroad?
5. How many years have you specialized in migration studies?

Research Question 01: Why do such accomplished skilled professionals return home?

6. Have you ever worked with returnee migrants in your current role?
7. Does your research include the return of highly skilled professionals?
8. What does discourse regarding “Highly Skilled Professionals” look like in your field of expertise?
9. Have you conducted any research on the Bangladeshi professionals in Saudi Arabia?
10. Have you conducted any research on the return of Bangladeshi professionals from Saudi Arabia?
11. Are there any trends or patterns by which we can understand the return of such professionals?

Research Question 02: What are some of the reintegration challenges faced by professionals upon return?

12. Given that professional migrants spend a significant time abroad, do you think that there might be any social, economic or cultural challenges they may face upon return? If so, what are some examples of these challenges?
13. What are some work opportunities that Bangladesh offers for returnee senior professionals, who desire to keep working upon return?
14. What are some policy schemes that Bangladesh offers to support returnee senior professionals, who desire retirement upon return?

Research Question 03: What are the professionals currently doing as retired migrants?

15. Is there a formal database in our country that records the return of professional migrants?
16. If so, what are these senior professionals currently doing in Bangladesh as retired migrants?
17. If not, what would be required to establish a formal, digital database for returnee migrants?
18. In a policy sense, how would you design an economic reintegration scheme that is both feasible and provides the returnee professionals a tool to adjust from a hectic and active life abroad to a more relaxed and easier life back home?
19. In a policy sense, how would you design an exclusive pension scheme that allows for senior returnees to retire with ease upon return?