
SKILLED GAMBIANS ABROAD: HOW MIGRATION AND
EMBEDDEDNESS THEORIES CAN EXPLAIN THEIR MIGRATION
CHOICES

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The research presented in this document addresses an important gap in the management literature in examining the choice Gambian skilled migrants make when they migrate, and then, between remaining abroad or returning home. This is an under-researched issue, despite the fact that qualified migrants represent a growing segment of the global talent pool. This study draws on migration and embeddedness theories as lens through which skilled Gambian migrants' unique characteristics and behaviours can be interpreted and highlighted. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 41 skilled Gambians: 23 current migrants and 18 returned migrants. The findings show that Gambians' decisions to go abroad are mostly driven by the wish to pursue education or look for greener pastures and are often contingent upon their financial capital to travel. Whether Gambian migrants remain abroad or eventually return is dependent upon the degree of home and host job, family, and country embeddedness. The contributions of this research to the migration and management literature pertain to a contextualized understanding of how skilled migrants' home and host embeddedness can be viewed as both a disabler and enabler of the choice to go abroad and then remain or return. Significantly, the findings extend research in suggesting that skilled Gambian migrants may have more opportunities abroad, but once they return, they can play a valuable role in overcoming the human capital deficiency affecting the Gambia's skilled workforce. By understanding the choices skilled Gambians make - when deciding to migrate, to remain abroad or return home - this study addresses the challenge of brain drain currently affecting the country and advances several theoretical and managerial implications.

Keywords: The Gambia, migration, highly skilled migrants, migration theory, embeddedness theory

JEL-codes: J61, J24, F22, O15, O55

A pesquisa descrita neste documento aborda uma importante lacuna da investigação em gestão, ao analisar as decisões dos emigrantes gambianos qualificados de partir e permanecer noutro país ou regressar ao país de origem. Este é ainda um tema pouco investigado em gestão apesar dos emigrantes qualificados representarem um número crescente de trabalhadores globais. Este estudo usa como referencial teórico as teorias da emigração e a teoria de *imersão/embeddedness* nos países de origem e destino, para compreender as características e comportamentos únicos dos emigrantes gambianos qualificados. Utiliza, como material empírico, a análise de conteúdo de 41 entrevistas semiestruturadas feitas a migrantes qualificados da Gambia: 23 emigrantes e 18 regressados. Os resultados deste estudo sugerem que a decisão de emigrar é principalmente motivada pelo desejo de continuar a estudar e procurar melhores oportunidades no estrangeiro, o que é facilitado, em muitos casos, pela capacidade financeira dos indivíduos para financiarem essa mobilidade. O eventual retorno à Gambia dos emigrantes qualificados está associado ao seu grau de *embeddedness* quer ao país de origem quer ao país de destino. Os resultados são relevantes e sugerem que o grau de *imersão/embeddedness* nos países de origem e destino funciona como facilitador e inibidor das escolhas de emigrar, permanecer no país de destino ou regressar. Estes resultados expandem o atual conhecimento sobre o comportamento migratório na Gambia ao revelarem que os emigrantes qualificados, tendo mais oportunidades no estrangeiro, desempenham também um papel crítico ao contribuírem para obviar a deficiência de capital humano que afeta a força de trabalho qualificada da Gâmbia. Além disso, a compreensão das decisões de emigrar, permanecer no exterior ou regressar, por parte dos emigrantes mais qualificados da Gambia responde à chamada atual para defrontar os desafios de gestão de pessoas neste país e evitar o fenómeno de fuga de cérebros que a Gambia enfrenta, o que tem diversas implicações teóricas e práticas.

Palavras-chave: Gâmbia, migração, migrantes altamente qualificados, teoria da migração, teoria da imersão

Códigos JEL: J61, J24, F22, O15, O55

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	v
RESUMO.....	vi
INDEX.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	xiv
I. INTRODUCTION	1
1. Background to the research	2
2. Purpose of the study and research questions	5
3. Justification for the research	5
4. Theoretical framework.....	6
5. Methodology	9
6. Definitions of terms	10
7. Delimitations of scope and key assumptions	11
8. Overview of the document.....	12
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
1. The phenomenon of migration in The Gambia	16
2. Migration literature	18
2.1. Theories addressing the initiation of international migration.....	19
2.2. Theories addressing the perpetuation of international migration.....	23
2.3. Overview of theories of migration applied to the Gambia: What is left behind?	
.....	27
3. Embeddedness literature	29
3.1. Field theory	30
3.2. Job embeddedness theory	31

3.3. Distinction between embeddedness and related concepts.....	34
3.4. Embeddedness theory and international migration	36
3.5. Embeddedness theory and repatriation	40
3.6. Overview of embeddedness theory applied to Gambian Migration: What is added? What is left behind?	43
4. Other factors influencing international migration	46
4.1. Demographic variables	46
4.2. Pre-departure variables: initial intention to return	51
4.3. Post-arrival variables	51
5. Summary	53
III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	55
IV. METHODOLOGY.....	59
1. Methodological approach	59
2. Procedure of data collection	60
3. Interview guide	62
4. Research participants.....	63
5. Data analyses	67
6. Quality assurance.....	77
7. Summary	78
V. RESEARCH FINDINGS	79
1. Why do some skilled Gambians stay home?.....	79
1.1. Local opportunities	80
1.2. Family-related issues	81
1.3. Political reasons.....	82
1.4. Summary.....	82
2.... Why skilled Gambians go abroad?	83
2.1. Feelings and expectations towards migration	83
2.2. Migration Reasons.....	87

2.2.4. Others'	92
2.3. Reasons for choosing the destination country.....	93
2.4. Summary.....	96
3. Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad?	97
3.1. Host country embeddedness	97
3.2. Host family embeddedness.....	102
3.3. Host job embeddedness.....	104
3.4. Home (dis)embeddedness.....	106
3.5. Earlier unsuccessful attempts to return	107
3.6. Summary.....	108
4. Why other skilled Gambians return home?	109
4.1. Self-fulfilment	110
4.2. Feelings and expectations towards return	111
4.3. Home family embeddedness	112
4.4. Home job embeddedness	116
4.5. Home country embeddedness.....	120
4.6. Host (dis)embeddedness	123
4.7. Summary.....	125
5. Why would skilled Gambian migrants return?	126
5.1. Home family embeddedness	126
5.2. Home job embeddedness	129
5.3. Home country embeddedness.....	134
5.4. Feelings and expectations towards a possible return	139
5.5. Summary.....	140
6. Other factors influencing skilled Gambian migration	141
6.1. Demographics.....	141
6.2. Pre-departure variable: Initial intention to return.	143
6.3. Post-arrival variables.....	144

6.4. Summary	145
7. Major findings: A reflexive summary.....	145
VI. DISCUSSION	149
1. Why, under similar circumstances, do some skilled Gambians stay home while others go abroad?	149
1.1. Factors dissuading skilled Gambians from migrating.....	149
1.2. Factors influencing skilled Gambians migration	151
1.3. The relative importance of home-country push factors versus host-country pull factors in explaining Gambians' migration choice.....	154
2. Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return?.....	154
2.1. Factors dissuading skilled Gambians' return.....	154
2.2. Factors influencing skilled Gambians' return	157
2.3. The relative importance of host country embeddedness versus home country embeddedness in explaining migration perpetuation and return	162
3. Other factors influencing skilled Gambians' migration.....	163
VII. CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	168
1. Key research findings and implications.....	168
1.1. Skilled Gambians migration can be dissuaded by.....	168
1.2. Skilled Gambians migration is prompted when.....	169
1.3. Skilled Gambians can be dissuaded from returning by.....	170
1.4. The return of skilled Gambians occurs when.....	170
2. Research limitations	171
3. Suggestions for future research	173
4. Theoretical contributions	177
4.1. Contributions to mainstream migration and perpetuation theories	178
4.2. Contributions to brain drain literature	180
4.3. Contribution to embeddedness literature.....	181

4.4. Contributions on the relative importance of other factors influencing migration	182
5. Managerial contributions.....	183
6. Conclusions.....	185
REFERENCES	187
APPENDICES.....	202
Appendix A – Interview Guide	203
Appendix B – Participants Characteristics	206
Appendix C – Participants Demographics.....	208

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Summary of the Main Migration Theories	28
Table 2 – Migration Studies Addressing the Concept of Social Embeddedness.....	37
Table 3 – Migration Studies Addressing the Concept of Community Embeddedness	38
Table 4- Migration Studies Addressing the Concept of Host/Home Country Embeddedness	39
Table 5 - Embeddedness and Repatriation Factors Influencing International Migration.....	41
Table 6- Embeddedness Theory and Concepts.....	45
Table 7 - Other Personal Factors Influencing International Migration	50
Table 8 - Sampling Grid	60
Table 9 - Demographics of Migrants by Destination Country.....	64
Table 10 - Primary Analysis: Identification of Key Themes (Cont.)	70
Table 11 - Primary Analysis: Identification of Key Themes (Cont.)	71
Table 12 - Primary Analysis: Identification of Key Themes (Final)	72
Table 13 - Summary of the Coding for the Secondary and Final Analysis (Continues)	74
Table 14 - Summary of the Coding for the Secondary and Final Analysis (Continues)	75
Table 15 - Summary of the Coding for the Secondary and Final Analysis.....	76
Table 16 - Reasons to Stay Home: Home Country Pull Factors	79
Table 17 – Reasons to Go Abroad	83
Table 18 – Reasons for Remaining Abroad for Current Migrants	97
Table 19- Reasons to Return Among Returnees	109
Table 20 - Reasons for an Eventual Return for Current Migrants	126
Table 21 - Other Factors Influencing Migration	141
Table 22 – Findings Map	146

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Distribution of Gambian Emigrants by Destination Country	16
Figure 2 - Emigration Rate of Tertiary-Educated Population of Sub-Saharan Africa - 2000....	17
Figure 3 - 'Top 10 Countries of Residence for The Gambian Diaspora - 2019	18
Figure 4 – Key Factors Explaining Skilled Gambians Migration Choices.....	163
Figure 5 – Key Factors Explaining Skilled Migrants' Choices to Stay Home or Go Abroad..	174
Figure 6 – Key Factors Explaining Skilled Migrants' Choices to Remain Abroad or Return..	176

LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acctg: Accounting

AD: Associate Degree

Admin: Administration

BA: Bachelor

D: Divorce

Dev: Development

Econs: Economics

Emp: Employed

F: Female

FOR: Foreign

GDD: Gambia Diaspora Directorate

GM: Gambia

GMB: Gambian

HS: High School

HCE: Home Country Embeddedness

HsCE: Host Country Embeddedness

ICMPD: International Centre for Migration Policy Development

IHRM: International Human Resource Management

IOM: UN Migration Agency

LDCs: Least Developed Countries

M: Male

MA: Master

MD: Married

Mig: Migrant

NA: Not Available

No: Norway

OECD: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PS: Primary School

Ret: Returnee

S: Single

SE: Self-Employed

SW: Sweden

SIEs: Self-Initiated Expatriates

UK: United Kingdom

UN DESA: The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNCTAD: The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UE: Unemployed

US: United States of America

WD: Widow

I. INTRODUCTION

International migration affects both developed and developing countries. A publication from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2019b) estimates that, in 2019, there were nearly 272 million migrants worldwide, of which around 65% were living in developed countries. The report further acknowledges that there has been a rapid growth in the rate of international migration over the past decade. This rise has been higher for highly skilled migrants who move from developing to developed countries (Arslan et al., 2015; Ngoma & Ismail, 2013; Shah, 2011). It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the rise of skilled migration caused by the work shortages experienced in developed countries (Ngoma & Ismail, 2013; Watanabe, 1969), as well as the wage differences and the improvement in employment conditions that persuade highly skilled workers to migrate (Ngoma & Ismail, 2013; Shah, 2011; Shumba & Mawere, 2012). In this context, the main purpose of this research is to explore why skilled Gambians go abroad when others stay (i.e., in a developing African country); and likewise, why many remain abroad while others choose to return.

So far, existing migration and global mobility theories explain why people move and how migration is perpetuated. The migration from developing to developed countries has been explained by a plethora of factors that include job opportunities, better living standards, security, and family. However, the crucial counterfactual question of knowing why many people do so while others, under similar hardship circumstances, choose to stay, remains largely unanswered. Furthermore, it remains unclear why, after leaving and attaining success, some people remain abroad while others return. These aspects have not hitherto been analysed in combination and in context as it is done in the present investigation.

The reason why this research also focuses migrants' choices to remain abroad or return is because some researchers have concluded that these behaviours are often determined by the initial choice to migrate (Caro, Fernandez, & Valbuena, 2016; Güngör & Tassel, 2014; Makina, 2012; Saarela & Rooth, 2012). Previous research addressed migration and repatriation choices separately, which emphasised the mobility reasons (i.e., the factors that prompt migration/repatriation) but disregarded the issues that might deter that mobility. This research, however, addresses migration choices, such as stay versus migrate and remain versus return, in combination and from the viewpoint of skilled Gambian migrants.

1. Background to the research

Population mobility is an enduring feature of humankind and has led to the movement of people across international boundaries. Countries around the world compete for resources, with human capital being at the centre of those resources (Abeuova & Muratbekova-Touron, 2019; Benea-Popușoi & Duca, 2020; Kim, 2018; Lanvin & Evans, 2018). These human resources range from technical niche professions to broader leadership roles. Some examples include the migration of engineers, physicians, scientists, and other highly skilled professionals with university training. When talented people leave their country of birth in search of opportunities abroad, it causes the downturn of the domestic economy (Summit, 2016). The central problem is that highly skilled workers are migrating to more developed countries, therefore leaving their native countries with fewer skilled workers (Bailey & Mulder, 2017; Ngoma & Ismail, 2013; Watanabe, 1969). This skilled migration is called '*brain drain*' and contributes to the human capital deficiency that often characterises poor developing countries (Adeyemi, Joel, Ebenezer, & Attah, 2018; Cañibano & Woolley, 2015; Ullah, Mohamad, Hassan, & Chatteraj, 2019). This has been recognised as a process that impedes human capital development in developing countries (Adeyemi et al., 2018; Artuc, Docquier, Özden, & Parsons, 2015; Cañibano & Woolley, 2015) and that requires further contextualised research. Even the more developed countries are increasingly worried about the problem of highly skilled migration. For example, Britain reports having 1.1 million graduates living or working abroad (Summit, 2016). As the educated youth leaves for work in the richest countries – a phenomenon that is likely to continue – they contribute to the brain gain at the destination but leave a skills deficit in the home countries (Giousmpasoglou & Koniordos, 2017; Hasselbalch, 2019; Marinakou, Giousmpasoglou, & Paliktzoglou, 2016; Swinney & Williams, 2016).

In the past decades, the mobility of the skilled workforce has increased significantly. A recent report from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2019b) estimates the number of migrant workers at 164 million, accounting for 60% of the total 272 million stock of migrants worldwide. The mobility of migrant workers from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to developed countries increased from 26,000 to 2.8 million between 1950 and 2020 (United Nations, 2019). Asian and African migration has driven this mobility, with the number of tertiary educated Africans, for example, now in excess of 2.9 million (UN DESA, 2013). The global stock of skilled migrants is projected to continue rising steadily. The African Union reports that approximately 70,000 talented people emigrate from Africa annually (African Union, 2018). The brain drain in the LDCs remains prevalent and contributes to chronic human resource shortages (Cañibano & Woolley, 2015; Lanvin, Monteiro, & Henry, 2020; Ndikumana, Elo, & Piekari, 2019) because LDCs are constantly losing their most talented individuals (IOM, 2019b). One of the main

challenges in developing countries is to know why the majority of skilled and fresh-out-of-college population is leaving, and how to encourage them to subsequently return, since a significant number of skilled migrants never return to their homeland. In fact, up to one-fifth of students who study overseas do not return home, at least not immediately; and there is evidence that those pursuing masters and doctoral studies are least likely to return (Summit, 2016). Approximately 70% of Chinese students studying abroad never return to their home country and about half of African most talented people live outside Africa (Lanvin & Evans, 2015). Therefore, talent becomes scarce, costly, and harder to retain.

The growing migration of highly qualified individuals has many negative outcomes. Skilled migration from LDCs can promote economic growth in the receiving countries but large outflows are raising concerns about *brain drain*. Brain drain is the process by which a country, through migration, loses its most trained and talented workers (Lanvin & Evans, 2018). This phenomenon is seen as a concern since the most qualified and competent people are leaving the country and taking their expertise to other economies. The nation they leave will endure economic difficulties because those who stay do not have the skills to change things. When a developing country has a high prevalence of brain drain, several negative economic effects occur, such as a shortage of skilled workers, loss of innovative ideas, low confidence in the economy and a perpetuation of the desire to leave. Hence, brain drain is usually viewed as a problem in need of a solution.

Brain drain has been a special concern for small countries with high skilled migration rates. Hitherto, several theories have addressed the benefits and the costs of skilled migration, but their explanatory scope remains limited. For instance, most studies do not account simultaneously for the reasons to stay versus leave. In addition, lessons learned from case studies on the advantages of skilled emigration from larger nations, such as China and India, may not be relevant for smaller countries. Furthermore, a contextualised empirical approach to the migration phenomenon of smaller countries that face high rates of skilled migration remains overlooked. Brain drain can be especially detrimental to an African country with a limited pool of skilled people like The Gambia. Yet, the movement of the best and brightest Africans has received little academic interest.

To address this research gap and provide a contextualised understanding of the brain drain in Africa, notably in a developing country, the Gambia was selected. The reasons for this choice are fourfold. First, Africa and African countries are the ones having the highest brain drain rates in the world (Capuano & Marfouk, 2013), despite being among the regions least studied. Second, the case of The Gambia is of particular interest as it faces one of the highest levels of brain drain in Western Africa (Arslan et al., 2015; Gajigo & Verdier-Chouchane, 2016; UNCTAD, 2012). This is especially true among highly qualified Gambians, as almost two-thirds of Gambian graduates are

studying and living abroad (Arslan et al., 2015; Docquier, 2014). This number will likely increase as the number of highly skilled Gambians abroad tripled in just 10 years (Arslan et al., 2015). Third, The Gambia has a stable political regime and has been a peaceful country since gaining independence in 1965. No major social and political turmoil has uprooted the country for the last 55 years, which distinguishes the country from other African countries experiencing high migration levels. However, the country has a total of 2.2 million citizens and one of the highest rates of skilled migration in the world (World Population Review, 2019). These characteristics make the country the perfect context for exploring skilled migration. Finally, the author is herself a skilled Gambian woman who has frequently faced the difficult decision of whether to stay or leave the country, so skilled Gambian migration is a subject that has personal resonance.

Previous migration research has examined the reasons why people leave their country of origin to move to a new host country (Cañibano & Woolley, 2015; Chand, 2019; Ngoma & Ismail, 2013). Despite there being a lack of economic opportunity and/or political instability, it is worth noting that under similar circumstances many skilled people do not leave (De Haas, 2010; King, 2012). Actually, the number of Gambians graduating in the country has been rising, reaching a high of 6,342 in 2020 (UTG, 2020); while graduates' unemployment rate reached an all-time high of 35.2% in 2018 (GBoS, 2018). In light of these contradictory circumstances, it is intriguing to know why some skilled Gambians go abroad while others stay at home, and why many are returning while others remain abroad (De Haas, 2010; King, 2012).

Recently, there has been increased interest and research in international migration from all academic spheres. However, migration and management literature run separately without informing each other (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013; Dorsch, Suutari, & Brewster, 2013). In the field of International Human Resource Management (IHRM), the literature on migration has been mainly focused on organizational or assigned expatriates and recently on self-initiated expatriates (those individuals who self-initiate a temporary and short stay abroad). Comparatively, less work has been done on migrants and skilled migration (Al Ariss, Koall, Özbilgin, & Suutari, 2012; Berry, 2009; Guo & Al Ariss, 2015). In the management literature, the term 'migrant' is mostly used to name unskilled persons, especially those characterised by a low level of education and originating from developing countries (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013; Castles, Miller, & Gąsior-Niemiec, 2011; Przytuła, 2015). The management literature focuses mainly on the causes of economic migration and leaves the areas of permanence and return almost unaddressed. Furthermore, existing migration theories examine the reasons why people move and perpetuate this international movement but ignore the crucial counterfactual questions of knowing why so many people, under similar circumstances, decide to stay home or return after migrating. This is the research gap that

is addressed by this investigation, in its focus on the experiences of skilled Gambians. A special emphasis is placed on understanding people's choices in context, through the viewpoints of those directly involved: skilled migrants from The Gambia, a developing African country. Skilled migrants are defined by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) as people who possess higher education and move abroad, temporarily, or permanently, for a variety of reasons, and that is the definition this investigation uses.

2. Purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of this study is to understand the migration choices of skilled Gambians and then answer the following research questions:

(1) Why, under similar arduous circumstances, do some skilled Gambians stay at home while others go abroad; and likewise (2) Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return?

This study addresses the experiences of skilled Gambian migrants in context, including migrants who are still abroad as well as those who have returned. The reason why this research focuses so strongly on the choice's migrants make to stay or migrate and the concomitant choices to remain abroad or return home is because previous research suggests these behaviours have similar roots (Caro, Fernandez, & Valbuena, 2016; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Makina, 2012; Saarela & Rooth, 2012). Notably, MacMichael et al. (2016) argue that the original factors that motivate migration also influence the decision to return in the long run. Other studies have also found a positive relationship between the initial intention to go abroad and the decision to remain at the destination (González-Ferrer et al., 2014; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Makina, 2012). According to Makina (2012), the justification for migrating is one of the main variables that determine the length of stay in the host country, in that migrants leaving on purely economic grounds and for a mix of economic and political reasons return more often than those who left for other reasons. Therefore, to extend our understanding of the similarities and differences underlining these processes, several semi-structured interviews were carried out under an interpretivist approach. This gives skilled Gambian migrants and returnees opportunity to provide an individualised and contextualised view of their experiences, which offers new insights into the phenomenon of skilled migration.

3. Justification for the research

Retaining skilled workers is crucial if The Gambia is to become competitive in the world economy (Gajigo & Verdier-Chouchane, 2016; Geli, 2017; Kebbeh, 2013; Ratha, 2016; World Bank, 2007). Recently, The Gambia government has established a Gambia diaspora strategy aimed

at emphasising the importance of skilled professionals. A Gambia Diaspora Directorate (GDD) was established in 2018 to enhance the optimum participation of the Gambian diaspora in national development (Directorate, 2018). Another example is the implementation of a national migration policy with the ultimate goal of making migration a choice rather than an imperative (Directorate, 2018). The first national policy, expected in 2020, aims to enhance the commitment of the Gambian Government to effectively address current migration challenges and meet international migration management standards (Altrogge & Zanker, 2019). The diaspora strategy recommends that The Gambia adopt policies to promote circulation of the brain and skills and to combat the negative effects of brain drain (Directorate, 2018).

As a consequence of brain drain in The Gambia, this research is both timely and relevant for three main reasons. Firstly, and to the best of our knowledge, this is the first attempt to understand the phenomenon of skilled migration in The Gambia, and certainly the first doing so through an interpretivist approach and from the viewpoints of those directly involved. Others, such as Bah (2019), have addressed the local phenomenon but through an economic viewpoint, focusing Gambian economic migrants. Secondly, this study draws upon the theory of embeddedness to examine both work or non-work factors affecting the lives of skilled migrants, paying particular attention to what motivates people to stay where they are (at home and abroad). These different perspectives, on related but distinct migration choices (i.e., go abroad versus stay, remain abroad versus return) have several theoretical implications for the migration and management literatures. While the findings are not generalizable to other contexts and samples, they do provide several insights that add to our existing knowledge of brain drain and skilled migration. Furthermore, they have theoretical implications for migration and embeddedness theories, also addressed in this investigation. Thirdly, this study also has managerial implications as the findings can significantly inform several key stakeholders as to why skilled Gambians stay in the country or go abroad and, for those who leave, why they then remain or might return. Using the results of this research, policy makers may leverage the findings to set up retention programs by addressing factors that typically contribute to skilled migration. This research also benefits both the governmental workforce and private organisations, adding knowledge to policies related to skilled migration as recommendations can (and are) made for retaining or attracting the most qualified workers (Kofler, Innerhofer, Marcher, Gruber, & Pechlaner, 2020; Özden, 2011).

4. Theoretical framework

This study addresses the international migration of skilled Gambians: the initial choice to stay versus migrate and then the choice to remain or return. Numerous studies have been

conducted on why skilled workers leave their homeland (Chand, 2019; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Özden, 2011; Siddiqui & Tejada, 2014; Tabor, Milfont, & Ward, 2015) and international migration has been widely documented (Lee, 1966; Stark, 1991; Wallerstein, 1974). It is also known that skilled workers and educated people are more likely to migrate and adapt to changes, as their level of intellectual and financial capacity allows them to move more easily and find employment abroad (Khoo, Hugo, & McDonald, 2008; Syed, Khimani, Andrades, Ali, & Paul, 2008). The apparent ease by which skilled workers move abroad might then move others to follow their example and leave (Bailey & Mulder, 2017; Castelli, 2018; Chappell & Glennie, 2010; Khoo et al., 2008; McAuliffe, Kitimbo, Goossens, & Ullah, 2018). This research draws upon the migration and embeddedness theories to address skilled Gambians' migration choices. It does so in context and comparatively, underlining the choice to stay versus migrate; and then, to remain abroad versus return.

The research design followed in the present investigation underscores the assumption that the original factors that motivate skilled migration might also influence its perpetuation in the long run. Also, any uncertainty and doubt regarding the original choice to migrate might explain why some skilled Gambians stay home and never leave, and why, once abroad, many others plan to return or actually return. Therefore, several theories on international migration are discussed and detailed in Chapter 2. Lee's push and pull theory which emphasizes the push and pull factors (Lee, 1966); the neoclassical economic model which considers pull factors at the macro and micro level (Ranis & Fei, 1961; Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1976; Todaro & Maruszko, 1987); and the premise of the new economics of migration theory that emphasises families and households in migration decision making (Stark, 1991). Other approaches include the dual labour market theory based on the insatiable need for foreign workers in receiving countries (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016); world systems theory conceptualising the world as a single capitalist system where the periphery provide cheap labour to core nations (Wallerstein, 1974); and network theory, which suggests that the existence of migrant's networks help explain the spread of migration over time (Boyd, 1989; Munshi, 2020). In addition, institutional theory emphasises the role of institutions in the perpetuation of migration (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016), while the cumulative causation theory indicates that migration is a self-sustaining process perpetuated by socio-economic factors (Paredes-Orozco, 2019; Pytel, 2018; Westlund, 2020).

Traditionally, management research on skilled migration has focused on employers' and assigned expatriates, and only recently, on self-initiated expatriates. So far, management research on skilled migration remains scarce (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013; Al Ariss et al., 2012; Habti & Elo, 2019). Management studies primarily employ the term 'migrant' to refer to untrained people, in particular those from developing countries with low education levels (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry,

2013; Przytula, 2015). However, in the past 40 years, the world map pertaining to the global flow of workers has totally changed (Przytula, 2015). On whole, the first wave of global workers occurred in the 1970s–90s and involved international companies transferring staff abroad. The second wave came between 1990–2010 and involved the transfer of human capital mainly from the West to the East. More recently, from 2010–2020, the mobility has occurred vertically and horizontally in a multi-directional way (Przytula, 2015). In this third wave, world migration encompasses both emigrants and immigrants, depending on the direction of the journey (Kubitsky, 2012), and migrants are now from different social and ethnic communities, which make specific migration waves virtually impossible to predict.

Despite being an important element of the international workforce, little management research has focused on skilled migrants. For example, Peltokorpi and Froese (2009) noted that international mobility is an under-investigated phenomenon in Africa and Asia, and Al Ariss (2012) observed that research on skilled migration remains undeveloped. The author argues that fresh studies on the topic would contribute to the development of new ideas and theoretical and methodological perspectives for business and management (Al Ariss, 2012). Furthermore, Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) showed that expatriates with low embeddedness in the host country have a greater urge to repatriate, as they often lack the willingness to stay, while expatriates who become locally embedded are more reluctant to repatriate (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). In spite of the potential interest of this talent pool, management scholars have not dealt with it. Given that the more qualified the workers, the greater the productivity and the better the job opportunities they have (Syed, 2008), understanding the choices of skilled people to either stay or go abroad and then remain or return home is key to international business.

In sum, individuals' choices to stay home, go abroad and then remain or return, are much more complex than it is implied by the migration theories and their explanatory factors, such as comparative benefits, hardship, probability of employment and desire to become successful. In addition to migration theories, people's embeddedness in the home/host country can play an important role in explaining the choice to stay or return after migration. Therefore, the theoretical insights derived from the embeddedness theory may add to the analytical framework provided by migration theories. Migration and embeddedness theories are then used for several reasons. Firstly, the present research stems from a wider understanding of the Gambian context. To our view, Gambians' migration choices cannot be seen as purely economic decisions. Therefore, the present investigation seeks a multidisciplinary approach that examines the interplay of factors that stimulate the international mobility of Gambians within their contexts of origin and destination. It draws on the theories of international migration and embeddedness to understand Gambians' migration. The

migration and perpetuation theories help explain the choices skilled Gambians make to go abroad, while embeddedness theory is better at explaining retention. Each theoretical framework is able to explain a part of the phenomenon that the other cannot, thus the need to combine both migration and embeddedness theories.

Secondly, the present research uses the embeddedness theory to further understand skilled Gambians' choices to stay in the country, remain abroad or return. In particular, embeddedness theory can explain why, in the context of Gambia skilled migration, being embedded in the host country increases the chances of remaining abroad, while being embedded in the home country might decrease skilled migration or increase the chances of return.

Finally, the empirical findings are described and interpreted within the scope of migration and embeddedness theories to depict the phenomenon of skilled-Gambian migration in its present context and through the viewpoint of those individually involved. The combination of these theoretical frameworks is expected to reveal the dynamics that are involved in a specific setting – The Gambia – and that have an impact on the migratory mobility of skilled workers.

5. Methodology

A qualitative approach is employed to answer the main research questions: (i) why skilled Gambians choose to remain in the country or go abroad and, if they do go abroad, (ii) why they then choose to remain or return. This methodology is well-suited to deepening the understanding of a phenomenon of interest (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Neuendorf, 2017; Schreier, 2012).

This research aims to explain the phenomenon of skilled migration in the context of The Gambia by following a qualitative and interpretative approach. The research sample was drawn from a population of skilled Gambians. Some participants had once lived abroad (US, UK, Sweden, and Norway) for a minimum period of two years and have subsequently returned to the Gambia, and other participants are still living abroad. Qualitative content analysis calls for the researcher to indicate when data saturation has been attained, or when further data collection is unnecessary (Saunders et al., 2018). For the purpose of this study, the researcher anticipated an approximate sample size of between 40 to 50 participants. The final sample comprises 41 participants, including migrants and returnees. The data collected was then subject to thematic content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Qualitative and interpretative analysis were drawn upon participants' experiences and subjective meanings to further understand the phenomenon of Gambia skilled migration (Creswell & Poth, 2016). An interpretivist approach underlines differences in meaning and allows for the fact

that people can make differing choices (e.g., when it comes to staying or going abroad) and that their choices may be influenced by their own perceptions of the environment. Therefore, and from the beginning of the data collection, the researcher developed a thorough interview guide and followed a theoretical sampling to continuously compare and contrast the findings that emerged from the data (Gibbs, 2018) respecting the individual views of the skilled Gambians interviewed. As a consequence, a particular emphasis is placed on the detailed description of the participants' viewpoints to tackle new insights and highlight commonalities as well as contradictions. Chapter 3 offers more information on the specific design of this study, which was aimed at providing a comprehensive and integrative understanding of Gambians' skilled migration.

6. Definitions of terms

The terms below are presented to assist the reader in understanding the theoretical frame and context of the present research.

Abroad. Refers to human mobility beyond the physical boundaries of one's country: in or to a foreign country from the same region or overseas (Merriam-Webster, 2020).

Brain-drain. Historically, the term brain drain has been used to describe the emigration of scientists and technologists to North America from post-war Europe (MacKay, 1969). Brain drain is a trend in which a substantial number of educated people emigrate compared to the remaining population. This leads to the depletion of the source's human capital assets, whereas the destinations are subject to 'brain gain' (Bailey & Mulder, 2017). Therefore, brain drain is herein defined as the emigration of educated people from a particular country.

Family reunion. People sharing family ties who join other individuals who have already entered an immigration country under one of the above-mentioned categories (IOM, 2019a).

Gambian. A Gambian is defined as a native or inhabitant of The Gambia, having full citizenship rights (Collins Dictionary, 2018).

Home country embeddedness. The construct of home country embeddedness is herein defined as the forces that embedded an individual to his or her home country (Wang, 2015).

Home country. A country of nationality or of former habitual residence of a person or group of persons who have migrated abroad, irrespective of whether the migration was legal or illegal (IOM, 2019a). In this study, the home country coincides with The Gambia.

Host country embeddedness. The construct of host country embeddedness is herein defined as the forces that embedded an individual to his or her host country (Wang, 2015).

Host country. A country that is 'the destination for a person or a group of persons, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly' (IOM, 2019a, p. 37).

Migrant. UN Migration Agency defines a migrant as ‘a person who moves from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons’ (IOM, 2019a, p. 130). For the purpose of this research, migrant is a national citizen who is living or has lived abroad for at least two years. This minimum stay period was used because it fulfils the required period to be considered a migrant instead of a temporary assignee (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013).

Migration. Herein defined as ‘the physical movement of persons from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a state’ (IOM, 2019a, p. 135).

Return migration. In the context of international migration, return is defined as the movement of persons returning to their country of origin after having moved abroad from their place of habitual residence and crossed an international border (IOM, 2019a). This is the operational definition adopted in this study.

Returnees. It covers individuals who return to their country of citizenship after being international migrants (either short or long term) in another country and “who intend to stay in the country for at least one year” (UN DESA, 1998). This is the operational definition adopted in this study.

Skilled migrants. There is no agreed definition on what constitutes a skilled migrant. It is easy to assume that the term ‘skilled migrant’ is a well-defined concept and that everybody is talking about the same thing, yet this is far from being the case and the term skilled migrant remains a hazy and vague concept (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013). Although differences of opinion persist, there appears to be some agreement to associate the concept of skilled or qualified migrant with the level of educational attainment (e.g. years of schooling or completed secondary/tertiary education), so being a migrant with high education is used here as a proxy for ‘highly skilled’ or ‘skilled migrant’ (ICMPD, 2005).

7. Delimitations of scope and key assumptions

Migration theories have historically proposed various models trying to explain (part of) the puzzle of international migration, and this study assumes that there are many contextual and asymmetrical reasons, in addition to economic motives, to explain why some people migrate while others do not; and likewise, explain why many migrants return to their home country while others remain abroad. Another assumption of the present study is that semi-structured interviews with skilled Gambian migrants will provide new in-depth qualitative insights to answer these questions.

A delimitation of this study is that the data is confined to the perceptions of skilled Gambians who have migrated or returned to The Gambia. These perceptions may well vary from (i) the interpretations of skilled migrants from other African countries; (ii) the views of economic

Gambian migrants; as well as (iii) the visions of those skilled Gambians who have never left the country. Furthermore, the findings offer the reasons why skilled migrants have not stayed in The Gambia, from their own viewpoint, which may not be comparable to the reasons why other fellow nationals chose to stay instead of migrating. These are design delimitations that act as limitations, so a logical research move would be to extend this investigation to locals by collecting data from non-migrants, preferably those highly educated nationals who have never left The Gambia. This would provide more in-depth and comparable knowledge on the reasons for not migrating.

Another delimitation of this research is that the data is restricted to the selected sample and the findings may not extend across generations, as factors relating to voluntary departure and return are also influenced by societal expectations.

Finally, having been a migrant for 20 years, the researcher likely has some conscious and unconscious biases from her experience. Likewise, the selected literature for this study and that is summarised in Chapter 2 may also impart some bias. The migration and embeddedness theories were used as theoretical lens for data collection and interpretation, but other frameworks could have been used that would then depict other insights. However, this theoretical approach was selected because of its scope, conceptual soundness, and contextual adequacy.

8. Overview of the document

Although most existing models of international migration explain the reasons that trigger migration as well as those that push it to continue over time, there is a knowledge gap as to the contextualised reasons for migration choices in developing African countries in general, and The Gambia, in particular. In the Gambian context, studying the phenomenon of skilled migration is both timely and relevant. The country has one of the highest rates of brain drain in the world, so this is a pressing issue. Thus, this research aims to understand the migration choices of skilled Gambians from their viewpoints and then answer the following research questions:

(1) Why, under similar arduous circumstances, do some skilled Gambians stay home while others go abroad?

(2) Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return?

To answer these questions a qualitative research approach is used, and the findings have both theoretical and managerial implications for multiple stakeholders, such as migration and management scholars, policy makers, Gambia government officials and, above all, the skilled migrants themselves.

This document is then organised in chapters and five more chapters follow. Chapter II provides a comprehensive description of the phenomenon of migration in the Gambian context

and a critical evaluation of the migration theories by examining their shortcomings in explaining skilled Gambian migration. The theory of embeddedness is also discussed, including its potential to explain skilled migrant choices of remaining abroad or returning. Chapter III summarises the theoretical framework of this investigation and the research questions. Chapter IV describes the study methodology including the research design, the research participants and the procedures of data collection and data analysis. The research findings are then provided in Chapter V, followed by a discussion of the key findings in Chapter VI. Chapter VII presents the main conclusions within the limitations of this research. This chapter ends with a comprehensive presentation of the theoretical and managerial implications of the study, including suggestions for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

International migration is a phenomenon that has characterised human behaviour throughout history, although the scientific study of this phenomenon is fairly recent. The study of the subject began in the 1880s with the work of Ravenstein (1885) which focused mainly on internal migration and then expanded in the 1930s, coinciding with the period of the Great Depression (Greenwood & Hunt, 2016) that served as an inducement for economists' interest in migration research. Thereafter, scholars from many other academic disciplines, including sociologists, geographers and anthropologists, contributed to migration studies (see Greenwood & Hunt, 2016 for a review).

International migration research has recently expanded in all academic fields. Migration and management literature, however, tend to be separately published without mutual acknowledgement (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013; Guo & Al Ariss, 2015). In the field of international human resource management, migration literature is primarily concerned with organizational and assigned expatriates, and less research has been carried out on migrants (Al Ariss et al., 2012; Berry, 2009; Guo & Al Ariss, 2015). The word 'migrant' is used in the management literature mainly to identify non-skilled people, particularly those from developing countries with a low level of education (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013; Castles et al., 2011; Przytula, 2015), while the term 'expatriate' is preferred to name the other skilled international workers

Conversely, migration literature is empirically richer and scholars have increasingly focused their efforts on trying to understand how migration flows are triggered and perpetuated over time (for a comprehensive review, see Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). The existing literature on migration contains several anecdotal evidence to understand the phenomenon (De Haas, Fokkema, & Fihri, 2015) and, despite the long tradition of research, no single theory has captured all the complexity of migration (King, 2012). The main theories of migration explain the causal stimuli for (international) migration or for its perpetuation across time, while management and organization studies have paid little attention to the subtleties of migration (Al Ariss et al., 2012). Overall, earlier research has focused mainly on the causes of outward migration leaving the experience of returning migrants under-examined. To address this research gap, scholars have been challenged to build a more robust and more nuanced migration theory (King, 2012).

This chapter presents an overview of the migration phenomenon in the Gambian context, followed by a synthesis of the theories of migration. The chapter follows on with a review of the embeddedness theory that frames this research, as well as a comprehensive review of other factors (i.e., personal, professional) also influencing migration choices. The chapter ends with a summary of the most relevant theoretical contributions to the understanding of skilled Gambians' migration.

1. The phenomenon of migration in The Gambia

The experience of migratory movements in West Africa is not a recent phenomenon (Bossard & Trémolières, 2010; Yaro, 2008), and The Gambia has been witnessing a steady rise in the movement of emigrants to countries all over the world. The Gambia has a long history of emigration due to its geographic location. Situated in the western part of Africa, the Senegambia region was the main transit point for triangular trade between the 15th and 20th centuries (Yaro, 2008). During this era, millions of slaves were forcefully migrated to the Americas. In the period of Gambian independence (the 1960s), the United Kingdom became one of the main countries of destination, but nowadays Gambian emigrants are found in many regions of the world (Kebbeh, 2013), as shown in Figure 1.

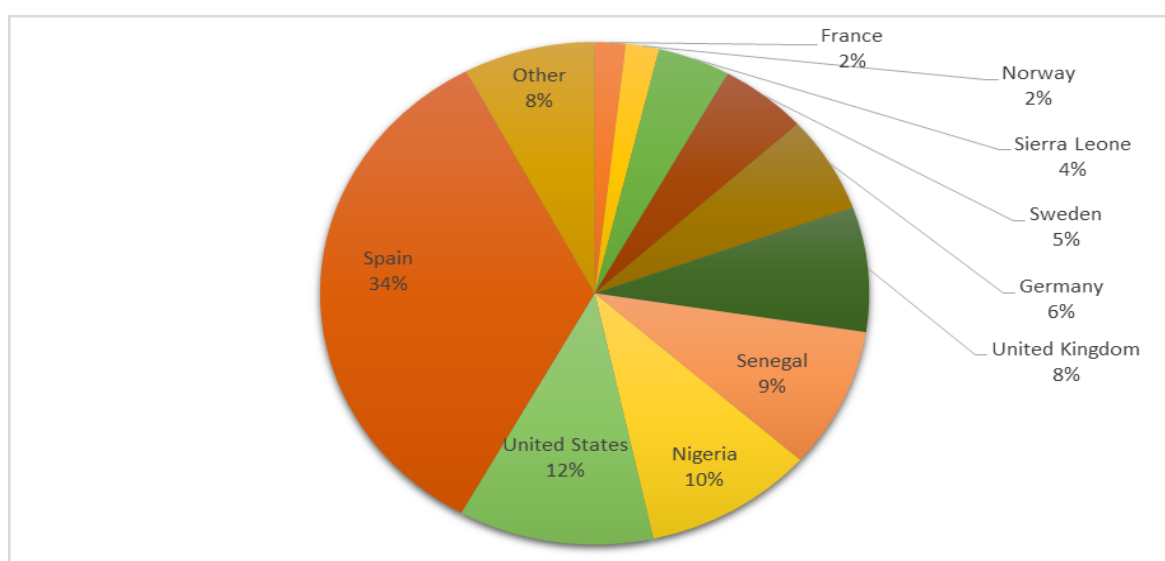


Figure 1 – Distribution of Gambian Emigrants by destination country

Source: (Kebbeh, 2013, p. 4)

Although small in comparison to the migration rates of other countries from the Sub-Saharan Africa region, The Gambia's net migration rate in 2015 was the tenth highest in Africa. In 2015, The Gambia's stock of emigrants was approximately 90,000, representing around 5% of the total country population (IOM, 2017). According to the OECD (2015), The Gambia is characterised by low qualification levels and high unemployment rates, thus resulting in increased emigration from all segments of the population. In 2010, Spain was the leading receiving country with a community of 22,168 Gambian emigrants representing 34.15% of the Gambian migrant population (Kebbeh, 2013; Montañola Sales, Casanovas Garcia, Kaplan Marcusan, & Cela Espín, 2014). Following Spain, the US represented the second most popular destination country, officially receiving 7,500 Gambian emigrants in the year 2010, although this figure is nearly half the unofficial

estimates (Kebbeh, 2013). According to Docquier and Marfouk (2006), in the year 2000 The Gambia had the second-highest emigration rate of tertiary-educated population (63%) in Sub-Saharan Africa and was ranked among the top 15 nations worldwide (IOM, 2017). Figure 2 represents this trend.

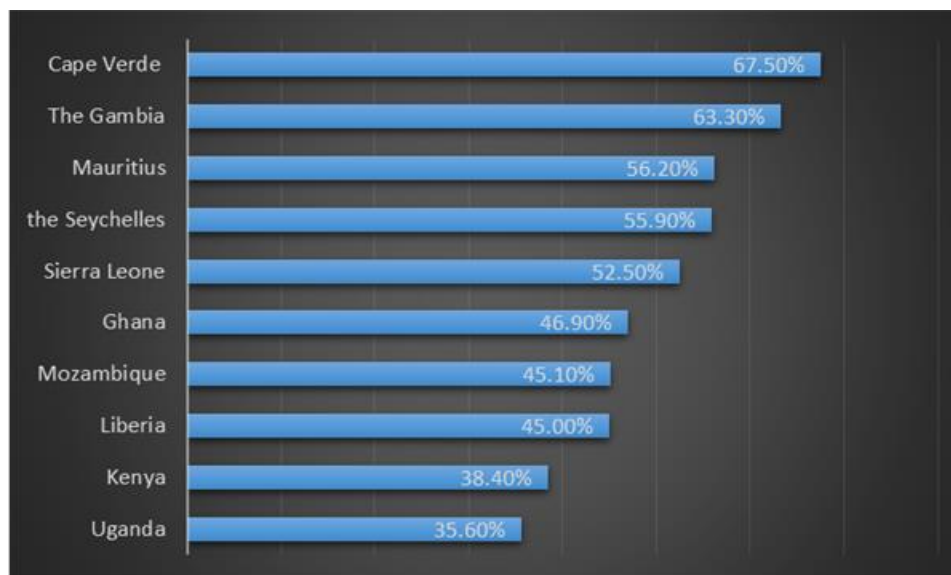


Figure 2 - Emigration Rate of Tertiary-Educated Population of Sub-Saharan Africa (Top 10 Countries) in the year 2000.

Source: Docquier and Marfouk (2006).

However, the OECD's figures differ widely: the emigration rate for tertiary educated Gambians to OECD countries is 28.3%, although that rate increased by 40% between 2000 and 2010 (OECD, 2015). The number of highly educated Gambians in OECD countries has, during the same period, increased by 138%. Such figures show that Gambia has a severe brain drain. In 2015, The Gambia had the fifth-highest rate of emigration (out of 21 countries) among highly educated people in the region and the fifteenth largest rate in the world (OECD, 2015).

A recent United Nations report (2019) projected the total stock of Gambian migrants living abroad to be 215,406. With a population of 2.2 million, The Gambia migrants' population constitutes 9.2% of the total population. The migration rate of the Gambia is twice the global average, at 3.5% (UN, 2019). In addition, the Global talent index (2020) estimates the migrant stock of the Gambia in 2017 at 64.49%. Further, according to the UN DESA report (2019), the proportion of working-age Gambian migrants (i.e., aged 20-64 years) was estimated at 60.2% in 2000, and increased gradually, reaching 66.3% in 2015 and 70.2% in 2019. These numbers are astonishing given that illegal migrants are automatically included in the estimated stock of Gambia migrants but the Gambians who were raised and bred abroad are largely excluded. Furthermore, UNICEF reports that almost 0.5% of the Gambian population emigrates annually – which is

Africa's highest rate of migration (EEAS, 2017). This trend has been increasing and is likely to continue in the future.

Ten countries constitute the most popular destinations for Gambian migrants: US, UK, Sweden, Spain, Norway, Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Finland, and Denmark. In the year 2019, the US became the leading destination, hosting 23% of Gambian migrants, followed by Italy and Spain, each receiving 19%.

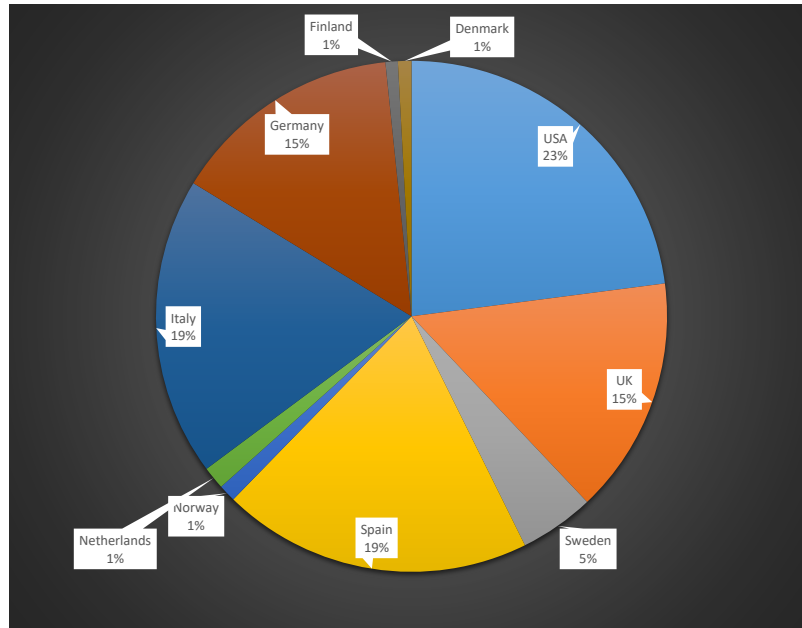


Figure 3 - Top 10 Countries of Residence for the Gambian Diaspora - 2019

Source: Kebbeh (2019)

To date, there are no official statistics on the exact number of Gambian migrants who return. It is known that since 2017, the International Migration Organization (IOM) has helped a total of 5,000 Gambian migrants to return home. Although this number refers mainly to irregular migrants, the brain drain in Gambia are unlikely to change in the near future. Therefore, learning what contributes to the constant emigration of skilled people from The Gambia is timely and relevant.

2. Migration literature

Several theoretical models have been developed with the aim of explaining international migration. Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana (2016) and Schoorl (1995) categorised these theoretical approaches in two groups: the first includes the theories that conceptualise how

international migration originates, and the second addresses the models that explain the continuation of migration. These theoretical frameworks are summarised below.

2.1. Theories addressing the initiation of international migration

These are theoretical approaches that provide an overview of how international migration begins. Whilst they use different approaches, these frameworks all attempt to explain what motivates the migration process, using different concepts, assumptions, and levels of analysis. These theories include: (i) the push-pull model, (ii) the neoclassical macro-economic theory, (iii) the neoclassical micro-economic theory, (iv) the new economic theory, (v) the dual labour market theory, and (vi) the world systems theory.

2.1.1. Push-Pull Model

The push-pull theory is a well-known theoretical framework (Lee, 1966) that tries to explain the motives for migration. Under this model, migration is seen as a consequence of negative factors that push people to leave their home country, blended with positive factors that pull them towards a host country (Schoorl, 1995). The push factors encompass various hardships experienced in the countries of origin while the pull factors consist in the perceived comparative benefits offered by the host countries. The key assumption of this theory is that migrants move from less developed to more developed countries, although it is the amalgamation of the pull and push factors that determines the destination as well as the rate of migration (Portes & Böröcz, 1989). This model has been criticised for not being able to explain the uneven distribution of migration flows within regions or their destination (Schoorl, 1995). Although push-pull theory is limited in its scope, it is still a popular concept in migration literature (De Haas, 2008, 2010; McDowell & De Haan, 1997).

Regarding the Gambian context, this model would predict that several push factors associated to the local context - such as the high unemployment rate and low remuneration - as well as some pull factors from the destinations (e.g., US) - such as the higher quality of life, higher wages, and more work opportunities - would explain the high migration rate of Gambians to the US and other destination countries. Yet this theory leaves unexplained why, under similar socioeconomic circumstances, some Gambians do not migrate at all and why others migrate to destinations such as Spain, where the unemployment rate was as high as 20% in 2016 and remains among the highest in Europe.

2.1.2. Neoclassical macro-economic theory

Considered as one of the earliest theories of migration, the neoclassical macroeconomic model was developed to explain how labour migration helps achieve economic development

(Lewis, 1954; Porumbescu, 2018; Ranis & Fei, 1961; Todaro, 1976). According to this model, labour migration is caused by differences in wage rates as well as differences in supply and demand for labour between host and home countries. This model states that the migratory flow between two regions will end with the elimination of wage differentials. International migratory flow is caused by the differences in wage due to migrants leaving low-wage countries to look for work in higher-wage ones. Higher wage countries are characterized by a shortage of labour and excess of capital whereas low-wage countries tend to have high labour supply and capital scarcity. This theory posits that a situation close to equilibrium will be achieved when countries with high wages experience a change in the opposite direction, with labour multiplying and wages falling (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). The main difference between this model and the push-pull theory is that, rather than focusing on individual factors, the neoclassical macro-economic theory focuses on pull factors at the macro level.

Applying the neoclassical macroeconomic theory to the Gambian situation, one would logically assume that Gambians would migrate to higher salaried destinations. This explanation holds good for migration to countries like the US and UK but can hardly explain the migration of Gambians to Kenya and Senegal, where the wage differential is negligible. The neoclassical theory can also assist in explaining the number of Gambians taking up permanent residence abroad, since neoclassical economists argue that people emigrate permanently to increase their earnings in the receiving countries.

Under this approach, return migration is either an anomaly (Cassarino, 2004) or an illustration of a trend towards labour market equilibrium between any given regions. In addition to possible macro level imbalances, there are other reasons that may lead Gambian migrants to go abroad and then choose to remain or return to the home country and so this theory fails to fully explain why Gambians choose destinations with low wage differentials and why, where there are continuing high wage differentials, some Gambians choose to return home, thereby moving back to a lower wage country.

2.1.3. Neoclassical micro-economics theory

Wages are considered an important cause of migration, but they do not account for the complexity of the migration process. Individuals are rational actors that decide to migrate based on a cost and benefit analysis leading them to expect a positive net gain from the move (Porumbescu, 2018; Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1969; Todaro & Maruszko, 1987). Based on this theory, the choice to migrate and the selection of a destination depend on the probability of employment, expected earnings and individual characteristics like education, experience, and language skills. In the case of wide wage gaps, migration flows may be limited when ‘would-be migrants’ expect a convergence

of earning differentials in the future (Schoorl, 1995). In addition to the neoclassical macro-economic approach, this theory stresses that migration is an investment choice that may lead to an upgrading of the migrant's human capital.

Applying this theory to the Gambian context, one would expect that, given the probability of employment in the destination country (e.g., US/UK) and the wage differential, Gambian international students and migrants would be expected to remain abroad. This theory adds to the neo-classical macro-economic views on the importance of net returns in the making of migration choices. Therefore, it helps explain why Gambians would migrate to destinations that have more employment opportunities, high wage differentials and/or share some cultural ties, such as language. This approach explains the Gambian migration to the UK and US but can hardly do so for the recent migration to Spain, a country with no cultural ties and no obvious employment opportunities. This theory also overlooks the reasons why some Gambians return despite a continuing earnings gap between host and home countries, although it suggests a potential return gain from the fact that the migrant's human capital will have been upgraded.

2.1.4. The new economics of migration theory

The new economics of migration model has been developed to address some of the hypotheses of the neoclassical perspective (Stark & Bloom, 1985). It has moved the emphasis of migration research from the individual to the family level (Greenwood, 2016; Stark, 1991). This model proposes that in the case of migration, families and households are the decision-makers. Their decision is made to maximize the expected income, minimising risks, and eliminating restrictions of market failures (Lauby & Stark, 1988; Stark & Levhari, 1982; Zhao & Hannum, 2019). So, when a member is sent on a migration journey, families not only make new investments, but they also diversify the sources of income. This theory is mostly used to study the impact of family remittances by providing an appropriate framework. For instance, a low-income household will be willing to send one of its members abroad to avoid or minimise the risk to family income (Nzima, Duma, & Moyo, 2017; Stark, 1991).

The new economics of migration theory attempted to examine the causes and outcomes of migration together. However, the theory has been challenged for being biased towards home countries and for its limited applicability related to the difficulties in separating effects caused by market imperfections from the effects of other variables, such as income or employment (Kurekova, 2011).

According to this theory, Gambian families would decide to send at least one of their members to a more developed country with the hope of finding employment and maximising remuneration. The same explanation would apply to international studying, in that families would

be investing in the future and potential income of the members sent abroad for studying. However, such a micro-level approach fails to explain why, under similar arduous socioeconomic circumstances, some families keep their members in The Gambia while others send them studying and/or working abroad. It also fails to explain why some Gambian migrants return home while others stay in the new country.

2.1.5. Dual labour market theory

The dual labour market model suggests that human mobility is determined by the perpetual demand for labour that characterises developed countries (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). Pioneered by Piore (1979), this model assumes that conditions of demand rather than supply are the main drivers of international labour migration. According to this theory, migration is not caused by low wages or high unemployment in the sending countries, but rather by an insatiable need for foreign workers in the receiving ones. The inexorable demand for labour is caused by the demography of labour supply, motivational issues, the structure of the labour markets and segmentation (Schoorl, 1995; Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). This model is very useful in explaining migration trends from Europe to the US during the post-war era but its focus is restricted to the pull factor (Hagen-Zanker, 2008) and does not provide a deep analysis of migrants' decision making.

Based on this theory, Gambian emigrants would only migrate to industrialised countries having a high and insatiable labour demand, which leaves unexplained the migration to Spain or to less industrialised places like neighbouring African countries.

2.1.6. World systems theory

Beginning with the study of Wallerstein (1974), the world systems model tries to understand the process of human mobility from a global perspective. Due to the fact that wealth is distributed unequally among nations, global capitalism expands to reinforce the balance of power that characterises the world economic order. Based on this view, world systems theory sees international migration as a natural consequence of the formation of a capitalist market in the unindustrialised countries caused by a structural change in world markets and the rise of new production methods (Arango, 2018; Chase-Dunn & Hall, 2016; Silver, 2003; Wallerstein, 1974). This model conceptualises the world as a single capitalist system, where the periphery or less developed countries provide cheap labour to the core or developed nations. According to this theory, migration choices are not solely motivated by the individual's choice but rather depend on the

international movement of labour, which follows the international flow of goods and capital, but in the opposite direction (Arango, 2018; Wallerstein, 1974). Thus, the infiltration of the capitalist economic model into peripheral societies is a catalyst for international migration. Another assumption of the world systems theory is that international migration is more likely to occur between past colonial powers and their former colonies due to cultural, linguistic, and other shared linkages.

For instance, in the Gambian context, this model can explain the brain drain of Gambians to the UK, its former colonial ruler; however, it does not explain the migration to other destinations like Spain or Sweden. Due to ties with the colonial past, Gambians learn English and take British style degrees and so it would be more likely for a Gambian migrant to go to the UK than to any other destination. According to world systems theory, the international movement of labour follows the international flow of goods and capital, but in the opposite direction. Based on this model it would be difficult to explain why Gambians would prefer to migrate to neighbouring countries like Senegal or Nigeria whose wage differentials are not high and where there is no obvious flow of goods and capital. In the same vein, the model cannot explain how Spain becomes one of the main destinations for Gambian emigrants given that there have been no colonial or cultural ties between the two countries, nor do they have geographic proximity. However, this can be somewhat explained by one of the other assumptions of the world systems theory, namely that migration has little to do with wage and employment differentials among countries and more with the checks and balances between the industrialised and least industrialised markets.

To sum up, the above-named models explain why migration happens by focusing on the macroeconomic and microeconomic causes. In so doing, these theories help explain the motives of migration but fail to explain migration perpetuation and do not answer specific issues related to the Gambian context. Matters relating to migration perpetuation are addressed by a separate group of migration theories.

2.2. Theories addressing the perpetuation of international migration

Migration can be triggered by several macro and micro causes, but there may be other reasons to perpetuate migration over time. Although different reasons have been advanced in trying to understand migration perpetuation, new conditions and independent causes of migration have emerged. The emergence of these conditions has led to the development of new theories designed to analyse and understand this phenomenon (Arango, 2018; Fawcett, 1989; Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). The following theories try to explain why migration perpetuates across time

and include: (i) the network theory, (ii) the institutional theory, and (iii) the cumulative causation theory.

2.2.1. Network theory

The network theory of migration was formulated by Boyd (1989) and Massey et al. (1987) as a sociological approach to migration based on migrant networks. A migrant network can be defined as a combination of interactive relationships that link migrants with their community and build a sense of kinship which influences the decision to migrate. According to the network theory, migrant networks are connections that link migrants and their compatriots in the sending and receiving countries through personal relationships and a shared community of origin (Arango, 2018; Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). The network theory attempts to explain the spread of migration over time by the existence of migrant networks (Skrbiš, 2008). This model is based on the assumption that the process of migration can be explained within the context of the relationships between the countries of origin and destination, and with special reference to the various roles families, friends and other contacts play in the migration process (O'reilly, 2012). This model assumes that migrant networks may assist 'would-be migrants' in their decision to migrate by providing them with the information and support necessary to find employment or housing. Networks can stimulate an increase in migration as they tend to expand, thereby reducing the costs and risks of movement. Proponents of this theory envisage that migrants' choice of a destination and their uneven distribution across countries are likely influenced by the location of a *diaspora* community (Arango, 2018; Dustmann & Glitz, 2005; Serrano-Domingo, Cabrer-Borrás, & Requena-Silvente, 2020).

So far, the network theory of migration has been used to explain many visible aspects of migration and can apply, to a certain extent, to the Gambian context. For instance, Spain was found to be a leading destination country with the highest rate of Gambian migrants by 2010 (Kebbeh, 2013; Montañola Sales, 2015; Montañola Sales et al., 2014). The kinship, friendship and shared community of origin that interconnect Gambian migrants may explain their presence in Spain, a country that has no cultural ties with the home country. Besides, these migrant networks can assist in the migration and settlement of a Gambian diaspora in various destination countries including Sweden and the US, among others. Today, there are dozens of Gambian diaspora associations abroad (Kebbeh, 2013). Prominent among them are: The Gambian American Association of Washington DC, Seattle Gambian Association, Gambia United Society (UK), and the Gambian Association in Finland, to name a few. The aim of these diaspora associations is to address the welfare of their communities (Kebbeh, 2013) by financing the travel abroad, helping to find a job or an accommodation, among other ways of support. While this theory can explain the reasons

leading to the choice to migrate it cannot fully account for the reasons why some migrants return, and others do not. While the home networks can play a decisive role among returnees, one needs to understand which influence is played by home versus host connections, and how that influence becomes apparent.

2.2.2. Institutional theory

Similar to the network theory, the institutional theory claims that migration is an ongoing process that will continue to spread regardless of the original motives to migrate (Ravuri, 2014). As a result of international migration, a variety of institutions and organisations are formed to capitalise on the gap between employers in the host countries and potential migrants in the home countries. With the rise of organisations to encourage the flow of migrants, the international movement becomes more established and the process of migration perpetuates, despite the original need that initiated it (Ravuri, 2014).

According to Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana (2016), there is a huge gap between the large number of people in industrialised countries looking for jobs and the small number of visas available to migrants. This has led to the establishment of many profitable and non-profit organisations specialising in migrant/employer issues. Therefore, the ongoing process of migration leads to the escalation of international migration with the emergence of private and voluntary institutions devoted to assisting potential migrants (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). An institutional theory of migration can be viewed as a systemic philosophy encompassing all the mechanisms undertaken legally and illegally by profit and non-profit organisations to continue the flow of international migration. Such organisations offer resources and assistance with travel, labour contracts, documents, residences, or legal advice. These organisations are often embedded in migrants' networks. While most non-profit organisations emphasise migrants' humanitarian aspects, profit-seeking entities are more likely to engage in illegal or lucrative activities by, for example, promoting clandestine cross-border migration, counterfeiting legal and travel papers, arranging marriages between migrants and citizens or legal residents, and providing credit facilities at a high rate of interest – and all in return for fees (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). In addition, this model claims that through smuggling manoeuvres, such as the provision of false documents and labour contracts, the migration flow will continue to perpetuate and sustain itself even after the cause that originally initiated it ceases (Ravuri, 2014).

The institutional theory is particularly important in attempting to explain why international migration persists. In the context of The Gambia, the continuous flows of international migration strengthen material ties with Gambian migrants' host countries. When travel between The Gambia and receiving countries like the UK rises, it creates low-cost and regular flight connections and this

reduction in the cost of travelling may then lower the threshold at which potential Gambian migrants make their decision. In addition, these organisations can also cooperate with Gambian migrants who have already settled. For example, non-profit organisations help migrants integrate into the host society because these connections reduce the psychological cost of migration. While this theory can explain the reasons behind the choice to migrate, the institutional theory alone cannot explain the choice of the individual migrant to return or remain in the host country.

2.2.3. Cumulative causation

The model of cumulative causation of migration was first developed by Myrdal (1957) and later extended by Massey and colleagues (Massey, 1990, 1999; Massey et al., 1993; Massey, Goldring, & Durand, 1994). The main tenet underlying the cumulative causation theory is that through the accumulation of social capital (i.e. connections, information, and skills necessary to prepare one's future migration), members of a community may gain knowledge and resources related to migration via the information provided by family members and friends who have already migrated (Massey, 1999). As a result, the phenomenon of migration may grow to become more popular than at the start, through a process called cumulative causation, which increases future migration (Arango, 2018; Massey, 1990; Myrdal, 1957). As the migrants' networks expand in a community, a culture of migration tends to develop and become accessible to all sectors of the population (Espinosa & Massey, 1997). For example, sending countries are mostly affected by lower demand for labour caused mainly by the emergence of new production methods and arable land vacated by migrants. The increasing rate of migration may alter the distribution of the local income, thus resulting in higher returns. Based on this model, once migration is triggered it tends to persist into the future by adjusting to the circumstances in both home and host countries. In addition to the existence of migrant networks and supporting institutions, international migration is self-sustaining. According to the cumulative causation theory, this trend is likely to continue until a saturation point is reached when the home country witnesses an increasing labour scarcity and a very low migration potential. From this point onward, migration flow may start to decrease.

This theory states that migration is a self-sustaining process and identifies socio-economic factors that perpetuate the phenomenon of migration. Migration is affected cumulatively by factors such as migration culture, migrant networks, and their uneven distribution, as well as the profiling of migrant jobs (Arango, 2018; Massey, 1999). Applying the cumulative causation theory of migration to the Gambian context, one would assume that the self-sustaining nature of migration would cause more Gambian migrants to go abroad. According to Massey and Zenteno (1999), any act of migration may create social capital among migrants' family and an entourage that will encourage others to migrate, thereby creating more social capital, which in turn would produce

more migration. Based on this theory, the more Gambians emigrate and settle abroad, the more likely it is that other Gambian citizens will choose to migrate.

However, experience has shown a reverse situation (such as return migration) which is seen as a counter-stream (Gmelch, 1980). It is worth noting that the above theory can accommodate the return as long as other Gambians start the returning process, which in turn would put in motion other causal links. According to Haug (2008), a migrant's choice to return is affected by the behaviour of other family members. For example, within a household, every case of return migration increases the propensity of return among the remaining members. As these occurrences happen in almost all households, Gambian migrants also can be affected by this return movement and decide to return also. Therefore, this model helps explain Gambian migration as well as migrants' return. However, further contextualised analysis is required to understand the 'outliers'; that is the individuals who stay in the country and persist, immune to the migration of their family members and acquaintances, as well as those who remain abroad despite the return of other fellow citizens.

2.3. Overview of theories of migration applied to the Gambia: What is left behind?

The following table summarises the main migration and perpetuation theories of migration, based on Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana (2016). It lists an interpretation of the questions that remain unanswered regarding the migration of skilled Gambians. Overall, the existing models explain the reasons that trigger migration as well as those that push it to continue over time. However, when these theories are applied to the Gambian context, they only offer a set of partial explanations drawn from different disciplines (Parella & Petroff, 2020; Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). Therefore, no theoretical model is simultaneously comprehensive and detailed enough to explain the reasons and mechanisms through which, under similar arduous social and economic circumstances, some skilled workers stay home while others go abroad, and likewise, why many remain abroad while others return. The choice to stay as well as the choice to return may be influenced by a migrant's embeddedness in the home country, which is addressed by the embeddedness theory. Unlike traditional migration theories, the theoretical insights derived from the theory of job embeddedness may provide another analytical framework for further exploring national immobility as well as migrants' retention and return.

Migration Theories – Initiation				
Theory	Main Authors	Main assumptions	Help explain	Leaves unanswered
Push-Pull Theory	Lee (1966); Schoorl (1995)	Migration is a consequence of negative factors that push people to leave their home country, blended with positive factors that pull them to a host country.	Migration from less developed to more developed countries (such as The Gambia to the US)	(1) Migration flows among less developed countries; (2) Why some Gambians migrate when others do not in the presence of equal push-pull factors.
Neoclassical Macroeconomic Model	Todaro (1976); Ranis & Fei (1961); Lewis (1954)	Labour migration is caused by differences in wage rates as well as supply and demand for labour between host and home countries	Migration from developing to developed countries (can explain the departure to countries like US/UK)	(1) Migration decision to low wage differentials countries; (2) Why some Gambians stay abroad while others return home, despite high wage differentials.
Neoclassical Microeconomic Theory	Sjaastad (1962); Todaro (1969); Todaro & Maruszko (1987)	The decision to migrate and the choice of a destination depend on the probability of employment, expected earnings and individual characteristics	Migration to countries where the probability of employment is high or that share cultural ties (e.g. US or the UK).	(1) Migration to a country with no cultural ties (Spain); (2) Why some Gambians remain abroad while others move
The New Economics of Migration	Stark (1991); Stark & Bloom (1985); Lucas & Stark (1985); Taylor (1999)	The decision to migrate is made by families and households.	Migrants choice of destination and the impact of family remittances	(1) Why not all Gambian families send abroad a family member; (2) Why Gambians return home while others remain abroad
Dual Labour Market Theory	Piore (1979)	Human mobility is determined by the perpetual demand for labour that characterizes developed countries	Migration trends from less developed to industrialized countries	(1) How less industrialized countries are destinations for Gambians (e.g. Senegal, Nigeria); (2) Why Gambians return from industrialized countries
World Systems Theory	Wallerstein (1974)	Migration is caused by the capitalist system, where the periphery provides cheap labour to the core nations.	Why the US becomes a destination country for Gambian emigrants	(1) Why Gambians migrate to neighbouring countries whose wage differentials are not high; (2) Why Gambians return from high wage
Migration Theories – Perpetuation				
Network Theory	Massey et al. (1993)	The spread of migration over time is caused by the existence of migrant networks.	Migrants' choice of destination.	(1) When/how the first diasporas are build; (2) Why some Gambians would return when other fellow citizens from the same Diaspora do not.
Institutional Theory	Massey et al. (1993)	The on-going process of migration leads to the emergence of institutions devoted to improving the treatment of migrants.	The existence of institutions that help perpetuate the flow of migration (e.g. Gambian diaspora associations).	The migrant's decision-making to return or stay in the host country.
Cumulative Causation	Myrdal (1957); Massey (1990)	Migration is a self-sustaining process perpetuated by socio-economic factors.	How factors such as migration culture, migrant networks, location and the profiling of migrant jobs sustain	Why the self-sustaining nature of migration do not cause some Gambians to stay abroad.

Table 1 - Summary of the main migration theories

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the literature review

3. Embeddedness literature

The concept of embeddedness is a theoretical construct that has fascinated scholars in various disciplines in recent decades. Embeddedness denotes that economic behaviour and outcomes, such as all social measures and effects, are influenced by the dyadic interactions between actors and the overall network structure of relationships.

In the fields of economics and socioeconomics, embeddedness refers to the extent to which non-economic institutions limit economic activity. As part of his substantivism philosophy, the concept was coined by the economic historian Karl Polanyi. Polanyi argued that the term 'economics' has two meanings. The formal meaning, employed by neoclassical economists today, refers to economy as the logic for rational action and decision-making as a rational option for alternative uses of limited or scarce means, known as optimisation (Polanyi, 1944). The second substantive meaning does not include rational decision-making or scarcity; it applies to how people interact in their social and natural environments. The substantivism approach is seen as a mechanism that may not include optimising resources, but an adaptation to the environment and material circumstances. In such cases, economic operations like supply are embedded in non-economic relationships, religious and political structures. In other words, every economic activity is always immersed in social networks i.e., it cannot be isolated from society as a whole. Polanyi's ideas were widely adopted and discussed in sociology (Plattner, 1989).

The concept of embeddedness came to the fore when the economic sociologist Mark Granovetter argued against the economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi. Granovetter then further developed the concept of embeddedness, arguing that economic activity in market economies is not disembedded from society as economic models would imply. By researching ethnic Chinese business networks in Indonesia, Granovetter was able to show how the economic agency of individuals was embedded in strong personal relational networks (Granovetter, 1985). The concept of embeddedness has since been widely used to illuminate and justify economic behaviour in many different contexts. Many researchers have criticised Granovetter for a too limited conception of the idea of embeddedness and have extended the literature with additional forms of embeddedness, such as social, relational and structural embeddedness (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Salaff, 2009; Spoonley & Meares, 2011; Tsuda, 1999), as well as job, organisational and community embeddedness (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001).

Based on the management literature over the past decade, increased attention has been paid to the theory of embeddedness - the idea that people become so immersed in their surroundings to the extent that it is hard to separate them from those circumstances (Mitchell et al., 2001; Ng & Feldman, 2009). The concept of embeddedness has been used in various contexts and researchers

have examined different types of embeddedness including *community embeddedness* (attachment to the area one lives in and to its people) and *occupational embeddedness* (attachment and entrenchment in one's occupation).

The embeddedness theory (Mitchell et al., 2001) has gathered increased consideration in the field of organisational behaviour because it represents a relatively new model used to explain how employees interact with their environment and how these circumstances influence their attitudes and behaviours over time. The theories that developed around the concept of embeddedness have demonstrated its relevance for the organisations and provided a wider understanding of the factors that contribute to the interaction of individual and collective forces that enable employees to stay with an organisation. The construct of embeddedness is based on the theoretical underpinnings of Lewin's (1997) field theory and Beach and Mitchell's (1990) image theory, which are summarized below.

3.1. Field theory

Field theory is a conceptual model of human behaviour developed by a psychologist - Kurt Lewin (1951) - which states that a person's behaviour is influenced by the totality of the situations that surround the individual. Lewin (1951) coined an equation expressed by ' $B = f(P, E)$ ' to illustrate the notion that human behaviour (B) is a function (f) of the field or life space, which includes the person (P) as well as his or her psychological environment (E). The force field analysis was brought up as a framework to study the various forces that constitute the totality of a situation, and Lewin (1951) assumed that different forces determine the realisation of a goal. For example, to understand individual behaviour in any organisation one needs to consider the interaction of a wide range of forces including psychological, physical, environmental, and social determinants.

The field theory is based on three main principles: (1) the life space, (2) the environment, and (3) the person. 'Life space' refers to the idea that a person's behaviour is always manifested within the coexisting factors of the current 'life space' or 'psychological field' (Lewin, 1997; Wheeler, 2008). Therefore, life space is the combination of all factors that influence an individual's behaviour and is produced by the interaction of the person and the environment. For example, if Gambians view Britain as a greener pasture, even though the perception of Gambians might not be true, it would still be valid in their life space. This (mis)perception would then influence their acts and attitudes, as if their interpretation were true in fact.

The 'environment' refers to the objective situation in which the person comprehends and acts. The environment is completely subjective within each context as it depends not only on the objective circumstances but also on the individual characteristics. In order to map out the

individual's life space, it is essential to consider all aspects of a person's conscious and unconscious environment. To understand the totality of the situation, the person's environment, including the person's perception, conscious and unconscious, must be seen as a whole. Therefore, to understand the migration of skilled Gambians, their individual subjective viewpoints, in addition to the objective circumstances highlighted by migration theories, are a necessary starting point.

Finally, and according to Lewin (1951), the term 'person' encompasses four different characteristics/properties of the individual: his/her needs, beliefs, values, and abilities. This way our understanding of our relationship to the world will ultimately reflect the psychological facts of 'life space' to ourselves. The individual development inevitably affects the life space, as the person undergoes changes in his/her own body and image.

To sum up, the field theory is seen as one of the most influential social psychological theories of the 20th century (Argyris, 1989; Ramage & Shipp, 2020). It has been used by management scholars to explain many phenomena including the retention of employees (Mitchell et al., 2001). Lewin's (1997) field theory helps explain how an individual's behaviour (such as emigrating) is influenced by his/her environment, including the work, community, and home. By drawing on the field theory, the embeddedness theory envisions workers as entrenched in a web of forces that shape their subjective views and their choices (including to stay or quit a job); addresses various forces, such as sacrifice, good fit, and structural links; and stresses the importance of the social relationships. Therefore, a Gambian migrant's choices to go abroad and then remain or return to the home country can be viewed as influenced by the totality of factors influencing his/her life space, such as the willingness to migrate, the financial capability to do that, the family wishes, and a plethora of other economic and social factors.

3.2. Job embeddedness theory

The theory of job embeddedness was introduced by Mitchell and colleagues (2001) as a new approach to turnover research. This model emphasises the factors influencing an individual's likelihood to stay in the job instead of leaving. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), *'embeddedness suggests that there are numerous strands that connect an employee and his or her family in a social, psychological, and financial web that includes work and non-work friends, groups, the community, and capture the physical environment in which he or she lives'*. In other words, job embeddedness endeavours to capture all the factors that influence an individual's choice to stay in a particular job (or prevent the individual from leaving the job). In addition, the job embeddedness theory assumes that the choice to leave an organisation is not a stand-alone decision, but it is shaped by the person's environment (work and non-work related) in which he or she is embedded (Mitchell et al., 2001). Thus, job

embeddedness can be work-related (e.g., positive relationships with supervisor and colleagues, perks, and benefits) or not work-related (e.g., parents living in the same community or spouse working in the same area). As a result, a person becomes embedded when s/he has links with people in the organisation and community, whenever the community and the organisation are a good fit for the person, and when the individual realizes that s/he will have losses for leaving the organization and the community.

According to the theory of job embeddedness, the most important determinants of turnover are the relationship of the person to the job and the organisation, as well as his or her relationship to the community. Within both the organisation and the community, a person can have three types of attachments: link, fit and sacrifice. Therefore, the model of job embeddedness has nine dimensions consisting of these three types of attachments (link, fit, and sacrifice) put together with the three factors (job, organization, and community). These dimensions of the job embeddedness model are detailed below.

3.2.1. Link dimension

The job, organisational and community link dimensions refer to the formal and informal connections that an individual has with people and happenings in both the job, organisation, and the community. For example, a strong organisational link may exist between an employee and his supervisor or among co-workers. Similarly, a community link may connect a group of friends living in the same area to get together during the weekend. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), the more an individual has job, organisational and community links, the more s/he is bound to stay with the job, organisation and community.

Applied to the context of migration, the link dimension, which represents individual's connections or ties, can be a predictor of the likelihood that someone will remain in their home country as well as an indicator of how long a migrant will be abroad before returning. As a case in point, the influence of other migrants and aspiring migrants on the choice of migrating has been considered a predictor of migration and the choice of the migrant's location in several studies (Haug, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2001). As discussed earlier, community link is a dimension of home/host community embeddedness that promotes staying or leaving, depending on how strong are the links to home and host communities. Similarly, migrants may choose to remain abroad if they have built strong host community links or return home to preserve their original community links.

3.2.2. Fit dimension

The job, organisational and community fit refers to the degree of compatibility an individual perceives to have with the work and non-work settings. For instance, an individual may see himself as a fit in the organisation if s/he works in a green industry that supports recycling when s/he is indeed an environmentalist. A good example of community fit is being a soccer fan and working in a community that gives the opportunity to join a team and play soccer during leisure time. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), the better the fit an employee has with the organisation and its surrounding community, the harder it will become for the person to leave the organisation. Similarly, the higher the fit in a community the higher the likelihood someone will stay and feel they belong in that community.

Applied to the context of migration the fit dimension can be associated to the skills that migrants have, how these skills can be used in the destination country and how they can make them fit in those communities. Besides, staying with other fellow migrants would make them feel highly fitted in a particular community. For example, a Gambian migrant would prefer to stay in a location that is surrounded by a Gambian diaspora than living entirely alone.

3.2.3. Sacrifice dimension

Finally, the job, organisational and community sacrifice dimension includes the totality of the benefits that a person has to give up if s/he chooses to quit a job. In other words, it is perceived as a loss of social, psychological, or financial benefits that an organisation avails its workers. A case of organisation sacrifice is the loss of perks or the loss of healthcare benefits provided by the organisation. In addition, an example of community sacrifice would be leaving a very safe neighbourhood or leaving a great school district to relocate to an area which is far from schools. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), the greater the sacrifice an employee would have to make when quitting a job, the more difficult leaving the organisation and community becomes.

Applied to the context of migration, with regard to the sacrifice dimension, people may lose or gain some benefits when leaving their home country or when staying abroad. These include social capital elements like family, friends etc., which may influence a migrant's choice to stay or leave. In addition, cultural or climate differences are factors faced in destination countries that influence a migrant's choice between staying abroad or returning home. Sometimes migrants choose to return because they feel a certain void when living abroad. According to Ramesh and Gelfand (2010), an individual may quit the job due to family demands. This may be applicable to migrants, who can decide to leave due to social influence, such as following a partner or to meet family care duties. For example, some Gambian migrants might choose to return home because they miss their relatives, or because they have to look after their elderly parents.

In sum, the embeddedness theory and its dimensions have been used to explain employee retention behaviour (Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). The job embeddedness model has added a new contribution by including the community dimension or non-work aspects of an individual's life-space to explain organisational behaviour. Similar to the choice of remaining in or leaving an organisation, people's choices to stay or leave a country can be explained using these same dimensions (Peltokorpi, Allen, & Froese, 2015), although this has been somewhat disregarded in the migration literature, as is detailed below.

3.3. Distinction between embeddedness and related concepts

One issue requiring further discussion is how the embeddedness construct differs from other somewhat related organisational constructs, such as (but not exclusively): (1) job/organization/community identity, (2) job/organization/community engagement, and (3) job/organization/community satisfaction.

The **job/organization/community identity** element has been addressed by the social identity theory. Social identity is defined as part of a person's self-conception as derived from the experience of being a member of a social group, or groups (Peltokorpi et al., 2015; Tajfel, 1974). The construct of social identity induces the notion of fusion between the person and the (occupational/organizational/community) group, the latter becoming fused with the self. For instance, organisational identity refers to the propensity of employees to identify themselves as members of the organisation, which therefore represents the psychological fusion of the self and the organisation (Tajfel & Turner, 2010). Whilst organisational identity and the concept of organisational embeddedness, in particular its fit dimension, can be confused, the theory of organisational identification is somewhat deeper. Organisational identity is different compared with the embeddedness construct because the latter addresses the forces that connect and hold the individual into an organisation in spite of their identity effects. Someone might be embedded into an organisation because of the sacrifices involved in leaving it and not because that organisational membership is part of their identity.

The **job/organization/community commitment** element refers to the psychological connection between individuals and organisations (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006) and the commitment construct has been applied specifically to organisational topics. Organisational commitment is a multidimensional conceptual model and encompasses three dimensions: affective, normative, and instrumental. The affective and normative aspects are theoretically detached from the job/organisational embeddedness framework, in that the affective aspect refers to the way an individual holds on to a job which is justified by the affections and positivity that the job nourishes;

and the normative aspect reflects a sense of duty to remain in office. Even though some element of the dimension of links may apply to a sense of duty, for example in the case of a work team member, this dimension is surpassed by the job embeddedness construct (Mitchell et al., 2001).

While organisational commitment and job embeddedness are two empirically comparable, yet conceptually different models, the continuance commitment is a dimension of the organisational commitment concept, which looks similar to the sacrifice dimension of the embeddedness theory. Mitchell et al. (2001) suggested that job embeddedness includes factors related to the community, but these factors are not included in the continuance commitment purely related to work. So, the continuance commitment scale does not include half of the job embeddedness measure.

Finally, the **job/organisation/community satisfaction** element describes how employees feel about their job/organisation/community. It is a general feeling towards these elements which is generated by different attitudes concerning the various aspects of the job/organisation/community (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). The definition of satisfaction is evaluated in various theoretical and multi-dimensional forms. Such aspects of the concept of organisational satisfaction include affective attitudes towards the workplace, workers, and supervisors. In comparison with job and organisational embeddedness, job satisfaction emphasises factors of organisational and non-external nature (Mitchell et al., 2001) and while there may be affective dimensions in the sacrifice dimension of the job embeddedness theory, the embeddedness construct is not confined to affective elements (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Although the embeddedness theory may help us understand migration choices (Zhang, Fried, & Griffeth, 2012), its theoretical autonomy, distinctiveness, and dimensions have been largely ignored in the context of migrants' attachments to home and host country. This study aims to fill that void.

This research draws upon the embeddedness theory from a composite perspective (Ng & Feldman, 2009) and follows Mitchell et al.'s (2001) conceptualisation of job embeddedness, envisaging a network of forces (e.g., families, employers, culture, etc.) holding individuals to their home/host countries and having an impact on their decisions to migrate, remain or leave. In the same way, home/host country embeddedness corresponds to the forces that retain individuals to the home/host country, making it difficult to abandon them. Furthermore, it is possible that this set of forces persists even after people leave the home/host country. Thus, the concept of home/host country embeddedness, and its respective dimensions (link, fit and sacrifice) is distinguishable from the macro and micro economic factors that favour or hinder migrants' choices to stay or leave. Ultimately, the concept of embeddedness may explain part of the variance in these

choices, drawing attention to people's 'life space' and how they perceive their entrenchment in a web of forces that shape their subjective views and their subsequent behaviours. The construct of home/host country embeddedness is addressed in this research, from the point of view of both the country of origin and the host country. This is especially relevant because a growing number of researchers (Lo, Wong, Yam, & Whitfield, 2012; Meuer, Tröster, Angstmann, Backes-Gellner, & Pull, 2019; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010) have shown that, to foreign workers, home and host country embeddedness is no longer independent of other economic dimensions at play in the countries of residence.

3.4. Embeddedness theory and international migration

The concept of embeddedness has been examined by previous studies as an extension of different dimensions of the social network (Aziri, 2011; Johansson, 2008; Van Houte & Davids, 2008). A few studies examined the relationship between social capital and social embeddedness, as shown in Table 2. The seminal work of Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) is an exemplary illustration, showing that migrants' economic activity and behaviour are influenced by the social structures they are submerged in. Another study from Stamm (2006) examined the social networks among Lebanese return migrants in post-war Lebanon. The author focused on the role of social networks in the migrants' decision-making processes and during their reintegration upon return. The results revealed that the choice to return and the process of reintegration were impacted by the changes migrants go through in the host nation and the level of embeddedness in their social networks. Tsuda (1999) addressed the process of migration decision-making and investigated how the structural and financial position in the labour market determines migrants' choice to stay in the host nation. The study found that a good position in the host labour market is a good predictor that migrants will stay in the host nation. The author considered it important to analyse the social aspects of structural embeddedness on the grounds that migrants are socially and economically embedded in society.

Main Authors	Purpose	Findings
Portes & Sensenbrenner (1993)	To analyse social capital as an explicit demonstration of social embeddedness	The study reveals the idea that migrants' behaviours are somehow influenced by the social structure in which they are immersed.
Stamm (2006)	Examine the social networks among the return migrants to Post-War Lebanon	The decision to return and the reintegration into a host country is influenced by a process of personal change in the host country and the level of embeddedness in their social networks.
Tsuda (1999)	Address the migration decision-making process and examine how immigrants' structural and economic position in the labour market determines their decision to stay in the host country.	The study revealed that a good position in the labour market determines immigrants' stay in the host country, yet the author deemed it necessary to analyze the social aspects of structural embeddedness because they are economically and socially embedded in the society.

Table 2 – Migration studies addressing the concept of social embeddedness

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the literature review

Despite the fact that the economic literature on migration decision-making emphasises the relationship between social capital, social networks, and position in the labour market, as predictors of the choice to remain in the host country, it is recommended that the level of embeddedness in the host society is also examined. A contextualised study of the relations between social networks and migration choices will therefore contribute to the debate about whether being socially and economically embedded in a host or home social network contributes to a greater likelihood of staying or leaving. However, few studies investigated the importance of community embeddedness during the time spent abroad, as presented in Table 3.

Authors	Purpose	Findings
Spoonley & Meares (2011)	To investigate the social embeddedness of the Chinese community of Auckland, in Australia.	The socio-political context of the host country may favour more or less relational embeddedness.
Chavez (1994)	Test the relative importance of the “imagined community” on the intentions of undocumented migrants to stay in the USA.	The results clearly underscore the importance of feeling part of the host community as a powerful influence on settlement
Salaff (2009)	Study young East Asian adults’ intention to return to their native homes after studying in a Canadian university.	Social relations were powerful forces prompting youth’s intention to return, and their transnationalism was especially important.

Table 3 – Migration studies addressing the concept of community embeddedness

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on the literature review

As shown, Spoonley and Meares (2011) concentrated on the social community embeddedness of the Chinese living in Auckland, in Australia. Their study showed that family and ethnic networks give pivotal support to new migrants in unfamiliar situations. In addition, the social and political context of the host country was observed to be an enactor of social embeddedness. In addition, Chavez (1994) examined how a sense of belonging determined intention to stay in the host country among undocumented migrants from Mexico and San Diego living in the US. The study concluded that migrants who consider themselves as part of the host country community were the most likely to remain, and in contrast, those who perceived isolation and discrimination were more likely to return. Furthermore, Salaff (2009) explained how migrants become socially embedded in the host society and emphasised how the frequent interaction with the host community may influence different aspects of their life especially the roles within the family. This interaction can destabilise the original roles within the family, which may be reflected in migration choices, often leading to ambivalence about future plans. In sum, these studies found host community embeddedness to be an important determinant in migrants’ decisions to remain abroad. Migrants who feel connected to the host country community were more likely to stay compared to those who did not.

A small number of studies have addressed the different aspects of the embeddedness construct (e.g., sense of community, belonging, social integration, well-being, and self-identification), which constitute inseparable parts of the immigrants’ settlement process in the destination country. Table 4 provides a summary of this literature.

Authors	Purpose	Findings
Bolíbar, Martí, & Verd (2015)	This article analyses the composition and evolution of migrants' personal networks during the settlement process	The desire to return or to re-emigrate was expressed by migrants who maintained strong ties with their communities in the home country.
Luken & Tranmer (2010)	To analyse the composition and role of personal support networks of immigrants in Spain.	The presence of Spaniards in a migrant's social network contributes positively to the latter's ecological transition and his social integration.
Maya-Jariego & Armitage (2007)	Explore the sense of community concept applied to the case of immigration population and university student commuters in Spain.	There is a positive relationship between the Spanish sense of community and the expectation of staying in Spain indefinitely

Table 4- Migration studies addressing the concept of host/home country embeddedness

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the literature review

Among those studies, Luken and Tranmer (2010) focused on the composition and role of personal networks, whereas Bolívar et al. (2015) analysed the composition and evolution of migrants' personal networks during their settlement in the host country. In their study of the ties between immigrants in Spain and the local population, Luken and Tranmer (2010) found that the presence of Spaniards (host citizens) in a migrant's social network contributes positively to the latter's ecological transition and migrant's social integration as well. However, Bolívar et al. (2015) showed that the presence of host country nationals in a migrant's personal network is not the result of social integration alone but is determined by the pre-migration networks as well. Another finding that is important to our research is that even though these studies did not address future migration intentions, they observed that the desire to return or to re-emigrate was expressed by migrants who maintained strong ties with their communities in the home country. Maya-Jariego and Armitage (2007) explored the concept of sense of community among immigrants and commuting university students in Spain. This study observed the sense of community belonging to be positively linked to the expectation of staying permanently in Spain. Furthering the conclusion drawn by Chavez (1994), the findings of Maya-Jariego and Armitage (2007) shed light on how migrants develop and maintain a strong sense of belonging to a local community. The authors showed that the immigrants whose personal networks and social support providers consisted mainly of compatriots tended to identify more with their home country (Maya-Jariego & Armitage, 2007). In addition, the study also found that the length of migration tends to lessen the sense of belonging to the home country and to increase the sense of belonging to the host country.

In a nutshell, all the above cited works show that community embeddedness is a fruitful construct to aid further understanding of migration choices. Apparently, the choice to stay or return is influenced by the presence of all those factors (i.e., fit, links, sacrifice) related to home country embeddedness. Furthermore, the same factors as they relate to host country embeddedness can help explain the choice between returning or remaining abroad. This approach remains largely unexplored and community embeddedness has not been used to explain migrants' behaviours. Instead, most management research has applied the embeddedness theory to the study of international mobility among temporary migrants, such as business expatriates, ignoring its relevance to understanding the phenomenon of migration. Therefore, a contextualised examination of the relationship between Gambians' community embeddedness and the migration choices they make can contribute to the discussion on whether a sense of belonging to either a host or home country leads to a higher likelihood of staying or leaving, remaining, or returning, which will further extend our understanding of Gambian skilled migrants.

3.5. Embeddedness theory and repatriation

Job embeddedness is a well-established theory that has been initially used to explain employee retention. Scholars now commonly use the embeddedness theory to address the retention of business expatriates, which results in a number of retention models with, in some cases, conflicting results. Apart from different contexts and methods of study, several studies have drawn upon the embeddedness theory to investigate expatriates' choice to stay abroad or return as illustrated in Table 5.

Factors	Main Authors	Migrants' Behaviours			Main Findings
		Initiation	Perpetuation (or Stay)	Return	
Home country pull factors; host country push factors	Tharenou & Caulfield (2010)		√	√	Host country pull factors would lower intentions to repatriate; whereas home country pull factors increase desire for repatriation.
Home country community embeddedness; host country organization embeddedness; host country community embeddedness	Lo et al. (2012)		√	√	Host country organization embeddedness (Host COE) serves as a mediator between expatriates' home country community embeddedness and turnover intent
Country embeddedness	Goštautaitė et al. (2019)	√			Country embeddedness minimizes the desire for self-initiated expatriation.
Job embeddedness	Meuer et al. (2019)			√	Job embeddedness is positively related to repatriation
Job embeddedness; Home country pulls	Linder (2016)		√	√	JE increases expatriates' retention; Home country pulls decrease SIEs' retention in the host organization
Family; community relations	Schewel, K. (2019).		√		Family and community relations in origin areas, appear to be particularly important to explain the preference to stay

Table 5 - Embeddedness and repatriation factors influencing international migration

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the literature review

So far, research devoted to self-initiated expatriates (SIEs)' choices to expatriate or repatriate has identified a number of factors affecting their decisions, such as host country influences (Lo et al., 2012; Meuer et al., 2019; Salaff, 2009; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010); job-related factors (Goštautaitė, Bučiūnienė, Mayrhofer, Bareikis, & Bertašiūtė, 2019; Linder, 2016; Lo et al., 2012); home country dynamics (Lo et al., 2012; Meuer et al., 2019; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010); and individual characteristics (Goštautaitė et al., 2019; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Fewer studies have examined how job embeddedness affects SIEs' repatriation intentions. For example, Tharenou and Caulfield (2010), draw on a sample of 546 Australian SIEs, and find that job embeddedness decreases SIEs' intention to repatriate. Further, Lo et al. (2012) investigated the impact of embeddedness on the repatriation intentions of a sample of 127 local staff and 210 SIEs from the Macau hotel industry. The study showed that lower host country organisational embeddedness reinforced expatriates' willingness to accept unsolicited job offers. Overall, these studies demonstrate that the concept of job embeddedness is a significant predictor of expatriates' intentions to repatriate. Conversely, host country embeddedness reduces repatriation intentions (Meuer et al., 2019; Schewel, 2019; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010) and home country embeddedness minimizes the desire to expatriate (Goštautaitė et al., 2019; Schewel, 2019).

Some scholars have also used the occupational embeddedness construct to investigate the decision to expatriate or return (Goštautaitė et al., 2019; Hom, Allen, & Griffeth, 2019; Lo et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Although few researchers have investigated the preference for staying at home, Schewel (2019) and Goštautaitė et al. (2019) found that home career embeddedness can reduce the intention of moving abroad. Goštautaitė et al. (2019) examined the role of external influences (e.g. developmental feedback and national identity) and country embeddedness (i.e. career and community embeddedness) on SIEs' choices to work abroad. The findings showed that the home country's occupation and community embeddedness are negatively correlated with SIEs' intentions to expatriate. In addition, a higher level of career embeddedness in the home country and a sense of national identity reduce SIEs' expatriation intentions.

Other studies showed that career embeddedness in the host country reduces the intention to repatriate (Lo et al., 2012; Schewel, 2019; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). For instance, Tharenou and Caufield (2010) revealed that career embeddedness in the host country leads to lower repatriation intentions. Likewise, Hom and colleagues (2019) found that expatriates who are embedded in their career abroad are less likely to repatriate due to the career sacrifices they would be making.

Other studies on expatriation research has focused on the job embeddedness concept to help understand repatriation (Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison, & Ren, 2012; Tharenou & Caufield,

2010). Research has, for instance, shown that home country embeddedness lessens the desire to expatriate while host country embeddedness is negatively related to repatriation. For instance, Meuer and colleagues (2019) draw on a sample of 345 expatriates comprising 80 assigned expatriates (AEs) and 265 SIEs from 40 culturally diverse countries, to investigate the unplanned return of expatriates. The study revealed that job embeddedness is associated with repatriation, but that relationship depended on the type of expatriates and the form of embeddedness. Whilst embeddedness is an effective way to reduce expatriation plans, off-job embeddedness is often more relevant to AEs, while on-the-job embeddedness plays a major role in repatriation plans of SIEs. The study concluded that expatriates are keen to be fully immersed and repatriation is an opportunity to recover a sense of identity when the degree of host country embeddedness is weak.

Overall, these studies show that home country embeddedness minimises the desire to expatriate (Goštautaitė et al., 2019; Meuer et al., 2019), while host country embeddedness reduces repatriation intentions (Meuer et al., 2019; Schewel, 2019; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Career embeddedness in the home country lessens the intention to expatriate (Hom et al., 2019) while career embeddedness in the host country lowers intentions to repatriate (Goštautaitė et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). While home and host country embeddedness warrant further research in expatriation studies, these constructs can be valuably applied to understand migration choices. This might substantially enrich our understanding of the phenomenon of brain drain/brain gain in both the country of origin and destination. To this purpose, the present study explores why some skilled Gambians choose to stay at home when others go abroad, and why some stay abroad when others return, which is consistent with earlier calls to investigate international mobility in various contexts and address skilled migration in the field of business and management (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009).

3.6. Overview of embeddedness theory applied to Gambian Migration: What is added?

What is left behind?

Table 6 summarises the main concepts and existing empirical evidence on the embeddedness theory as it applies to the study of international mobility. The table also lists an interpretation of the questions that can be answered by this approach regarding the migration of skilled Gambians. As shown, the embeddedness theory and the constructs of job embeddedness as well as home/host country embeddedness might help explain why people stay - that is, why, under similar socio-economic conditions, skilled Gambians remain in the country instead of migrating; and likewise, why many migrants return instead of perpetuating the migration.

This research seeks to address the migration choices of skilled Gambians in ‘context’ by understanding their own views of their ‘life space’. For that, this study draws upon a comprehensive theoretical framework that brings together the contributions of the migration and embeddedness theories. Firstly, the international migration models underscore the macro and micro socio-economic factors influencing international migration. Secondly, the embeddedness literature underlines how migration choices are shaped by a person’s environment (work and non-work related) in which s/he is embedded, notably how the dimensions of fit, links and sacrifices to that personal environment influence migration. Although both literatures point to some similar and somewhat overlapping precedents, each one offers unique contributions as aforementioned. The present study then argues that bringing together both theoretical fields can help expand the management literature on migration and provide a wider understanding of international migration, in general, and skilled Gambian migration, in particular.

Embeddedness theory and concepts				
Theory/Concept	Main Authors	Main assumptions	Help explain	Leaves unanswered
Job embeddedness Theory	Mitchell <i>et al.</i> (2001)	This model emphasizes the factors influencing an individual's likelihood to stay on the job instead of leaving	The initiation of migration and the decision of remaining abroad (such as Gambians remaining to the US)	Why people migrate when they have a job at home and why they return despite not having a guaranteed job at home?
Home country embeddedness	Baruffaldi & Landoni (2012); Goštautaitė <i>et al.</i> (2019); Wang (2015); Lin <i>et al.</i> , (2019); Lo <i>et al.</i> (2012)	This construct emphasizes the factors that embed an individual to a home country	The decision of migrants to return to the home country	Why some Gambians stay home (given the high unemployment rate) and why some would return home regardless of the career opportunities in the host country?
Host country embeddedness	Lo <i>et al.</i> (2012); Tharenou <i>et al.</i> (2012);	This model emphasizes the factors that embed an individual to a host country	host country embeddedness reduce intentions to return due to links and fit in the host culture, and the sacrifices	Why skilled Gambian workers migrate (despite high level of uncertainty) and why they remain abroad (given their home embeddedness)?
Family embeddedness	Feldman, Ng & Vogel (2012); Kiazad, Holtom, Hom & Newman (2015); Ramesh & Gelfand (2010)	Family forces encourage the decision to stay or leave (such as family opinions on residence preferences and job)	Family embeddedness increase migrants decision to migrate, remain abroad and return home	Why do some Gambians stay abroad despite the appeal of their families staying at home, and why do some migrants return (given the burden of family sacrifice abroad)?

Table 6- Embeddedness theory and concepts

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the literature review

4. Other factors influencing international migration

This chapter ends with a comprehensive summary of the empirical findings from migration and embeddedness literature regarding other factors influencing international migration. Table 7 presents an overview of the most relevant factors given the purposes of the present research. These include demographics (such as age, gender, marital status, and family considerations); pre-departure variables (i.e., initial intention to return); as well as post-arrival variables (i.e., level of education and length of migration). While often overlooked by researchers, the inclusion of such factors is central to the development of a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the dynamics of Gambian migration behaviour.

4.1. Demographic variables

4.1.1. Age

Existing empirical literature commonly agrees that an increase in age is negatively related to initiation of migration (Dennison & Dražanová, 2018; Goštautaitė et al., 2019; King & Lulle, 2016; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Greenwood (2015) found that the likelihood to migrate peaked in an individual's early twenties and then gradually decreases with age. Other studies showed that younger men are more likely to go abroad than older men or young women (Greenwood, 2015; King & Lulle, 2016; Migali & Scipioni, 2018). Existing empirical evidence generally agrees that there is a strong positive relationship between increase in age and the choice to return after migration (Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014; Caro et al., 2016; Dennison & Dražanová, 2018; Haug, 2008; Migali & Scipioni, 2018). Yet, this relationship was found to be reversed in another study with migrants in Madrid (Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014): the return choice among older migrants was found to be lower than among the younger aged. Another study found no relationship between age and return choice (Caro et al., 2016). These contradictory findings mean that age might relate to the context of migration (e.g., migration for studying versus migration for economic reasons) which underlines the need for a contextualised approach to the study of skilled Gambian migration.

4.1.2. Gender

Few studies have considered the effect of gender on the choice to migrate, remain abroad or return (Caro et al., 2016; De Coulon & Wolff, 2010; Güngör & Tansel, 2014). Gender is a factor that might be expected to influence migration and return but the findings differ. Although some studies outline the significance of the role of gender in the initiation of migration (Bouchoucha, 2010, 2018; Chiang, Hannum, & Kao, 2015; Khoo et al., 2008), others demonstrate no significant

relationship (Ayales, Blomstrom, Rivera, Pedraza, & Briceño, 2019; Bouchoucha, 2010). For example, some scholars investigated the return intentions of female migrants and found that they are less likely to return than their male counterparts (Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Medina & Posso, 2013; Ruiz-Tagle & Wong, 2009; Syafitri, 2012). Conversely, Khoo et al. (2008), in an examination of the reasons related to temporary migrants' choice whether or not to become permanent residents in Australia, found no gender differences in those who intended to stay permanently. Lastly, De Coulon and Wolff (2010) investigated the intentions of migrants regarding their residential choice after retirement: either staying in the host country, going back to the origin country or adopting a mobile strategy between the host and the origin country. Among the three options analysed, the study found the probability of going 'back and forth' to be less important for female migrants (De Coulon & Wolff, 2010).

4.1.3. Education level

A clear pattern that emerges from the literature is a positive relationship between migration and education level (Aydemir & Robinson, 2008; De Coulon & Wolff, 2010; Medina & Posso, 2013). A number of studies found high level of schooling to be positively related to migration (Dennison & Dražanová, 2018; Migali & Scipioni, 2018; Parella & Petroff, 2020). Studies demonstrate that highly educated persons are more likely to migrate than those with a lower level of education. Current literature disagrees on the impact of education level on the intention to return: most studies show that high education lowers the probability of return (Gallerani, Raggi, Samoggia, & Viaggi, 2005; Medina & Posso, 2013; Parella & Petroff, 2020), while others show that a higher level of schooling lessens the migration duration (Carrión-Flores, 2018; Jensen, 2020; Saarela & Rooth, 2012). Conversely, some researchers found that a low level of education has a significant influence on the decision to return. Based on the study of Medina and Posso (2013), examining the role of higher education in the choice of South American migrants residing in the US to return to their homelands, it was observed that the less educated immigrants were more likely to return to their home country compared with the more educated, who often do not return. This can be attributed to the fact that skilled immigrants from South America might undertake jobs that are commensurate with their education level, although such an association may differ for migrants from other countries. Finally, another study (Toren, 1976) has found no difference in education level between returning and non-returning migrants. In his examination of the relations between specific features and motives of returning among Israeli migrants from the US, Toren (1976) came to the conclusion that, in terms of educational achievement, returning migrants are no more or less educated than people who remain abroad. In the case of The Gambia, given the significant brain drain that characterises the country and since many Gambians go abroad to further

their education, this study anticipates that returning Gambians will hold a higher education level than those who remain abroad.

4.1.4. Family considerations

Research on the impact of family considerations on migration choices has been centred on marital status and the number and location of children. Several studies found that the location of children influenced the choice to return (Coniglio, De Arcangelis, & Serlenga, 2010; de Arce & Mahia, 2012; De Coulon & Wolff, 2010; Haug, 2008; Makina, 2012). Some studies observed a positive relationship between migrants' choice to return home and the number of children before migration (De Coulon & Wolff, 2010; Pinger, 2010): the higher the number of children located in the home country, the higher the probability of return. Some scholars have found the probability of return to be higher among migrants with dependents left in the home country (Coniglio et al., 2010; de Arce & Mahia, 2012; Makina, 2012), and other studies have found migrants living with young children to be more inclined to remain abroad (Medina & Posso, 2013; Pinger, 2010). In addition, some studies found that the likelihood of returning diminishes with the increase of family members living in the household, even though having children reduces the likelihood of migrating depending on the age of these children (Haug, 2008; Jensen & Pedersen, 2007). For example, the psychological cost of relocating school children is typically much higher than that of pre-school children. Conversely, some studies found no relationship between the number of children and migration choices (Pinger, 2010; Thomas, 2019). According to Pinger (2010), the number of children in the family, especially young ones, does not influence migrants' decision to return. In a similar vein, Haug (2008) examined the migration networks and migration decision making among Italian migrants in Germany and noted that it is neither the total number of children nor their location that sways migrants to return home. Finally, Pinger (2010), in his examination of the determinants and consequences of temporary and permanent migration from the perspective of migrant source countries, found that family presence abroad tends to increase the likelihood of staying permanently while the presence of family in the home country tends to reduce it. Other studies confirm that family presence abroad is positively related to migration (Cossor, 2016; Pinger, 2010). According to these authors, most migrants move as a family and not as individuals and the main legal way for migrating into the European Union is through family reunion, and this has been the case for over forty years. For instance, a study using a sample consisting only of migrants showed that having children is generally cited as a reason for migrating (King & Lulle, 2016).

Empirical research has also shown that marriage has a significant impact on migration choices (Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014; King & Lulle, 2016). Some studies found that marriage is negatively related to migration (Dennison & Dražanová, 2018) while being single or divorced is

positively related (Syafitri, 2012). Mahapatro (2013) investigated the relationship between gender relations and female migration in India and the research findings revealed that the choice to migrate is influenced by women's empowerment. On the one hand, marriage to a native is found to have a negative impact on return intentions (Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014; Mahapatro, 2013), and on the other hand marriage to a fellow citizen is found to have a positive impact on return choice (Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014; Güngör & Tansel, 2014). For example, Güngör and Tansel (2014) found that factors like marriage to a foreign spouse or family support to staying abroad negatively impact return intentions. In addition, Bijwaard and Doeselaar (2014), when investigating the impact of changes in the marital status on return migration, found that migrants who marry a native are more likely to stay abroad than those who marry a fellow migrant. So far, research has found that migrants who marry a native are more likely to stay abroad (e.g., Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014; Haug, 2008), while those who marry a fellow migrant are more likely to return (Güngör & Tansel, 2014).

An earlier study from Dustmann and Kirchkamp (2002), which investigated the optimal migration duration, found that the duration of stay of migrants who got married before migrating is significantly lower than for others. Furthermore, empirical research found that the probability of return is higher for people living as a couple in a foreign country (Dustmann & Kirchkamp, 2002; Haug, 2008). According to Dustmann and Kirchkamp (2002), this is due to the fact that these couples were married before emigration and when living together they tend to preserve their cultural habits, which acts as a restraint on integration. Divorce is largely ignored in the literature on migration. To the best of our knowledge, only one study has found divorce to be an influence on the choice to return. Bijwaard and Doeselaar (2014) observed that divorce, which was mostly influenced by factors such as age and income, shortens the length of migration, especially among migrants from less developed countries. Conversely, migrants from developed regions were found to be less dependent on their marital status when obtaining a residence permit and more likely to stay after a divorce. Another study provided evidence that single migrants tend to remain in host countries for a shorter duration than married migrants (Aydemir & Robinson, 2008). Table 7 below sums these findings.

Factors		Main Authors	Migrants' Behaviours			Main Findings
			Initiation	Perpetuation (or Stay)	Return	
Personal Factors	Age	Bijwaard & Doeseleer (2014); Khoo <i>et al.</i> (2008); Makina (2012); Zaiçeva (2014)	√	√	√	The increase in age is positively related to the chances of return and negatively related to migration
		Caro, Fernandez & Valbuena (2016)		√	√	Older migrants are more likely to remain and less likely to return
		Haug (2008)			√	No association found between migrants age and return
	Gender	Dennison (2018); Güngör & Tansel (2014); Medina & Posso (2013); Syafitri (2012)	√	√		Female migrants are more likely to remain; while male tend to migrate more
		Khoo <i>et al.</i> (2008)		√		No association found between becoming a permanent resident and stay
		De Coulon & Wolff (2010)			√	The probability of going 'back and forth' is negatively related to return
	Family Considerations	Bijwaard & Doeseleer (2014); Donato & Gabbaccia (2015); Güngör & Tansel (2014); King & Lulle, 2016			√	Marriage to a fellow is negatively related to return, while intermarriage is positively related to migration
		Dennison & Dražanová (2018); Syafitri (2012)	√		√	Marriage is negatively related to migration and return
		Dustmann & Kirchkamp (2002); Haug (2008)			√	Living as a couple in a foreign country is negatively related to return
		Aydemir & Robinson (2008); Bijwaard & Doeseleer (2014); Dennison (2018); Syafitri (2012)	√		√	Divorce and being single are positively related to migration and negatively related to return
		De Coulon & Wolff (2010); Haug (2008); Medina & Posso (2013); Thomas (2019)		√		Staying with young children is negatively related to migration; and positively related to stay
		Cossor (2016); Pinger (2010); King & Lulle (2016)	√	√	√	Family presence abroad is positively related to stay and migration while family presence at home is negatively related to stay
	Migration Length	Aydemir & Robinson (2008); Caro <i>et al.</i> (2016); González-Ferrer <i>et al.</i> (2014); Güngör & Tansel (2014); Parella & Petroff (2020)		√	√	Longer stay duration is positively related to remaining abroad while staying for short period after arrival is negatively related to return
	Initial intention to return	Caro <i>et al.</i> (2016); Güngör & Tansel (2014); MacMichael <i>et al.</i> (2015)			√	Initial intention to return is negatively related to return and the initial intention of staying abroad is negatively related to stay
		Hernández-Carretero (2016); Saarela & Rooth (2012); Williams & Baláz (2012)	√		√	Uncertainty in the original decision is negatively related to return and positively related to migration
	Education Level	Gallerani <i>et al.</i> (2005); Medina & Posso (2013); Saarela & Rooth (2012)	√	√		High level of schooling is positively related to migration and staying abroad; Low level of education is negatively related to stay
		Parella & Petroff, 2020; Toren, 1976			√	No association found between Education level and return
	Occupation	Caro <i>et al.</i> , (2016); Dennison & Dražanová, 2018; MacMichael <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Migali & Sapióni, 2018	√		√	Being unemployed is positively related to migration while having employment in the host country is negatively related to return intention
		Carling & Collins, 2018; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Medina & Posso, 2013; Sidhu <i>et al.</i> , 2016	√	√	√	working in academia is positively linked to migration and negatively linked to return
		Mothathedi & Nkomazana, 2018; Owusu <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Walton-Roberts, <i>et al.</i> , 2017	√	√	√	Being a health worker is positively related to migration and negatively related to return

Table 7 - Other personal factors influencing international migration

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the literature review

4.2. Pre-departure variables: initial intention to return

Some studies found a positive relationship between the initial intention to stay and the choice to remain (González-Ferrer et al., 2014; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Makina, 2012). For instance, Güngör and Tansel (2014) found a positive relationship between the initial intention of staying abroad and the prospect of non-return. González-Ferrer et al. (2014) also found that the return of Sub-Saharan migrants from Europe was slower and less common than the return of their counterparts from African destinations. Accordingly, this behaviour can be due to migrants' original goal, which is in line with their expectations that a longer time to install in Europe would be required to recover the initial investment and meet the savings' goal before returning home.

4.3. Post-arrival variables

4.3.1. Migration length

Some researchers have found that the duration of migration has a significant impact on the choice to return (for a review see, Caro et al., 2016; de Arce & Mahia, 2012; De Coulon & Wolff, 2010; Güngör & Tansel, 2014). Some studies revealed that a high migration length has a positive impact on return intention (Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014; Caro et al., 2016; de Arce & Mahia, 2012; González-Ferrer et al., 2014; Güngör & Tansel, 2014). This finding was corroborated by González-Ferrer et al. (2014) who defined a long stay as any stay for more than five years. Their study revealed that among Senegalese, Ghanaian, and Congolese migrants, the likelihood of return was highest for the Senegalese migrants who stayed abroad for more than five years. According to Makina (2012), however, the longer the duration of stay in the host country, the higher the chances of integration and the more unlikely a return home. In another study, De Arce and Mahia (2012) observed that a high probability of return is determined by the number of years migrants stayed in Spain. De Coulon and Wolff (2010) found a similar result in examining the location intentions at retirement among foreign nationals residing in France. Their findings revealed that the intention to remain in the host country is higher for those who have stayed longer in contrast to recent immigrants who prefer to return before retirement. In another study, Caro et al. (2016) analysed the core predictor of intention to return among migrants in Madrid and the results showed that an increase in the length of stay negatively impacted the return intentions. The eldest migrants abroad appeared to be more embedded in the host country and in consequence their intention to return level was lower. The literature is consistent in showing that the longer the stay abroad the lower the chances of return (Caro et al., 2016; de Arce & Mahia, 2012; De Coulon & Wolff, 2010; Güngör & Tansel, 2014). However, some studies draw a different conclusion (Aydemir & Robinson, 2008;

Parella & Petroff, 2020). In particular, Aydemir and Robinson (2008) found that the decision to leave is taken in within a short period after arrival, thus suggesting that it is the initial stay or leave decision that determines the length of stay.

4.3.2. Occupation

The relationship between employment and a future decision to migrate, stay or return has been investigated. Although few studies found being unemployed to be positively related to migration (Aydemir & Robinson, 2008; Dennison & Dražanová, 2018; MacMichael et al., 2016; Vever, Coz, Malakooti, & Dillais, 2016), MacMichael and colleagues (2016) found employment to be one of the factors that determine whether or not young immigrants intend to stay for a longer time. The literature has found a negative relationship between having employment in the host country and return intention (MacMichael et al., 2016). Caro et al. (2016) predicted being employed in Spain to be negatively related to return intentions. Similarly, Medina and Posso (2013) provided evidence from studies among South American migrants that a high level of education - especially having a professional degree - is the main predictor of the decision to remain in the US.

The literature finds that the level of education and skills, as well as the field of study and complexity of tasks play important roles in migrate/stay/return decision-making. Some studies found a positive link between working in academia and migration (Carling & Collins, 2018; Caro et al., 2016; Robertson, 2010). While mobile academics are driven by tangible mobility benefits, as Leung (2013) and Bauder (2017) have shown, their ability to travel globally as academics is often regarded as desirable. Furthermore, Carling and Collins (2018) described international academic mobility as *academic fetishism* promoted and endorsed by institutions and authorities of higher education and research. However, in their study, Güngör and Tansel (2014) found migrants working in academia to be less likely to return. In another study, Medina and Posso (2013) observed that highly educated South American immigrants who were performing a complex job requiring analytical skills were more likely to remain in the US.

The literature on the migration of skilled health workers found that the trend is increasing globally. Studies in Asia and Africa have shown that health professionals are one of the groups of professionals most likely to migrate. A study of health worker migration from four countries - Jamaica, India, the Philippines and South Africa - found that, because of skilled migration, health worker shortages are particularly high in some specific regions of India and in some specialised areas of health-care (Walton-Roberts et al., 2017). A study of returning migrants in Botswana found that only a small number of medical professionals are returning to their country of origin (Walton-Roberts et al., 2017). In another study investigating the emigration of healthcare workers from developing countries and the impact on maternal and child health, also found that the medical

brain drain is on the increase (Owusu, Medakkar, Akinnawo, Stewart-Pyne, & Ashu, 2017). In the case of The Gambia, anecdotal evidence suggests that health professionals are also likely to migrate more than other professions and seem to be less likely to return.

5. Summary

There is an extensive body of research on migration that attempts to explain migration using the theories covered in the literature review, namely theories of initiation and perpetuation of international migration, embeddedness and other factors influencing international migration. However, to date and to the best of our knowledge, no previous research has contextually and comparatively examined why some skilled people choose to migrate when others stay and why some remain abroad while others return. Furthermore, there has been no insightful research into the specific migratory choices of Gambian skilled workers. This study fills these research gaps by adapting a multidisciplinary theoretical approach that brings together the migration and the embeddedness theories to understand (1) why some skilled Gambians migrate while others do not, and (2) why some skilled migrants remain abroad while others return. To this purpose, a summary of this study theoretical framework and research questions is provided in the following chapter.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempts to fill a research gap by understanding a workforce with growing importance – skilled migrants. As shown, the theoretical ground of this study draws on the migration theories of initiation and perpetuation and the job embeddedness model (a relatively recent theory) to further understand the migration of skilled Gambians.

Previous research on migration and repatriation processes have shown that it is important to consider migrants' ties in both home and host countries (Boyd, 1989; Lo et al., 2012; Owusu et al., 2017). However, management research to date has failed to fully address embeddedness theory to explain migration choices. Actually, management literature to date has tended to focus on business expatriates (i.e., assigned, and self-initiated expatriates) rather than migrants. Given that what distinguishes business expatriates from migrants is the intent of the first to stay only temporarily abroad versus the intent of the latter to stay permanently and attain citizenship in a new country (Vance, McNulty, Paik, & D'Mello, 2016), one expects the factors influencing migration and return to differ. That is also one of the reasons why this research draws on migration and embeddedness theories to further understand the contextualised phenomenon of skilled Gambians who decide to migrate and then either remain abroad or return.

According to Larkin and Thompson (2012), understanding a particular behaviour in one domain is advanced by looking at the behaviour from outside its own boundaries. This holds especially true for a developing concept such as job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001), which can extend its validity and reliability when applied outside its initial boundaries. In this research, the job embeddedness theory and related dimensions is used to understand migrants' attachment to home and host countries in order to provide new insights about migrants' choices. To date, researchers have approached migration from various academic angles (e.g., economics, sociology, geography), however there is a paucity of research in the field of management. By targeting a somewhat similar behaviour, such as staying or leaving a country (instead of staying or leaving a job), such exploration and expansion of the job embeddedness theory can enrich our overall understanding of the embeddedness construct, thus extending the theoretical contribution of this study to other domains. To this end, the embeddedness theory portrays a logical force of influence to understand skilled migrants' decisions to stay or leave and then, for those who leave, whether to remain or return. Therefore, in addition to the migration theories of initiation and perpetuation, the embeddedness model indicates that a combination of both work (i.e., on-the-job features) and non-work (i.e., off-the-job) links, fit, and sacrifices, can increase retention and lead to immobility. This model considers the links between a person and other people or activities, the fit or perceived compatibility between the person, the work and other aspects of life, and the amount of sacrifice

consequent upon leaving the job or the organization or, by extension, a community, or a country. Additional expatriate evidence has illustrated expatriates' connection both to home (Larkin & Thompson, 2012) and host country communities (Lo et al., 2012), coining the concepts of home country embeddedness (HCE) (i.e. embeddedness in the home country) and host country embeddedness (HsCE) (i.e., embeddedness in the host country). Hence, the present research addresses these constructs to further examine how HCE relates to Gambian's decision to stay or leave the home country, in the first place; and then, how HCE and HsCE affect the choice of remaining abroad or returning home. These two constructs relate to the sense of belonging to both countries, which has been defined by the level of integration and the sense of social and emotional belongingness. To capture them, the personal views and feelings of migrants are the cornerstone to understand their migration choices and behaviours.

Based on the literature review, one can expect several pull and push factors influencing the complex process of skilled Gambian migration. In addition to the macro and microeconomic and institutional factors highlighted by migration theories, one can envision that a low HCE may lead to a greater likelihood of migration, while a high HCE may lead to a lower probability of migration. As for further understanding *why some skilled-Gambians migrate when others stay in The Gambia*, within similar social and economic arduous conditions, such as high unemployment rate, low wages and the presence of social networks and diverse diaspora abroad, one would expect the individuals less strongly embedded in the home community, holding weaker local links, and having lower perceptions of local fit, would be more likely to migrate than the ones staying home. Likewise, these stayers will perceive less sacrifices arriving from their choice to stay home compared with those who choose to migrate. The concept of HCE adds to the existing migration theories a new insight on factors explaining the choice to stay in Gambia. Home community embeddedness might make the migration process seem like a worthless sacrifice, which might explain why, under similar arduous social and economic circumstances, some skilled Gambians choose to stay home. Inversely, host attraction and social/diaspora embeddedness might further explain the migration of others.

As regards the reasons *why some skilled-Gambians remain abroad while others return to The Gambia* the concept of HsCE can be informative. One would expect that those skilled Gambians more embedded in the host job and community, can feel a better fit abroad, stronger host links and a higher sacrifice upon return, so that they will be more willing to remain in the host country than return. Likewise, one would expect that a migrant less embedded in the host country would be more likely to return, depending on the level of home country embeddedness. Migrants holding a high level of home country embeddedness would be more likely to return.

Different migratory behaviours among Gambian skilled migrants, according to their demographics, pre-departure, and post-arrival variables, such as (but not exclusively) age, gender, education, family considerations, initial intention to return, migration length, and occupation, are to be expected. For example, we would expect the propensity to remain abroad to be higher among migrants who have been abroad for a long time, as opposed to those who are short stayers.

In summary, individuals' migration choices are more complex than is implied by the migration and embeddedness theories alone. Hence, the theoretical insights derived from both fields are used in this study as an analytical framework to extend our knowledge about skilled Gambian migration. What is known about skilled migration is largely based upon empirical studies that follow one approach instead of another, often disregarding the specificities of the context. The existing accounts fail to understand, in context, the process of deciding to go abroad or to stay. Most studies focus on each process separately, or, in the best-case scenario, address them as faces of the same coin. In other words, the reasons for leaving (push) are usually the inverse of the reasons for staying (pull), and the same applies to the reasons to remain abroad or return. Furthermore, previous studies have not dealt with the specificities of skilled migration from an African developing country such as The Gambia. Thus, the selected theoretical framework presents a productive base from which to further understand Gambian skilled migration and answer the following research questions:

(1) Why, under similar arduous circumstances, do some skilled Gambians stay at home while others go abroad?

(2) Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return?

IV. METHODOLOGY

To address the main aim of this research, which is to investigate skilled migration in the context of The Gambia, a qualitative approach was adopted. This approach allows for a deeper and contextualized understanding of Gambian skilled migration. The applicability of a qualitative approach for this study is discussed below. The chapter also addresses the methodological approach, the procedures used to collect the data, the research sample, as well as data analysis and data quality assurance.

1. Methodological approach

The present study uses qualitative analysis in order to gain insights into skilled Gambian migration. According to Polit and Tatano Beek (2017), a qualitative method is beneficial for understanding the complexities of a little-understood phenomenon. Hence, a qualitative method was chosen for this research as it is more beneficial in providing detailed accounts of skilled Gambians with regard to their reasons for leaving The Gambia and migrating to other countries and what differentiates those who choose to stay abroad from those who eventually return.

Flick (2017) describes qualitative research as an interpretative approach concerned with exploring a phenomenon from the inside. Therefore, qualitative methods can be more useful in characterising and understanding the migratory choices and experiences of skilled Gambians. Considering the scarcity of research on Gambian skilled migration, the present study employs a qualitative and interpretative approach and collects data through semi-structured interviews. These interviews tackled the stories of skilled Gambians themselves and account for their own understanding of migration. One of the advantages of using a qualitative study is that it is concerned with non-statistical methods and small purposively selected samples. As Bengtsson (2016) puts it, the aim of qualitative research is geared towards understanding the human condition of a perceived situation and in circumstances that are different. Another advantage of qualitative analysis is to avoid the problem of losing important information, especially when the data collected is complex and detailed. Therefore, the rationale for using a qualitative approach is to first explore the experiences of skilled Gambian migrants who have gone abroad; and then, identify the circumstances that led them to leave and the conditions that would persuade them to return. A qualitative approach was considered to be the most appropriate to capture the migrants' own views and experiences.

Finally, a personal reason also lay behind this decision. The researcher has lived abroad as a child, a trailing spouse, and a student, for more than 20 years and is currently doing a study

abroad program. This personal journey frames this research. Since 2014, the researcher has been passionate about migration in general, and skilled migration in particular, as this is currently characterising The Gambia as a nation. The researcher personally interviewed all participants who were targeted because they fit the criteria of a skilled migrant, notably being a Gambian citizen with tertiary education living abroad or return. No participant in this study had a direct relationship with the researcher that could have represented a conflict of interest, such as being from the same family or staying in the same host country. The researcher has also been trained in the necessary skills to carry out the research as planned. The researcher's skills include training in research methodology as a part of the PhD curriculum and a qualitative research course at the University of Porto. Following all these quality assurance principles, the phenomenon of skilled migration in The Gambia could no longer be ignored, especially from an inside-out and an interpretative approach.

2. Procedure of data collection

The data arising from this research were collected through semi-structured interviews that followed a combination of convenience and purposive sampling, which utilised a snowballing approach (Patton, 2014). The sample size of a qualitative work is typically small (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, & Young, 2018). Since one cannot interview an entire population, four destination countries were selected as a sample group, based on the current dispersion of skilled Gambian migrants. These four countries are US, UK, Norway, and Sweden (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Spain was not included, despite being one of the main destinations of Gambians, because it is mostly sought by unskilled workers and economic migrants (Kebbeh, 2013), who are beyond the scope of this research. In each destination a minimum of six migrants currently living in the country were interviewed and six returned migrants from the same country were also interviewed. The sampling grid of this research is shown in Table 8. While one initially targeted 48 participants, the final sample is composed of 41 skilled Gambians, including migrants and returnees.

Types of migrants	Context and Gender								Targeted number of participants	Final number of participants
	USA		UK		Norway		Sweden			
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Migrants	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	24	23
Returnees	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	24	18
Total	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	48	41

Table 8 - Sampling Grid

As this study focused on the migration experiences of skilled Gambians, the homogeneity of participants' background was ensured. All interviewees belong to the study population and were targeted following the same theoretical selection criteria: (1) being a Gambian citizen; (2) being from both genders (male or female); (3) aged between 18 to 65 years; (4) holding a bachelor degree or above; (5) being currently living and working in a foreign country, or (6) having lived abroad for a minimum of two years and having returned to The Gambia in the past decade; and (7) having interest and openness with regard to participating in an interview about the international migration of Gambians.

Data collection was carried out from March to September 2017. During the data gathering process, the researcher travelled to Norway and Gambia to conduct face-to-face interviews with migrants staying abroad and then to interview returnees. As for migrants residing in the other countries, interviews were done online due to geographical dispersion and associated budgetary constraints. Snowball sampling was used to recruit the interview participants from their acquaintances (Flick, 2017), which is a method of sampling typically used in qualitative research to identify cases that are hard to find (Creswell & Creswell, 2009). Thus, participants were drawn from two groups. First, participants were contacted and recruited through the researcher's professional networks from social media platforms such as LinkedIn, the Gambian Academy, and the Gambian Medical Professionals. This group consists of 8 Gambians who are currently residing in one of the countries covered in the study (UK, US, Sweden, and Norway) and 12 returnees who are currently living in The Gambia. The second group consists of participants who were recruited on the recommendation of other interviewees. Since the study population is geographically dispersed and is hard-to-find, the researcher asked initial interviewees for leads to any Gambian male and female living in their destination country that fell within the criteria of skilled migrant. As a result, 21 participants were recommended by other interviewees. This group comprises migrants as well as returnees.

Even though the researcher was a Gambian, it was hard to locate and establish contact with Gambian skilled migrants and to invite them to participate in the research. The geographic dispersion, and difficulty to locate, enumerate and interview, were obstacles the researcher had to overcome. All potential interviewees referred by the initial participants in each host country were approached via email or phone. Approximately 45 skilled Gambian migrants were contacted, resulting in 41 completed interviews, a number that lies within the range of similar qualitative studies (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; McIntosh & Morse, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018). Twenty-four interviews were conducted face-to-face (Norway 6; The Gambia 18) and 17 were conducted using online means. The face-to-face interviews took place at various locations

according to the preferences of the participants. With the exception of one (an acquaintance), the researcher did not know the interviewees beforehand. Dates and locations for the face-to-face interviews were fixed via telephone conversations and then participants first met the interviewer during the face-to-face interviews. As for the online interviews, the interviewer and interviewee did not meet physically. The interviewees received a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study and its context before the interviews were conducted. The final sample comprises 23 interviewees who were abroad and 18 returnees.

The author conducted all interviews, which started by outlining the research objectives and interview topics as well as ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. All interviews were conducted in English. The decision to use English was made because of language barriers existing between different dialects in The Gambia, which made English the only common language for all parties involved and eliminated the need for translation. In consideration of the busy lives of participants and for convenience, interviews were held after working hours or at weekends at the participant's house, or in a hotel or restaurant. Finally, all interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants to enable accurate review and reflection on their experiences. The average duration of each interview was around 60 minutes. In each interview, the order of the questions was adjusted to consider the participants' personal experiences and their own opinions and interpretation of skilled migration.

3. Interview guide

The interviews were semi-structured, designed to encourage the participants to elucidate their choices to stay or to go abroad and then whether to return or not, by using their own words. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer uses a guide to optimally direct the conversation, allowing participants to express their own ideas, behaviours and feelings while keeping the interview focused (Vasileiou et al., 2018). According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), the aim of an interview guide and probing questions is to allow the respondents to shape their stories. Therefore, the first interview guide was pilot tested with a couple of similar interviewees who were particularly interested in the topic when contacted. During the pilot interviews, no systematic problems with the interview guide were found, but the order of the questions was changed to make clear which questions were best suited for migrants and which fitted the returnees. Before data collection, the interview guide was altered to incorporate the changes resulting from the pilot test.

The final interview guide combines a series of pre-determined open questions with a chance for the interviewer to further discuss specific subjects by expanding their responses

(Azungah, 2018). It addresses six key topics (see Appendix A for details). The first topic (i.e., “Reasons to stay home”) addresses the options the participants considered before deciding either stay in The Gambia or migrate. All participants were first asked what could have prevented their migration and, in that event, what was their plan B.

The second topic (i.e., “Reasons to go abroad”) also targeted all participants and referred to the reasons for going abroad. Participants were asked, for example, why they left the country of origin; why they made such decision; why they chose their country of destination; how long they intended to stay abroad as well as their recommendations to others.

The third topic (i.e., “Reasons to remain abroad”) targeted both migrants and returnees but the latter were inquired hypothetically, such as what could have made them remain instead of return.

The fourth topic (i.e., “Reasons to return”) targeted returnees only. The questions of the interview sought to encourage the returning participants to relate their personal feelings and attitudes towards the return. The goal was to understand whether returning migrants had intended to return, whether they had any expectations before their return, if such plans were fulfilled, if they had experienced difficulties abroad, and how such personal or professional expectations and difficulties might have influenced their return. As with the other issues, this topic sought to gain personal insight into factors affecting the return and how the interviewees envisioned their choices.

The fifth topic (i.e., “Reasons for an eventual return”) targeted migrants only. They were asked about their plans to remain abroad or return, and the interview questions were structured to better understand the factors framing that choice. Migrants were also asked about their visits to The Gambia, and how these visits might influence the choice to stay abroad or return.

The last theme of the interview was about other factors influencing migration and targeted migrants and returnees alike. This topic aims to better understand the interviewees, including information about gender and age, family concerns and education, as well as personal and professional accomplishments and achievements beyond the aspects set out in the other topics of the interview. The purpose is to deepen our understanding of how these personal factors matched the feelings expressed in the interview and how they interplayed with the phenomenon of skilled migration. Finally, all participants were encouraged to share with the researcher any other issues they considered important but ignored in the interview questions.

4. Research participants

The final research sample included 41 skilled Gambians: 23 current migrants and 18 returned migrants. They represent an appropriate source of data because they belong to the category of skilled Gambians and they are living or have lived abroad for a long period. Thus, they were experiencing or had experienced migration and were in a position to provide and share their own views on Gambians' skilled migration. Members of this sample all matched the criteria for a skilled migrant (Bledsoe, Houle, & Sow, 2007) or returned migrant (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013), and the sample size also fulfils the minimum size required to conduct an exploratory research (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The participants' profile is detailed in Table 9, without disclosing individuals' identity.

Interview	Migrant types	Age	Gender	Host country	Marital Status	Education Level	Interview location	Length of stay in years
1	Migrant	25-34	F	Sweden	S	Bachelor	Online	5
2	Migrant	25-34	F	Sweden	MA	Master	Online	20
3	Migrant	25-34	F	UK	MA	Bachelor	Online	3
4	Migrant	25-34	M	UK	MA	Master	Online	2.5
5	Migrant	25-34	F	UK	S	PhD	Online	28
6	Migrant	25-34	F	USA	MA	Master	Online	11
7	Migrant	25-34	F	USA	MA	Bachelor	Online	2.6
8	Migrant	35-44	F	Norway	MA	Master	Norway	16
9	Migrant	35-44	M	Norway	MA	Master	Norway	9
10	Migrant	35-44	F	Norway	S	Bachelor	Norway	17
11	Migrant	35-44	M	Sweden	MA	Bachelor	Online	3
12	Migrant	35-44	M	UK	MA	Bachelor	Online	19
13	Migrant	35-44	M	USA	MA	Master	Online	19
14	Migrant	35-44	F	USA	MA	PhD	Online	11
15	Migrant	35-44	M	USA	MA	Master	Online	16
16	Migrant	35-44	M	USA	MA	Master	Online	14
17	Migrant	45-54	F	Norway	MA	Master	Norway	26
18	Migrant	45-54	M	Norway	MA	Master	Norway	26
19	Migrant	45-54	F	Sweden	MA	Master	Online	32
20	Migrant	45-54	M	Sweden	MA	PhD	Online	28
21	Migrant	45-54	F	UK	DV	Master	Online	17
22	Migrant	45-54	M	UK	DV	Master	Online	15
23	Migrant	55-65	M	Norway	MA	Bachelor	Norway	34
24	Returnee	25-34	M	Norway	MA	Master	Gambia	2
25	Returnee	25-34	F	USA	MA	Bachelor	Gambia	4
26	Returnee	25-34	F	USA	MA	Master	Gambia	8
27	Returnee	35-44	M	Sweden	MA	PhD	Gambia	20
28	Returnee	35-44	F	UK	DV	Bachelor	Gambia	2
29	Returnee	35-44	F	UK	MA	Master	Gambia	4.5
30	Returnee	45-54	M	UK	MA	Master	Gambia	7
31	Returnee	45-54	M	UK	MA	Master	Gambia	17
32	Returnee	45-54	M	UK	MA	Master	Gambia	13
33	Returnee	45-54	F	UK	MA	Bachelor	Gambia	30
34	Returnee	45-54	F	USA	MA	Master	Gambia	16
35	Returnee	45-54	M	USA	MA	PhD	Gambia	18
36	Returnee	45-54	M	USA	MA	Master	Gambia	11
37	Returnee	55-65	M	Norway	MA	PhD	Gambia	12
38	Returnee	55-65	M	Norway	MA	Master	Gambia	11
39	Returnee	55-65	M	Sweden	MA	Bachelor	Gambia	41
40	Returnee	55-65	M	Sweden	WD	Master	Gambia	20
41	Returnee	55-65	M	USA	MA	Master	Gambia	9

Table 9 - Demographics of migrants by destination country

Note. DV: divorced; F: female; M: male; MA: married; S: single; WD: widow.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Age and gender. As noted in Table 9, of the 41 participants, 18 were female and 23 were male. The average age was roughly 43 years, ranging from 27 to 64 years old. At the time of the interview, the average age of female participants was 37 while the average age of male participants was 47. Returnees reported the highest average age of 38.5 years for female participants and 52 years for male participants. Current migrants reported a lower average age of 43 years old for male participants and 36 for female participants. In the sample, women were younger, with a majority aged between 25 and 34 years compared to men who were mostly aged between 45 and 54 years.

Marital status. The demographics of the participants show that most were married. All returnees were married at the time of the interview except for one. Yet, 5 out of 23 migrants were not married in the migrant cohort. All single participants were women. Of the married participants, 21 (out of 34) were between 35-54 years old, while the youngest 8 participants were between 25-34 years old.

Family considerations. According to the literature, family considerations are important in the choice to migrate, stay abroad or return. The data revealed that the majority of the married participants (20 out of 34) had Gambian spouses, and this trend was more pronounced among returnees (12) compared to migrants (8). Conversely, migrants were more likely to marry foreign or dual citizenship partners (10) than returnees (4). Female participants were equally married to Gambian and foreign spouses, while male participants were mainly married to Gambian spouses (14 out of 21). A substantial proportion of both migrants and returnees were living or have lived abroad with their spouses, including 13 (out of 18) migrants and 10 (out of 15) returnees. However, five migrants were not abroad with their spouses: two of the spouses were still in The Gambia, and the other three spouses were in different countries due to work reasons. Correspondingly, three out of five returnees were not currently living with their spouses as they remained in the host country. The other two were married when they returned but their new partners were abroad. Most of the participants who did not live with their spouses were women (6 out of 10). The data also revealed that more migrants' spouses were employed (16 out of 18) than in the case of returnees' spouses (7 out of 16). Of these seven returnees, four had self-employed spouses.

Spouse level of education. The migrants' spouses had higher education levels than returnees' spouses. Most migrants' partners were master graduates (6 out of 7) while most returnees' wives only had bachelor's degrees (6 out of 11). Moreover, two migrants' wives hold PhD degrees.

Children. Most participants (37 out of 41) reported having children. Most migrants (20) reported having one to four children, but the majority had either a single child (8) or two children (7). Returnees (17) reported a higher number of children ranging from three to five children (6), or more (3). So, migrants, mostly female, had fewer (1-2) and younger children (0-12 years); while returnees had more (3 and above) and older children (0-18 years). The data further reveals that 15 out of 18 migrants were staying abroad with their children while 7 out of 16 returnees were staying home with their children. Six participants were living with some of their children, but the majority (6) were returnees. Only two migrants and three returnees reported leaving their children behind. Among the returnees of this group, two were female.

Initial intention to return. The initial intention to return is a pre-departure variable that may affect the migration length and eventual return. The participants in this study reported several levels of intention to return, which were categorized into four groups. The larger group (14) reported having no idea of their initial intention to return; while a second group (of 14 participants) registered intentions of a medium stay of 3-5 years. A third group (9 participants) represented those who wanted to return in a short time, within 0-2 years; and finally, 5 participants planned to return after a long stay of between 6-10 years. It is worth noting that participants who had no idea on their return were mainly women (10 out of 14), while men planned a long stay (19 out of 30); and were aged between 35-54 years old.

Education. Education is a post-arrival factor that might influence the choice to remain abroad. All the participants were university graduates and hold degrees ranging from bachelors to PhDs. The majority (24 participants) were master's degree holders, consisting of 13 migrants and 11 returnees. Bachelor's holders represented the second group, with 11 participants comprising mainly migrants (7 out of 11). Finally, the number of PhD holders was small, although consisting of six participants who were mainly male returnees (4 out of 6).

Migration length. The length of time a migrant stays abroad might influence whether they choose to remain or not. Participants of this study had spent different periods abroad, ranging from two to 41 years. Almost half of the participants (11 migrants and 9 returnees) reported staying abroad for 11 to 20 years; 13 participants (6 migrants and 7 returnees) stayed for 2 to 10 years, while the remaining 8 participants (6 migrants and 2 returnees) reported a long-term stay of over 21 years. Although most participants spent a long period abroad, women were more likely than men to stay for a shorter term.

Occupation. The vast majority were in full-time employment (31 out of 41), and the remaining were either self-employed (5), unemployed (3) or retired (2). Migrants (3 out of 23) were slightly more engaged in self-employment than returnees (2 out of 18). However, the

gender-occupational difference can be particularly important among migrants. As regards current occupations, the interviewees performed several jobs, but the most represented professions were medical practitioners (8 of 23 migrants) and academics (8 out of 18 returnees). The remaining 25 participants had other professions (see details in Appendix C). However, the data shows that although five out of seven medical practitioners were willing to return permanently, their goal was to return in a short period of time. Finally, of the 18 returnees 8 had occupations similar to those performed abroad, and five were in different occupations. Equally for migrants, 15 out of 23 were working in jobs matching their qualifications, while the remaining included 3 students and 5 working in less skilled occupations (even if the vast majority hold a master's degree), such as social workers, administrative and healthcare assistants.

5. Data analyses

In this study the emphasis was placed on an interpretative approach concerned with exploring a phenomenon from the viewpoint of the interviewees (Flick, 2017). The interpretative nature of this research is geared towards understanding how migration is shaped by human experiences and social circumstances. Due to the scarcity of research that takes account of the Gambian context, the researcher needed to gather data on the migration stories of skilled Gambians, aiming to explore the phenomenon of skilled migration from their own perspective. Having conducted 41 interviews, the data saturation was considered to have been met. Lowe et al. (2018) describe the concept of saturation as the collection of data to a point where observation of additional data does not lead to further information on the research questions. Saturation was reached in this study after the 40th interview.

Both memo writing and comparative analysis are key elements of effective qualitative data analysis because they help minimise bias and encourage independence (Gibbs, 2018; Saldaña, 2015). Therefore, throughout the interviews, analytic memos were written regularly (Saldaña, 2015). They were used to refine concepts and patterns that emerged from the data, both during and after data collection. Memos included topics such as summaries of key findings or opinions and thoughts on specific areas of research. Furthermore, writing memos provided an outlet for thinking about additional data that would be helpful to explore in order to fully understand and report each story.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data was then analysed through the content analysis technique. Content analysis is a research method used for the interpretation and coding of textual material to make replicable and valid inferences (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Weber (1990) posited that qualitative content analysis goes further than just counting words to

intensively examine communications in order to classify large quantities of text into an appropriate set of categories reflecting similar significance. Duriau, Reger, and Pfarrer (2007), explained that content analysis is a research approach situated at an intersection where qualitative and quantitative traditions converge. It is also an important bridge between strictly quantitative and purely qualitative methods of analysis. In one regard, content analysis enables researchers to overcome the divide between large sample archival research that can experience internal validity issues, and smaller sample research that allows primary data collection and in-depth analysis, but can also suffer from problems with external validity (Pfarrer, Pollock, & Rindova, 2010).

The proponents of quality content analysis recognise some advantages over other methodological approaches. Management researchers define content analysis as a replicable approach to comprehend a profound personal or common viewpoint, for example values, concepts, actions and understanding (Gaur & Kumar, 2018; Short, McKenny, Reid, & Behavior, 2018). Content analysis is then pertinent to address a wide variety of organisational behaviours. The application of content analysis in management research includes, for instance, subject areas such as human resources (see Bos-Nehles, Renkema, & Janssen, 2017 for a review), organisational behaviour (e.g., Short et al., 2018), and international mobility (e.g., Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann, 2014), which are topics difficult to study using traditional quantitative methods. In these cases, content analysis has significant benefits over other methods using questionnaires or surveys to collect data on difficult-to-measure theories.

The present research then uses a qualitative research method and the content analysis technique to describe and understand participants' migration experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Qualitative content analysis aims to systematically transform a large amount of transcribed texts into a highly organised and concise summary of key results (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Through the use of content analysis, this research aims to describe a particular phenomenon in a conceptual form based on each participant's experience. By organising and generating meaning through coding the interview transcripts, the researcher aims to understand and then explain a social phenomenon, drawing on the selected theoretical background and interpretation of participants' shared experiences. This approach was chosen because it emphasises human experience and recognises the personal insight of each person (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In line with the content analysis technique, the research findings reflect the identification of themes and/or trends that help understand the data (Bengtsson, 2016).

To analyse the data using content analysis, four steps were taken (Bengtsson, 2016; Drisko, 2020; Duriau et al., 2007) consisting of data collection, coding, analysis of content, and

interpretation of the results. In the first stage, the data was collected from a selected sample of skilled Gambian migrants (including returnees), as previously explained. Recorded data (in audio form) was then converted into text in the second stage as all interviews were fully transcribed by the researcher. The third step involved the coding of text into different thematic categories. Fourthly, the coding scheme led to further analysis of the content, by merging categories and/or adding subcategories. These procedural steps were carefully followed to help the researcher to use the data to deliver research outcomes. Given the complexity and richness of information, the interview questions first guided the analysis that subsequently progressed to the recognition of patterns emerging from the data. Therefore, two main analytic stages were followed: (1) primary analysis and (2) secondary analysis.

In the primary analysis, the researcher began by listening to the recorded interviews and by transcribing the audio files into texts. All transcriptions were then uploaded to the NVivo software (version 14) which was used as a tool to support the content analysis. The content analysis started by labelling the research questions as anchor themes and main thematic categories (i.e., 'tree or mother nodes' as named by NVivo 14) under which other thematic subcategories were added as a result of further reading and content codification. Tables 10 - 12 summarise the first coding structure resulting from the primary analysis. The information is separated in different tables that follow the research questions for easy reading.

The Research Question	Interview Questions	Initial codes
RQ1: Why, under similar hazardous circumstances, some skilled Gambians stay home while others go abroad?	1. Reasons to Stay Home	(Decent) Work
		Opportunity to further education
		Employment
		(No) Nepotism
		Close family at home
		Family status at home
		Spouse at home
		(No) Political prosecution
	2. Reasons to Go Abroad	Further Education
		Self-development
		Illusion about europe
		Tekky
		Presence of a network abroad
		Role played by the network
		International Education
		Financial means to travel
		Scholarship
		Greener pasture
		Give back to the community
		Be successful
		International Exposure
		Family
		Political Instances
		Local network
		Cultural ties
		Visa process
		Immigration openness

Table 10 - Primary analysis: Identification of key themes (Cont.)

The Research Question	Interview Questions	Initial codes
RQ2: Why skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return?	3. Reasons to Remain Abroad	Economic/salary
		Life opportunities
		Self-development
		Host country lifestyle
		Formal and informal connections with locals
		Links with an international network of fellow nationals
		Spouse and children
		Extended family
		Career abroad
		Rising up in a host career
		Work opportunities
		Previous career loss
	4. Reasons to Return	Marriage with a fellow national
		Looking after elderly parents
		Missing the home family
		Spouse/ couple sacrifices
		Children sacrifices
		Better fit to the home job market
		Link to the home job market
		Host opportunities lost
		Sense of belongingness towards Gambia
		Giving back to the community
		Social links
		Religion links
		Generational links
		Fed up with staying abroad
		Lack of job prospects abroad
		Employment discrimination abroad
		Host racism and discrimination
	5. Reasons for an Eventual Return	Spouse and/or children
		Extended family and friends
		Parents
		Planning to settle professionally upon return
		Commuting
		Disliking the social life abroad
		Foreignness, homesickness and loneliness
		Disliking the cold weather
		Missing other fellow citizens
		Disliking living abroad
		Missing a common language

Table 11 - Primary analysis: Identification of key themes (Cont.)

The Research	Interview Questions	Initial codes
Final	6. Other Factors Influencing Migration	45-54
		35-44
		25-34
		55-65
		Male
		Female
		Married
		Single
		Divorced
		Widow
		Number of children
		Staying with children
		Children age
		Spouse citizenship
		Spouse occupational status
		Staying with spouse
		Master's degree
		Bachelor's degree
		PhD
		Initial intention to return
		Long term stay
		Short term stay
		Medium term stay
		Academics
		Health professionals
		Administration & Hotel industry
		Others
		Social work
		Economics & Accounting

Table 12 - Primary analysis: Identification of key themes (final)

In the second analytic stage, and because the initial analysis suggested some interesting patterns emerging from the data and related to the migration and embeddedness theories, the data was re-coded by adding to the initial coding structure new categories, such as two embeddedness concepts: home and host country embeddedness. While these were ‘a priori’ themes that were first derived from the literature (e. g., home country pull factors, home, and host country embeddedness) they also emerged from the data content. So, the researcher went back to the data and analysed it again through the lens of the embeddedness theory. For instance, the thematic category of ‘*Home Country Embeddedness*’ represents the factors (i.e. links, fit and sacrifices) that

embed an individual to the home country and *'Host Country Embeddedness'* refers to the factors that embed an individual to the host country (Mitchell et al., 2001). So, the researcher went through the data looking at the way migrants were linked and how fitted they were to their home or host countries and the sacrifices they would make if they decided to leave their home or host country, considering whether these made sense within the a priori top-level themes of *'home job/family/country embeddedness'* and *'host job/family/country embeddedness'*. At this stage, the researcher felt that these concepts worked well and brought new insights. As a result, a second template including these categories was used and the full dataset was again recoded. Tables 13 - 15 summarise the main and final thematic categories and subcategories resulting from this second (and final) codification stage. Again, the tables are split by research question for easy reading.

In summary, the analysis began with the transcripts of all the interviews with the aim of identifying the reasons for going abroad as well as those leading to the perpetuation of migration or the return home. A comparative study of the key themes was performed for both types of data – from current migrants and from returnees – also considering their demographics, such as the four destination countries to identify both generalities and uniqueness in their responses. As the codification progressed, the criteria became refined as the three typical dimensions that reflect the embeddedness theory – links, fit and sacrifice – were identified. Through the reiterated investigation of regularities and unique patterns, the themes were refined into subordinate subthemes (Duriu et al., 2007). Quotes were taken directly from the data and grouped under the headings of (sub) themes (Gaur & Kumar, 2018) to illustrate them by using participants' own words, and also for an indication of the number of participants addressing each theme. Lastly, the researcher ensured that the main themes were mutually exclusive and that the main categories did not overlap, so some minor mergers of subcategories were performed. The main themes resulting from the content analysis and the frequencies are presented in the results section. While the frequencies do not necessarily represent a measure of significance, they show the commonalities across responses and interviewees.

The dominant themes that arose out of the content analysis are organised into an overarching framework, comprised of: (1) Reasons to stay home; (2) Reasons to go abroad; (3) Reasons to remain abroad; (4) Reasons to return among returnees; (5) Reasons for an eventual return among current migrants; and (6) Other factors influencing migration. These themes are thoroughly described in Chapter V.

The Research Question	Interview Questions	Main Themes	Sub themes	Initial codes
RQ1: Why, under similar hazardous circumstances, some skilled Gambians stay home while others go abroad?	1. Reasons to Stay Home	Home country pull factors	Local opportunities	(Decent) Work
				Opportunity to further education
				Employment
				(No) Nepotism
			Family-related Issues	Close family at home
				Family status at home
				Spouse at home
	2. Reasons to Go Abroad	Feelings and expectations towards migration	Political reasons	(No) Political prosecution
			Further Education	Further Education
			Self-development	Self-development
			Illusion about Europe	Illusion about Europe
			Tekky	Tekky
		Migration Reasons	Network abroad	Presence of a network abroad
			Intellectual and financial capability to go abroad	Role played by the network
				International Education
				Financial means to travel
				Scholarship
			Optimistic hope	Greener pasture
				Give back to the community
				Be successful
		Reasons for choosing a destination country	International Exposure	International Exposure
			Others' influence	Family
				Political Instances
			Host education	
			Family ties	
			Host country attractiveness	Local network
				Cultural ties
				Visa process
				Immigration openness

Table 13 - Summary of the coding for the secondary and final analysis (continues)

The Research Question	Interview Questions	Main Themes	Sub themes	Initial codes
RQ2: Why skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return?	3. Reasons to Remain Abroad	Host country embeddedness	Host sacrifice	Economic/ salary
				Life opportunities
				Self-development
				Host country lifestyle
			Host fit	
			Host links	Formal and informal connections with locals
				Links with an international network of fellow nationals
		Host family embeddedness	Host family links	Spouse and children
				Extended family
		Host job embeddedness	Host job links	Career abroad
				Rising up in a host career
			Host job sacrifice	Work opportunities
				Previous career loss
	4. Reasons to Return	Home family embeddedness	Home family links	Marriage with a fellow national
				Looking after elderly parents
			Home family sacrifice	Missing the home family
				Spouse/ couple sacrifices
		Home job embeddedness	Home job fit	Children sacrifices
				Better fit to the home job market
			Home job links	Link to the home job market
				Host opportunities lost
		Home country embeddedness	Home country fit	
				Sense of belongingness towards Gambia
			Home country links	Giving back to the community
				Social links
		Host (dis) embeddedness	Home country sacrifice	Religion links
				Generational links
			Host job (dis) embeddedness	Fed up with staying abroad
				Lack of job prospects abroad
	5. Reasons for an Eventual Return	Home family embeddedness	Home family links	Employment discrimination abroad
				Host racism and discrimination
		Home job embeddedness	Home job links	Spouse and/or children
				Extended family and friends
				Parents
		Home country embeddedness	Home country sacrifice	Planning to settle professionally upon return
				Commuting
				Disliking the social life abroad
				Foreignness, homesickness and loneliness
				Disliking the cold weather
				Missing other fellow citizens
				Disliking living abroad
				Missing a common language

Table 14 - Summary of the coding for the secondary and final analysis (continues)

Interview Questions	Main Themes	Sub themes	Initial codes/subordinate themes	Sources
6. Other Factors Influencing Migration*	Demographics	Age	45-54	13
			35-44	12
			25-34	10
			55-65	6
		Gender	Male	23
			Female	18
		Marital status	Married	34
			Single	4
			Divorced	2
			Widow	1
		Family considerations	Number of children	37
			Staying with children	34
			Children age	33
			Spouse citizenship	34
			Spouse occupational status	34
			Staying with spouse	33
	Pre-Departure	Initial intention to return	Initial intention to return	12
	Post-Arrival	Education	Master's degree	23
			Bachelor's degree	11
			PhD	7
		Migration Length	Medium term stay	20
			Short term stay	13
			Long term stay	8
Occupation		Academics	8	
		Health professionals	8	
		Administration & Hotel industry	7	
		Others	7	
	Social work	7		
Economics & Accounting	4			

Note. (*) As regards the other factors influencing migration herein are represented the number of interviewees who mentioned each topic(e.g. 37 interviewees referred the number of children)

Table 15 - Summary of the coding for the secondary and final analysis

6. Quality assurance

To ensure the quality of a qualitative research some elements are required, such as (1) establishment of trustworthiness and reliability; and (2) assurance of ethical standards.

The trustworthiness and reliability of a qualitative research relies on what the investigator observes and hears. Daniel (2019) acknowledged the value of integrity, transferability, reliability, and confirmability in maintaining trust. One way to establish trustworthiness is to lessen researcher bias. It is essential to interpret what the data is saying without bias. In the present study this was achieved by a set of recommended procedures (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), such as: (1) transcribing all interviews; (2) breaking down interview content into smallest units or codes (i.e. interview questions and related themes and subthemes) and converting these codes into documented and understood stories; and (3) coding the transcripts following a similar set of coding rules, which includes looking for patterns, similarities and relationships.

The use of constant comparative analysis was also important in ensuring the reliability of the findings that emerged from the collected data, which authorized the researcher to highlight certain codes and thematic categories that were used in answering the research questions (Gibbs, 2018). Content saturation was also attained, which ensures that the collected data provides enough information to reliably support the research findings (Gibbs, 2018).

In this study, transferability is obviously limited to the sample, as this research explores the unique experiences of Gambian skilled migrants which are not necessarily generalisable. The coexistence of online interviews with face-to-face interviews is also a potential drawback of this research. However, Bolderston (2012) suggested that researchers should concentrate more on verbal communication, so that the effect of missing non-verbal cues is overcome. To this purpose, all interviews were carried out following a similar interview guide to ensure consistency across the interviews, even when done remotely. Furthermore, all interviewees agreed to the recording of the interviews, which facilitated the data collection.

Finally, the biases that could arise from the researcher have been lessened to a certain extent by following Yin (2016) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005)'s recommendations, such as employing a range of clear rules and controls. These included: (1) following a similar interview guide; (2) recording all interviews; (3) transcribing all the interview material to avoid the omission of data; (4) following the same coding rules; and (4) coding all the transcripts and coding them entirely. Also, using memos allowed the researcher to be accountable for the findings and subsequent interpretations by helping to reflect and analyse data along the entire research process (Gibbs, 2018).

Throughout the study, the researcher ensured that ethics remained a top priority. Based on the ethical standards (Bolderston, 2012), a researcher is required to: (a) obtain informed consent from prospective participants; (b) mitigate the risk of damage to participants; (c) maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants; (d) prevent deceptive action; and (e) give the participant the right to withdraw from the research. Therefore, the researcher provided participants with a detailed explanation of the purpose and context of the study, informed them about the procedures, and assured them that they were free to withdraw at any time. A recorded informed consent was obtained before starting each interview.

7. Summary

In sum, the purpose of this chapter has been to present the methodology used to answer the research questions. A description of the methodological approach, procedure of data collection, research participants, and data analysis outlined how the research was carried out and who participated. The thematic content analysis technique was chosen as it is suitable for understanding why skilled Gambians decide to stay or go abroad, and then remain or return. All 41 participants in the study contributed to this research by sharing their experiences and their perspectives on the choice to migrate, remain abroad or return. The next chapter will then describe the research findings resulting from the data analysis and answering the questions.

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter contains the findings of the qualitative content analysis in response to the research questions: (1) Why, under similar circumstances, do some skilled Gambians stay home while others go abroad? and (2) Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return. To facilitate the description and interpretation of the findings they are presented under the six overarching themes and the corresponding research questions:

- (1) Reasons for staying home | *Why do some skilled Gambians stay home?*
- (2) Reasons for going abroad | *Why do skilled Gambians go abroad?*
- (3) Reasons for remaining abroad | *Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad?*
- (4) Reasons for returning | *Why do other skilled Gambians return?*
- (5) Reasons for an eventual return | *Why would skilled Gambian migrants want to return?*
- (6) Other factors influencing migration

The entire coding hierarchical structure with an indication of the number of sources and references per theme is presented and described in the following sections.

1. Why do some skilled Gambians stay home?

To answer this research question, the views of **current migrants and returnees** were collected. Both were asked about the factors that could have prevented or limited their decision to go abroad. They were asked two questions: *What reasons could have prevented you from migrating, and why?* and *What plan B did you have and why?*

The reasons given were all categorised into a single main theme, named 'Home country pull factors' that includes all the reasons that might have prevented the migration divided into three subordinate themes: (1) local opportunities; (2) family-related issues; and (3) political instances. Most interviewees perceived their migration as non-optional, especially those who were politically prosecuted. Table 16 summarises the reasons for staying at home, reported by 38 participants (104 references), differentiating the responses for migrants and returnees.

Interview Questions	Main Themes	Sub themes	Initial codes/subordinate themes	Sources (out of 41)		Total References
				Migrants	Returnees	
1. Reasons to Stay Home	Home country pull factors	Local opportunities	(Decent) Work	13	9	28
			Opportunity to further education	13	3	18
			Employment	6	4	13
			(No) Nepotism	3	3	8
		Family-related Issues	Close family at home	0	5	6
			Family status at home	2	0	3
			Spouse at home	2	0	2
		Political reasons	(No) Political persecution	3	2	6

Table 16 - Reasons to stay home: Home country pull factors

1.1. Local opportunities

Local opportunities refer to the general perception of lack of opportunities at home: in work, education, and employment, as well as the effects of local nepotism. A sizeable number of participants indicated **decent work** and **employment** as reasons that could have prevented their migration. Several participants describe the unemployment rate in The Gambia as high, the working conditions as poor and the joblessness as giving rise to a sense of hopelessness. As one woman puts it:

'If the conditions of work were much better than they were at that time, like I said I was a senior economist. You know I wasn't well paid, things were very tough, had they been better I would have stayed' (Returnee US, female, 16 years abroad).

'I was young that time and apart from wanting to go somewhere else, and things were hopeless no job, nothing to do. So that motivated me more to leave' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

When indicating the **lack of opportunity to further education**, participants also indicated that the availability of a quality higher education institution could have deterred them from migration:

'I am pretty sure in my head that if we had good universities in Gambia I would never come' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad), explained one female participant.

Another participant noted, about **nepotism**: *'If I had a good job and financially strong and didn't see that because my family has to struggle and ... I am the elder of five brothers and none of us were working and it wasn't easy'*. He went further: *'You have to have connection to get employment; the unemployment rate in The Gambia is very high and the positions are for people who have. So, there were no reasons for me staying'* (Migrant Norway, male, 34 years abroad).

In this latter case the comparison was not simply one of employment versus unemployment, rather it mapped onto a communal sense of hopelessness. Given that employment in The Gambia was deemed to be reserved for those who had connections, those who were unconnected felt left behind.

Overall, several home push factors triggered the migration choice, such as: poor working conditions, unemployment, lack of/poor tertiary education, and nepotism. Therefore, these same factors, in their reverse form could have acted as **pull factors, retaining talent in The Gambia**, through the offer of: (1) decent/adequate work; (2) quality tertiary education; (3) employment; and (4) a meritocracy culture.

1.2. Family-related issues

Some participants indicated family-related issues, such as close family at home, family status, and joining a spouse as factors that could have made them stay. A male returnee describes **leaving parents behind** as the only reason that could have made him stay, as he related:

'Family reasons perhaps daddy, mummy leaving them behind was something that was a discomfort kind of. But apart from that there was no other reasons' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

One participant reported that his parents' sentiments could have prevented him from migrating, as he puts it:

'My parents were not happy with it; they were never happy with it. My father was very annoyed' (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

A number of participants reported **leaving family behind** as a factor that could have prevented their migration; a point illustrated by one participant:

'I told you there was a time I just wanted to cancel. I even called my brother once and told him that I don't think I would go' (Returnee US, female, 4 years abroad).

Another participant reported that: *'I spend a lot of time with my mum, she is upstairs right now, so leaving her behind because all my brothers have travelled, I am the last born. Those could have been reasons to keep me in Gambia'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 20 years abroad).

As for the **family status at home**, it is reported that coming from a wealthy or politically well-connected family is one of the reasons for not migrating. For example, one participant related that he decided to leave because: *'I realise that most of those opportunities | in Gambia | tend to be for those from affluent societies or affluent families. So, my case would have been very difficult for me'* (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad). Similar sentiments were echoed by another migrant who relates being from a poor family, which was a push factor:

'We all know the situation how it is in The Gambia if you are not from a powerful family, if you do not have a rich uncle or rich somebody in position, somebody in a strong political position there was nothing for me to do there ...you have to have connection to get employment; the unemployment rate in The Gambia is very high. And the positions are for people who have. So, there were no reasons for me staying' (Migrant Norway, male, 34 years abroad).

Joining a husband abroad was mentioned as a reason for not staying in The Gambia by female participants. As one participant indicated: *'If he were at home may be, I would not have come to the UK because I already have a job there'* (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad).

Likewise, another female participant made similar claims: *'If it weren't for my husband, I do not think I would have come to Norway voluntarily'* (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

In sum, participants reported family-related issues as factors that could have made them stay in The Gambia. Given the importance of the family in Gambian society, those who had a spouse in The Gambia, an affluent family, and close relatives at home were more prone to stay. Such **family-related factors** could, therefore, have served as **pull factors to retain skilled workers in The Gambia**.

1.3. Political reasons

Finally, five participants mentioned **political reasons**, citing political persecution as a push factor, the absence of which could have prevented their choice to leave. A point illustrated by a female migrant, who was politically persecuted:

'If I was allowed to live in my country that is The Gambia I would not have migrated because I was educated, I went to the highest institute in The Gambia; I graduated from one of the highest institutions in The Gambia' (Migrant Sweden, female, 32 years abroad).

Another female migrant, who left to seek political asylum, related similar feelings:

'I would not have been able to go back to Gambia at that time because of the political system because I left Gambia as a political asylee, so I sought asylum in England' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

Moreover, a male returnee recounted that the only reason that could have made him stay was: *'the change of government could have prevented me from migrating'* (Returnee UK, male, 12 years abroad).

Similar opinions were mentioned by another male migrant, who asserted:

'if I have confidence in the government back home, I lost confidence and I am also not comfortable in my workplace also because I have a lot of issues like having problems specifically with the financial controller and she has a lot of influence in that institution ... job security and confidence in the government could have prevented me from migrating' (Migrant Sweden, female, 3 years abroad).

Finally, a male returnee declared: *'If I weren't politically persecuted and I didn't get a scholarship I think I would be staying here. I had no intention of leaving'* (Returnee Norway, male, 2 years abroad).

So, the absence of political reasons/persecution could have made these participants stay in their homeland. Some were politically persecuted and had to leave while others left because they did not like the political situation in The Gambia.

1.4. Summary

In sum, the reasons why under similar circumstances some skilled Gambians may remain in their home country instead of going abroad were taken directly from the viewpoints of the interviewees (i.e., migrants and returnees), regarding the factors that could have prevented their migration. As shown, and for most interviewees, there was not really a 'plan B', nor an alternative

to migration. They felt it as the only way: (1) to surpass the scarcity of local opportunities; (2) to provide for family needs or re-join family members; and (3) to overcome political persecution. Interestingly, however, there was a recognition that despite the lack of alternatives, going abroad still required intellectual and financial capability, as well as links abroad, as explained below.

2. ... Why skilled Gambians go abroad?

In answering the question why skilled Gambians go abroad, the perceptions of all participants were collected. Both **current migrants and returnees** were asked about the factors that prompted their choice to go abroad. A total of 41 participants answered and 435 references were given.

The findings were grouped in three main themes: (1) feelings and expectations toward migration; (2) reasons for migrating; and (3) reasons for choosing a specific destination country. In sum, all these aspects contributed to an environment that challenged skilled Gambians to go abroad. Table 17 sums the main findings that are described following.

Interview Questions	Main Themes	Sub themes	Initial codes/subordinate themes	Sources (out of 41)		Total Reference
				Migrants	Returnees	
2. Reasons to Go Abroad	Feelings and expectations towards migration	Further Education	Further Education	15	14	43
		Self-development	Self-development	8	9	20
		Illusion about europe	Illusion about europe	5	3	15
		Tekky	Tekky	2	3	7
	Migration Reasons	Network abroad	Presence of a network abroad	23	18	49
			Role played by the network	22	16	42
		Intellectual and financial capability to go abroad	International Education	19	15	51
			Financial means to travel	8	8	22
			Scholarship	4	2	6
		Optimistic hope	Greener pasture	9	4	23
			Give back to the community	4	2	10
			Be successful	3	2	7
			International Exposure	1	2	3
		Others' influence	Family	7	0	12
			Political Instances	2	3	7
	Reasons for choosing a destination country	Host education		10	9	24
		Family ties		10	6	22
		Host country attractiveness	Local network	5	4	11
			Cultural ties	1	3	4
			Visa process	2	1	3
			Immigration openness	2	0	3

Table 17 – Reasons to go abroad

2.1. Feelings and expectations towards migration

Before migrating, participants had different expectations. A substantial number of participants described those expectations in terms of attaining: (1) further education; (2) self-

development; (3) pursuing an illusion about Europe; and (4) tekky¹. Only three participants did not have any expectations before going abroad.

2.1.1. Further education

For many participants, the main concern was to go abroad to get education and then return. Participants accounted having the intention to come back home during the initial stage of pre-migration, and after acquiring new skills abroad:

'My expectation was to go and come back' (Returnee US, female, 4 years abroad) asserted a female returnee.

Another male returnee added that his expectation before migration was to *'get knowledge, get a good qualification and then come back here [Gambia]'* (Returnee UK, male, 7 years abroad).

Another added:

'I just wanted to qualify as a sea captain as a navigator because it was part of my life, it was my work and I think everybody who is working want to excel in what you are doing' (Returnee Sweden, male, 11 years abroad).

Some participants mentioned that they went abroad just to further their education, a point described by a female participant: *'I just wanted to further my study'* (Returnee UK, female, 2 years abroad). Another woman migrant expressed similar thoughts:

'I wanted to be highly educated and I think originally a PhD was my target' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Another participant, who claimed that he mainly intended to continue his education when moving abroad, added:

'My expectation was mainly to go and further my study, get a bachelor's degree and a master's degree before going back. Due to my family background, I thought that by getting higher education I would be able to get a job that will allow me to provide for myself and my family' (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad).

Interestingly, most migrants (18 out of 23) and returnees (12 out of 18) foresaw a short stay abroad, mostly to further their education. However, many ended up staying for a long time and some more than ten years.

2.1.2. Self-development

Several participants saw their migration as a matter of self-fulfilment and self-development, as explained by a female migrant:

'My expectation was to make a difference, I wanted to go abroad, get the best skills that I can get so I can come back home and help my people' (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

¹ Means success in the local language of Wolof

Other participants stated the wish to transform their lives and that of their family in different ways:

'Transform my life and to elevate my life and transform the lives of my closest family members' (Returnee Sweden, male, 11 years abroad).

'I thought that by getting higher education I would be able to get a job that will allow me to provide for myself and my family' (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad).

'That I would be able to acquire my master's degree, that I would be able to get a PhD, that I will be able to somehow position myself economically and to be able to build lives in The Gambia including my very own because when I left, I was so young I did not have a lot of investments in The Gambia that would make life easy for me in The Gambia' (Migrant US, female, 12 years abroad).

2.1.3. Illusion about Europe

This theme captures participants' impressions about life abroad stemming from their imagination. Illusion about Europe is a dream that participants had prior to their migration and it ranges from having the illusion that Europe is an *'economic Eldorado'* (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad), and have a *'better living standard'* (2 participants) to *'everything come on a silver plate'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad) or *'everything would be perfect'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 20 years abroad).

One participant added: *'My expectations were getting rich at that time because the idea was that the wealth was in the West and that those who went at that time when they return their life changes'* (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

Another clarified: *'You get the impression it is an economic Eldorado where everything is fine. So, I was happy going'* (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad)

Finally, a male returnee who remembered his illusion in the days before he migrated added:

'When I was going, I thought it was going to be ok, it is the notion that everything is going to be ok here in Europe. It is going to be easy; I will have a job I will get enough money and then I will have a fantastic life. This is because if you live in this part of the world the stories you hear about Europe and things you see when people come back from Europe, what they tell you' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

However, this illusion was most of the time short-lived, as was explained by a female participant:

'All the things I heard were good things like it's good here, it's nice here you have no problems here you come here your life is complete. So, I came here it was not easy at all, you come here and then you don't see things you were expecting like everything come on a silver plate. You have to work for it, to get it, you have to work for it if you don't work you don't get anything' (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad).

In short, participants' illusion about Europe stem from imagination, which was mostly developed by the movie industry. However, once in Europe the dream was shattered, as one male returnee summed it up:

'At that time, I didn't know so much about Europe, what I see from the cinema and movies, so one expect that if one is there one will live a very comfortable life and then maybe get work and get plenty money, it turn out not to be what I expected' (Returnee Sweden, male, 41 years abroad).

2.1.4. Tekky

'Tekky' as the name indicates in Wolof (i.e., a local dialect) encompasses both self-development and becoming successful or being able to alleviate one's situation as well as that of the family. As one participant summed it up:

'The expectation was to go to Europe, become 'tekky' and alleviate your family situation and also to change your own life. So generally, the expectation was to transform your life' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

A large number of participants asserted the same: before migration, they expected to 'tekky' as one female migrant clarified:

'I hoped that I would be able to improve my career prospect because then I would have the opportunity to study, gain a qualification and thereby improve my career' (Migrant UK, female, 17 years abroad).

Finally, three participants did not have any expectations before going abroad. They were either politically persecuted or too young to think about expectations, as was asserted by one male participant whose migration was politically motivated because he did not feel comfortable at home:

'It has not been my plan as I said but I hope that now I finally find myself here and since I don't have confidence at that time to return' (Migrant Sweden, male, 3 years abroad).

Another female participant commented: *'I did not know anything about Sweden, and I did not make any research about Sweden. I was like I am going on exile may be within 6 months, a year or two I will come back insballab². That was all I was thinking, so I did not have any expectations' (...)* *'I didn't have any expectations just other than I'm going to be with my family'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 32 years abroad).

In sum, the expectations migrants had before going abroad consisted of dreams and hopes. Failure to find and achieve those expectations was described in by migrants and returnees as:

'My expectation was shattered' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad),

'I came here it wasn't easy at all' (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad), and

'When I was coming here, I was expecting some things that I did not see' (Migrant US, female, 2.6 years abroad).

² God willing

As one woman puts it when asked about her expectations before migration:

In Europe you don't have to struggle, everything comes easily, and you are like you sit there and imagine stuff I think that was one of the expectations. Actually, I was thinking I would be living with my parents like everything would be as you see on the TV' (Migrant Sweden, female, 20 years abroad).

2.2. Migration Reasons

Current migrants and returnees referred to four main reasons leading them to migrate: (1) networks abroad; (2) intellectual and financial capability to go abroad; (3) optimistic hope; and (4) others' influence.

2.2.1. Network abroad

This section of the results deals with the question of having networks abroad and the extent those networks prompted the decision to migrate, as well as the assistance they provided to newcomers.

Presence of a network abroad. All participants spontaneously attributed this network to family, friends, and political movement. As one participant puts it: *'my family my dad, my uncle, my aunty, my cousins they were all here'* (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

One female participant commented: *'When I came, I found out that people I knew before, couple of my friends already live here. I knew some of them when I was a kid, but I did not know they were here'* (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

A small number of participants also reported the influence of not having a network abroad:

'Not quite I didn't have any acquaintances' (Returnee Sweden, male, 41 years abroad),

'I did not have any acquaintances before going, the only Gambian I knew was the one I met in the train station, but he did very well', said one man, *'the sad part of it is I can remember I slept in the railway station for 3 nights. I have nowhere to sleep, I didn't know anybody'* (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

Role played by the network. Having a network abroad only sometimes influenced the choice to go, but once the decision had been made the network played a supporting role that was crucial. The majority of the participants reported:

'They helped me settle down, they helped me find accommodation and showed me where to get my bus passes from' (Returnee UK, male, 7 years abroad).

'They played an important role because I stayed with them before I started my studies. Also, when I was at university during the holidays, I also stay with them' (Migrant UK, female, 17 years abroad).

Others reported that their networks:

'Sponsored the whole trip' (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad),

'Provided accommodation' (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad),

'Paid for housing' (Migrant UK, female, 30 years abroad).

As it is summed up by one participant:

'They actually help us with travel arrangements, they picked us at the airport and then they ask us to request for asylum, which we did because at that time we could not go back to Gambia' (Migrant Norway, male, 34 years abroad).

In sum, the presence of a network abroad was crucial in the settlement process as these migrant networks provided the social structure that reduced both the emotional and financial cost of international migration. These social ties extended beyond international borders to aid in the migration process, as mentioned by migrants (22 out of 23) and returnees (16 out of 18). However, having a network was not the primary reason for going but, instead, a source of support once the choice was taken.

2.2.2. Intellectual and financial capability

Herein are included reasons related to looking for (1) international education and (2) having financial means to support it, including a (3) scholarship.

International education played an important part in the choice to migrate, as the following quotes illustrate:

'At that time Gambia did not have a university. So, it was quite common for people to go abroad and continue with their study. That is why I ended up here' (Migrant Norway, male, 26 years abroad)

'Initially I came over here to do 6th form because I planned to attend university so it would better my chances ... at that time there was no university and I have planned to study medicine and I had to go abroad for that' (Returnee UK, male, 19 years abroad).

'I got a scholarship to do a master's degree' (Returnee Norway, male, 2 years abroad).

'Generally going abroad to study is perceived as having a better quality of education' (Returnee US, female, 8 years abroad).

A significant number of migrants (19 out of 23) reported targeting a specific degree to justify their choice to go abroad, as shown by a woman migrant:

'I wanted to be highly educated and I think originally a PhD was my target' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Another male participant added:

'My profession is sea captain, in The Gambia I was trained locally, and I needed to be trained internationally so that I can sail with big vessels that are applying Europe, America, Asia, all over the world. For that reason, I had to go to Norway to study navigation. The Norwegian merchant fleet is one of the best in the whole world.' (Returnee Norway, male, 11 years abroad).

In sum, the most powerful reason for moving abroad was further education, mentioned by 34 interviewees. The then lack of tertiary education in Gambia, the absence of certain fields of education (such as navigation, medicine, etc.) were all listed reasons.

Financial means to travel. A large number of participants reported having financial means to travel as a pre-condition for migration, as one participant explained:

‘From a personal point of view, I always find it a bit of difficult situation, a difficult topic because I mean even though I stated all the reasons I migrated, the main reason is the fact that my parents could have afford it and I think people sometimes don’t realize how much it would actually cost them and how much you got to achieve otherwise without doing that much’ (Migrant UK, male, 19 years abroad).

Other participants stated that their travel was covered by themselves through personal savings or employers’ contributions. Four participants stated that they used their personal savings to pay for their migration and this has been the case of participants who came mostly from a poor background. One participant explained that the situation was difficult to the extent that they had to sell household properties:

‘Gathering some money was difficult in that my mum didn’t have the money. It was basically between selling a cow. We had to sell a cow and my uncle in Niimi contributed some funds’ (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad). He added that his former employer had to contribute to fit the air ticket: *‘And the late owner or co-owner of the point newspaper Deyda Hydara actually gave me some money as well. That also contributed to my airline ticket’*.

Participants who were employed before their migration explained how they were able to pay for the trip:

‘I was working there when I went. I had the money to buy the ticket myself’ (Returnee US, female, 16 years abroad)

‘It took me a while to get ready for it because I was controlling myself. So, I was working at the bank and I took some loans and was able to go. I sponsor myself’ (Returnee US, male, 11 years abroad).

Conversely, for participants who did not have that financial support to travel, they mentioned a scholarship to cover education and travel expenses. **Scholarship** was declared as the only reason for migrating for six interviewees, as migration would have been impossible otherwise:

‘The only factor that would have prevented me from travelling is the money to pay for the tuition fees meaning that if I didn’t have the scholarship to go and study or money to pay for my fees I would not travel. I would have stayed home’ (Migrant US, male, 16 years abroad).

Other two migrants added:

I had a clinical research fellowship at Imperial College, so that's why I came over. It was for education purpose. To get a PhD because I already had the first step towards getting a PhD fellowship by the time, I left the country' (Migrant UK, male, 2.5 years abroad).

I got a fellowship from the Irish government through a college in Dublin to study development like development studies' (Migrant UK, male, 15 years abroad).

The cost of going abroad — along with the financial means to travel — were depicted as indispensable in the migration process. Parental support was deemed necessary for the unemployed, but for the employed, the possibility to buy the ticket or sponsor themselves was real. As one returnee summed it up: *'the only thing that could have prevented me is that had I not get the chance to go may be not get the chance to get a visa or transportation'* (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad). These quotes reveal that financial capability is required to migrate, even when migration is pushed by home country reasons.

2.2.3. Optimistic Hope

Participants attributed their migration to optimistic hope. Optimistic hope refers to participants' memories about the stage of pre-migration and includes four subordinated themes: (1) greener pasture, (2) giving back to the community; (3) being successful, and (4) gaining international exposure.

Greener pasture. The first vignette below includes the description of a personal motive for migrating:

I left The Gambia in 2014. Actually, I was here [Sweden] on holiday and later I decided to stay hoping for greener pasture' (Migrant Sweden, male, 3 years abroad).

A male returnee added that:

'At that time, I didn't know so much about Europe, (...), so one expect that if one is there one will live a very comfortable life and then maybe get work and get plenty money' (Returnee Sweden, male, 41 years abroad).

Some participants see migration as a trend that needed to be followed, as the following quotes illustrate:

It was the trend at that time that if you finish high school there are no prospect for you to get a job, the default option is for you to migrate to go and hustle partly because it was popular because most young people were coming from Europe. We saw them driving big cars, so we thought that was what we could do' (Returnee Sweden, male, 12 years abroad).

That was around the time when most of my friends and neighbours who have brothers in the West were helped by their brothers to go out and I did not see any future in Africa. I left Gambia not to come and stay in

Europe permanently, I left Gambia to come and change my live so that I can have a better job so that I can help my family' (Migrant Norway, male, 34 years abroad).

Giving back to the community. Participants also attributed their optimistic hope to giving back to their community and becoming successful at home. One participant recalled that one of his most important dreams was *'to come home'* and serve his country.

Another described that he would come back to the same institution and *'be able to give back to the students'* (Returnee UK, male, 13 years abroad).

While another commented that: *'the reasons are I came here to improve my knowledge to be better able to serve my people, so I am going back to where I am needed the most'* (Migrant UK, male, 2.5 years abroad).

As one participant summed it up: *'The contributions that I can do weigh more when I offer them back home than when I do them here because the truth is whatever I do here there are dozen others like me equally as qualified who can provide the same services but back home, I would probably be the only one who can do what I do. So, I prefer to give back to my community'* (Migrant UK, male, 2.5 years abroad).

Being successful. The aim of becoming successful was highlighted. One returnee reported that: *'At that time it was what we saw, we saw the precedence'*, but he went on *'we saw those who went at that time Germany was the only place if you wanted to become successful as the wolof would say 'tekey'* (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

Furthermore, being successful was associated with having education, getting a job, and becoming financially stronger. As one man recalled:

'To be successful in life, to have education and be able to have a job, to have an occupation' (Migrant Norway, male, 34 years abroad).

Other participants asserted that to be successful was probably to *'get some more money and financially ... be stronger'* (Returnee US, male, 11 years abroad).

In sum, to become successful was not only to be educated but also to boost one's financial status: *'When I was going, I thought it was going to be ok, it is the notion that everything is going to be ok (...) I will have a job I will get enough money and then I will have a fantastic life'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad).

International exposure. Other participants considered it important to gain international exposure through migration (3 participants). In particular, female participants equate this exposure to: *'go to the school to at least study and have that international experience'* (Returnee US, female, 7 years abroad).

Conversely, one male participant mentioned that he *'was curious about Europe the outside world ... wanted to go outside and see'* (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad).

In other words, international experience was reported to play an important role in the choice to migrate: *'being somewhere different, meeting different people, seeing the outside world*, were especially thought to require migration.

In short, these optimistic expectations (e.g., greener pasture, give back to community, success, and international exposure) led to the migration choice, even though some were short-lived. Although the main reference to greener pasture was made by migrants (9 out of 13) across gender and age, it is worth noting that those who referred to giving back to the community are mainly young males and health-care professionals (3 out of 6), who have lived outside the country longer than 10 years. These findings suggest a link between the reasons for going abroad and migrants' choices to return so that they can give back to their home community, as will be addressed later in this chapter.

2.2.4. Others' influence

Unlike the participants whose choice to migrate was made by themselves alone, seven participants were influenced by others, such as: (1) family; and (2) political instances. In particular, female participants went abroad more often to either join their parents or spouse and not on their own initiative:

I left The Gambia January 2015 because my husband was here doing his PhD and he was going to be here for four years. So, I went to join my husband' (Migrant US, female, 2.6 years abroad)

Another female added: *'My father has been living here, my dad is the reason why I came because I came to reunite with him'* (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad). This woman summed it up thus: *'because my parents live here, I just came to join my family. It wasn't my decision to come here, I come to join my family'*.

Another key reason pushing people to migrate was **political persecution**. Even though minimal, four male participants mentioned that their choice to go abroad was politically motivated. One male returnee commented: *'The UK going was more to do with the political situation than anything else'*. He went on: *'I wasn't happy living in The Gambia under the former regime, but my life was not threatened. I just felt that I don't like what was happening and I just left'* (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

Another participant added: *'I was absolutely not comfortable with the former regime because I remember there are series of incidents at my workplace where they came to arrest people like five senior staff of our office'* (Migrant Sweden, male, 3 years abroad).

Conversely, one female participant stated that:

'My life was threatened I had a baby, and I was part of a political movement that was banned in The Gambia. Life was like unsustainable' (Migrant Sweden, female, 32 years abroad).

In other words, these participants left The Gambia because they did not feel comfortable at home, their life was somehow threatened, or they were prosecuted.

In short, then, people chose to migrate for three main reasons: (1) intellectual/ financial ability to travel, (2) their optimistic hope and the (3) influence of others. Having a network abroad was also helpful and supported that choice. A point succinctly made by a participant's dictum:

'During those days we were very young ... you had an ambition and apply for school somewhere wherever you get the admission and if the parents can afford, they help you out to come'.

As another participant summed it up:

'I left Gambia not to come and stay in Europe permanently, I left Gambia to come and change my live so that I can have a better job so that I can help my family' (Migrant Norway, male, 34 years abroad).

Interestingly, the reasons to migrate somewhat influenced the expected duration of the migration and the intention to return, as is explained below.

2.3. Reasons for choosing the destination country

The reasons for choosing a destination country were somewhat different from the reasons for migrating in that the selection of a destination does not overtly assert why a migrant leaves the home country. Overall, participants commented that they chose to live in a specific country because of: (1) host education; (2) family reunion; and (3) host country attractiveness. The quotes illustrating these aspects are presented in the next sections.

2.3.1. Host education

The majority of the participants stated education as the main reason for choosing a destination country. Among those, the choice of a host country was determined by the quality of host education, offer of a scholarship or free education. The following quotes illustrate these three educational dimensions: *'My father went to school in the US and he believed that they have a better-quality education'* (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

Another male participant added: *'I chose UK for their excellence in research and education. I only wanted to come here because Imperial College is the world leader in what I wanted to study'* (Migrant UK, male, 2.5 years abroad).

Another male returnee recalled: *'How I choose the US has something to do with the fact that at that time it was one of the best countries in the world on higher education'* (Returnee US, male, 18 years abroad)

One male participant said he chose Ireland because: *'that is where I got the scholarship'* (Migrant UK, male, 30 years abroad).

For another participant: *'in Norway if I complete |high education| and go back to a third world country I don't have to pay'*, so he added: *'I chose Norway because there I could read, study without burden because*

I did not have to do part-time job or any other stuff I can just concentrate on my study' (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

While located in different countries (US, UK, Norway, and Sweden), most participants reflected on the quality of the education provided, as one male returnee summed it up:

I came to Sweden in January 1975. It was because it was easier. I did not have to pay for any school than in America. Once you have a paper and you can manage it around the paper you could get a study loan, have a job, financial implications' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

However, education (i.e., quality of education, the availability of scholarship or free education) was not the only reason for choosing the host country, which included family ties.

2.3.2. Family ties

Family ties encompasses family-related factors that made people choose a certain destination. Participants reported choosing a country because it was *'a choice of their parents'* or because they wish *'to join spouse'* and/or they were *'born there'*.

One female returnee remarked: *'That's where my dad studied, he is pro-American and since my dad studied in the US it was just easy to lean towards the US'* (Returnee US, female, 8 years abroad). For some participants, the parental choice was due to their young age when they were migrating. As one participant recalled: *'England was chosen for me at that time because it was a choice my parents made for me. So, I was under 18'* (Migrant UK, male, 19 years abroad).

For others, the purpose of the reunion was to join the spouse who was living abroad or studying there:

'Norway is my last country of destination and I went there to join my husband who live here. So, I have been living in Norway together with my family for the past 6 years' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad) narrated one female participant.

Another female added: *'I went to join my husband ...my husband was already studying in the US'* (Migrant US, female, 2.6 years).

Family ties are thus a key reason for choosing a destination country: the majority chose a country where their parents once lived or where the spouse was living.

2.3.3. Host country attractiveness

Host country attractiveness represents what made a country attractive to skilled Gambian migrants. In this study, a host country was considered attractive because of (1) a local network; (2) cultural ties (i.e., language, historic relationship); (3) easier visa process; and (4) immigration openness. The following quotes illustrate how skilled Gambians described the attractiveness of the host country.

Local network. Participants chose a host country in which they already had a network. These networks are in the form of ‘acquaintances’ or ‘political movement’:

I choose Sweden because we have friends who were living in Sweden’ added a female participant ‘and we also know that Sweden has a history of solidarity with people (...) fleeing political persecution’ (Migrant Sweden, female, 32 years abroad).

I chose UK simply because like I said apart from the political pressure, I had the ambition of also going to school’ (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad) stated one male returnee.

Some reported that the choice of a country of destination was based on the location of the political movement they belonged to, which facilitated their migration. As regards Sweden as a destination country, other participant added:

‘We had people who we were working with the same movement for justice in Africa MOJA-G [Movement for Justice in Africa-Gambia branch] and they were the ones who facilitated our coming’ (Migrant Sweden, female, 32 years abroad).

Another participant viewed the same choice for Norway as accidental:

‘Because the leaders of MOJA were living in Stockholm, Sweden so they fixed our tickets. They just split us: two to Denmark and two to Norway. That’s why I say I came to Norway by accident!’ (Migrant Sweden, male, 34 years abroad).

Others stated that their choice of a destination was influenced by the presence of a local network:

‘I had lot of friends from The Gambia who were already in Norway studying’ (Returnee Norway, male, 11 years abroad) recounted one participant.

‘Another reason was that one of my cousins was already in the school. So, he has been accepted and he went. So, I would have known someone at the school I was coming to’ (Migrant US, male, 14 years abroad), claimed another participant.

Cultural ties. *I thought UK was the best country to go to do my master’s degree since it has a lot of ties with The Gambia’ (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).*

Another participant added that *‘there would be any language barrier’ (Migrant UK, male, 7 years abroad).*

One female migrant explained that she chose UK as a destination because *‘it is a commonwealth country, so it was easy to be accepted to stay here’ (Migrant UK, female, 17 years abroad).*

Lastly, one male returnee related why he initially migrated to the US:

‘There was a black population, being part of a black population in America and I was interested in the black consciousness movement and I was aware also of what was happening there, and I could easily dissolve into that population ‘ (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

Visa process. *I decided to try US. I think at that time the visa process was a lot easier'* (Migrant US, male, 14 years abroad)

I guess it was probably easier for me to get the visa from here. I wouldn't have to travel to Dakar or any other country for visa' (Migrant UK, male, 7 years abroad)

Another participant recounted:

It was not easy to come to Europe to study. I tried so many ways to come it was very difficult', he then added *'but then when I saw that program I applied and I said to myself this could be a gateway to Europe because this program could be a stepping-stone for me'* (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad).

Immigration openness. Participants also reported that being an immigrant-friendly country influenced their choice of the destination: *I chose the US because it was more immigrant friendly, they had both study and assistantship for migrants. They also had scholarships for aspiring immigrants at that time'* (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

Another female participant added that: *'we also know that Sweden has a history of solidarity with people of third world countries fleeing political persecution'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 32 years abroad).

Therefore, host country attractiveness was one of the reasons for choosing the destination. Migrants mostly chose a country where there was a network of other fellow citizens that shared cultural ties, and/or where the visa process was easier. Women more frequently than men chose a country open to immigration. As shown, even before migration, the presence of a social network had the greatest influence on the choice of the destination country. Social networking, by having acquaintances or a mere presence of members of a political movement, was a key support factor for skilled Gambians and a reason for choosing a specific destination.

2.4. Summary

To sum up, some skilled Gambians choose to go abroad as the result of a combination of factors that work together to drive skilled migration, sometimes for real life situations and other times for illusory visions and hopes. Seeking to overcome a situation of need and hopelessness, migration was not merely a matter of individual choice but rather a strategy used by those who had the financial and intellectual means to migrate to improve their life and that of their family and community. In addition to the expectations held before migration (motives, 'tekky', illusion about Europe) and the root reasons for migration (intellectual/financial ability, optimistic hope, others influence) the presence of a social network abroad was decisive. Once the general decision to migrate was made, the network influenced the selection of the destination country, which ideally had cultural ties, an easier visa process and was open to emigration.

3. Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad?

To answer this research question, **current migrants** were asked about their actual situation abroad and their future plans. **Returnees** too, were asked about the reasons that might have prevented them from returning, and what would they do (plan B). Most returnees did not have a plan B, as they saw no reason that could have prevented a return they had always planned.

The reasons to remain abroad reported by migrants include: (1) host country embeddedness; (2) host family embeddedness; (3) host job embeddedness; (4) home (dis)embeddedness; and (5) earlier unsuccessful attempts to return. Table 18 sums the findings that are further developed below.

Interview Questions	Main Themes	Sub themes	Initial codes/subordinate themes	Sources	Total References
3. Reasons to Remain Abroad	Host country embeddedness	Host sacrifice	Economic/salary	17	41
			Life opportunities	8	10
			Self-development	5	8
			Host country lifestyle	4	8
		Host fit		15	61
		Host links	Formal and informal connections with locals	10	13
			Links with an international network of fellow nationals	7	9
	Host family embeddedness	Host family links	Spouse and children	13	22
			Extended family	6	12
		Host family sacrifice		8	15
		Host family fit		5	7
	Host job embeddedness	Host job links	Career abroad	10	12
			Rising up in a host career	3	4
		Host job sacrifice	Work opportunities	9	18
			Previous career loss	2	4
		Host job fit		3	3
	Home (dis)embeddedness			5	15
	Earlier unsuccessful attempts to return			3	3

Table 18 – Reasons for remaining abroad for current migrants

3.1. Host country embeddedness

As part of the coding process, host country embeddedness includes all the factors that tie an individual to the host country in its multiple dimensions as per the literature review, such as (in descending order of reference and thus importance to the interviewees): (1) host sacrifice (i.e., losses from leaving the host country); (2) host fit; and (3) host links.

3.1.1. Host country sacrifice

‘Host Sacrifice’ captures the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited if migrants leave the host country. In that sense, it includes sacrifices related to the following aspects: (1) economic/salary, (2) life opportunities, (3) self-development; and (4) host country lifestyle.

Economic sacrifice. People remained abroad because they cannot forfeit the economic benefits they receive while staying abroad. Those benefits included pay rate or salary and economic incentives. As two participants put it:

‘If the pay rate were better in The Gambia, I think many people would have stayed there’ (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad).

‘I cannot afford to go now |return| because I have a lot of responsibility, ... the salary I have now I can support people and be comfortable but if I go back to Gambia now, I would struggle to support myself and others, that’s the only reason that keeps me here’ (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

So, the difference in pay rate was depicted as a constraint that prevented them from returning: *‘I may be wrong, but I do not think there is any other place where I will be able to get as much as I am getting here’* (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

Another participant echoed a similar statement by claiming that: *‘you don’t get paid much over there’* (Migrant UK, female, 28 years abroad). In addition, one male participant who has been in the US for almost 20 years, said: *‘I have a job that pays reasonably okay’* (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad).

Another female migrant blatantly admitted: *‘What I am earning now doing the same job is more than what I was earning in The Gambia doing the same job’*. she went on *‘If the pay rate were better in Gambia, I think many people would have stayed’*.

In addition, participants felt that migrants did not intend to stay abroad but **economic incentives** kept them there, a point described by a female participant:

‘I never wanted to stay in America. I think America has a way of keeping people here. When you are good, Americans have a way of giving you incentives, increasing your salary. They have a way of keeping the people they need’ (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad)

Thus, the pay rate difference was advocated not only as a motive to migrate but also a constraint towards returning. As summarised by one participant:

‘The situation back home requires more giving up so that I will be able to live more comfortably’ (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

And another put it:

'They don't pay that much because the maximum you can get on a master's degree is 30,000 dalasi and that is a lot of money per month. That is not a lot if I have to support my family and the extended family and save and then pay mortgage' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Life opportunities abroad. As part of the reasons keeping migrants abroad, a large number of participants reported that they cannot forfeit the personal and social opportunities they are having abroad. As one participant asserted:

'I believe that the opportunities here for me have been tremendous. And I believe that I did very well, I took advantage of the opportunities' (...) thus 'leaving that and going to The Gambia of course as you know in third world countries one of the problems are political changes' (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad).

Similarly, one female participant reported that besides having work she has her family abroad: *'I am staying because I don't have the opportunity in Gambia why not stay'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad).

'I had better opportunities here once I had the Norwegian language in my head, I felt that I will be very successful quickly' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad) said one female participant who went to Norway to join her spouse.

In contrast, one female participant asserted: *'I do not think I would ever get the life skills and the opportunities that I have right now in the US ... I had a job even before I graduated'* (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

Self-development. Besides comparing the opportunities abroad to those back home, participants explained that their choice to remain abroad was related to their self-development. A point that was clearly described by one female participant:

'I think I have developed myself professionally and personally. I have learned a lot of things that I would not have learned if I had stayed at home' (Migrant UK, female, 17 years abroad).

Many participants said they would like to excel or improve personally or educationally: *'My expectation was that I would excel for me that is very important as a migrant partly because of all the stigma that migrants face'* (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

As one male participant recounted:

'I left high school and I needed some qualifications, some professional training and I couldn't have that at that time in The Gambia because there was not that kind of institution that can develop people to the level that I wanted' (Migrant Sweden, male, 28 years abroad).

Additionally, another migrant woman added:

'I hoped that I would be able to improve my career prospect because then I would have the opportunity to study, gain a qualifications and thereby improve my career' (Migrant UK, female, 17 years abroad).

Finally, a participant explained why he wanted to professionally develop himself:

'Here my goal was to get education and to position myself economically in ways that I would be able to at least have opportunity of investment in The Gambia. I actually didn't have any viable investment when I left so that this was just one piece of what I wanted to do, the other piece was to build myself up economically so that I can provide for whatever I need to be able to be more stable in The Gambia' (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

Host country lifestyle. Other participants described the host country as a nice place to be that they would miss if they were to leave. The host country was referred to as 'nice' or 'too nice', 'comfortable, and safe for kids', having a 'social welfare system', and being 'a place where people feel safe' because 'you never end up in the street'.

One participant who has been abroad for the past 16 years remarked:

'Norway is too nice. Do you know the benefits we have here...' she further noted *'I am of the belief that as long as I live here, I am going to live here comfortably'* (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad). As for another female participant, the host country is known by *'the comfort, the safety for my kids in Norway'* (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

One female participant claimed that:

'I have never actually packed my stuff and decided to leave. I have always thought about it and as long as I have a good life here, a comfortable life and I am able to dream, have ambition and have a little bit of nice place' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Another female migrant, who is staying with her children abroad, described Norway as a safe place:

'Norway is too nice. Laugh, hey do you know the benefits we have here. I was dating this guy who was a football player, so he travels like everywhere. So, I broke the relationship because I do not want to move... And I like Norway and at least I am lucky. I have a family here; a lot of migrants would not have anyone.' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

3.1.2. Host country fit

As one of the reasons that kept migrants living abroad, host fit refers to the perceived compatibility or comfort with a host country. Participants reported that they felt 'connected', 'in love with', or 'very settled' in the host country, because they appreciated and fitted in with it:

'I am very settled where I am. If I were to move to a third country, I think that would be too much hassle really' (Migrant UK, female, 17 years abroad).

In addition, participants think of the host country as home. In related words, they considered themselves 'citizen of the host country' and others refer to the host country as a 'home' or a 'second home', 'a safe place' and a place that is 'not alien':

'I fell in love with the nature and the beauty and the calm and having spent much of my time in chaotic London. I thought Norway will be good' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

Another participant who migrated to London at a tender age, reported that:

'London never really felt like a foreign or distant place even since birth it was like home because my parents bring us back and forth' (Migrant UK, female, 28 years abroad). She then added: *'London has always been home to us like a second home ... because (my parents) were married here, established themselves, went back home, and decided to come back again'*.

In short, then, host fit - feeling compatible with the host country – was depicted as supporting the choice of remaining abroad. As another participant summed it up:

'It is difficult to reallocate myself to go to The Gambia because I am already established here and doing other things' (Migrant Sweden, male, 28 years abroad).

3.1.3. Host country links

The host country links include: (1) the formal and informal connections with locals, and (2) links with an international network of fellow nationals. Ten participants mentioned their host links to **formal and informal connections** in the host country, as one woman elucidated:

'I am a Norwegian citizen and everything and I have settled and have my life here, so I probably think like even if I decide to move back home, I am still going to be connected to Norway. I will still going to come back, and I am still going to have that door' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Having those connections encourages remaining abroad, as one woman summed up:

'The real outcomes are ... making friends and building a community here for myself that I really value. It is not about the job and the degree but the social networks that I am able to make here' (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

Another participant stressed: *'I think I have more network in Europe or in Ireland than I would have in The Gambia. It is very sad to say but I think I have more network here a network of colleagues, friends, institutions, people who you will actually exchange ideas like in terms of academic work like research, probably like information sharing'* (Migrant UK, male, 15 years abroad).

Other participants had **links to a network of fellow citizens abroad** which also accounted for the choice to remain abroad:

'I am doing the best that I can, using the opportunities that I have, the chances that I have, the network that I have had, the connections that I have made. I try to make as much connections as possible so that I can evolve, I don't want to stay stagnant in one place and not do something out of myself' (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

Therefore, having an international network was seen as an opportunity to remain abroad. Some emphasised that these connections were significant, while others reflected on how they connected them to their success in the host country.

3.2. Host family embeddedness

As part of the coding process, host family embeddedness emerged as a key factor retaining Gambian migrants abroad. In other words, having family abroad retained them, above and beyond host country embeddedness, and involved (by descending order of reference): (1) host family links; (2) host family sacrifice (i.e., losses from leaving); and (3) host family fit.

3.2.1. Host family links

Participants emphasised their family links in the destination country to include (1) spouse and children, as well as (2) extended family.

Spouse and children. Close family was repeatedly mentioned by skilled Gambians, which indicates the importance they attributed to their family. In related words, participants reported deciding to remain abroad because they *'already have a family'* (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad) or they *'have started having family'* (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad). Some have started their family in the host country, which limited their return to The Gambia:

'Because I have started having family here, I am married to somebody who is staying so, I don't have a choice but to stay with him' (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad).

A male migrant in the UK noted the relative importance of family:

'I already have a family here: my wife and my little daughter. So perhaps if there is any other reason it might be my family. So, the reasons that could prevent me from returning are the PhD first, and then my family and the cold weather' (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad).

One female migrant also added:

'My husband and some family members were already in the UK and as a trailing wife I feel like I am following my husband and it depends on his movement' (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad).

Extended family. Some participants reflected on the importance of the extended family, also present in the destination country. As one participant puts it: *'My family my dad, my uncle, my aunty, my cousins they were all here'* (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

Another female participant commented:

'I like Norway and at least I am lucky I have a family here; a lot of migrants would not have anyone. My dad is here just a walking distance' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Finally, another female migrant added:

'England was the country that I felt most connected with because my family, my immediate family almost all of them are living in England' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

3.2.2. Host family sacrifice

Several participants reflected on the sacrifices the family would have to make if they returned, including being separated, as illustrated by the following:

'The main constraint as of now is my family because I have started to have kids over here and it is not easy taking your kids back home because of government's rules as of now is my family' (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad).

'I do not believe in distance marriage' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Another participant added:

'If I didn't have kids or husband it would have been different, and I would probably have gone back to Gambia and not give it a second thought. If I knew that I would have the opportunity to come back if things do not work out but now, I need to have something very concrete because I have people that I am responsible for. So, I decide to stay in the meantime because of family reasons, my children, I have a job that I like working in, and also like I said the comfort the safety for my kids in Norway' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

One male participant also added that, if he could go back in time and change something in his choice to remain abroad, he would have changed his *'family life ... I would probably get married and bring my children a bit earlier rather than now'* (Migrant UK, male, 15 years abroad).

Some participants listed personal sacrifices if they left, and these included building a career so that they could take care of the family, who otherwise would not be able to afford it:

'My expectations are to basically build up a good retirement for me and my wife and also to get some good college education for my kids' (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad).

Another female participant shared similar feelings:

'I have improved my career and I have a reasonably good job and I can take care of myself and my family' (Migrant UK, female, 17 years abroad).

In sum, having family in the host country was one of the reasons that kept migrants abroad. Having or starting a family abroad, not believing in distance marriage and loving to be with one's family represented the factors that not only kept migrants abroad, but also constituted a personal and family price that inhibited them from returning home. So, host family embeddedness and its subordinate dimensions were closely related with the choice to remain abroad among skilled Gambian migrants.

3.2.3. Host family fit

As one of the reasons keeping migrants abroad, host family fit refers to the perceived compatibility or comfort of their family in the destination country. In related words, participants

reported that they are currently living abroad because the family is settled and well-connected locally:

I decide to stay in the meantime because of family reasons, my children’ (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad) reported one female participant.

A male migrant emphasised that his choice for remaining abroad was linked to:

Having a healthy life to continue living here. That’s the only expectation of this moment which is to be with the family for the children to have a healthy and peaceful life here’ (Migrant Sweden, male, 28 years abroad).

Finally, another participant added: *I have a 17-year-old boy I have been following up and ... I will follow him until his 20s until his grandfather take him to the States*’ (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

3.3. Host job embeddedness

As part of the coding process, host job embeddedness includes all the factors that embed an individual to the host job or career, in its multiple dimensions as per the literature review, such as (and in descending order of reference): (1) host job links; (2) host job sacrifice (i.e., losses from leaving); and (3) host job fit.

3.3.1. Host job links

This category represents migrants’ connections or ties with a host job or career, often perceived as a reason for remaining abroad. Particularly emphasised was (1) having a career abroad, and (2) the prospects of rising up in a host career.

Career abroad. Having a career abroad works as an incentive for remaining. Ten migrants mentioned that their choice to remain abroad was a consequence of their career in the host country. Two participants reported:

I was building on my career’ (Migrant Sweden, female, 32 years abroad).

So, I see throughout, I see the outcome where I stay here and work my career up and put all my effort in that and have a career in the Norwegian finance sector because I know that branch and I know I have a network there’ (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Rising up in a host country career. Another female participant added that she was *going to rise up the career ladder*’ (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad). In short, having a career abroad constituted one of the factors that kept migrants abroad, especially for those who valued their career. As summed up by one participant:

If I stay here, I am going to rise up the career ladder like I did. My career is a very important part of my identity even though I am a mum and a wife’ (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

3.3.2. Host job sacrifice

'Host job sacrifice' captures the perceived cost of losing the job or career benefits in the case of migrants leaving the host country. In that sense, it includes sacrifices related to the following aspects: (1) actual work opportunities; and (2) previous career loss.

Work opportunities. These include the professional opportunities migrants would lose if they were to leave, as illustrated by one participant who has recently earned a PhD degree:

'For now, my decision is to stay, and the reason is because I graduated, and I happened to be in academy. And I believe that it is important you know... to upgrade myself and get myself more grounded before I am able to return. I am not saying I am not able to do that at home, but doing it here because of the resources that I have available to me here in the United States ... I am able to develop myself in my field and |resources| are more readily available here. I am not saying it is not available in The Gambia, but I believe that they are more easily accessible where I am right now' (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

Another participant mentioned that the work environment was a constraint on returning:

'I know the environment that I was working in and for me it was not as conducive or it was not structured as I would like' (Migrant UK, female 28 years abroad).

Previous career loss. Conversely, one female participant who moved to Norway to join her husband described, emotively, the sacrifice she went through career-wise:

'It was very difficult given that I have given up my career and of course that also meant my financial independence and freedom. So, for somebody who was earning a decent, a good wage and being a manager of mental health service. So, career wise I was on top of my career in England and I had to start from the beginning, from scratch. I had to start looking for a job and all the rest of it' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad)

In sum, the decision to stay abroad was heavily influenced by perceived host job sacrifice. As one participant summed it up:

'If I knew that I would have the opportunity to come back if things do not work out but now (...) So, I decide to stay in the meantime (...) I have a job that I like working in (...) Norway' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

3.3.3. Host job fit

This category includes participants' positive references to their present job and their perceived professional compatibility, while abroad. One participant summed up this theme: *'I have my work and my family here and I don't have the opportunity in Gambia why not stay'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad).

A female participant considered remaining abroad to develop herself personally and professionally, and she recounted: *'I have improved my career and I have a reasonably good job and I can take care of myself and my family'* (Migrant UK, female, 17 years abroad).

A female migrant added:

'To continue working for me that is very important, to have financial independence and the expectation is that the Norwegian society would evolve and be more migrant friendly and have more opportunities for people like myself because I am not unique, I just happen to be lucky' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

Another female migrant explained her choice to remain abroad and she narrated:

'My intention is to keep what I have and enhance it. I am doing pretty well in terms of building my career, my family is here, and I have been fortunate in working in an environment where I have a good exposure. So just want those things to continue, so I want my career to continue to blossom by God's grace and my family to continue to prosper. So, you know just be happy' (Migrant UK, female, 28 years abroad).

Lastly, a male migrant summarised his prospects in the host country as follows:

'My expectations is to have good health, and have the contacts that I have now, be able to continue the job I am doing now, the possibilities of this job I have and then now I am happy' (Migrant Norway, female, 34 years abroad).

In short, migrants perceived their compatibility with the host job as an influencing force of their choice to remain abroad. Overall, host job embeddedness included not only the professional factors that make migrants feel positive and happy, through the links and fit with the host job, but also the job sacrifices that would make it difficult to leave due to the costs of losing professional benefits.

3.4. Home (dis)embeddedness

Finally, and regarding the factors that were perceived to explain why skilled Gambian migrants choose to stay abroad, the research collected some references to becoming alienated and distant from the home country, as the migration extends. A point neatly summarised by one participant:

'If you stay in a country for 15 years, actually I know more about Ireland now than in The Gambia. It is actually funny I was born in The Gambia but when I go to The Gambia, I feel like a stranger in some way ... when I go to The Gambia sometimes you feel that you are only visiting even though you have your families, you have your relatives, that's where you were born. And then returning to Ireland is like you are coming home because sometimes you feel like you are going home to The Gambia but when you stay there for some time and it's time to come back you feel like it is not home anymore and you feel alienated as well' (Migrant UK, male, 15 years abroad).

Another participant described how she felt unsafe during one of her (temporary) visits to The Gambia, thus nurturing the feeling of home (dis)embeddedness:

I am a Gambian and when I was there for those two weeks, I felt very unsecure, I felt very unsafe and I didn't feel at home. So, I just wanted to leave, two weeks was too long at that time. Not because I didn't love the people or the country but because I did not feel safe' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

A female participant now sees the UK as her own country and described Gambia as follows:

I love the fact that I can go to Gambia and you know I have my roots there and that I still have family there. And when I am there it is home, it is my second home really' (Migrant UK, female, 28 years abroad).

Finally, another female migrant said she could not stay for a long time in Gambia:

'So, going to Gambia for four weeks is too much for me. If I were going to Gambia for four weeks and I had a job or I had something to do a project or something, then that's fine because I would know that every morning that I wake up I would have something to do. But staying there for three weeks idling, I can do it for three days, after three days I get bored and when I am bored, I get miserable' (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

Briefly, migrants' feelings of home (dis)embeddedness influenced the likelihood to remain abroad. Such emotional feelings, which made migrants unhappy and feel alienated in their home country. They were settled in the host country, which made it more difficult to leave because of the psychological cost and loss of material advantages.

3.5. Earlier unsuccessful attempts to return

Finally, three participants stated that they have tried to return but their attempts were unsuccessful, which precluded a definitive return. For instance, one male participant reported that: *'Back in 2010 I decided to return home to contribute to the economic growth of The Gambia and for one reason or another I couldn't'* (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad).

Another female participant described her attempt to return as uneasy:

'The main constraint is the environment, the people and the financial constraints as well because in all honesty you know at this stage in my life where I spent most of it studying now it is time for me to build lot of experience but also to financially have something for myself and there is no way that the things that I would like to be able to set up for myself I would be able to do it in The Gambia, because you don't get paid much over there. It is also hard work with people who even though I am Gambian, I share culture with them, but it is still some differences because we can say I have hybrid culture because I had UK culture you know, and behaviour and I also have some Gambian culture and behaviour. So, it is so difficult for me to kind of set down my way and behaviour the way of thinking and way of manoeuvring in The Gambia because it is very different. I found that very challenging so working with people and having to manoeuvre around situations that you know are wrong or being put into situation you are very uncomfortable with' (Migrant UK, female, 28 years abroad).

Finally, another participant recalled that his unsuccessful attempt to return was necessary for him to understand that the opportunities abroad were better than thought:

'It is the opportunities at least for me that I have in the US and if I have to go back home and contribute to the development of my country and if I may tell you I have actually tried ... to return home to contribute to the economic growth of The Gambia and ... I couldn't actually work the way I wanted to work. So, I decided to return back to the US, and it was a learning a lesson for me' (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad).

As shown, some migrants have tried to return to contribute to the economic growth of The Gambia, work in Gambia or return permanently. Owing to their high degree of host embeddedness, along with the exposure to host opportunities, and experience, the adaptation to the workplace environment in The Gambia was difficult. They have learned that the previous migration experience was better than thought, or more bearable, than living at home. As a result, they re-migrated because of work-related issues (such as working conditions, work environment), as well as personal and career development. Some have tried to stay in The Gambia for a brief period (6 - 18 months) and others spent more time (5 years), but it was a learning lesson for all of them. They all went back to their previous destination and have no immediate plan of returning. Why do they fail to remain in The Gambia after a long stay abroad? How do these re-emigrations relate to home (dis)embeddedness? Are the uncondusive or unstructured work environments of the home country, which led some migrants to re-migrate, a cause of the persistent Gambian brain drain? These are some of the questions for future research that are prompt by the finding that several skilled migrants attempted to return but failed, which ignited migration perpetuation.

3.6. Summary

To sum up, there is a range of reasons why skilled Gambian migrants remain abroad. These consist of an amalgamation of factors that relate to the degree of migrants' host country embeddedness and home (dis)embeddedness, which are driven by work situations abroad and political, family, and personal situations in the home country. Host country embeddedness-related factors like *opportunities abroad* and host family embeddedness-related factors, such as *family abroad*, were mainly perceived as sacrifices that were hard to make; whereas host job embeddedness, home (dis)embeddedness and earlier unsuccessful attempts to return were mostly perceived as factors holding migrants abroad. Even though the vast majority of migrants claim that they do not regret the choice to remain abroad, they did not recommend the same to other migrants. Surprisingly, they discouraged others from remaining abroad.

4. Why other skilled Gambians return home?

To answer this research question, **only returnees** were directly asked about the reasons that have made them return. Current migrants were asked, instead, about the reasons that could assist and prompt their return (as presented in section 5). Table 19 summarises the reasons for returning among the returnees, grouped into six main categories: (1) self-fulfilment of the motives for going abroad; (2) feelings and expectations towards return; (3) home family embeddedness; (4) home job embeddedness; (5) home country embeddedness; and (6) host (dis)embeddedness.

Interview Questions	Main Themes	Sub themes	Initial codes/subordinate themes	Sources	Total References
4. Reasons to Return	Self-fulfilment	Initial intention to return		19	19
		Completed education		12	12
	Feelings and expectations towards return	Recommendations to other fellow migrants		17	20
		No personal regrets about return		17	18
	Home family embeddedness	Home family links	Marriage with a fellow national	13	23
			Looking after elderly parents	10	17
		Home family sacrifice	Missing the home family	8	11
			Spouse/ couple sacrifices	5	8
			Children sacrifices	4	5
		Home family fit		6	7
	Home job embeddedness	Home job fit	Better fit to the home job market	12	30
		Home job links	Link to the home job market	10	21
		Home job sacrifice	Host opportunities lost	8	18
	Home country embeddedness	Home country fit	Sense of belongingness towards Gambia	9	12
			Giving back to the community	8	16
		Home country links	Social links	4	6
			Religion links	4	5
			Generational links	3	4
		Home country sacrifice	Fed up with staying abroad	3	3
	Host (dis) embeddedness	Host job (dis) embeddedness	Lack of job prospects abroad	5	16
			Employment discrimination abroad	4	5
		Host country (dis) embeddedness	Host racism and discrimination	6	16

Table 19- Reasons to return among returnees

4.1. Self-fulfilment

'Fulfilment' was mentioned as a major reason for returning home. In related terms, the choice to return occurred after achieving the purpose of going abroad. A sizeable number of participants asserted that they decided to return because: (1) they always had an initial intention to return; and (2) they had completed their purposes abroad, including education. In sum, these aspects provided them a sense of self-fulfilment that justified their choice to return.

4.1.1. Initial intention to return

'Initial intention to return' was an objective several participants had in mind even before migrating. In other words, participants who mentioned this intention stated that they had planned to go abroad and return before they left The Gambia: *'The reason I return at this point, it was always my intention to return'* (Returnee UK, female, 30 years abroad) commented one female returnee. Another female participant remarked: *'I felt like it has always been in me even before I travelled that when I travel ... I would definitely come back'* (Returnee US, female, 4 years abroad).

Many other participants, who have stayed abroad for a long time, reported that their intention or objective was *'always to come back'*, *'to go and come home'*, and *'never ever wanted to stay or be there forever'*. Despite being long-term emigrants, they were sure that: *'going to stay was not an option'*.

A similar sentiment was echoed by a male returnee who had spent time in the UK:

'I felt like I had to come back (...), as I said earlier, and I did not go to Europe to stay and get married or something like that' he added *'I went for a purpose and when it is over, I come back'* (Returnee UK, male, 12 years abroad).

4.1.2. Completed education

Participants also reported that after completing their international education they came back home: *'Let me go home. I have done my education here'* (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

As another put it:

'I felt like it has always been in me even before I travelled that when I travel after I graduate, I would definitely come back' (Returnee US, female, 4 years abroad).

The decision to return after fulfilling the motives for going abroad means that the returnees interviewed were certain of their choice to return, which represented a strong sense of self-fulfilment. Once they attained their goals abroad, they felt an affective and normative need to return home.

4.2. Feelings and expectations towards return

Feelings and expectations towards return express the moods, emotions, and attitudes of returnees towards return and recommendations, based on their experience, to others. Thus, this category includes: (1) recommendations to other fellow migrants; and (2) no personal regrets about return.

4.2.1. Recommendations to other fellow migrants

A number of returnees reported that they would recommend other migrants return home *'after retirement'*; to *'invest capital or knowledge'*; or after gaining *'skilled qualifications'*. After all, *'there is no place like home'*. The following quotes illustrate these arguments:

'I think everybody should return home at some point because home is home. ... There is no place like home as the saying goes' (Returnee US, male, 9 years abroad).

'Whether you are coming to invest capital or whether you are coming to invest knowledge, I would recommend anybody who can bring something to come back' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

'I encourage migrants to return home all the time and I advise people not to leave the country, to stay here and try to have their own business or go to school' (Returnee US, female, 2.6 years abroad).

Others referred to return as a moral imperative:

'Especially now Gambia needs its people and its qualified sons to come and help build this country' (Returnee Norway, male, 11 years abroad).

Thus, returnees encourage other migrants to return home and urge them to invest the human and/or financial capital they have gained during their stay abroad. Referring to the old adage *'there is no place like home'*, the return was sometimes seen as a moral imperative for the development of the homeland.

4.2.2. No personal regrets about returning

A sizeable number of returnees reported not regretting returning as illustrated by the following quotes:

'I don't regret my decision' commented one male returnee *'and I would not regret it even if another opportunity comes in'* (Returnee UK, male, 13 years abroad).

Another female returnee stated: *'when I was going it was never my decision to stay, my decision was to read and return back. So, I did not regret the decision at all'* (Returnee UK, female, 4.5 years abroad).

Others recalled their experiences from their migration days:

'I would not change (the decision to return). I do not like loneliness, it is not human to be lonely all the time' (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad) said one participant.

I would not change anything I would have done the same thing to come back. I have no regret coming back home. I think I am a very happy man now' (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

4.3. Home family embeddedness

As part of the coding process, references related to the influence of home family were coded in this category. Home family embeddedness includes all the factors that embed an individual to the home family and help explain their return, in its multiple dimensions as per the literature review, such as: (1) home family links; (2) home family sacrifice; and (3) home family fit.

4.3.1. Home family links

The link dimension refers to the formal and informal connections that a returnee has with family in The Gambia. In this regard, participants emphasised: (1) marriage with a fellow national, as well as (2) looking after elderly parents.

Marriage with a fellow national. 'Marriage' was a family-related factor that returnees have mentioned as a reason for returning. These participants asserted that they have returned home because they got married to someone back home: *I got married in the summer and I always said to myself I am not going to get married and leave my wife behind'* (Returnee UK, male, 7 years abroad).

Another female participant added:

I got married about three years ago before returning but I think that's the main reason' (Returnee US, female, 16 years abroad).

Others reported that they returned because they wanted to '*get married and settle down*' or '*make a family*'

Thus, marriage with a fellow national represents a home family link that makes skilled Gambians return. Another family link regards dependent parents.

Looking after elderly parents. Some participants pointed out that they returned because their parents, who remained in The Gambia, were getting old and needed to be looked after. As one female returnee related:

The reason I come back at this point is that my mum and dad were both being quite ill. So, I come back to stay and help them' (Returnee UK, female, 30 years abroad).

Another male returnee called looking after elderly parents a responsibility of offspring in Gambian culture. He remarked that:

In the Gambia we have the responsibility to take care of our parents when they are getting old. And in my family, I am the first born' (Returnee Norway, male, 11 years abroad).

Others reported returning because the parents were *'getting old and they needed support'*, or they wanted *'to bury them'*, or they were *'getting sick'*. Returning to take care of elderly parents is a home family link that brings Gambians home, a point precisely described by one male participant:

In The Gambia we have the responsibility to take care of our parents when they are getting old. And in my family, I am the first born, my sisters and my brothers were in Norway together with me because when I had that opportunity and I saw that there is an opportunity in Norway I helped my younger ones to come over. And once they were there, there were nobody back home helping the family, taking care of the old people. I decided to come back home. It was a very tough decision because by then I had all the opportunities in Norway. I had a permanent company that I sail with, I will be on board for 6 months and have 3 months holidays with pay and they will pay to any destination that I want to travel. I left everything there and decided to come back home. This was one of the reasons that I come back home' (Returnee Norway, male, 11 years abroad).

4.3.2. Home family sacrifice

'Home family sacrifice' captures the perceived material or psychological costs that migrants experience when they remain abroad, and the sacrifices the family would endure when the migrants returned home and leave them in the host country. The first (i.e., sacrifices when they remain abroad) includes the sacrifices endured by missing the home family who remained in The Gambia; and the second (i.e., sacrifices when they returned) includes: (1) missing the spouse; and (2) children sacrifices, which entail emotional sacrifices that make return difficult.

Missing the home family. *'Missing family'* is another issue that made some participants return. Some of them returned because they missed their family members, or they felt unhappy as a result. One male participant noted:

'I want to be with my family members and my country folks and that makes me happy' he further explained *'you know psychologically I enjoy that, and I help them a lot'* (Returnee US, male, 18 years abroad).

A returning woman explained how difficult it would be to leave her mother behind if she had remained abroad:

'I have always been in this environment and then traveling abroad is like a huge step, it is a huge change you have to be thinking what am I going to meet there like the cultures and all that, that could have been something that could hold me back. and most of it I spend a lot of time with my mum, she is upstairs right now, so leaving her behind because all my brothers have travelled, I am the last born' (Returnee US, female, 4 years abroad).

Another participant equates his unhappiness to missing his family. He related that:

'When I realized that I am also unhappy there, very unhappy and I was missing my family my mum and then I have come to the realisation that this man is going to be there we are in for a long whole I said I will go' (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

One of the returnees explained how it was necessary for him to remain with the family: *'There is nowhere like home. I could have stayed with my family and study because it is not easy to live abroad. One thing is you will leave your family behind'* (Returnee Norway, male, 11 years abroad).

So, these returnees indicated that the decision to return was mostly driven by a nostalgia for the family members left behind in The Gambia and the unhappiness stemming from that feeling.

Spouse/couple sacrifices. A large number of returnees reported that their spouses were *'not happy'* or *'regretted'*; while others commented that their partners tried to discourage them or had a shock, upon return. One male returnee evoked about his wife:

'She is not happy |in the UK| and sometimes she is not in talking term with me for weeks, sometimes she will be angry, and she will make me feel guilty sometimes' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

Another one added:

'My spouse... was not much happy about my permanent stay in The Gambia. She kept nagging on the matter' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad)

Other participants suggested that their decision to return had been associated with *'divorce'*:

'I just got divorce five or six months before I came back' (Returnee UK, female, 2 years abroad), narrated one female returnee.

'My children are understanding, |but my| spouse... unfortunately shortly before that return decision we divorced' (Returnee UK, male, 13 years abroad).

A male participant summarises how the return choice can impact negatively on a couple:

'Although I was married there [US] to a naturalised United States citizen originally from Sierra Leone, even though we got married I told her listen: this is my plan in life and if you want to work with me, we get married. She asked what's the plan and I explained to her that when I earn a PhD degree, I want to go back home immediately. She said ok, so when we got married and the time came, I said I am going to go, just to remind you of our agreement in the beginning, informal agreement because we didn't sign any agreement. She said: no but I am going to stay, then I said fine I am going and that was the end of it because I never wanted to compromise on it' (Returnee US, male, 18 years abroad).

Children sacrifices. Overall, children endured emotional suffering caused by either the return or the separation from parents when they choose to leave them behind and return. A female returnee who left one of her daughters abroad, said:

'My big daughter initially she seemed ok with it and I think as time went and it got to the point when I was leaving, she wasn't ok with it. So, it was a big decision for her' (Returnee UK, female, 30 years abroad).

One female returnee, who considered cancelling the migration, because her son was too young, and remaining in The Gambia, reported:

Um, may be my son I told you there was a time I just wanted to cancel. (...) At that time, I have won the scholarship, the visa was issued and everything, I said I think I would cancel. He said why and I said my son because he was young. It was not easy, and it did not even end there, when I went the first two or three months, I just wanted to come back, but I had this cousin brother kind of extended family who kept calling me, talking to me, this is just for some time and I said ok. That was it but otherwise I would have been back long' (Returnee UK, female, 2 years abroad).

Another male repatriate stated that the wife did not welcome his choice, so he left his children abroad and returned home.

In the beginning she did not think about it, but you know when we started having children and the commitments are here and there, sometimes she gives me the option indirectly that either you chose your country or your family. And always I say don't go there it is something that I will not compromise. You know my dreams and my dream is to go back to Gambia that's where I want to live. So, I cannot change my mind on that. But she is not happy about my return. The kids they miss their dad, but they are still young' (Returnee Sweden, male, 12 years abroad).

He added that the most difficult thing was to separate the children and send a child home: *In some case I have to go there and take one of the kids and take her to Senegal to their grandmother to be there, separating my kids. So those are some personal challenges which are most difficult for me' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).*

A returning male related her daughter's ordeal when he decided to go back home:

I had a girl child by her, and I was so close to the girl. I felt it emotionally because she was closer to me than the mum because I babysat her, we never pay a babysitter for the ten-year period I was there with her. She was ten years old when I left, though we were so much attached, and I told the girl although she was ten at the time you know daddy loves you very much, but I have to go out and do stuff that will help you later in life. So that's the reason why I am going but we communicated since I came. She came every summer I make sure she came to see me here and we always communicate online. Now she's grown, she is 17 she has one more year to finish high school and go to university and we still communicate. But when I told her about my return she cried, I knew her age that was the only thing she can do just to cry she is going to miss her dad and I will miss her too, but we got to do what we got to do like the Americans say' (Returnee US, male, 18 years abroad).

Hence, those migrants who returned reported that their return had entailed emotional sacrifices borne by themselves and their children.

4.3.3. Home family fit

As one of the reasons that help explain why returnees return, home family fit refers to the perceived compatibility or comfort of the family in the home country. In related words, several returnees reported that their family was well settled and well-connected in The Gambia, after their return:

'My spouse really welcomed it and my kids did not really have a problem with it' (Returnee US, female, 16 years abroad).

'They were very happy because I had some money that I could share and enjoy with them' (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

'My wife wanted me to come back' (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

Others described the attitudes as supportive:

'He (my husband) is very supportive' (Returnee US, female, 4 years abroad).

'My dad wanted to return, and it is best for me to be around him' (Returnee UK, male, 13 years abroad)

'I thank God she (my wife) was in support and she said when you are ready, I am ready' (Returnee US, male, 12 years abroad).

4.4. Home job embeddedness

'Home job embeddedness' implies that participants returned home because their work aspirations had not yet been fulfilled. Participants commented that they came back home to find a job and be professionally active in The Gambia, profiting from the social and human capital acquired abroad. As part of the coding process, home job embeddedness includes all the factors that embed an individual to a home job or career, in its multiple dimensions as per the literature review, such as: (1) home job fit; (2) home job links; and (3) home job sacrifice.

4.4.1. Home job fit

This category includes returnees' positive references to their home job and their perceived professional compatibility in the context of The Gambia. One participant summed up this theme by saying: *'I was just fed up |abroad| and I said that let me go home I have done my education here [UK] and the prospects of me making it'* (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

Another participant reported:

'I knew with the quality of education that I have, it will better fit practising it here [Gambia] than there [UK]' (Returnee UK, male, 13 years abroad).

Another returnee, who preferred to work in The Gambia, said:

I am not a migration guy because when I was going to Dakar, all my brothers were somewhere in England, some in Germany and others in other parts of Europe but I did not like to travel. I believe you know I could study here and work here and contribute positively that is why when I finish, I just pack my bags and come'.

He further added: *'To be honest I feel like you know I have to work here and earn a living here. I do not feel like I have to leave home to be somebody and I think history has got me right because you know everything, I realised in my life I realised it here when I come back'* (Returnee UK, male, 7 years abroad).

Despite the job opportunities abroad, a female participant described her preference to work in The Gambia:

'It could have been easy for me to say I am migrating in the US because I chose to study something that I would make more use of it in the US than I would in Gambia, but I chose to come back because this is where I want to be. I can see making difference, I can see growing, developing at the moment there is so much opportunity here we can't shy away from it or run away from here we have to be here to create those opportunities for us and we make sure that everything grows to how we want it to be' (Returnee US, female, 8 years abroad).

A female participant said that, at home, she is more comfortable with the job:

'It is not like I am trying to say this based on emotion or sentiments but there is no place like home. At least at home you can come and do something which you know like what I am doing. I would not say it is not like I am not trying to blow a trumpet but at least I am not doing bad at all and I think as I grow, I can even do better' (Returnee UK, female, 4.5 years abroad).

4.4.2. Home job links

This category represents returnees' connections or ties with the home job environment, often perceived as a reason for returning. Particularly emphasised was the search for a job to contribute to the country. Therefore, working in The Gambia was an important reason for many returnees. Put in related terms, these participants asserted that they have returned home hoping to find a job or build a career: *'come back and work', 'make a career' or 'practice what I have learned', and 'to work for my country'.*

One returnee summed this up as follows:

'I know there is high demand for my specialisation...here in The Gambia than United States' (Returnee US, male, 18 years abroad).

Likewise, another male participant said getting a job was not difficult:

'Abroad I succeeded in having good navigation papers both theoretically and practically, so I was well qualified before I came back to The Gambia. When I came back to The Gambia it was not difficult to find a job, I had a job and a good job too because to Gambian standard when I was at the port, I was a senior manager marine operations. I act as director so I mean that is the highest you can go I mean until I retire' (Returnee Norway, male, 11 years abroad).

Another explained that their return was driven by the wish to: *'Come work here among (my) people'* (Returnee US, male, 7 years abroad). A returning male declared that he had returned once he was informed about a job opening:

*'I had information that this office is being set up the tourism authority, tourism board now and I knew there was not enough qualified people in that area and IT especially the internet was just emerging in England and I was lucky enough to work for an internet company. So, combine that with my tourism qualification I thought I could make some difference. I was lucky to get a job in the Gambia tourism board and I started building my career in tourism and hospitality and now I am the director general of The Gambia ...'*³ (Returnee UK, male, 11 years abroad).

Some returnees mentioned the fear of coming back without having a job. One female participant said she had no such concern due to her previous ties with the organization:

'When people migrate, their main fear is finding a job when they come back, I didn't have that. I knew I could get a job here. So, it's not something that I had to worry about. I knew if I come back to The Gambia, I would have a job working at the airport. I did two weeks attachment there before I left, and I had an idea of what they were doing. So, I knew that I could come back' (Returnee US, female, 8 years abroad).

Another male returnee echoed the same fear:

'Exactly, I don't want to come back without a job because I don't want to come back and start struggling, looking for a job, moving from one place to another already knowing The Gambia before, so I don't want to come back because however little or small you come with, you end up using all before you get that certainty of support or so. You cannot go back to people and ask for that support. So, I wanted to get an assurance of a job before leaving, until when I get the university's appointment letter then I knew I get a job' (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

In short, having a job at home was mentioned as a decisive factor for the return. While some thought it was a concern that should be tackled before they returned, others had no trouble finding a job.

4.4.3. Home job sacrifice

'Home job sacrifice' includes both the sacrifice migrants made once they left a job and returned home as well as the sacrifices they would go through if they remained and stayed with the job they hold abroad. The first category includes the job sacrifices (i.e., quitting a decent job, forfeiting a career prospect, and a job offer) incurred following the choice to return. The second category consists of regrets caused by job losses due to choosing to stay abroad. This aspect was barely

³ Removed to protect the participant identity

alluded to, although a male participant explained how he chose to quit a decent job in Europe and go back to Gambia to look for work:

'When I finished my master's which was in 2009, I got the chance to stay and work in Europe, but I was like ok in Europe they don't need me, but Gambia needs me more than Europe needs me. And this has been the thinking all along the way ok in as much as I can stay in Europe and get a decent job and live a decent life, get a mortgage, get a nice car, and live a quiet life but at the end of the day my education would not benefit the greatest amount of people, especially my people. That is why I decided to come home' (Returnee Sweden, male, 12 years abroad).

A female returning from the US refers to forfeiting a career prospect there to come back home and create opportunities:

'I chose to study something that I would make more use of it in the US than I would in Gambia, but I chose to come back because this is where I want to be. I can see making a difference, I can see growing, developing at the moment there is so much opportunity here we can't shy away from it or run away from here we have to be here to create those opportunities for us' (Returnee US, female, 8 years abroad).

Lastly, there are the returning migrants who choose to forfeit a job offer and prefer to return home. As one participant summed it up:

'I was already offered a job in Norway; I would do the same thing. They have a centre that is researching solar technology I used to work there on part-time but after I defended my PhD it was turned to full-time. But what discouraged me was there was no black, it is break time you go and get your food and you will sit down alone. It is really not nice' (Returnee US, male, 12 years abroad).

Another returning woman regretted her stay abroad because she felt that those who remained at home were better off:

'If you already have a degree or you already have a profession you can stay in The Gambia and do what you would have done outside of The Gambia because going to somebody else's country you have to come back and try to resettle. And people are not waiting for you, they are moving forward, and they are not waiting for you because for me when I went to the US and come back you know some of my colleagues that I left here they were not sitting down waiting. In fact, when I came back, I had to restart and you know some of them if not most of them are ahead of me' (Returnee US, female, 16 years abroad).

In short, the perceived compatibility of the returning migrants with the home job played a significant role in the choice to return. In general, home job embeddedness usually involved professional factors that attracted and fulfilled returning migrants through their work connections and the fit with their home job, but also some job sacrifices. These included the costs that made the return difficult due to the perceived loss of professional benefits abroad coupled with the need to find a job and restart a career from scratch at home.

4.5. Home country embeddedness

As part of the coding process, home country embeddedness includes all the factors that embed a returnee to the home country, in its multiple dimensions as per the literature review, such as: (1) home country fit, (2) home country links; and (3) home country sacrifice (i.e., loss from remaining abroad).

4.5.1. Home country fit

This category contains the reasons related to the perceived compatibility or comfort with the home country, which includes (1) a sense of belongingness towards The Gambia; and (2) the need to give back to the community.

Sense of belongingness. A considerable number of returnees attributed their return to a sense of belongingness. They have the feeling that they belong to their home country rather than anywhere else. The Gambia is the only country in which they feel they are in ‘the right place’, loved and appreciated:

‘I know that this is home, where I belong to, where people would love me, and where I would sit down and talk to people’ (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad) asserted one male returnee.

Similarly, another male participant stated:

‘I want to be with my family members and my country folks and that makes me happy. You know psychologically I enjoy that, and I help them a lot’ (Returnee US, male, 18 years abroad).

Finally, there was the wish to die at home. In a nutshell, participants who love The Gambia, and love living there, prefer to be buried in The Gambia, as illustrated in the following contribution:

‘Let me go home to The Gambia because I would have people to bury me’ (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad). And another participant summed it up: *‘I would die in the realms of that country [Gambia]’* (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

Giving back to community. A substantial number of returnees stated that their decision to return was taken because of a wish to give back to their home communities. This wish was engendered by the hope of sharing the different forms of capital they had acquired abroad with their communities. One participant stated that:

‘The only reason why I came back is to help develop my country and also to share my knowledge with the younger generation of Gambians’ (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

One female returnee added:

‘I wanted to come back and contribute my little way to the country or society that I found myself in’ (Returnee US, female, 4 years abroad).

Others added that they were coming back to *'contribute', 'develop the country', 'share knowledge', 'give back', 'transform society', 'help Gambian people', and 'work for the country'*.

In short, these participants hoped to contribute to transforming Gambian society in order to develop the country. Giving back to the community and a sense of belonging were shown to be community-related factors that push participants to return – a point concisely made by one participant: *'Going home where you belong and giving back'* (Returnee US, male, 29 years abroad).

4.5.2. Home country links

The link dimensions refer to the formal and informal connections that an individual has with people and happenings in The Gambia. In addressing the reasons to return, several returnees emphasised their home links, notably (1) social links with friends who they named *'my people'*; (2) religion links; and (3) generational links. The following quotes illustrate these findings:

Social links. Includes references to friends, family (in general) and home settings: *'Be with country folks'* (Returnee US, male, 18 years abroad)

'Bring up my family among my people' (Returnee US, male, 11 years abroad), and

'Going home where you belong' (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

As one participant summed it up:

'Why I wanted to come was to work here among my people, bring up my family among my people, in the culture, the religion aspect to instil those things in my children' (Returnee US, male, 11 years abroad).

Religion links. Was considered an important factor causing return, especially among those who called themselves pious: *'I am a pious Muslim and when I was in Europe, I could not practice properly my religion'* (Returnee Norway, male, 11 years abroad).

Another participant, returning from Norway, summed it up:

'And one very important thing would be your religion. In Oslo Pakistanis are seen as Muslims and there was a time these extremists started to bomb places and the targets were the mosques. So, I said to myself - well before I am shot to death here, let me go home to The Gambia' (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

Another participant commented that he came back: *'to bring up my family here [Gambia] so that I can instil in them the culture and also the religion you know whatever to know their family'* (Returnee US, male, 11 years abroad).

In short, religion was understood as incompatible with staying abroad. Proper religious rituals were considered not to be practicable while abroad, especially for those staying in Norway. Thus, returning home represented a way of properly practising one's religion or instilling religion into one's children.

Generational links. A long and well-established lineage in The Gambia was also referred to as a reason to return, as illustrated by one male returnee:

'This is where I live. My seventh generation is from this country. I don't know any other place may be some people their grandparents are from Casamance but for me this is where and the only place I know. My father's fathers are from this country and my mum too they are from this country. I am not going anywhere I am staying here [Gambia] because for me frankly I don't have any other place than here [Gambia]. This is home for me ... I may go for holidays somewhere or get a job outside of the country but at the end of the day this is home, and it will always be home for us' (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

Another participant commented that he came back because: *'socially I am also the head of the current generation of my family, I am the eldest both male and female and both the sons and daughters. So, I feel it would also be better for me to come back here'* (Returnee UK, male 13 years abroad).

Another participant returning from Sweden summed it up: *'the only reason why I came back is to ... to share my knowledge with the younger generation of Gambians'* (Returnee Sweden, male 12 years abroad).

In short, ties between the generations are viewed as a reason to return home. Having a close connection with earlier and future generations of one's family was considered a strong pull towards the homeland. The desire of migrants to return home also gave rise to cultural questions about family leadership issues. The decision to return home was seen as a way to bind families and generations together and to mentor younger generations.

4.5.3. Home country sacrifice

Several participants reflected on the general sacrifices that they would endure if they did not return, despite the difficulties faced in resettling in the home country. This included a dislike of living abroad. One participant described the ambivalence in this way:

'The lifestyle is different once you get use to that lifestyle to come back is a challenge. And some of them |migrants| they have families that are so deep-rooted children are going to school they are big they have never come to Gambia. You've been in the US let say for 20 or 25 years is a challenge to come back' (Returnee US, male, 11 years abroad).

However, returning was seen as a way of overcoming host country difficulties too, which means that in spite of the difficulties that persist in The Gambia, many returnees had grown tired of being migrants or they just did not like living outside The Gambia:

'I was just fed up and I said that let me go home ... I was just fed up with living in the UK and the west' (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad) recounted one male returnee. Another female participant explained:

'I don't like living outside of The Gambia maybe because most of my life I have lived outside (...) because I went to Fourah Bay College for five years, from there I went to Ghana and when I come back, I went to the US.'

In fact, I spent twenty something years of my life living outside The Gambia. So, I really have enough of living outside' (Returnee US, female, 16 years abroad).

A similar sentiment was echoed by another returnee who asserted that:

'The return was easy, I was tired of being there, so I just come back home' (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

Another male returnee added:

'No, it is horrible in Europe. It is hell, I don't like it at all. When I look at the BBC news and I see something from Europe it just gives me bad feelings. I don't want to go there. Not that I had a terrible time, I think compared to an average migrant I have done fairly decent jobs there, including working at the university. I just don't like it there' (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

So, missing The Gambia and wishing to return home were depicted as compatible – as expressed up by one female participant who was abroad for 32 years:

'Being abroad for so long, I have missed Gambia and Africa so much and I have also travelled so much during the time that I was in exile but for me the ultimate wish is to return home' (Returnee Norway, female, 32 years abroad).

4.6. Host (dis)embeddedness

This category includes all issues related to the destination, that were mostly felt as negative, and that prompted the return. Includes: (1) host job (dis)embeddedness and (2) host racism and discrimination.

4.6.1. Host job (dis)embeddedness

According to the job embeddedness theory, the sacrifice dimension includes the totality of the job/career benefits that a person would have to give up by choosing to quit a job/career. This research found that most returnees do not regret the choice to return, either because they were unemployed or underemployed abroad (and then the loss from returning was low) and/or because were subject to employment discrimination. These aspects were related to workplace (dis)embeddedness, which acted as incentives to return, and include: (1) lack of job prospects abroad and (2) employment discrimination in the foreign country. Interestingly, although emphasised by several returnees, these aspects were not mentioned by current migrants.

Lack of job prospects abroad. *'Lack of job prospects'* was a negative factor endured by several participants who were qualified and yet did not see any prospect of obtaining a job commensurate with their qualifications if they continued abroad. In consequence, they were confronted with a choice between underemployment abroad or unemployment in The Gambia. One male participant summed it up:

'So, you may be occupied, you get the job, but it may not be in line with your qualifications which means you may be doing something less than your qualifications, so you are not practicing what you have learned. To practice what I have learned it is better for me coming back here and that was my main reason' (Returnee UK, male, 13 years abroad).

Another female explained:

'I know if I have stayed in the US for another five or ten years it would not have made a difference. I would have wasted my time' (Returnee US, female, 16 years abroad).

A similar sentiment was echoed by a female returnee, who explained her return by her inability to find job satisfaction. She emotionally described her experience:

'After my studies I was looking for work in my field, but it was not possible. I was not lucky enough, so I was doing work which was not even related to what I have studied, and I was never satisfied with that even though I was working and getting money, but at the end of the day the satisfaction was not there' (Returnee UK, female, 4.5 years abroad).

Employment discrimination abroad. This includes differences in access to career resources and opportunities compared with locals, as summed up by one returnee from UK:

'There are some unwritten rules that prevent you from being what you are' (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

Another returnee added:

'In some way you are not given the opportunity to show yourself, to do a lot to excel it is not there and you needed that. That opportunity to show yourself, to excel only exists in the world you come from, where people do not hear your value and where you are not discriminated based on who you are or based on your colour. Those who come voluntarily like people I have just spoken about just felt that there is no point staying. Every stone you want to hold on to is just taken from you, they make life difficult for you there. You can't work, you can't do anything, and you can't look up to yourself' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

Thus, despite the employment difficulties in The Gambia, these participants preferred to deal with them at home than elsewhere. This finding suggests that migrants who preferred to have a job at home were more likely to return home. Likewise, those who were more connected with their colleagues at home and felt more comfortable and satisfied with the home job market were also more likely to return. Finally, those who were more job disembedded at destination were also more prone to return.

4.6.2. Host racism and discrimination

Racism and discrimination in the destination country were also cited by returnees as causes for return. Participants used terms such as *'horrible'*, *'not favourable at all'*, and a place where *'I learned to understand what racism is'*.

One male returning from a 17-year stay in the UK, said:

'I don't like the racism there both manifested and subtle' (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

Other participants described the subtle discrimination they witnessed abroad, which pushed their return. A point summarised by one participant, who stayed abroad for almost 20 years:

'I don't want to stay there [Sweden]. I am tired, I am an old man now. I don't want to go, live in another culture, being stared at. Swedish transport system sometimes the subway you come in a wagon and sit, everybody avoids you, and nobody likes to sit next to you. You have that feeling psychologically all the time that is not good. Here you forgot you are different, of course you are not different from the local environment but there you always ask yourself why are they staring at me, why don't they want to sit by me? To avoid that, it is comforting to come back home' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

Another returnee added:

'When I realised what was almost becoming the white man would prefer to stand than sitting beside you, so I learned to understand what racism is. I have seen what racism is, what discrimination is, it has taught me a very good lesson. So, let me go home to that small Gambia, maybe I can help so that others would not come through what I went through' (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

Finally, another one related discrimination to loneliness abroad, thus explaining his return:

'What discouraged me was there was no black, it is break time you go and get your food and you will sit down alone. It is really not nice, it is what anybody would like to have his whole life to be lonely all the time, you want to eat you are lonely, you are walking you are lonely, everything... you are lonely' (Returnee Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

In short, racism and discrimination experienced in the host country drove many returnees back home. A point described by one male returnee:

'I didn't like Europe a lot, I mean what I saw in Europe and what I experienced in Europe was not favourable at all. The first time I experienced racism was in Europe' (Returnee Sweden, male, 20 years abroad).

4.7. Summary

To sum up, the reasons why some skilled Gambians returned include a combination of factors that relate to the individual self-fulfilment of the migration goals and home family/job/country embeddedness, as well as factors related to the migration experience itself, such as experiencing host (dis)embeddedness. Clearly, these factors did not carry equal symbolic weight: home job links and home family links were more cited and overwhelmingly understood in positive terms, while host (dis)embeddedness, including racism and discrimination, were mostly

understood in negative terms. Altogether, the returnees do not regret the decision to return, and they recommended it to other fellow migrants.

5. Why would skilled Gambian migrants return?

To answer this research question, all **current migrants** were asked about their feelings and expectations towards a possible return and the reasons that would make them return in the future. The reasons reported are similar to the ones mentioned by returnees (as per the findings reported in section 4.... *Why other skilled Gambians returned?*) but follow a different order of importance and include aspects related to: (1) home family embeddedness; (2) home job embeddedness; (3) home country embeddedness; and (4) feelings and expectations towards a future return. Table 20 summarises these reasons.

Interview Questions	Main Themes	Sub themes	Initial codes/subordinate themes	Sources	Total References
5. Reasons for an Eventual Return	Home family embeddedness	Home family links	Spouse and/or children	18	27
			Extended family and friends	15	30
			Parents	4	5
		Home family sacrifice		11	27
		Home family fit		8	13
	Home job embeddedness	Home job fit		15	22
		Home job links	Planning to settle professionally	12	16
			Commuting	10	17
		Home job prospects instead of sacrifice		11	16
	Home country embeddedness	Home country fit		12	40
		Home country links		11	13
		Home country sacrifice	Disliking the social life abroad	7	14
			Foreignness, homesickness and loneliness	7	10
			Disliking the cold weather	6	10
			Missing other fellow citizens	6	7
			Disliking living abroad	3	6
			Missing a common language	6	7
	Feelings and expectations towards a future return	Immediate return to Gambia		3	5
		Migration to a nearest country		3	3

Table 20 - Reasons for an eventual return for current migrants

5.1. Home family embeddedness

'Home family embeddedness' was the most frequently mentioned by migrants in these responses and refers exclusively to family-related factors pressing them to consider a return. Participants drew a direct link between their family back home and their plan to return. This includes: (1) home family links; (2) home family sacrifice; and (3) home family fit.

5.1.1.Home family links

The links dimension refers to the formal and informal connections that migrants keep with their family in The Gambia, while they are abroad. In this regard, participants emphasised wishing to return because of those who remained home, such as: (1) spouse and/or children; (2) extended family and friends; and (3) parents.

Spouse and children. Several migrants have left their spouse and/or children in the home country: *I left a family behind, so I have to come and join them. I don't want them to experience what I was experiencing there* (Migrant Norway, male, 12 years abroad).

A male migrant who has been abroad for the past 26 years asserted that: *it is not easy to go and leave everything behind* (Migrant Norway, male, 26 years abroad). A point illustrated by a female migrant who reported that she would return if her family were left behind:

If I didn't have kids or husband it would have been different and I would probably have gone back to Gambia and not give it a second thought (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

Another male participant claimed that the only reason why his children were left behind was to seek education abroad: *I left my children in The Gambia to learn about the Gambian culture. If it weren't for education nobody would come here* (Migrant US, male, 16 years abroad). Some participants said that before returning home they need to train their children first. As a female participant notes:

If I leave them here, they will be able to like training them you know how to take care of the household, handing over bills to them that they know they are doing paying the bills and everything. It is a crash course in household management (Migrant Sweden, female, 32 years abroad).

Another male participant posed similar concerns: *I have two small children that also need some kind of support to go through certain things* (Migrant Sweden, male, 28 years abroad).

Parents. Other migrants have links with parents who remained in The Gambia and whose absence they regret. One female migrant noted *leaving my mum was a bit scary* (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad). Another male migrant added: *I have always wanted to be in The Gambia, be close to my mum. My mum was getting old* (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad).

Similarly, one female migrant regretted leaving her mum behind: *My mum lives there and my grandma who raised me live there. I have family there* (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

One male migrant noted that the main reason for his eventual return would be: *to see the loved ones, family, to see the old pa and the mum* (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad).

Extended family and friends. Other participants asserted supporting the *'extended family'*, and *'friends'*. A male migrant described how he contributed to his family basic needs:

I contributed a lot to the education of people family members, supporting families, parents. I do for them basic things like religious commitment, hajj and then may be providing food for people, building houses' (Migrant UK, male, 15 years abroad).

Similar feelings were described by a female migrant residing in Norway:

I feel like I am contributing to my family members in The Gambia. If I were in The Gambia maybe I would not have that opportunity to do that. I have had the opportunity to assist people who are not my family members through education and offer them other opportunities' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

A 37-year-old male migrant reported supporting his family members at home, a point he clearly recounted:

I have been able to provide for my family like their needs from day one I came into this country. I could just imagine what would have happened if, I am grateful to Allah in the sense that they have not gone hungry, they've been sheltered you know. Basically, what I am saying is that being able to look after my family in The Gambia and taking care of them' (Migrant US, male, 14 years abroad).

5.1.2. Home family sacrifice

A sizeable number of participants reported that, by leaving the home country, the sacrifices they endured included *'leaving parents behind'*, *'leaving kids behind'*, and *'leaving family behind'*. Other participants stated that *'there is nowhere like home'*.

As one female migrant recounted, the first time she went back was due to homesickness:

I missed my family so much, so I said now I have to go home. I think family moments are priceless I just wanted to go home and be a baby one more time' (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

Several participants indicated missing their family back home, as expressed by a female participant: *'Over here you missed your family, you are distanced from your family and you just keep on struggling, even time for yourself you don't have'* (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad).

Other participants shared regret that they were deprived of their family life when they migrated - a point explained by a woman migrant:

I would have been married by now may be. It would have been different married with a family and then working right now or trying to pursue my education down there if I didn't have the opportunity to go outside the country because I think you can do your master's there too. But I don't regret anything about the migration, I do not regret coming here. Sometimes you just missed Gambia, but I don't regret coming here.' (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad).

Another male participant contrasted his life with that lived by his mates and regretted missing his family:

I think I would have stayed in The Gambia because abroad is harder and I do not think it is worth it, come all the way here and spend all these years, be far away from your family and loved ones. I have friends but they

have been through the same high school, sat in the same classroom. Now when you look at their life, some of them are in The Gambia and they are very close to their loved ones in The Gambia and like me we are very far away from our loved ones, so whatever I might have is here' (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad).

Thus, migrants make sacrifices by leaving their children, parents, and families at home. These family deprivations were also coloured by nostalgia and a sense of regret, as summarised in this response:

If I could go back in time I would stay in The Gambia. I always tell them why you guys brought me here. I wouldn't because if you have a good job and you have your family, (...). I don't know, we are very different, but it would not be something that I would recommend people to do' (Migrant Norway, female, 20 years abroad).

5.1.3. Home family fit

'Home family fit' refers to the perceived compatibility with the family in the home country, as expressed by one participant who spoke not only of his love for The Gambia but also the family presence:

'Just waking up and seeing your family waking up in your country that for me means a lot' (Migrant Sweden, female, 20 years abroad).

Another participant explained his wish to return because he does not want to get old in the host country:

'[I want to return] because the way older people are treated ... I don't want to go to a nursing home' (Migrant UK, male, 15 years abroad).

Another participant spoke about regular visits home and dating her husband:

'I used to go every other year and then when I was dating my husband now, I was there every year because he will come here in the summer and stay for 3 months then I will go for Christmas in The Gambia' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

A male participant expressed his love for Gambia and his folk:

'It is even better for me in The Gambia than here because why it is my country and I love my country. I love to really be with people whom I love, my family and my friends' (Migrant US, male, 16 years abroad).

Overall, migrants who reported a higher level of home family fit expressed an increased desire to return.

5.2. Home job embeddedness

'Home job/work embeddedness' includes all the factors that embedded migrants to a home job or career, in its multiple dimensions as per the literature review, such as: (1) home job fit; (2) home job links; and (3) home job sacrifice (i.e., losses from being abroad).

5.2.1. Home job fit

Given the fact that the interviewees are still abroad, the *fit to a home job* is more imagined than real, as illustrated by the following participant who plans to become self-employed at home:

'To go back to The Gambia and you know the experience that I have gathered in this country go and take that to our home country and get something out of it. That could include either starting a non-profit or some type of organisation to continue the work that I do because I believe Gambia, we still have a lot to go' (Migrant US, male, 14 years abroad).

Some migrants mentioned the need to set up a project before returning home. One migrant woman declared that she plans to start a business on her return:

'My plan is to have develop something that I can depend on when I go back home. If it is business or a house that I can depend on or a job that I would depend on rather than just going back and starting from zero' (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad).

Another added: *'I plan to at least do some initial may be open a coronary heart disease prevention centre, get a plan or write a grant, build it, set it up and when it is ready to run then I want to go home. But I want to have something set up before I finally go back'* (Migrant UK, female, 11 years abroad).

A few participants indicated that they would return home and work when they were most needed. *'I will return as soon as I finish and the reasons are, I came here to improve my knowledge to be better able to serve my people, so I am going back to that's where I am needed the most'* (Migrant UK, female, 2.5 years abroad).

Another migrant had similar feelings: *'My plan is heading back home and teaching at the University of The Gambia. The US to me is the same as The Gambia, no difference. It is even better for me in The Gambia than here because it is my country and I love my country. I love to really be with people whom I love, my family and my friends'* (Migrant US, female, 16 years abroad).

Likewise, a woman participant expressed her willingness to work for Gambia: *'Actually I always say that I am going back to Gambia. I say this at work and my colleagues were like you come here you get educated and you don't want to work for us you are going back? I was like my country needs me more than you guys, you have like thousands of me... We joke about it. I have a group of friends and we do talks, and we are like we are going to build a hospital. We have doctors in the group, we have nurses why not we can do it? We used to joke about it we are like we are going to build a hospital and we will go back there and work'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad).

Some participants have already started investing in Gambia:

'Well right now I start to invest again, I have a gym, I have 2 physical rehabilitation centres there, but I have made my decision that I am going to stay here for another ten or eleven years and wait for my pension' (Migrant Norway, male, 34 years abroad).

Although the perceived fit is more imagined than real, some were happy imagining their return to work in Gambia because they believed it is important as their country needs their experience. A few others were already investing at home before an eventual return.

5.2.2. Home job links

While abroad, some migrants remained linked to the home job/work market, either by (1) planning to settle professionally upon return; or (2) commuting. The following quotes illustrate this:

Planning to settle professionally upon return. Some migrants were planning to return after building a professional career abroad, as described by a female migrant:

I will be able to develop myself in my field and that I am able to create a lot more economic development and to be able to get a lot more economic advantage that I could use to develop the conditions that I need back home and to get somewhat stable life when I return ... So far, I have met 75 percent, there are some things that are left like I have said getting grounded to the academic field and being able to get the economic mean to sustain my life when I return' (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

Another female migrant who lives in Norway added the following:

I will not go to Gambia if I don't have a job beforehand. If am able to, if somebody offer me a job that is within my expertise and a sustainable type of job because I need stability for my family' (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

A male migrant commented on how he wants to take advantage of the experiences he acquired abroad on his return:

I have been able to go abroad and been able to experience different things, different ways of learning, different ways of being taught and I hope that I can be able to do the same when I come back to use that. In my case I have come over here and I have done the medical school and I have been trained as an orthopaedic surgeon and I don't think well chances are if I stayed in The Gambia, I would be able to achieve that. At this point I would be the first Gambian orthopaedic surgeon' (Migrant UK, male, 19 years abroad).

Another female participant in the UK has outlined how she plans to use her skills professionally:

In the future I would like to go back and work in The Gambia but only once I feel like I gained enough experience outside I can actually go and contribute and bring something new and fresh and innovative into the country whatever I am doing' (Migrant UK, female, 28 years abroad).

Another male participant identified how the skills learned abroad are linked to and will be used in The Gambia:

I think fortunately I have achieved quite a lot since I came here both academically and professionally. I think that is a good thing in terms of how I serve my community here because I am very active in the Gambian

community in Norway. So, we try to do things to impact our own welfare. These are all transferable skills in terms of an imminent |return| to The Gambia' (Migrant Norway, male, 26 years abroad).

Commuting. Some migrants are combining work periods abroad with trips home, as reported by one male participant who is currently pursuing his PhD abroad:

I have spent almost half of that time back in Gambia because I always choose to do my research back home, so I go back and forth' (Migrant UK, male, 2.5 years abroad).

Another migrant related how he spent six months temporarily working for the Gambian government:

I have actually tried that back in 2010. I decided to return home to contribute to the economic growth of The Gambia ... I was recruited here to go and serve as the principal economist at the ministry of finance and I was excited about it. I thought it was a good opportunity ... I will be coming to the office every day from 8 to 4 for six months' (Migrant US, male, 19 years abroad).

One female migrant reported spending some time in The Gambia: *I did return temporarily. Yes, I did return for about 5 years'* (Migrant UK, female, 17 years abroad).

In preparation for return, another male migrant related the frequency of his visits to Gambia:

In the last five years I think I have gone back 4 times but overall, I used to go 2 to 3 times a year for usually for 2 or 3 weeks ... for the last time it was to get acquainted with the health system there, try and help improve it, preparing for my return. I am used to it, every time that I come, I spend time in the hospital, so I know what to expect but the last time it was more specific. The last trip I made I brought some equipment for the orthopaedic department and I tried to set up a few projects' (Migrant UK, male, 19 years abroad).

A woman migrant who works as a nurse in Sweden shared similar thoughts:

I was there in December and I was in the labour department, I was doing a school project and I decided to go to Gambia. But like what a midwife is earning is nothing, it is like two hours of work here' (Migrant UK, male, 5 years abroad).

Another migrant woman recalled her short-term job in The Gambia:

I have worked in The Gambia for 18 months, so I work for four different institutions on short contracts. So, I had some sense, I did the government, I worked for international NGO UNICEF and Action Aid, I also worked for the University of The Gambia' (Migrant UK, female, 28 years abroad).

In the same way, a participant also commented on his pro donor activities in The Gambia:

I have many years been back to Gambia with doctors, chiropractors, physiotherapists, and acupuncturists. You know we will go around and treat hundreds of people for free every year' (Migrant Norway, male, 34 years abroad).

Return is not a sudden choice, but something most migrants have been planning for a long time. Furthermore, some occupational groups — health professional (8 out of 8) and faculty (3 out of 8) — are nurturing home job links (e.g., commuting and planning to settle professionally upon return) to facilitate their return.

5.2.3. Home job prospects instead of sacrifice

Among the reasons that push migrants to return home are the job prospects in the home country. Because of the lack of job prospects abroad, these migrants found themselves '*coming to find work*', aiming to '*have the job that I expected*', to '*work in something which is related to what I have studied*', wanting '*to have a career*', and start '*a small business*'.

A number of participants encourage people to start their own business once they return home. '*The best thing for them is to earn some capital and go set up business*' (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad). Another declared that her future plan is: '*Pack up myself and go home and do the same thing but probably I may start my own business*' (Migrant US, female, 17 years abroad).

Another migrant, who spent 34 years abroad, claimed to be the first Gambian fitness entrepreneur. '*Today in Gambia there are 6, 7 or 8 gyms. I was the first one to open a real gym and entrepreneur the gym business in The Gambia and that wouldn't happen if I didn't go out*' (Migrant Norway, male, 34 years abroad).

In contrast to the financial incentives available abroad, one participant said that he wants to work at home because he wishes to contribute more:

'The truth is there are more opportunities here and everything is better here, their work quality, work satisfaction, the salary you know the payment like your everything is better here but I mean let's just say that I measure like the benefits from my work not based on how satisfied I am at the place of work or how much pay I take home but on how significant my contributions are in making the lives of other people better' (Migrant UK, male, 2.5 years abroad).

A female migrant stated that economic stability was important for her return: '*So, for now I want my life to be stable like economically that when I go home, I would just go for the sake of Allah I would not do it for the sake of money.*' (Migrant Sweden, female, 20 years abroad).

In a nutshell, home job/career embeddedness includes all the factors that link migrants to their career progress in the home country. Having a job that is related to a migrant's field of study which may be hard to find abroad, or starting a business back home, are reasons motivating a return. As summed up here: '*I have the degrees and the skills that I want, I have the network, right now I can survive anywhere, Gambia or America or anywhere I go I can survive. I do not have to go out there looking for a job I can create my own job and employ people ... we just want to go and create new jobs. So, I will encourage them*

to go home and develop, not just to go home and do nothing. Go home and be an entrepreneur, be something' (Migrant US, female, 11 years abroad).

5.3. Home country embeddedness

Home country embeddedness includes all the factors that continue embedding a Gambian migrant to his or her home country while abroad. In related terms, participants reported: (1) home country fit; (2) continuing home country links; and (3) enduring home country sacrifice.

5.3.1. Home country fit

As part of the reasons for an eventual return, *home fit* refers to a perceived compatibility or comfort with the home country still nourished by current migrants. This is expressed under sentiments of love, joy, and happiness. Migrants reported '*loving Gambia*' or '*liking home*', '*feeling more relaxed at home*' and '*going back and forth*'. In related terms, they described it as '*spiritual connection*' (Migrant UK, male, 17 years abroad).

One female participant who had been living abroad for the past 16 years claimed: *'I really love Gambia; I do, and I have always missed Gambia (...) That's the place I was born and that's the place that I know and that's the place I want to develop'* (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

A participant who moved to the United Kingdom at the age of 5 years echoed similar feelings: *'I know I would return home eventually because I do love my country even though it might not sound like the other, I am very covet to it, but I am'* (Migrant UK, female, 28 years abroad).

A male participant in the US indicated that he would rather return home, and he said: *'It is my country and I love my country. I love to really be with people whom I love, my family and my friends'* (Migrant US, male, 16 years abroad).

In short, then, Gambians were proud of their identity and culture. Love for their country made them miss home and they were continuously thinking about returning. As one participant puts it:

'I am proud of the fact that I am a Gambian, I wouldn't change my head for anything. I think we have the best culture in the world, and we are a very likeable people. So, it is like we are happy people, even though you can be sad sometimes things might not work the way you want... anywhere you see Gambians we are jovial when we are gathered together, we are always talking, shouting, laughing and people envy us' (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

Another woman added:

'Gambia is the best place in the entire world, and we are a very small country' (Migrant Sweden, female, 20 years abroad).

Finally, other participants stated that they prefer to be buried in The Gambia, their home country: *'I am not going to die here [abroad]'* (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad) declared one female migrant.

5.3.2. Home country links

"Home country links" include the formal or informal connections between migrants and home that are kept up while abroad and might drive migrants to return in the future. Furthermore, home links were nourished by frequent visits and holidays, as illustrated here:

'In my personal life it was normal I went back home to the family house and live with my son' (Migrant UK, female, 2 years abroad).

Another commented:

'If you have holidays you just want to rest and the best place to rest is home among friends and people who value you' (Migrant Sweden, male, 12 years abroad) .

A migrant woman described her regular and frequent visit to the country: *'I used to go every other year and then when I was dating my husband, I was there every year because he will come here in the summer and stayed for 3 months then I will go for Christmas in The Gambia. But since I had my baby, I was there for 3 months when I had maternity leave, I stayed in The Gambia, I went there in December and came back in March'* (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

This participant listed going regularly to maintain close touch with the homeland: *'I want to go back; I really want to go back home. That's why I make sure that as much of my research as possible I do it back home so that I continue to have one foot in there and do not lose touch of what is happening'* (Migrant UK, male, 2.5 years abroad).

Those feelings were raised by other participants: *'I do, I try to do as much as possible. Um, the last five years I didn't go as much as I used to but in the last five years, I think I have gone back 4 times but overall, I used to go 2 to 3 times a year for usually for 2 or 3 weeks'* (Migrant UK, male, 19 years abroad).

Finally, a woman migrant related how often she visited Gambia: *'Actually, I go very often to The Gambia if I can every year I go. When I was in high school and university, I would stay for two months or two months and half but as long as I work because we have four weeks of vacation but before I would have stayed for 3 months'* (Migrant Sweden, female, 20 years abroad).

Overall, the findings suggest that migrants who maintained more formal or informal ties while abroad were more eager to return in the future, which was fostered by regular visits and vacations.

5.3.3. Home country sacrifice

'Home sacrifice' captures the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that are forfeited by leaving a home country. In other words, missing those benefits may influence the migrants' choice to return. A sizeable number of participants reported that by leaving the home country, they were enduring several sacrifices that include: (1) a sense of foreignness, homesickness, and loneliness; (2) missing other fellow citizens; (3) missing a common language; (4) disliking the cold weather; (5) disliking the social life abroad; and (6) disliking living abroad.

Foreignness, homesickness, and loneliness. Participants reported that being away from home caused people to *'just miss Gambia'*, *'continuously thinking about The Gambia'*, to be *'missing home'*, to *'miss your people'* and *'be far away from your family and loved ones'*.

Life abroad as a foreigner was mostly described in negative terms, a point concisely made by one female participant:

'The negative includes coming to a country that you are a foreigner and you do not belong there. It doesn't matter how many years you live here; they will not consider you as one of them. You are foreigner and you will remain a foreigner it doesn't matter how long you lived here' (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad).

Another male participant recalled his homesickness:

'I do not think it is worth it, come all the way here and spend all these years, be far away from your family and loved ones' (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad).

Furthermore, participants depicted an association between foreignness | homesickness and loneliness as a return factor, as loneliness was not commonly felt by Gambian people:

'You are lonely, we are not the type that are very accustomed to loneliness' (...) *'we are people's people, we love people'* (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

One female participant summed this up:

'Even if you die you will want to be buried in The Gambia, so it is like there is no place like home.' (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

Missing Gambians. This was also mentioned in recognition of the open lifestyle in Gambia that migrants could not find elsewhere:

'Gambia is so nice because you can go and ask somebody can you give me this and the person gives you wholeheartedly' (Migrant Sweden, female, 5 years abroad).

Another female added:

'I left my friends and everything I knew back home' (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

Finally, another one highlighted how a migrant can feel 'miserable':

'Every day we are here all we think about is The Gambia. In winter you are like I wish I were in Gambia, even in summer you are like I wish I were in Gambia. Because the food and everything and the fact that it is a

miserable life here. For me I think the life here is sort of miserable in a way, we try to socialise as much as possible but at the end of the day when you go home you are lonely' (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

Missing a common language. This issue was mentioned by a few migrants, as illustrated:

'Nothing is better than waking up in your country, seeing your own people talking the same languages. It is a good feeling and I know if we have the same life as economically and everything people wouldn't come here' (Migrant Sweden, female, 20 years abroad).

Another participant clarified that she wished to return due to the difficulties of learning a foreign language: *'I actually remember calling my grandma who raise me and saying I want to go home after half year because it was difficult to learn the language and the culture and everything'* (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Another female migrant also referred to this language barrier: *'When I came to Norway, I could not speak the language. So, you can imagine how hard it was I could not speak the language'* (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

A female participant indicated that despite her young age, she was aware of the language gap:

'I did not know what to expect because I was actually not that old, I was still a youngster. So, I knew that they spoke a different language in Norway, but I did not know exactly how things were going to be' (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

A male participant registered similar feelings:

'Well actually I did not know much about Norway. Everything was new and different; the little I knew about Norway was what we read in geography class. It was completely new the climate the weather, the food, and of course there is a new language that I had to sort of learn, adapt to' (Migrant Norway, male, 26 years abroad).

Learning a new language was a daunting task for migrants aiming to become fully integrated into the host country's culture.

Dislike the cold weather. Participants also reported the cold weather as a sacrifice they endured while staying abroad. They reported the weather as being *'so cold'* or *'very cold'*. One male migrant who is staying abroad for 15 years declared:

'I don't want to get old here because the weather does not permit it' (Migrant UK, male, 15 years abroad).

Another migrant added: *'I do not want to stay any longer. The place is very cold, and the cold is another problem, laugh'* (Migrant Norway, male, 9 years abroad).

A female participant said that depression was triggered by different seasons of the climate:

'Here everyone is depressed, when it is snowing outside you are depressed, when it is raining you are depressed, even during the summer you are depressed because you are lonely and we are not the type that are very accustomed to loneliness' (Migrant Norway, female, 17 years abroad).

So, the cold weather (absence of sunny weather) is a sacrifice many migrants are enduring while staying abroad. Sometimes, it may be a cause for return especially for the participants who have already stayed for a long time or have health problems.

Disliking the social life abroad. Participants also mentioned that they would prefer to eventually return home because they do not like the social life abroad, which is often described in negative terms. Participants think, for instance that *'the social aspect is very down', 'boring', or 'missing'*. One female migrant in UK noted that:

'There is more social life in Gambia than in here [abroad]' (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad).

Another migrant in Norway asserted:

'The togetherness, the Christmas feeling because the Christmas here [Norway] is just boring' (Migrant Norway, male, 17 years abroad).

One male migrant who has been abroad for the past 15 years remarked:

'There is better health care here [UK] than probably in The Gambia but I think the social aspect is very down' (Migrant UK, male, 15 years abroad).

Despite their choice to go abroad and remaining for years, participants missed the social life back home. A point described by another participant:

'It is so boring over here [UK] and you would miss your people. So, if I had a choice, I would not migrate, but my husband is there and that's the only reason I came over' (Migrant UK, female, 3 years abroad).

Thus, the dislike of social life in foreign countries were a relevant reason to plan the return. The findings suggest that migrants who reported more sacrifices from being abroad and those who felt less happy were more likely to return to The Gambia.

Disliking living abroad. A large number of participants reported that they would eventually return home because they simply do not like living abroad. In related terms, they echoed statements like: *'I never like staying outside The Gambia'* or *'I don't like it there [abroad]'*, *'I never liked the US'* and *'I didn't like Europe a lot'*.

One female migrant commented:

'I never like staying outside The Gambia. I like travelling but not to stay forever since I came if you ask him, he will tell you I always tell my husband every day I don't want to stay here [US], I don't like it here' (Migrant US, male, 2.6 years abroad).

Participants commented that *'It is very difficult to live in somebody else's country'* or *'life is very stressful over there'*.

Living abroad and not liking it can lead to despair.

'So, they have it really nice back home in The Gambia, so us living here [abroad] is not that easy. If I had a choice I would have stayed in The Gambia' (Migrant Norway, male, 17 years abroad).

In sum, disliking living abroad was a clear argument for intending to return home.

5.4. Feelings and expectations towards a possible return

'Feelings and expectations towards a possible return' express the moods, emotions, and expectations of migrants towards a possible return. Thus, this category includes plans for: (1) immediate return to The Gambia; and (2) migration to a nearest country.

5.4.1. Immediate return to The Gambia

Three participants reported that they prefer to immediately return to The Gambia after fulfilling their motives for going abroad. In related terms, they mentioned statements like: *'I will return as soon as I finish'*, *'I want to go back home'*, and *'I feel more settled in The Gambia'*. Those who mentioned this were male, aged 35-44 years. Conversely, the more elderly group of migrants showed no definitive plans for return.

A male participant said that as soon as he completes his doctorate he would return:

'In five months', time I will have my PhD, so I will head back after that. Just like how I got into a flight and come here, I can get into a plane and return home. There is no planning, knowledge is the planning I seek the knowledge and when I get is the end of the plan' (Migrant US, male, 16 years abroad).

Another male participant said that he had always had intentions of returning:

'As I said for me return has always been my plan that is what I have been working towards, that is my end goal. Um, for me it was based on finishing my training to an acceptable level and I am there now' (Migrant UK, male, 19 years abroad).

Likewise, another female participant reported that she plans to return home by the end of the same year:

'My specific time would have been by December this year inshallah. Like one year after Yahya Jammeh's departure then I would have rolled up all what I am doing, seeing that my children are ok staying without me, fix everything it was not going to be a rush back even myself. The 2nd of December 2017 the anniversary of the election would likely find me in The Gambia not in Sweden that was my plan. I gave myself one year because as I said that would give me enough time to go back' (Migrant Sweden, female, 32 years abroad).

5.4.2. Migration to a nearest country

When asked about their plan B (i.e., an alternative to present migration), some replied that they would move to the nearest country which shared the same customs and traditions with The Gambia:

'My plan B will be to go to Senegal because it is nearer to The Gambia and I have lived there before, and I like it there. I would prefer to go to Senegal but not to stay in UK because no way that is not part of the plan. That is not even plan Z. Besides, I like my 'chebu jen' [fish and rice], I have to go back' (Migrant UK, male, 2.5 years abroad).

Similarly, another participant said of his plan B: *'My plan B would have been to move in another African country. ... I was already trying that for Sierra Leone because I started my education in Sierra Leone. I have a lot of friends who are working there, and I did have some positive encouragements from them to move there. So, if that situation happens in The Gambia, I would have gone to Sierra Leone, but I was ready to leave the west'* (Returnee UK, male, 17 years abroad).

Another female participant expressed her preference for staying in another African country, in case of return: *'If I have a nice safe African country that would be my dream would come true and I would stay permanently'* (Migrant Norway, female, 26 years abroad).

A migrant woman reported that she preferred to be reconnected to an African university of a neighbouring country:

'I would have chosen to go to an African university because along the way I met some friends that inspired me a lot, I look at them and I feel so jealous because they studied in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and I think they have something that I don't have. I think they have the Africanness, I have to reconnect with my Africanness because when I was studying here, I hate to admit it but I kind of lost being a little bit in touch with my culture, I kind of just got very integrated' (Migrant Norway, female, 16 years abroad).

Briefly, participants shared their feelings and hopes for a potential return by voicing their willingness to return to Gambia immediately or move to a country nearby.

5.5. Summary

To sum up, skilled Gambian migrants have revealed many reasons to consider returning to their home country. These were primarily associated with home family embeddedness, followed by home job and country embeddedness. These different factors operate at varying degrees in influencing migrants' return. Home family embeddedness, through the continuing links and the superior fit with the home culture and family life were regularly cited, alongside the travails of family separation. Although the majority claimed not to regret the choice of going abroad, they did not recommend remaining abroad to other fellow migrants.

6. Other factors influencing skilled Gambian migration

This section includes the other factors influencing migration, as per the literature review, including an in-depth analysis of sample demographics, pre-departure, and post-arrival issues. The same questions were posed to both **migrants and returnees** to collect such demographic data. Table 21 lists the main information collected.

Interview Questions	Main Themes	Sub themes	Initial codes/subordinate themes	Sources
6. Other Factors Influencing Migration*	Demographics	Age	45-54	13
			35-44	12
			25-34	10
			55-65	6
		Gender	Male	23
			Female	18
		Marital status	Married	34
			Single	4
			Divorced	2
			Widow	1
		Family considerations	Number of children	37
			Staying with children	34
			Children age	33
			Spouse citizenship	34
			Spouse occupational status	34
			Staying with spouse	33
	Pre-Departure	Initial intention to return	Initial intention to return	12
	Post-Arrival	Education	Master's degree	23
			Bachelor's degree	11
			PhD	7
		Migration Length	Medium term stay	20
			Short term stay	13
			Long term stay	8
		Occupation	Academics	8
			Health professionals	8
			Administration & Hotel industry	7
Others			7	
Social work	7			
Economics & Accounting	4			
Note. (*) As regards the other factors influencing migration herein are represented the number of interviewees who mentioned each topic (e.g. 37 interviewees referred the number of children)				

Table 21 - Other factors influencing migration

6.1. Demographics

As per the literature, the researcher examined (through NVivo queries) the links that might exist between the sample demographics and the reported contents. For instance, one examined: (1) the combination of age and gender of migrants and returnees' subsamples; (2) the marital status and its link to the choice to go abroad, remain and return; and (3) other family considerations, such as having separated children. The findings are detailed below.

6.1.1. Age and gender

The **interviewees' age distribution** reveals that the migrants' cohort is younger than the returnees' cohort. While the ages of the entire sample ranged from 25 to 65 years, the bulk of returnees were older and aged between 45 and 65 years.

The distribution of **participants by migration status and gender** shows that the ratio of female to male in the migrants' cohort is more gender-balanced than in the returnees' cohort. A higher proportion of male were found in the returnees' group, reflecting a higher number of male participants in this sub-group. It is also noted that there is only a small number of young returnees, which may be due to the tendency of migrants, particularly for women, to remain abroad. Due to their conventional gender roles, 3 (out of 6) female migrants indicated being less open to return because they have the family abroad. This finding suggests that women migrants might be less open to return than their male counterparts, a trend that is worthy of further research in the future.

In addition, the data showed that 9 out of the 11 youngest participants (aged 25 to 34) are women. In spite of the qualitative nature of this finding, it suggests that younger, and skilled Gambian women are also migrating, while older Gambian men are returning. The data also confirms that the trend for women skilled migration had started by 1985 and continues, which may explain why women migrants were younger, because their migration is recent. The preferred destinations for women were the United Kingdom and the United States, which are historically related countries.

In short, some patterns emerged from the data and include age groups, gender, and migrant types, which may be useful for further inquiry. In the Gambian society, a factor that has changed over the last twenty-five years is an increase in Gambian skilled migration and the migration rate of women. This pattern is especially prominent among educated Gambians, which is a trend worthy of further inquiry.

6.1.2. Marital status.

The sample profile shows that most participants were married at the time of the interview: 8 migrants and 12 returnees were married to a fellow Gambian and 6 migrants and 4 returnees were married to foreigners, while 4 migrants and no returnees married a spouse with dual citizenship. A small number of migrants and returnees reported being divorced, single, or widowed.

At the time of the interview only 4 (out of 41) participants were single, and all the single participants were young women. This suggests a possible link between marital status and age: married skilled migrants were represented in all age groups, but they were more numerous in cohorts between 35 and 54 years.

Regarding the **participants who were married to Gambians**, 11 were returnees and 8 were migrants. It seems that more returnees were married to Gambian partners, which may have increased their likelihood to return, whereas more migrants (than returnees) were married to foreigners, thereby lowering their likelihood to return. Finally, in exploring the relationship between **marital status** and **length of stay abroad**, the data suggest that couples stayed abroad longer. However, due to the small sample size this and other trends need to be interpreted carefully.

6.1.3. Family considerations

As reflected in the participants' profiles, 13 migrants were abroad with their spouse and 5 have left the spouse in Gambia. As for the returnees, 10 returnees were living in Gambia with their spouse and 5 left the spouse abroad.

Considering the number of children, most migrants recorded one or two children (8 and 7 respectively) compared to returnees, who had 3 and 5 children (6 and 4 respectively) at the time of the interview. It is not surprising that only younger participants (10 migrants and 3 returnees) reported having only one child due to the age differences. In contrast to returnees with older children, migrants on average had fewer and younger children. This can however be understood, given the younger age of migrants. Finally, few participants recorded four children or more, but this may be understood because some are still in reproductive age and may not yet have their family size completed.

6.2. Pre-departure variable: Initial intention to return.

The data indicates that migrants who intended to stay abroad for a short period of time (e.g., from 9 months to 4 years) end up spending a longer time – in the case of the research group, at least 13 years and at most 41 years. Correspondingly, participants who had not thought about returning, have mostly stayed abroad for a long time (11 years to 32 years). Only a small number spent 2 to 4.5 years abroad and in this short timeframe, two migrants returned because one was underemployed, while the other returned after completing their studies.

In this sample, the majority of participants (29 out of 41) went abroad to study. Of the 15 current migrants who migrated for study, all but two expected to stay abroad for a brief duration (e.g., 2 – 4 years. Instead, they stayed longer, between 11 and 28 years, with an average of 18 years. Among the 14 returnees who went to study abroad, most spent between 11 and 30 years there. Even others who left for greener pastures ended up spending a long time abroad - one of them having spent longer abroad than anyone else in the group. These findings suggest that, even when the return is planned, the international stay ends up being longer than initially intended, even for those who went to study abroad.

6.3. Post-arrival variables

6.3.1. Level of education

The migrants and returnees who participated in this study were all graduated, and they had a similar level of education. The majority hold a master's degree, and a few hold a PhD. However, in examining the relation between education level, host country and gender, one observed that those residing in the US had the greatest number of masters followed by the UK and Norway. Sweden, on the other hand, had the highest number of bachelor graduates. Although PhD holders were few, they were living in the US and the UK (respectively 3 and 2 PhDs), while Sweden and Norway have one each.

The data also revealed that female participants were less highly qualified, being less represented in the master's and PhD categories than their male peers. The gender difference by educational level was more striking among returnees, where all returnees with PhDs were male. This might be explained by the lower number of women among the older cohorts of migrants as well as potential gender differences in the access to educational scholarships.

6.3.2. Length of migration

The demographic data revealed that the length of stay abroad varied among the participants. The majority of migrants and returnees (11 and 9 respectively) registered staying abroad for a period of 11 to 20 years; 13 participants (6 migrants and 7 returnees) remained abroad for 2 to 10 years; and the remaining 8 participants (6 migrants and 2 returnees) spent more than 21 years abroad.

For both groups, the duration varied between 2 to 41 years. However, returnees' length of stay was lower compared to current migrants who tend to remain abroad longer. For the current migrants, the minimum length of stay was 2.5 years, and the maximum was 34 years. The majority of the migrants were staying abroad between 11 to 20 years with an average of 16 years. As for returnees, the minimum length of stay was 2 years, and the maximum 41 years. Most returnees stayed between 11 to 20 years. The data show that several skilled Gambians returned home despite being abroad for a long time.

6.3.3. Occupation

The participants of this study are all skilled workers employed in various professions. A significant number of the participants were either healthcare professionals (8 participants) or academics (8 participants). The rest worked in the fields of administration and in the hotel industry, social work, economics, and accounting. The distribution of occupations by type of migrants

showed that among current migrants the healthcare workers were highly represented while returning migrants were more involved in academia. A gender distribution found that five of the eight health professionals aged 25-34 years were women. Those aged 35-44 years were associated to academia, administration/hotels, and social work. The majority of older participants, aged 45-54 years, were engaged in social work.

6.4. Summary

In summary, the participants' profiles revealed that current skilled Gambia migrants were largely represented by younger women, whereas the group of returnees were predominantly formed by older men. Likewise, the children of returnees were older than the children of migrants, who had fewer and younger children. The findings also show that many participants were living with the spouse, with the exception of a few migrants and returnees. Most participants were married to a fellow Gambian, but migrants were more likely to be married with a foreigner or a spouse holding dual citizenship. When asked about their initial intention to return, the majority of participants had not thought about it, but all returnees had originally intended to return. Regarding the length of stay abroad, current migrants were staying longer, on average, than returnees, although returnees had the highest length of stay. As per the research design, all participants were university graduates, and the majority hold a master's degree. A small number of Gambians hold PhDs. The data further revealed that female participants were not as highly qualified as their male peers, and the group of returnees had more PhDs. Finally, as for occupation, the bulk of the participants were healthcare professionals or academics, but health professionals were mostly women migrants and younger than academics who were mostly male returnees.

7. Major findings: A reflexive summary

Overall, this study's findings show that home country pull factors and family-related issues can prevent migration while host country pull factors are causing skilled migration and retention abroad. While the choices to migrate, remain abroad, or return are based on a range of variables, six common prominent themes were addressed by the interviewees reflecting on their migration journey. These themes included: (1) reasons to stay; (2) reasons to go abroad; (3) reasons to remain abroad; (4) reasons to return; (5) reasons for an eventual return; and (6) other factors. Furthermore, home and host country/job/family embeddedness were productive constructs for interpreting the data. Given the extension and interplay of this information, Table 22 presents a sum of the major findings as addressed by both migrants and returnees, and separately. This summary presents the

main patterns, commonalities, and differences between the two cohorts (current migrants and returnees).

Research Questions	Main Theme	Migrants	Returnees
RQ1: Why, under similar hazardous circumstances, some skilled Gambians stay home while others go abroad?	1. Reasons to stay	Lack of local opportunities	
		Family related issues	
		Political reasons	
	2. Reasons to go abroad	Feeling and expectations toward migration	
		Migration Reasons	
		Reasons for choosing the destination country	
RQ2: Why skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return?	3. Reasons to Remain abroad	Host country embeddedness	
		Host family embeddedness	
		Host job embeddedness	
		Home (dis) embeddedness	
		Earlier unsuccessful attempts to return	
	4. Reasons to return		Self-fulfilment
			Feelings and Expectations towards return
			Home family embeddedness
			Home job embeddedness
			Home country embeddedness
	5. Reasons for an eventual Return		Host (dis) embeddedness
		Home family embeddedness	
		Home job embeddedness	
		Home country embeddedness	
		Feeling and expectations toward a possible return	
6. Other Factors Influencing Migration	Demographics	Gender and Age	
		Marital status	
		Family considerations	
	Pre-departure variables	Initial intention to return	
	Post-arrival variables	Level of education	
		Length of migration	
		Occupation	

Table 22 – Findings Map

The first research question queried ***“Why, under similar circumstances, do some skilled Gambians stay at home while others go abroad?”***. In general, the results of this study are consistent with the current migration literature. However, factors leading skilled Gambians to go abroad are different from those that could have made them stay home. **Skilled Gambians could have stayed** if they had had local (and better) education and employment opportunities; and/or if their near family had not migrated; and/or if they had not been politically persecuted.

Migration, instead, was influenced by eleven factors grouped in 3 key categories: (1) feelings and expectations towards migration (such as, looking for further education, self-

development, illusions about Europe, and Tekky); (2) migration reasons (including a network abroad, intellectual, and financial capability to go abroad, optimistic hope, and others' influence); and (3) reasons for choosing a destination country (such as, host education, family ties, and host country attractiveness). Overall, the findings reinforce the importance attributed to family and social networks, mainly by providing support once migration takes place.

The second research question inquired ***“Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad while other skilled Gambians return?”*** The research findings show that the reasons why some skilled Gambians remain abroad are very different from those that would make them return and the reasons that actually influenced migrants who had returned.

Concerning the choice to remain abroad, this study shows that factors related to host country embeddedness, such as host family and host job embeddedness made skilled migrants remain. Additionally, factors like home (dis)embeddedness and earlier unsuccessful attempts to return were perceived as negative factors related to the home country that made return less desirable and thus influenced the choice to remain abroad.

For the choice to return, the results of this investigation show that the reasons to return for returnees and the reasons for an eventual return among current migrants are similar. The findings show commonalities for both groups, related to home family/job and country embeddedness. While feelings and expectations towards return influence return intentions, these were more significant for returnees (who had no personal regrets and recommended the return to others) than for migrants (who pondered an eventual return or re-emigration to a neighbouring country). **Among the returnees**, self-fulfilment, and host (dis)embeddedness were two additional factors that also triggered their choice to return and were not mentioned by current migrants.

Overall, self-fulfilment emerged as the most powerful reason for returning migrants, which, however, did not affect the return intentions of current migrants. Likewise, host (dis)embeddedness, which was a meaningful reason to return for returnees, was not mentioned by current migrants. It seems that self-fulfilment, and host (dis)embeddedness, do not influence the return intentions of current migrants, which suggest they might feel more host embedded than returnees did. In short, the reasons that explain skilled Gambians stay abroad are distinct from the reasons that caused their (eventual) return. Skilled Gambian migrants stay abroad when they feel: (1) host country embedded, (2) host family embedded; and (3) host job embedded, along with (4) feeling home (dis)embedded; and (5) having failed earlier return attempts. Correspondingly, skilled Gambian migrants are more likely to return, whenever they feel more home embedded (to the family, to a job, and the country). In addition, holding positive feelings and attitudes towards return

impacts return intentions and actual return, while self-fulfilment influences actual return but not migrants' return intentions.

Regarding the other factors influencing migration, the findings suggest that such factors can have a significant impact on skilled Gambians choosing to migrate, remain abroad or return. This study has collected socio-demographic information about 41 skilled Gambian migrants and returnees, who were highly educated and were all employed at the moment of data collection. Women were more represented in the migrants' cohort, which was also younger and with younger children. This cohort were also more likely to remain abroad. As for returnees, they were generally older, had older children and were more likely to be married to a fellow compatriot. Likewise, those with a higher level of education were more likely to return compared to those with just a bachelor's degree. Similarly, time abroad was negatively associated with the intention to return. However, the findings do not suggest any significant association between a definitive initial intention of return and the length of the stay. Actually, the findings show that those who stay longer can still return, meaning that skilled Gambians are usually long-term migrants.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the migration choices made by skilled Gambians, by drawing on the migration theories and the embeddedness theory to answer the following research questions:

- (1) Why, under similar circumstances, do some skilled Gambians stay home while others go abroad?
- (2) Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return?

This chapter discusses the major study findings as they relate to the theoretical framework of this research. To ease the interpretation of the data, the discussion follows each research question. In each case, findings consistent with previous research are mentioned first, and then the findings that are unique are highlighted. In recognising the complexity of the analysis, the researcher chose to address the simple effects first (e.g., reasons to go abroad or reasons to return), and only afterwards the more complex, combined effects (e.g., reasons to go abroad among migrants versus returnees or among male/female migrants, etc.). In other words, this chapter is structured to answer the two research questions by distinguishing firstly the findings that are consistent with the literature and, secondly, the findings that are unique and therefore provide new theoretical insights and/or raise new research questions. The theoretical and managerial contributions of the present research are then further examined in Chapter 7.

1. Why, under similar circumstances, do some skilled Gambians stay home while others go abroad?

In answering this research question, the author first addresses the factors that discourage migration and then the rationale for migrating. It is not surprising that both migrants and returnees were more emphatic about their reasons for going abroad and returning than they were about aspects influencing a potential choice to stay home. To extend our analysis of the factors discouraging migration, the views of local skilled Gambians, mainly those who have never migrated, are still required, which constitutes a first avenue for future research resulting from the present study.

1.1. Factors dissuading skilled Gambians from migrating

Findings from this research suggest that three key factors could impede skilled Gambian migration and thereby deter *brain drain*: (1) local educational and work opportunities, (2) family-

related factors, and (3) political conditions. The following paragraphs elucidate the potential impact of these three factors on the decision of skilled Gambians to stay and not migrate.

Local opportunities. The results of this study show that skilled Gambians do not consider local higher education opportunities or employment prospects adequate, at least at the time they left the country. This lack of local opportunities is perceived as a negative factor that pushes people to leave the home country. This finding supports previous migration research (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Migali & Scipioni, 2019; Parella & Petroff, 2020), which found a clear negative correlation between local work opportunities and migration.

Family-related factors. The results suggest that skilled Gambians' choice to stay is linked to family-related factors in many ways. Home family factors can help predict the likelihood of choosing to stay home, while host family factors, such as joining a spouse or reuniting with parents abroad, help determine migration. These findings are in line with previous studies (Cossor, 2016; Dennison & Dražanová, 2018; Paparusso & Ambrosetti, 2017; Thomas, 2019), and confirm that in the cultural context of The Gambia, which is a collectivistic society, the family, and in particular leaving the family behind, is a concern that can both impede peoples' migration and encourage return. In addition to macro and micro economic factors, individual variables such as family dynamics influence skilled Gambian migration.

Political conditions. The idea that the political conditions of the home country influence migration is long-standing. The present study found that political factors, mainly related to local nepotism and political persecution, influence skilled migration to an extent that going abroad becomes the only way out for some skilled Gambians. While listed by a small number of participants (5 out of 41), these findings corroborate earlier studies on the prominence of political violence, dictatorial rule, and discrimination in African countries (Adepoju, 2017; Fleischer, 2007; Ndikumana et al., 2019). In addition, the findings of this study highlight how political membership can determine the choice of the destination country, based on a previously established mobility route.

In sum, the data from skilled Gambian migrants and returnees support the push-pull, the neoclassical economic and the dual labour market theories of migration, the network theory, and the cumulative causation theories of migration perpetuation, in that various home factors push people abroad, while destination variables attract them to move and remain abroad. Interestingly, this study found no evidence related to home country embeddedness hypothetically influencing skilled Gambians' choice to stay. While some alluded to home family sickness, which almost made them give up or return prematurely, actually none recognised significant elements related to home embeddedness that could have hindered their decision to migrate. The explanation for this is not

clear but it could be linked to the research design, which does not include the views of skilled Gambians who have never migrated. This is an important topic for future research that is also suggested by the embeddedness theory, since the construct of embeddedness is more informative of retention than departure. Given that long-term migrants and returnees could be less reflexive about their own home embeddedness before migration, future research might further examine how home country embeddedness and home family embeddedness affect stayers versus leavers.

1.2. Factors influencing skilled Gambians migration

In addition to the absence of local opportunities, political persecution, nepotism and family influence, the findings show that certain personal attributes (such as intellectual ability, optimistic hope, and wish to give back to the community) along with social and financial capital are key factors shaping skilled Gambians' migration. These considerations are discussed separately.

Intellectual capability. Results from this study show that intellectual capability is relevant to seeking further education abroad (and to meeting the scholarship requirements), which might be a particularity of skilled migration (see Table 17- page 85). This result is consistent with the view that highly educated people are more likely to emigrate (see Dennison & Dražanová, 2018; Migali & Scipioni, 2018; Parella & Petroff, 2020). However, future research must examine this issue in more detail, mainly by expanding our understanding of the international mobility that is motivated by international programs providing scholarships for higher education to students from developing countries. Some participants alluded to this issue, which in fact explains why some Gambians migrated to culturally distant countries like Sweden and Norway. How do these scholarship programs influence the phenomenon of *brain drain* in developing countries? How likely is the return of these migrants who have received an international tertiary education? Why are health workers less likely to return after completing their tertiary education abroad? These are just a few questions that are prompt by this study findings and that are worthy of future research.

Optimistic hope. The results of this study indicate that migration is frequently driven by an illusionary idea of success (expressed through expectations of self-development, illusion about Europe, greener pasture, future success and tekky). These findings confirm earlier work (see Gaibazzi, 2014; Mbah, 2017; Sabharwal & Varma, 2017; Suso & Conrad, 2019) that reported skilled Nigerians and Indians migration motivated by an unrelenting quest for more 'fertile pastures' and hopes of a 'greener' life abroad.

Although the current study shows that skilled Gambians who migrated for 'greener pastures' also shared optimistic hopes, additional research is required to examine these relationships. How are these higher and somewhat unrealistic expectations related to migrants'

host country (dis)embeddedness? How do skilled Gambians who migrate for greener pastures cope when their illusory dreams are disappointed? How do they deal with the challenges of living abroad, such as discrimination, employment, education, settlement, and social life? How do returning migrants deal with the problems and difficulties faced upon return, such as fitting into home working and living conditions? Who return most often: those who succeed abroad (and can afford to share their success back home) or those who unfortunately could not find a greener pasture, and then, are better off home? The findings from this study are not enough to fully answer these questions, but they are indicative of the relevance of these related aspects pertaining to migration success.

Giving back to the community. In this study, the aim of giving back to the community emerged as an important reason for migrating (see Table 17, page 85). Though past studies have found a correlation between giving back and returning (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Hirt, 2017), few studies considered this variable as a predictor of migration. Thus, this research offers new insights about the importance of the home country, since most skilled Gambian migrants considered giving back to the community an initial driver of migration. Actually, the data confirm that this early intention remains, and many skilled Gambians returned to fulfil this aim. Understanding more about the specific circumstances and perceptions of what really constitutes ‘giving back to the community’ and what binds both cohorts (returnees and permanent migrants) to this purpose will help in addressing the phenomenon of brain drain in The Gambia.

Social capital. The findings of this study show that the presence of a social network abroad is also an important predictor of migration, which is consistent with previous work (Bertoli & Ruysen, 2018; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2018). These results support Manchin and Orazbayev (2018), who showed that networks and migration intentions have a positive relationship, particularly when the networks consist of friends and family. Consistently with the network theory, the findings reinforce the importance attributed to family and social networks, mainly to provide host support once the migration takes place. Furthermore, the data underscores how family and political supporters abroad drive skilled Gambia’s skilled migration, including the choice of a destination country. Thus, it appears that the diaspora can play a significant role in accruing or preventing brain drain, especially when the members of the diaspora provide realistic information about the challenges and opportunities faced abroad.

Financial capital. The results of this study reveal the importance of financial capital for migration, which runs counter to the traditional view that poverty increases the likelihood of migration. As shown in this study, skilled migration requires a sound financial basis as skilled Gambian migrants are not the poorest of all migrants but are the people who have intellectual and

financial capital for backing the move. Some migration research showed that people from impoverished countries are less likely to migrate, while recent studies show that the trend is still relevant to contemporary migratory flows (Dao, Docquier, Parsons, & Peri, 2018; De Haas, 2010; McKenzie, 2017; Sabates-Wheeler & Waddington, 2003). Due to its high cost, migration may not be a viable option for the poorest people, but when income or wealth increases above a certain threshold, migration becomes possible up to a point where higher income or wealth levels are no longer needed (Docquier, Peri, & Ruysen, 2014; Sabates-Wheeler & Waddington, 2003). Our findings are consistent with these predictions, since highly wealthy and well-connected Gambians were less in need to migrate (given that local nepotism supports their access to scarce resources) and the poorest cannot afford to do it. Thus, skilled emigration from The Gambia is backed by a secure financial base.

Reasons for choosing a destination country. An interesting finding from this study is the observation that the reasons for choosing a host country are very different from the reasons why a migrant leaves the home country in the first place. As found, the choice of a destination is clearly influenced by host attractiveness, based on international exposure, cultural ties, visa process and emigration openness. With the exception of a few studies (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Van Hear et al., 2018) that have considered host economic, social, and environmental attractiveness, these aspects have been neglected by the migration and management literatures. So far, the research that has noted the importance of host country attractiveness has emphasised (i) the economic conditions of the host country (e.g., Lee, 2016); (ii) its social attractiveness, including the political stability, human growth and culture (see Achenbach, 2016; Andersson & Nilsson, 2011; Lee, 2018); and (iii) the environmental attractiveness, including pleasant weather (Dimant, Krieger, & Meierrieks, 2013). The findings of this study, however, highlight other variables that increase the attractiveness of a host country and are related to its international exposure and openness to migration. As shown, skilled Gambians carefully viewed the country's attractiveness as an indicator of the adequacy of the destination, and the results underline the significance of cultural ties (e.g., historical links, common language). Therefore, future management studies on global mobility might expand this stream of research and, for instance, examine other somewhat surprising migration routes, such as the migration of unskilled Gambians to Spain. To our view this might be related to the existence of Gambian diaspora networks, but this assumption requires further investigation.

1.3. The relative importance of home-country push factors versus host-country pull factors in explaining Gambians' migration choice

According to the push-pull theory, migration is a consequence of home negative factors that push people to leave, blended with host positive factors that pull them to a destination (Lee, 1966; Schoorl, 1995; Toren, 1976). Actually, and consistently with this theory, the findings of this study show that home-country push factors (e.g., absence of local work and educational opportunities and political persecution) combined with host-country pull factors (e.g., family living abroad and destination attractiveness) play an important role in the migration of skilled Gambians.

The findings of the present study underline that local hardship circumstances, such as the absence of decent work, opportunity to further education, and nepotism, are negative forces from the home country that push skilled Gambians to leave. However, the choice to migrate is also a result of other personal circumstances prior to migration that include family-related issues (e.g., joining absent family) and political reasons. Furthermore, push and pull factors alone are not enough to actually drive Gambian migration, so the question is not how important push versus pull factors are, but instead, how much social, intellectual, and financial capital do skilled Gambians have to make the migration choice feasible. Although the initial choice to migrate might be prompted by push and pull variables, it only takes place when Gambians have an optimistic hope and possess human capital (i.e., intellectual, social, and financial capital). Given that these skilled and competent workers are exactly the ones who are crucial for The Gambia to remain competitive in the world economy, knowing more about an eventual return is the next logical step to avert the negative effects of brain drain.

2. Why do some skilled Gambians remain abroad while others return?

In answering this research question, the author first addresses the factors that dissuade the return and encourage migration perpetuation and then the rationale for returning. It is no surprise that migrants were more enlightening about their own reasons to remain abroad and returnees were more informative about their reasons to return. These findings are consistent with the research design used, in that current migrants were asked about their present situation and potential return, while returnees were asked about their migration and return experiences.

2.1. Factors dissuading skilled Gambians' return

The findings show that factors related to host variables, such as (1) host country embeddedness, (2) host family embeddedness, and (3) host job embeddedness, along with (4)

home (dis)embeddedness; and (5) personal circumstances including earlier unsuccessful attempts to return, have a significant effect on migrants' choice to remain abroad. The importance and the impact of these issues are elaborated below. The order of these factors has significance. In explaining why, they remain abroad, skilled Gambians first mentioned their embeddedness in the host country, followed by host family embeddedness; and finally, host job embeddedness.

Host country embeddedness. Host country embeddedness has a positive impact on the intention to remain abroad, endorsing the predictions of the embeddedness theory (Hom et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Although earlier studies have investigated the link between host country embeddedness and repatriation intentions (e.g., Hom et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010), the findings of this study expand this theory to the context of skilled migration. The findings show that migrants who feel comfortable with the host country community and lifestyle are strongly embedded in the host country. Furthermore, once migrants become embedded in the host-country's culture and lifestyle and establish contacts with locals and fellow citizens, they are more likely to remain. In fact, host links and sense of good lifestyle fit, together with the perception of loss and sacrifice that would be incurred from leaving the host country, explain why skilled Gambians remain abroad.

The results confirm that being embedded in the host country explains migrants' intention to remain. The desire to remain can be explained by the many ties with the locals and the perceived sacrifice that would ensue from returning, leading to losses related to host job opportunities, business contacts and social life (Andersson & Nilsson, 2011). Furthermore, participants that fit the host-country lifestyle and the host culture are more likely to remain abroad (Hom et al., 2019; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Hence, the skilled Gambians who choose to stay abroad, some said they fell in love with the nature, beauty, and peace of the host country, others thought the destination was home, and some others even felt alienated from The Gambia.

Host family embeddedness. Host family factors played a major role in the choice to remain, which is consistent with the theory of family embeddedness (Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Hom et al., 2019; Lu, Zong, & Schissel, 2009; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Although previous studies have looked at the relationship between host family and the choice to stay or leave among business expatriates (e.g., Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Hom et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2009; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010; Soon, 2014; Varrel, 2011), the findings of this study extend the family embeddedness theory to the migration context. The results show that participants' choices to migrate and then remain abroad are influenced by the presence of family members in the destination country (i.e., spouse, children, parents, and extended family). The dimensions of host family fit and host family links explain migrants' host family embeddedness. Therefore, the

migrants who were more embedded with their family abroad were also (1) more likely to remain and perpetuate emigration, and (2) less likely to return, because they experienced a higher level of family fit and links abroad and perceived higher family sacrifices that included being separated from family members and friends should they leave the host country.

The findings also show that the migrants who have raised their families abroad and who were integrated in the host country were less eager to return, especially when they were less embedded in the home country. Furthermore, once they choose to return they felt the burden of family sacrifices, such as being separated from their children, spouses/partners, thus eventually losing a meaningful life (Soon, 2014; Varrel, 2011). The prospect of family sacrifices actually makes the return less desirable, and thus encourages the choice to remain abroad (Ramesh, 2007; Soon, 2014).

Host job embeddedness. This study reveals that host job embeddedness is closely related to the intention to remain abroad, which is consistent with the theory of job embeddedness (Lo et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2001; Ng & Feldman, 2007; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). While previous studies have investigated the connection between host work embeddedness and return choices, the results of this study expand the theory of job embeddedness to the migration context. The findings show that when skilled migrants build a career abroad and nurture prospects of rising up the career chain, through strong connections with host colleagues to whom they feel to be professionally compatible, they were (1) more likely to remain abroad, and (2) showed lower return intentions. Furthermore, they often appreciated the host country's working style and working culture, so when migrants become embedded in the host job, they were more likely to remain, not only because they were better fitted and locally linked, but also because they feared losing work and career opportunities, business contacts, and professional activities should they go back to their home country (Lo et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010).

The results further suggest that being embedded in one's job in the host country is directly related to a lower intention to return. Greater workplace ties in the host country and familiarity with the profession make it more feasible for migrants to remain abroad, thereby reducing their desire and need to return (Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010).

Home (dis)embeddedness. The findings offer fresh insight into how home (dis) embeddedness impacts migrants' chance to remain abroad. Consistent with the theory of home embeddedness, home (dis)embeddedness is a major influence on the tendency to remain abroad. While migrants felt that they would have little trouble returning home, because 'they are not new' to their own country, they also recognized that both the country of origin and they themselves have changed during the time abroad (Salaff, 2013). Such home (mis)adjustment was not

understood as temporary and thus contributed to the feeling of home (dis)embeddedness reported by several migrants once they made home trips for holidays and visits. Such experiences included feeling alienated and unhappy, disturbed by interpersonal issues with fellow citizens, dissatisfaction with the home country, and considering the host country as their new home (Fong, 2011; Kim, 2012; Plüss, 2018; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Therefore, migrants with a higher level of home (dis)embeddedness showed: (1) more negative attitudes towards the home country; (2) higher likelihood of remaining abroad (in the present destination or elsewhere, depending on their level of host country embeddedness), and (3) lower return intentions (in that they might leave the present destination – if they are not entirely host embedded) and relocate to another place (but not return to The Gambia).

Earlier unsuccessful attempts to return. The findings of this research show that past failures to return have a significant impact on the choice of remaining abroad, which is consistent with the predictions of the neoclassical theory of migration (De Haas et al., 2015; Plüss, 2018; Szélenyi & Rhoads, 2007). In this study, some skilled Gambians have attempted to return but failed. As a result, they all re-migrated to the same destination country. This finding confirms the interpretation of earlier studies, in that failed returns are known to be the result of a low level of re-adaptation, along with some personal factors (such as financial need, tertiary education level and previous migration experience); and home country political unrest (Aradhya, Scott, & Smith, 2017; Bratsberg, Raaum, & Sørlie, 2007; Flahaux, 2017; Sinatti, 2011; White, 2014). However, the findings from this study are unique and differ from earlier research (Lietaert, Derluyn, & Broekaert, 2014; Monti, 2020), because they show that re-emigration is more driven by host country pull forces, such as exposure, opportunities and experience, than unfavourable circumstances in the home country. Therefore, host embeddedness seems to play an important role in retaining migrants abroad.

2.2. Factors influencing skilled Gambians' return

The findings show that both migrants and returnees plan their return, as they have all elaborated on their feelings and expectations towards that choice. In planning for the return both cohorts recognised the importance of home family embeddedness, home job embeddedness and home country embeddedness, and by this order of importance, which is meaningful. While the choice to remain abroad was firstly influenced by migrants' embeddedness in the host country, followed by host family and host job embeddedness, the choice to return was mostly influenced by home family embeddedness, followed by home job embeddedness and home country embeddedness. These findings suggest that variables related to the country of destination (such as

lifestyle and openness) are more significant to retain skilled Gambian migrants abroad, while variables related to their home family are more weighted when they choose to return. Moreover, the returnees pointed out other influential factors, such as their own self-fulfilment and their perceived (dis)embeddedness in the host country, which they believed to have a significant influence on their effective return. The next segments discuss the relative importance and impact of these issues on the choice to return of returnees and current migrants.

Self-fulfilment. Both the present study and earlier research found a positive link between self-fulfilment and migration return (Achenbach, 2016; Comunian, Jewell, & Faggian, 2017; Kinginger, 2009; Kunuroglu, Yagmur, Van De Vijver, & Kroon, 2018). Indeed, several studies highlighted the convergent association between an initial intention to return and return migration (e.g., Achenbach, 2016; Carling & Pettersen, 2014; Kinginger, 2009; Kunuroglu et al., 2018). While previous studies on return migration depicted ‘economic failure’ as a reason for failing to return home (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014; Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016), this study extends the push-pull theory (Lee, 1966) to explain how actualising the purpose of going abroad (i.e. how an initial intention to return after completing studies) pushes migrants to go back home. Interestingly, this perception of self-fulfilment was only mentioned by the returnees and not current migrants (as shown in Table 22 – page 152). This suggests that self-fulfilment was important to returnees because they have fulfilled their motives for going abroad, while migrants had not yet self-fulfilled their goals, or were more self-fulfilled abroad. Further, host (dis)embeddedness was mentioned by the returnees but not by migrants, who instead, expressed a lower degree of home embeddedness and did not share the returnees’ experiences of host racism and discrimination. Even when migrants experienced such instances, they were not sufficient to send them home. Why, then, are migrants not feeling the same levels of host (dis)embeddedness as returnees?

Feelings and attitudes towards return. Both the present study and earlier research found positive feelings and expectations towards return to be positively linked to the intention to return (Arhin-Sam, 2019; Kļave & Šūpule, 2019; Mintchev, Boshnakov, Richter, & Ruspini, 2017). The findings suggest that both migrants and returnees are more inclined to return when they experience positive moods, emotions, and attitudes towards return. Specifically, this study found that these feelings were more important to returnees than migrants, who instead, expressed their wish to return or, ultimately, to migrate to a neighbouring or nearby African country.

Comparatively, returnees expressed positive feelings and attitudes toward return through a higher confidence in their decision, having no personal regrets about the return and recommending it to other Gambian migrants. As for the migrants, the results also indicate that those participants

who have positive feeling toward a possible return hold higher return intentions, including the prospect of relocating to a nearest country with similar traditions and customs approaching those of the 'homeland'.

Among the participants who migrated due to political persecution (having no alternative), most have returned or have an actual intention to return, and rarely choose to stay abroad. This suggests that when people are forced to leave, they are more eager to return or, inversely, more suspicious, and less positive about return. Our data leaves unanswered the way forced migrants interpret the return, in that only one returnee listed change of government as a reason to return. This may be because the change of government was recent, at the time of the interview, and this is an issue that is worth future research examining how political change can have a lasting effect on migrants' return.

Home family embeddedness. Home family embeddedness plays a significant role in the choice to return among skilled Gambian migrants. Although previous studies have looked at the relationship between family embeddedness and the choice to stay home or leave (e.g., Feldman, Ng, & Vogel, 2012; Kiazad, Holtom, Hom, & Newman, 2015; Ramesh, 2007; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010; Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, & Bolino, 2012), our findings expand the family embeddedness theory to the migration context and to understanding the return decision. The results show that both migrants and returnees who have strong ties with their family, relatives, and friends in the home country, are strongly home family embedded and (i) have less intention to remain abroad and extend emigration; and (ii) are more likely to return or actually do return, as in the case of the returnees.

The findings further reveal that in a collectivist country like The Gambia, people are deeply embedded in an extended family, which is as significant as their ties to the close family. Such relationships form a large network that creates financial and social responsibilities for migrants. As shown, the findings indicate that being embedded in one's family at home is positively associated with a higher intention to return. If migrants choose to remain abroad, they sacrifice children, spouses or extended family ties that affect a meaningful life (di Belgiojoso & Ortensi, 2013; Fokkema, 2011; Harvey, 2009; Hugo, 2006). Stronger family sacrifices make migration less desirable, and thus promote the return of migrants and returnees (Harvey, 2009; Hugo, 2006; Ndikumana et al., 2019; Ramesh, 2007).

This study findings also provide evidence on the connection between the constructs of family and country embeddedness. Given that home family embeddedness includes perceptions of fit and links to an extended home family lifestyle and culture, it is then likely that home family embeddedness increases home country embeddedness. Therefore, home family embeddedness

influences the return decisions of skilled Gambian migrants both directly and indirectly. Home family embeddedness directly influences the return of migrants through home family links and fit, as well as the perception of unbearable family sacrifices if they remain abroad; and, indirectly, by increasing migrants' perceptions of their own home country embeddedness.

Home job embeddedness. The current study shows that home job embeddedness is closely linked to return intentions, which is consistent with the predictions of the job embeddedness theory (Gill, 2010; Ho, Seet, Jones, & Hoang, 2018; Meuer et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2001; Zweig & Han, 2010). Although previous works have explored the connection between home job embeddedness and repatriation intentions (Chen & Shaffer, 2017; Lo et al., 2012; Meuer et al., 2019), the findings of the present study extend this theory to the context of skilled migration.

The current research supports the value of the theory of job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001) to explain how the three dimensions of job embeddedness (links, fit and sacrifice) affect migrants' intention to return. As the results illustrate, migrants and returnees feel that they might lose jobs, career opportunities, business contacts and professional growth in their home country if they remain abroad (Chen & Shaffer, 2017; Gill, 2010; Lo et al., 2012; Tung, 2008; Zweig & Han, 2010). Once they feel more home job embedded, they are (i) less likely to remain abroad and perpetuate emigration; and (ii) more likely to return, not only because of the links and fit they have built up at home but also because they feel they will sacrifice home employment links, career opportunities and employment activities if they remain abroad.

The results also show that being closely connected to a job at home is strongly linked to a higher desire to return. Actually, strengthening links to the workforce and fit to the working culture in The Gambia make it more desirable for migrants to come home and therefore reduce their desire to remain abroad (Ramesh, 2007).

Home country embeddedness. Home country embeddedness has a positive influence on the choice or intention to return, supporting the predictions of the embeddedness theory (Baruffaldi & Landoni, 2012; Goštautaitė et al., 2019; Ho et al., 2018; Lin, Zheng, Lu, Liu, & Wright, 2019; Lo et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). While previous studies have investigated the relationship between home country embeddedness and repatriation intentions (e.g., Goštautaitė et al., 2019; Ho et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010), the findings of the current study extend this theory to the context of skilled migration. The present study found that the intention to return, as well as the actual return of skilled Gambians, were closely linked to home-country embeddedness

In the present study, returnees and migrants who have a close relationship with family, friends, and relatives in their homeland and feel comfortable with their home culture and lifestyle,

were more strongly embedded in the home country. Once migrants and returnees remain embedded in the home country, they are (i) less likely to remain abroad and (ii) more likely to come back, as the absence of family, friends, social life, and the home culture and lifestyle will be missed.

The results further indicate that being home embedded was associated to the intention to return. The incentive to return is such that while migrants live abroad they miss the extended family left behind and they fear to lose employment and business ties in their country (Lo et al., 2012). Furthermore, participants who fit the home culture and lifestyle want to return to avoid the hurdles of remaining abroad (Baruffaldi & Landoni, 2012; Monteleone & Torrisi, 2012; Shaffer et al., 2012). Overall, the findings suggest that home family and home job embeddedness are of primary importance to prompt the return of skilled Gambians, having an influence that extends beyond home country embeddedness. The findings therefore suggest that the higher the perceptions of fit, links and level of potential sacrifices related to the home family and home job, (i) the higher the home country embeddedness; and consequently, (ii) the lower the intention to remain abroad; and (iii) the higher the intention to return.

Host (dis)embeddedness. The results shed a new light on how host (dis)embeddedness can influence migrants' return intentions. In line with the embeddedness theory, host (dis)embeddedness leans towards low embeddedness to the host country, which was repeatedly reported as a push force affecting skilled Gambian returnees. In this study, host (dis)embeddedness **was only mentioned by returnees** who feel that they have come home to where they belong, instead of being alienated and discriminated against as they were while they were abroad. Perceived racism and discrimination have made returnees feel disconnected to the host country, resulting in their effective return (Kunuroglu et al., 2018). Consequently, it is likely that migrants who experience a higher degree of racism and discrimination abroad will experience more negative attitudes towards the host country and have higher intentions to return. In this study, Norway and the United Kingdom were the destinations where returnees felt more discriminated against. These feelings were caused by life experiences, sometimes related to their work, religious beliefs, or loneliness. These perceived feelings were more related to the host employment (lack of job prospects and employment discrimination) in the UK, but in Norway they were related to racism, alienation, loneliness, and religion. These feelings seems to be connected to occupational differences, since the current migrants displaced in those destinations were mostly health workers or occupied positions that usually have a higher social status than those held by returnees. Therefore, one can conclude that the level of host (dis)embeddedness is a differentiating factor between migrants with high return intentions and actual returnees. It seems to be the 'final straw' that overflows the bottle and pushes migrants towards a decision to return.

2.3. The relative importance of host country embeddedness versus home country embeddedness in explaining migration perpetuation and return

As shown, both host-country embeddedness and home-country embeddedness influence skilled Gambian migrants' choice to remain abroad or return, which is consistent with the predictions of the embeddedness theory (Lo et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2001; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Consistently with the embeddedness theory, the research findings support the following research propositions:

(1) Host country/family/job embeddedness (and by this order of importance) influence **migrants' choice to remain abroad**. Host country embeddedness is a key predictor for choosing to remain abroad among migrants, essentially because of the perceived host country sacrifices (i.e., economic and the lifestyle) that leaving the destination would entail.

(2) Home family/job/country embeddedness (and by this order of importance) influence both **returnees and migrants' intentions to return**. Home family embeddedness is an important reason for both cohorts, mainly because of the home family links of migrants, and home family sacrifice (for continuing abroad) of returnees. Furthermore, home family embeddedness seems to enact home country embeddedness, having both a direct and indirect influence on migration return.

(3) Host (dis)embeddedness influences the **actual choice to return** among returnees but has no clear influence on the return intentions of migrants. Returnees emphasised negative factors that included host racism and discrimination, lack of job prospects and employment discrimination, which were not mentioned by actual migrants.

In summary, this study's findings support and extend the predictions of the embeddedness theory by combining and distinguishing the influencing factors related to migration choices (Lo et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). As shown, home and host country/family/job embeddedness provide a comprehensive and distinctive explanation for the reasons why skilled migrants choose to remain abroad or return home. Furthermore, the findings of the present study show that host country related factors, such as host country lifestyle, host connections and career abroad represent experiences that are key to the choice to remain. Instead, home family and home country factors, such as strong home links, sense of belonging and better fit to the home job market, represent forces from the home country that attract migrants back and influence their choice to return. In addition, host (dis)embeddedness seems to have a strong influence in converting return intentions into actual return. Hence, skilled Gambian migrants who become embedded in the host country are more likely to remain and extend the migration, while those who remain home embedded while abroad have higher intentions to return. The skilled Gambians who

actually return, in spite of a long stay abroad, are those who attained a higher sense of self-fulfilment from their international experience and/or who felt more host (dis)embedded. Figure 4 illustrates these relationships.

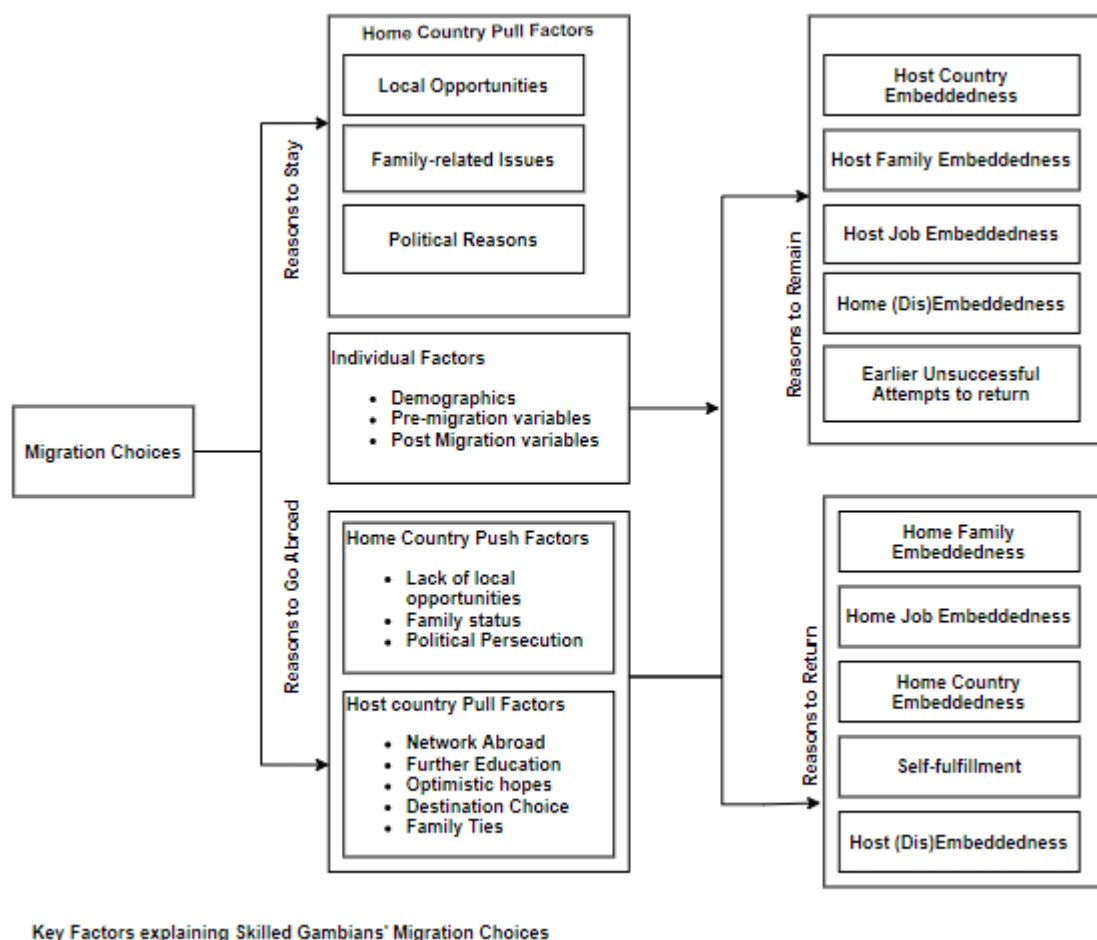


Figure 4 – Key factors explaining skilled Gambians Migration choices

3. Other factors influencing skilled Gambians' migration

Several interesting findings emerged regarding the influence of other factors (demographic, pre- and post-arrival variables) influencing skilled Gambians' migration choices, as is summarized below.

Age and gender. This study findings show that young skilled Gambians are more likely to migrate and remain abroad in comparison to older migrants. This finding confirms earlier studies (e.g., Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014; Khoo et al., 2008; Makina, 2012; Zaiceva, 2014) suggesting that age is negatively related to migration and positively related to the chances of return. This study further reveals that older skilled Gambian migrants are more likely to return because they have stayed long enough to fulfil their motives for going abroad, which is in line with previous research

(Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014; Khoo et al., 2008; Makina, 2012; Zaiceva, 2014). In addition, prior research (Dennison & Dražanová, 2018; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Medina & Posso, 2013; Syafitri, 2012) has shown that men are more likely to migrate than women. This study found that women often migrate for family reunion and less of their own volition and they were less likely to return because of their perceived traditional roles. This evidence is consistent with the findings from studies carried out in other regions of the world (Caro et al., 2016; Gatti, 2009; Güngör & Tansel, 2014). The diverging results in this study, showing that men emigrate more, and women return less, may derive from the sample peculiarities, as gender was associated with age. Furthermore, younger women migrants belong to the group that mentioned more family ties abroad in explaining migration choice. Therefore, further research is needed to clarify the moderating effects of age and gender on the migration choices of skilled Gambians, in that (i) if women are more likely to follow the migration decisions of other family members; but (ii) are less eager to return, then they can play a distinct role as regards the phenomenon of brain drain. Gambian women might be best persuaded to stay in The Gambia, mainly when they do not belong to a migrants' family; but once abroad, they may be less receptive than men to local policies aimed at attracting skilled Gambian migrants.

Marital status. This study found a positive relationship between marriage and both migration and return. This finding supports earlier studies (De Coulon & Wolff, 2010; Medina & Posso, 2013) and confirms Syafitri's (2012) finding that being single or divorced is positively associated with migration and negatively linked to return. However, due to the small sample size (and the reduced number of widow and divorced participants), this finding needs to be interpreted carefully. In this study, although the gap is small, the data suggest that more migrants than returnees are married to foreigners, thereby making them less likely to return compared to those married to a Gambian spouse. This evidence follows previous studies' findings showing that marriage to a fellow national is strongly connected to return, while marrying someone of another nationality is strongly correlated with both migration and retention abroad (Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2014; Donato & Gabaccia, 2015; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Haug, 2008). Furthermore, this study shows that most participants who remain abroad do so with their spouses, thus supporting earlier studies which found living as a couple in a foreign country was negatively related to return (Dustmann & Kirchkamp, 2002; Haug, 2008). However, owing to the small number of divorcee and singles in the participants' group, more research is needed to expand existing knowledge on how and why being single or divorced influence migration choices.

Family considerations. The current research shows that the majority of the migrants are living with their spouses abroad and the majority of the returnees are returning home to join their

spouses. This result supports the findings of earlier studies confirming that the presence of close family abroad is strongly linked to migration and migration perpetuation, while the presence of the family at home is negatively related to remaining abroad (Cossor, 2016; King & Lulle, 2016; Pinger, 2010). This research also shows that some returnees left some children in the host country, while other children were left at home once they were abroad. This finding suggests that children may not deter the migration of skilled Gambians nor define their return. This evidence partially supports previous research (De Coulon & Wolff, 2010; Haug, 2008; Medina & Posso, 2013; Thomas, 2019), which found staying with young children in the host country to be positively associated with migration perpetuation and negatively related to return. Though staying with children were associated to migrants' choices to remain abroad, it did not prevent returnees from going back home, in that these returning persons were more likely to have a second family at home, as polygamous marriages are quite common in the Gambian community. Therefore, the importance of family considerations to migration and migration perpetuation varies with the migrants' cultural background.

Education. The results of this study show that returnees were more highly qualified than actual migrants, thus suggesting that the return rate increases with the level of education. This finding supports some studies that found return increases with higher education (Parella & Petroff, 2020; Saarela & Rooth, 2012) but disagrees with a prominent assumption of the migration literature that a higher level of education decreases the likelihood of return (Medina & Posso, 2013; Syafitri, 2012). In the present study, instead, we observed that the higher education can be coupled with the perception of having self-fulfilled the migration goals, which might explain the return of highly skilled Gambian migrants.

Migration length. The data shows that both migrants and returnees spent a long time abroad, and long-term migrants actually choose to return (as exemplified by one returnee who went back home after spending 41 years abroad). This means that spending a long time abroad is not a definitive reason to remain abroad, so our findings do not endorse the view that the chance of return decreases with a longer stay abroad (Caro et al., 2016; González-Ferrer et al., 2014; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Parella & Petroff, 2020). Actually, most returnees claimed self-fulfilment as a reason for returning, because their intention had never been to remain abroad, but to go, get education and then come back. However, due to various reasons, some migrants spent a short time, while others stayed for a longer time. These reasons include: misconnection from home, willingness to set up one's family before returning, waiting for the offspring to reach university level, acquiring some properties, and set up a business at home. Although most skilled Gambians intended to spend two to three years abroad, they have stayed much longer (16 years or more). In

this study, participants who returned after a long stay explained that they did not return sooner because they wanted to achieve their goals. Once they had completed their goals, they then returned to serve their hometowns and the country.

Initial intention to return. Results of this study suggest that the initial intention to return is associated to migrants' intentions to return in the future and returnees' choice to return. This result supports previous studies suggesting the initial intention to stay abroad is positively related to staying and that the initial decision to return is positively related to returning (Caro et al., 2016; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; MacMichael et al., 2016; Sener, 2018). Furthermore, the study could not determine whether the uncertainty is related to the choice of returning, since because among the participants who stated that they had not thought about return during the phase of pre-migration, half of them have returned while the rest have stayed abroad. This finding is not consistent with earlier results (Hernandez-Carretero, 2016; Saarela & Rooth, 2012; Williams & Baláž, 2012) showing that uncertainty about the original decision to return was positively related to migration and negatively related to return. This study findings show that the choice of returning or remaining abroad is distinct from the initial intention to return. A possible explanation for these findings may lie on the observed importance attributed to 'a sense of fulfilment'. Even when migrants' plan to return, this intention might be bounded by their achievements while abroad. Some propositions still require further research, such as: (i) higher achievements coupled with home embeddedness might permit the return, while lower achievements, although associated with high home embeddedness, might avert it. Likewise, higher achievements coupled with high host embeddedness might perpetuate the migration, while lower achievements coupled with high home embeddedness might prompt an earlier return.

Occupation. The results of this study show that (i) unemployment is a reason for migrating and (ii) having a decent job at home can prevent migration. However, being employed abroad does not prevent migrants' return. These results are broadly consistent with earlier findings showing that unemployment at home leads to migration (Caro et al., 2016; Dennison & Dražanová, 2018; MacMichael et al., 2016; Migali & Scipioni, 2018) but differ from other studies which estimate that being employed in the host country will prevent the return. This disparity could be attributed to the degree of home family and country embeddedness, which were mentioned by returnees, who actually preferred to forfeit a good job and higher wages abroad, than bearing the sacrifice of leaving the family and The Gambia behind. In addition, this study shows that academic scholars are among the top migrants who returned, which means that becoming an academic scholar can facilitate the return to The Gambia. This result contradicts earlier studies that suggest working in academia is positively linked to migration and negatively linked to return (Carling & Collins, 2018;

Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Medina & Posso, 2013; Sidhu, Collins, Lewis, & Yeoh, 2016). Furthermore, this study shows that one of the most representative occupations in the sample – the healthcare professionals – tend not to return. This finding supports earlier studies, which have shown that healthcare workers are more likely to migrate and less likely to return (Motlhatlhedi & Nkomazana, 2018; Owusu et al., 2017; Walton-Roberts et al., 2017). Therefore, future research might explore why Gambian academics are more likely to return than Gambian health professionals, especially because Gambian universities do not provide better job prospects than local health institutions. There might be many reasons why scholars choose to return, even when they know that the return will require extra effort to have a comfortable life. Perhaps more than the health professionals, the academicians who do return accept that their situation in Gambia is better, and they feel they must come back to share the knowledge, exert a greater influence, and contribute to the development of the Gambia.

In summary, the findings of this study support the view that migration choices are much more complex than is implied by orthodox migration and perpetuation theories, which underscore our approach to use a multidisciplinary theoretical framework and employ a qualitative methodology to address skilled migration in the Gambia context.

VII. CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The research framework of this study combines two areas of knowledge: firstly, international migration and perpetuation theories, and secondly, management literature addressing international mobility and notably the embeddedness theory. So far, chapter II introduced the theoretical basis of this research, and the other chapters described the research design and methods, the findings, and their discussion in line with the existing theories. Hence, this chapter ends with a comprehensive sum of the main findings and respective implications, including the research limitations, followed by the main theoretical and managerial contributions and suggestions for future research. A concluding section ends this dissertation.

1. Key research findings and implications

This thesis expands the existing knowledge regarding the causes of skilled migration, notably in the Africa and The Gambia context, such as the choice to stay at home, migrate, remain abroad, or return. The sections below outline the key findings of this study and advances several implications regarding skilled migration and return.

1.1. Skilled Gambians migration can be dissuaded by...

The factors that can dissuade skilled Gambian migration refers to home country pull factors, such as local opportunities; family-related issues; and the political climate. These factors were perceived as making the migration choice optional, whereas their absence turned this choice compulsory, particularly for the politically persecuted Gambians.

To dissuade skilled Gambians from migrating, it is necessary to first address the reasons that could have prevented their migration. These include providing better work and employment opportunities as the unemployment rate in The Gambia remains high and the working conditions are poor. Another preventative measure can be the provision of quality higher education as seeking further education is one of the main reasons for migration. Further, the country's nepotism needs to be tackled if skilled Gambians are to be retained. Therefore, the issue of brain drain is not simply one of unemployment but is mapped into a shared sense of hopelessness in that skilled Gambians perceive employment to be a privilege for the affluent or politically connected Gambians and not available to the masses. So, these home-push factors, such as – unemployment, poor working conditions, lack of/poor tertiary education, and nepotism – trigger the choice to migrate. Equally, the opposite factors, such as – reducing unemployment, provide quality tertiary education and

cultivate of a culture of meritocracy – can become pull factors capable of retaining talent in The Gambia.

Secondly, family-related issues represent pull factors that could have prevented skilled migration. The family issues mentioned, such as – leaving family behind, low family status at home, and joining a husband abroad – have to be addressed to avert Gambian brain drain. This study found that migrants who are from an affluent and politically connected family and who have their spouses and close relatives at home are more prone to stay. So, these family-related issues are reasons that can dissuade skilled Gambian migration. Due to the prominence of the family in a collective society like The Gambia, family-related factors work as pull factors that can prevent skilled Gambian migration.

Lastly, political reasons can also act as pull factors that may dissuade migration. Political persecution was seen as a push factor, and its absence might encourage skilled Gambians retention. So, to dissuade talented individuals from migrating, the political persecution needs to be stopped to enable skilled workers to stay in their homeland.

In summary, to dissuade Gambian skilled migration the country needs to address the scarceness of local opportunities, provide adequate employment to lift up family status and overcome political persecution. Furthermore, the findings confirm that skilled Gambians are less likely to migrate when they are older and/or have close family at home and/or have the opportunity to further their education in the country.

1.2. Skilled Gambians migration is prompted when...

Skilled Gambian migration is prompted when a combination of factors challenge educated Gambians to migrate. This combination includes positive feelings and expectations toward migration, coupled with several other reasons for migrating, including the selection of an appropriate destination country.

Firstly, Gambians choose to go abroad because they expect to attain further education, wish to transform their lives and the lives of their family by pursuing the dream of attaining a better life abroad to alleviate poverty and become successful or ‘tekky’. Expectations are hopes and illusions migrants construct before migrating. Therefore, to address the issue of brain drain, there is a need to understand how these hopes are socially constructed and individually enacted. Further information on the hurdles of emigration, provided by the Diaspora and returnees, is therefore needed, if the country intends to prevent brain drain.

Secondly, the findings show that migration becomes effective only when it is backed by a few facilitating factors, such as having a social network abroad, and possessing the intellectual and

financial capability to pursue international education and finance the migration. Although the most frequent reason for migrating is the desire to receive a foreign education, which in turn highlights the lack of/insufficient level of higher education in Gambia, at least in certain educational fields (such as navigation, aviation, engineering etc.), migration only becomes effective when (i) it is coupled with an optimistic view of the life abroad; (ii) it is backed up by financial resources; and (iii) is supported by an international network. Families have an enduring influence throughout the entire process, as the Gambian families provide the inspiration, the motives, the funds, and the connections that transform intentions into action. This was especially true for Gambian women who often migrated without intending to, just to join their parents or spouse or because they felt politically persecuted.

Finally, skilled migrants choose a destination country based on host education (quality of education, free education, or availability of scholarship), family ties (join parents or spouse), and host country attractiveness as interpreted through social networking, cultural ties, an easy visa process, and an openness towards immigration.

In short, to deal with the problem of brain drain in The Gambia one needs to understand that the reason why skilled Gambians choose to migrate is a result of mixed factors caused by actual living conditions, hopes and dreams, coupled with family influence, financial resources, and network support.

1.3. Skilled Gambians can be dissuaded from returning by...

Various individual factors can discourage skilled Gambians' return. These factors include the economic benefits and the life opportunities abroad, along with a sense of fitting well the host country and the destination lifestyle. In addition, the choice to remain abroad can be strengthened by the feeling of being connected and settled in the host country, where migrants built reliable connections with locals and other fellow citizens. Furthermore, skilled Gambians can be dissuaded from returning if they already have or have started a family abroad. Other factors dissuading return involve migrants' feeling of being home (dis)embedded and alienated from the home country. Finally, unsuccessful attempts to return can further reinforce the decision to remain abroad.

1.4. The return of skilled Gambians occurs when...

Several reasons can prompt the return of skilled Gambians. These include realising the goals of migrating, such as returning after completing education, coupled with enduring positive feelings and expectations towards return, including the appeal of the family left at home. As shown, the return of skilled Gambians can be further influenced by their spouse, children, and parents in

the home country; including the need to provide family support at home. Feelings regarding home family, home job and home country embeddedness explained the return of most skilled Gambians. In addition, those who quit a decent job, forfeit a career prospect, and a job offer abroad were more likely to return or regret staying abroad for too long because their colleagues at home are better off.

Finally, skilled Gambian would be influenced to return if they feel a sense of (dis)embeddedness in the host country once they do not see any job prospects and do not have access to career and opportunities due to racism and discrimination.

2. Research limitations

Although the findings of this study are beneficial and enhance our understanding of the choices skilled Gambians make with regard to migration, this study is subject to some theoretical and methodological limitations.

The first limitation refers to the theoretical framework used to address the skilled migration in The Gambian. While the migration and perpetuation theories can explain much of the phenomenon, they do not provide an in-depth understanding of the reasons why many skilled workers never leave the Gambia and, inversely, why many skilled migrants never return. The embeddedness theory was then used to address these missing dots. This research employs a multidisciplinary view, required to understand a complex phenomenon as is Gambian skilled migration and brain drain. Although the theoretical frameworks used underscore the individual factors perceived to influence migration choices, they also pinpoint other collective factors that might explain the phenomenon, such as, but not exclusively, migratory trends, migration governance, and political pressures, among other social and institutional forces. Whenever a researcher chooses a course of action and a “way of interpreting a phenomenon” s/he also ignores other ways of seeing. Given this inherent limitation, future research might expand this interdisciplinary approach to develop our understanding of the phenomenon from another theoretical lens.

Secondly, the findings report the perspective of skilled Gambian migrants from a relatively small sample that cannot completely uncover the entire diversity within skilled Gambian migrants. However, the sample includes migrants and returnees from the main destination countries, namely US, UK, Norway, and Sweden, so it still provides a comprehensive understanding of the views of the skilled Gambian migrants. A future research avenue pertains to examining why Gambian women were less open to migrating and, thereafter, less eager to return. This study’s findings revealed that female migrants were less open to return than their male counterparts. It would be

interesting to study a group of female migrants and investigate their agency, especially in the context of an African country where women are still expected to comply and live within a large and extended network of multiple wives and children (Dierickx, 2020) to ascertain if their exposure to other cultures and ways of living might influence their motives for not returning.

Thirdly, the findings are not generalizable to other skilled migrants. The results refer to a single country, so they are hardly transferable to other contexts and samples. However, our approach follows earlier calls to investigate the phenomenon of skilled migration in Africa and address the phenomenon of brain drain from LDCs. To this end, this study contributes to explain the phenomenon of skilled migration in the context of The Gambia and compares the experiences and insights of both migrants and returnees. This study then contributes to the brain drain literature by adding another layer of interpretation and analysis to explain the phenomenon of skilled migration, namely via the theoretical lens of home/host country embeddedness and the personal views of those directly involved. Since scarce management research has addressed the international mobility from/and to The Gambia, including the in-flows of immigrants, as well as the propensity of migration among its youngest population (e.g., university students), these are interesting avenues for future research. The findings of such studies would extend the present research, which might further help the government in identifying strategies to better tackle the issue of migration and brain drain, especially among the millennials who are going to be the future leaders.

Fourthly, this study uses a semi-structured interview method of data collection, which is a common approach in qualitative research (Vasileiou et al., 2018) but is limited to a small number of participants. The number of interviewees is often limited to ensure that researchers have enough time to conduct interviews and gather information about useful encounters, behaviour, and attitudes to obtain more valuable interactions. Although the semi-structured interviews were inherently time-consuming, the interview guidelines allowed the researcher to conduct comprehensive discussions with all participants to gather detailed information about the research topics. In addition, this study used a theoretical sampling, and many participants were found through a snowballing method. While this approach is commonly used, especially in instances where it is difficult to find study participants, as was the case in this study, it has some drawbacks. For example, the researcher is unaware of the true population distribution. Although the sampling population remains unknown, the study participants were drawn from four different countries, notably the ones welcoming more skilled Gambian migrants. Given this sample diversity one aimed to reduce the chances of having a non-meaningful sample.

Finally, another major drawback of this research is the fact that it was aimed to answer the question of knowing why skilled Gambians do not migrate by interviewing the movers (migrants

and returnees) and not adding the views of the stayers. Therefore, a fruitful research avenue would be to explore and compare the views of those skilled workers who chose not to migrate. Their insights may help expand our understanding of the role played (if any) by the home country pull factors and their perception of home country/family/job embeddedness.

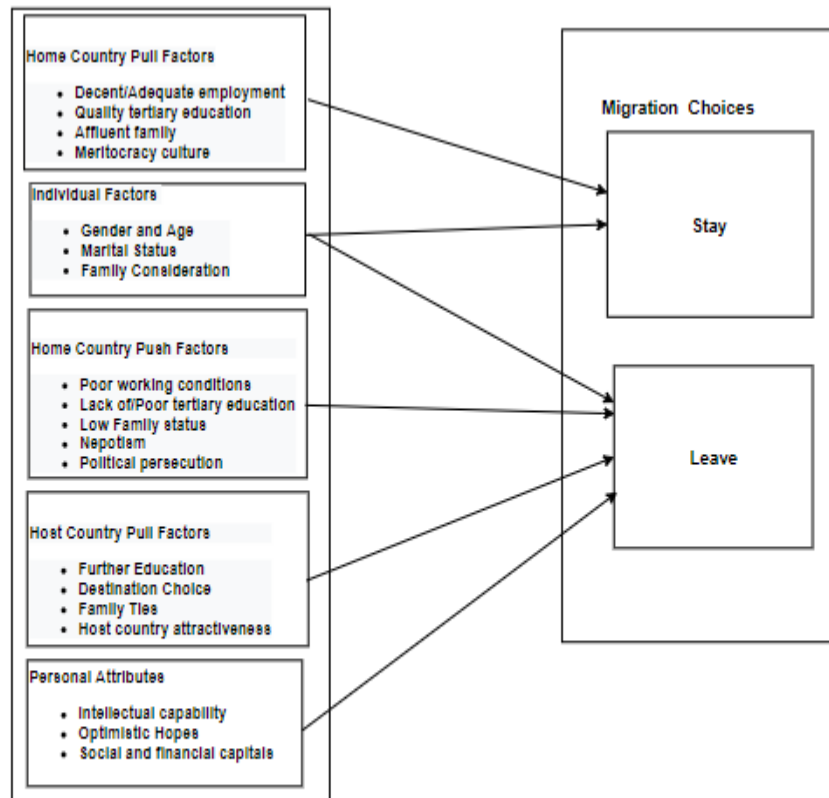
Overall, the information collected in this research is informative regarding the main reasons influencing skilled Gambian migration, retention abroad, and return, thus validating the theoretical and methodological approaches employed. There follows a few suggestions for future research.

3. Suggestions for future research

The merit of a qualitative and interpretative study lies in the advancement of new insights and research propositions that may guide future research. Therefore, this section offers a few research propositions for future research on skilled migration that are derived from the findings and are related to (i) the key factors explaining the choice to stay versus migrate; and (ii) the key factors explaining the choice to remain abroad versus return.

3.1.1. Key factors explaining skilled workers' choices to stay home or go abroad

Figure 5 outlines the observed associations between home country push factors and host country pull factors and the choice to stay home or go abroad. Overall, home country push factors and host country pull factors affect the choices of skilled Gambians to stay in their home country or go abroad. Migrants' intentions to stay home are influenced by local opportunities, family-related issues, and political conditions, all of which could potentially deter the migration choice. In addition, the positive feelings and expectations toward migration, international education, networking abroad, optimistic hopes and dreams, the influence of others and reasons related to the destination are among the factors that motivate skilled migrants to go abroad. Contrary to what was anticipated, no clear association was observed between home embeddedness and skilled Gambians choice to stay at home. Furthermore, the findings show that some demographic variables, like gender and age, family and marital considerations, and the initial intention to return can affect these relationships.



Key Factors explaining Gambian choices to stay home or go abroad

Figure 5 – Key factors explaining skilled migrants’ choices to stay home or go abroad

Migration choices – stay home

As shown in Figure 5, the findings suggest the following propositions for future research on skilled migration:

Proposition 1: Home country pull factors, such as (a) decent/adequate work opportunities; (b) quality of tertiary education; (c) family considerations, such as having an affluent family; and (d) a local meritocracy culture are positive predictors of skilled workers intentions to stay home.

Proposition 2: Individual factors, such as (a) gender; (b) age, (c) marital status; and (d) family considerations are predictors of skilled workers intentions to stay in the home country, in that young male or female who are single and have no relative abroad are more likely to stay home.

Migration choices – go abroad

As shown in Figure 5, the findings suggest the following propositions for future research on skilled migration:

Proposition 3: Home country push factors, such as (a) poor working conditions, (b) poor tertiary education, (c) low family status, (d) nepotism, and (e) political persecution are predictors

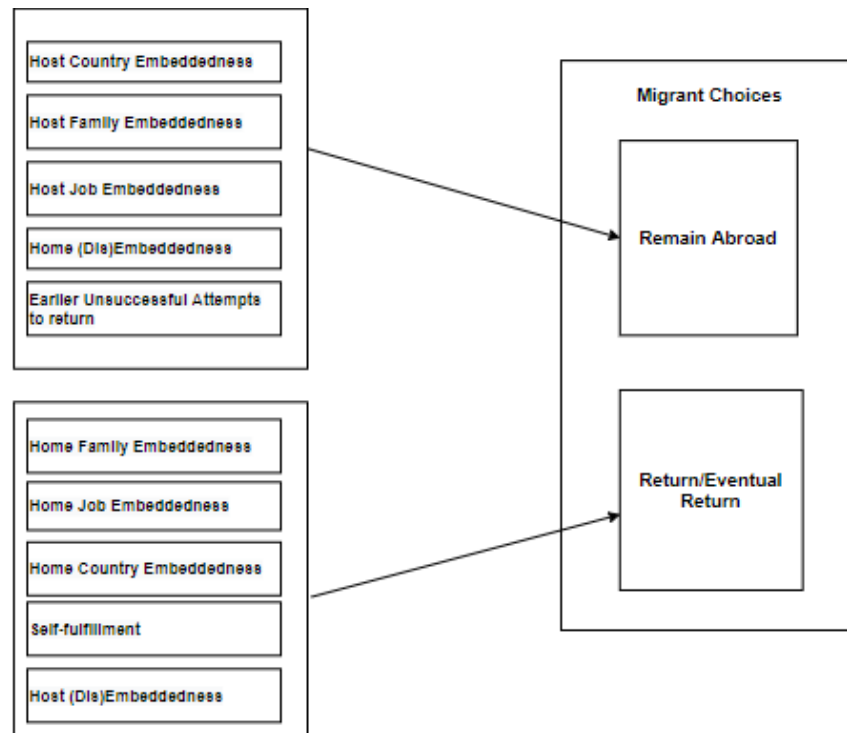
of skilled workers' likelihood to emigrate since unemployment, the unavailability of quality local universities, being from a destitute family and the effects of nepotism may trigger migration.

Proposition 4: Host country pull factors, such as (a) opportunity to further education; (b) destination considerations as cultural/historic ties, and openness to migration; (c) family ties at the destination; and (d) host country attractiveness are positive predictors of skilled migration because those who have the opportunity to pursue international education and choose a destination country with family ties, quality higher education, a local network, cultural ties, easier visa and immigration openness are more likely to migrate.

Proposition 5: Migrants' personal attributes, such as (a) intellectual capability, (b) optimistic hopes towards emigration; and (c) social and financial capitals are predictors of skilled migration in that skilled workers who have the intellectual ability to pursue higher education and the money to finance the mobility, the optimistic hope for greener pastures and possess the human, social and financial capitals are more incline to migrate.

3.1.2. Key factors explaining skilled migrants' choices to remain abroad or return

Figure 6 depicts all the empirically supported relationships between migrants' choice to remain abroad or return, including home country embeddedness, host country variables and personal circumstances.



Key factors explaining skilled Gambian choices to remain abroad or return

Figure 6 – Key factors explaining skilled migrants’ choices to remain abroad or return

Migration choices – remain abroad

As shown in Figure 6, the findings suggest the following research propositions for future research:

Proposition 6: Host embeddedness with the (a) country; (b) the family; and (c) the job are positive predictors of skilled migrants’ intention to remain abroad.

Proposition 7: Home (dis)embeddedness is a positive predictor of skilled migrants’ intention to remain abroad.

Proposition 8: Earlier unsuccessful attempts to return are positive predictors of skilled migrants’ intention to remain abroad.

Migration choices – return

As shown in Figure 6, the results suggest the following propositions for future research:

Proposition 9: Home family embeddedness is a positive predictor of skilled migrants’ (a) intention to return; and (b) effective return.

Proposition 10: Home job embeddedness is a positive predictor of skilled migrants’ (a) intention to return; and (b) effective return.

Proposition 11: Home country embeddedness is a positive predictor of skilled migrants' (a) intention to return; and (b) effective return.

Proposition 12: Skilled migrants' perceptions of self-fulfilment is a positive predictor of skilled migrants' return.

Proposition 13: Skilled migrants' perceptions of being (dis)embedded in host country is a positive predictor of skilled migrants' return.

Finally, the data used in this research was collected before the COVID-19 pandemic period. As shown, many skilled migrants went abroad to look for work and now, since the outbreak, many are facing layoffs or their jobs were made redundant (Borjas & Cassidy, 2020). Therefore, another promising avenue for future research is the investigation of the experiences of these skilled workers, including how the COVID-19 affected/is affecting their careers and how is it shaping their migration plans.

4. Theoretical contributions

This research presents a cross-disciplinary approach that places together the insights of two bodies of knowledge: migration and international management. It draws upon the migration and perpetuation theories and embeddedness theory to widen our understanding of the skilled migration in The Gambia.

This study represents an attempt to address the conceptual limitations of earlier studies that neglected the importance of home/host country variables on migration and return. As shown, the migration literature covers many aspects of migration but reveals some theoretical limitations related to the complexity of the phenomenon and the interplay of many non-work and individual factors shaping migrants and skilled migration. So far, migration studies have examined migration separately from migration perpetuation and migration return, and questions about 'migrants' inner world' have remained largely ignored (De Haas, 2011). Similarly, the management literature reveals some important gaps, such as a limited interest for migrants themselves, thus ignoring an important and talented international workforce. Therefore, the theoretical contributions of this study are fourfold, and pertain to: (i) the mainstream migration theories; (ii) the literature regarding brain drain in LDCs; (iii) the embeddedness theory; and (iv) the relative importance of other individual factors influencing skilled migration. These specific contributions are detailed below.

4.1. Contributions to mainstream migration and perpetuation theories

The review of the mainstream migration literature presented in Chapter II revealed that: (i) mobility factors were given undue emphasis, disregarding the issues that might restrain mobility; (ii) skilled workers' migratory choices were under-researched; (iii) there was scant empirical evidence on the factors that prompt migration/return corresponding, *inter alia*, to the relationship between home/host countries, work/non-work variables, psychological factors, and the choice of remaining abroad or return. Finally, the theoretical and empirical developments on migration and perpetuation of migration were subservient to migration research and were mostly absent in the management research.

The present study was designed to address these gaps by empirically examining how migration theories can be used to understand Gambians skilled migration and Africa brain drain. As shown, migration theories are valuable in explaining why people migrate and why they stay abroad. Earlier theories such as Lee's push-pull (1966), neoclassical economic theory (Lewis, 1954) and network theory (Boyd, 1989) are geared towards explaining international migration. The findings of this study are generally in line with these theories as they show how some home country pull factors (e.g., local opportunities, family issues and political conditions) explain the choice of staying in The Gambia, while home push and host pull factors explain migration choices. This research also found that lack of local opportunities pushes people to migrate. This is in line with push-pull theory (Lee, 1966). Furthermore, this study argues that family-related factors influence the choice to either remain abroad or return. The choice to stay at home is also influenced by having close family members at home, a spouse and better-off family status. Correspondingly, host family factors (such as reuniting with parents or joining a spouse abroad) influence migration. Moreover, political persecution and local nepotism encourage skilled migration. Overall, these factors are in line with some of the existing migration theories as aforementioned.

Nevertheless, this research further elaborates on the factors prompting skilled Gambians to migrate. It shows that an optimistic hope of a greener life abroad, coupled with the wish to give back to the community, along with social capital (a network abroad) all lead skilled Gambians to go abroad. However, the final choice mostly depends on other attributes, such as migrants' intellectual, social, and financial capability to travel. This research, therefore, shows that financial capital is a backbone of skilled migration, which contradicts the arguments offered by some previous migration researchers (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016) who see migration (especially from LDCs) as poverty-driven. Contrary to this mainstream view, but consistently with recent migratory trends (IOM, 2017; 2019b), skilled migrants are not the poorest of all migrants but are the ones who have the intellectual and financial capital to back up the move. This finding has implications

to migration studies, as underlines the view that migration flows are encompassing an increasing diversity, thus requiring the contributions of multiple disciplines and various field approaches.

In sum, earlier migration theories (Lee, 1966; Lewis, 1954; Todaro, 1969) have sought to explain the factors leading up to migration choices using different assumptions, models, and levels of analysis to understand what prompts the process of migration. Perpetuation theories (Boyd, 1989; Myrdal, 1957; Ravuri, 2014) further focused new emerging factors, such as network, institutions, and cumulative causation, to explain why international migration perpetuates. Altogether, migration and perpetuation theories do not provide a comprehensive and detailed model to explain skilled migration, for three main reasons. Firstly, the models of initiation and perpetuation of international migration are mainly based on empirical studies that follow one of the two approaches, but often disregard the particularities of the context. Secondly, most of these models focus separately on the process of going abroad or remaining but fail to examine the process of going, remaining, and returning as a whole, as they intrinsically relate to one another. Thirdly, these theories tend to overlook the influence of work and non-work factors (such as the family) in explaining the migration and the choice of a destination. The choice of studying skilled Gambian migrants aimed to address these research gaps and further followed the call of Peltokorpi and Froese (2009) to investigate the international mobility of skilled migrants in Africa. By doing so, this research uncovered:

(1) The particularities of skilled migration in The Gambia. Gambian skilled migration is surprisingly high in the region and has not been driven by poverty. Instead, skilled migration requires financial capital, which can actually accrue the negative effects of local brain drain.

(2) The importance of the local context, notably the importance of the links, fit and sacrifices that bound skilled workers to the home and host destinations. As shown, these dimensions are key to explain migration and return as well as skilled migrants' retention abroad.

(3) The importance of non-work factors, such as the power of the extended family, influencing the migration choices and being decisive on the support needed before, during, and after migration.

Finally, another contribution of this research is to comparatively underscore migrants' choice to stay or go abroad, and then remain or return. This methodological approach, unusual in most migration studies, follows the argument that factors that encourage migration may also influence the choice of remaining abroad (MacMichael et al., 2016); and factors that hinder migration may also influence the intention to return. Therefore, this research provides an empirical step forward, because the use of participants' triangulation (e.g., migrants and returnees) offers a

comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the key variables influencing skilled migration in The Gambia.

4.2. Contributions to brain drain literature

This study also contributes to brain drain literature. This research addresses the lack of empirical evidence from African countries, which have one of the highest rates of brain drain in the world. Paradoxically, African countries are among the less-studied (Capuano & Marfouk, 2013). Investigating the factors influencing and dissuading skilled migration is of prime concern to African countries, which is a research gap this study attempts to address.

This study hopes to fill the gap of lack of information about the phenomenon of brain drain in The Gambia. Brain drain is becoming a serious problem in Gambian society because the country is facing one of the highest rates of skilled migration in Africa (Arslan et al., 2015; Gajigo & Verdier-Chouchane, 2016). Yet, and up to our knowledge, there is no research on such a large-scale phenomenon. Despite its relevance and economic and social impact, statistics about migration are scanty and incomplete notably about the skilled migration from The Gambia. Understanding the phenomenon is both timely and relevant because the main challenge facing African countries today is the recruitment and retention of talents and the harsh truth is that only a few countries have managed to retain or lure back their talented emigrants. This study shows that the migration choices of skilled Gambians are shaped by the home country push factors and the host country pull factors, which emphasise the factors that may dissuade or influence Gambian skilled migration. In the same vein, the choices to return or not derive from migrants' links, fit and perceived sacrifices regarding job, family, and country embeddedness, in that having family in the home or host country can boost or hinder the return, and the choice can be further reinforced by migrants' attitudes toward the return and feelings of self-fulfilment.

In contributing to the brain drain literature, the findings of this study uncovers the following insights:

(1) Skilled Gambians leave the country for multiple reasons, including home push and host pull factors. However, all migrants plan to go abroad temporarily and then return once they fulfil the aims for going abroad. Thus, the prevention of brain drain should start earlier in life, and mainly through education, so as to decrease the duration of Gambians international mobility once this happens.

(2) Once abroad, most skilled Gambians nurture strong links to the Gambian Diaspora, as well as to the home country. Family and friends left at home, holidays and country visits help them foster their home embeddedness (including family, job, and country embeddedness).

(3) Home embeddedness coupled with positive attitudes toward the return can help increase the intentions to return, which can impede the perpetuation of the brain drain in The Gambia.

(4) Finally, this research helps to explore the in-depth experience of skilled migration, which provides unique insights into the brain drain phenomenon that affects many countries around the world. Although earlier research focused on the economic and human costs of brain drain (Beine, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2008; Docquier, 2014; Gibson & McKenzie, 2012), this study provides a different approach. It looks at work and non-work factors (such as family and country) that influence or hinder skilled migration from The Gambia. Since retaining skilled workers is crucial for the competitiveness of each and every country, this research offers a new step forward as it uses skilled migrants' insights to understand the choices leading to their retention, migration, and return.

4.3. Contribution to embeddedness literature

Previously, management research on skilled migration was mainly concentrated on the expatriation and repatriation choices of assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates. This study shows that the migratory choices of skilled migrants is just as important. Although the focus of this study is on Gambian skilled migrants, these migrants make up an important part of the international workforce and have, so far, been largely ignored in the management literature.

This study argues that the degree of migrant's embeddedness in the home and host countries influence their choice to either remain abroad or return. Being embedded in the host country, host family, and host job encourage staying abroad and prevent the return, while being embedded with the home family, home job and home country encourage return. These variables outline the multiple work and non-work factors that promote the persistence of brain drain and provide an understanding of how to prevent the phenomenon of skilled migration. For instance, being strongly embedded in the host country influences skilled migrants to become attached to the destination culture, growing their formal and informal links to the job or the career they are aspiring to develop abroad. This, in turn, makes returning hard, due to the psychological and financial sacrifices. Therefore, the choice to return is not a simple economic decision but is determined by other psychological and social variables, such as the degree of embeddedness in the host or home country and the inherent links and sacrifices. All this determines whether skilled Gambians opt for returning or not.

The findings empirically support those who defend the embeddedness theory to disclose the following insights:

(1) This study differs from previous studies in that it applies and extends the embeddedness theory outside the organizational borders. The theory was originally an organisational theory aimed at explaining workers' turnover and retention (Mitchell et al., 2001), but this research uses the embeddedness theory to explain a much wider phenomenon, namely skilled migration in the Gambia. Thus, this research extends the construct of embeddedness beyond the scope of employees' retention to cover migration behaviours.

(2) Another contribution of this research is that earlier studies (e.g., Lo et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010) have applied the embeddedness theory to predict the retention of expatriates in the host country, however, the findings of this research show that the theory can explain skilled migrants' choice to remain abroad or return home.

(3) Finally, another contribution of this study is to simultaneously compare skilled migrants' choices to migrate or not, and then remain abroad or not. This methodology, uncommon in most migration research, follows the assumption that factors that encourage expatriates' retention may also influence migrants' choice to remain abroad; and factors that hinder their retention may also influence the migrants' intention to return (Kraimer et al., 2012; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Therefore, this research provides a first-hand step forward because it offers a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the new variables that were overlooked in the field of migration but are important in understanding the phenomenon of skilled migration in The Gambian context.

4.4. Contributions on the relative importance of other factors influencing migration

This study also looks into the other factors (demographics, pre-departure, and post-arrival variables) influencing migration. So far, scholars do not agree on the importance of the education level in affecting the choice to migrate. This study especially targeted skilled (i.e., highly educated) migrants to find that return is related to the level of education, in that many went abroad to pursue studies but then return to give back to the local community. This is a finding that goes against the grain of mainstream migration research, which suggests the opposite. In the case of skilled migrants from The Gambia, education level is associated to the choice of going abroad and then return, which can be of interest to those who wish to further examine the association between education levels and return migration.

Migration length is usually considered another significant predictor of the choice to remain abroad. However, this study found no clear association, finding instead that those who stay longer can remain or still return. Therefore, the present study does not underscore the significance that has been attributed to migration length in influencing migration perpetuation, which is a result that

might be further examined with other samples of skilled workers. It seems that being abroad for long does not necessarily perpetuate migration and brain drain.

Earlier migration studies do not consider that an initial intention to return can be a significant predictor of migrants' return. However, the findings of this research do suggest that skilled migrants plan to be abroad temporarily, so that their initial intention to return can have a signalling effect for both migrants and returnees.

Finally, being fully employed abroad does not prevent the return, according to the findings of this research. This evidence is contrary to previous migration studies which have suggested that having a job abroad is negatively associated with a return outcome. However, this study suggests that (home) unemployment can influence migration. Moreover, occupations in the healthcare and the academia were found in prior studies to be negatively correlated to return, whereas our findings only support the non-return of health professionals. Gambian academics are more likely to return, which can be a positive outcome to potentially decrease future skilled migration, motivated by the search for tertiary education.

5. Managerial contributions

The research findings have also important implications for several stakeholders, including Gambian policymakers, home and host institutions, migrants and 'would-be-migrants', employers, and managers.

As regards to Gambian policymakers, although the phenomenon of skilled migration is an important issue in several LDCs and developed countries (Lanvin & Evans, 2018), studies investigating the skilled migration from Africa are scant and virtually inexistant as regards The Gambia. Prior research suggests that continuously losing skilled workers is detrimental to the development of a country (Summit, 2016), so this study presents the reasons pushing skilled Gambians abroad. As shown, understanding the multiple reasons leading to migration choices can provide insights into factors underscored before, such as the influence of a meritocracy culture or personal attributes pertaining to local family status and migrants' social, intellectual, and financial capital, influencing skilled migration. Thus, to efficiently retain skilled workers in The Gambia one needs first to identify the issues leading to their migration, such as (but not exclusively) the home country push factors like poor education and work conditions, lack of local opportunities, nepotism, and political persecution. To attract and retain skilled workers and avert brain drain, the Gambia government should focus on creating employment and educational opportunities so those from less affluent or less politically connected families can have decent/adequate education and employment. They should formulate policies to encourage educated Gambians to stay and work

in the Gambia, thereby enhancing the nation's competitiveness. Nevertheless, home country push factors alone do not confirm skilled migration. Migration becomes effective only when other conditions are met, such as (i) the destination is convenient (i.e., provides opportunities for further education, is open to skilled migration, and has an established Diaspora); and (ii) the emigrant possess the required attributes (i.e., intellectual, social, and financial capital) to endure such change. Given that skilled migration has been perpetuating, local authorities must address the home country push factors that might avert emigration, as aforementioned, as well as put in place interventions aimed to attract the Gambian skilled migrants who are considering a return. To this aim, decreasing the unsuccess of those who attempt to return, as well as supporting those who may invest in the country, are effective policies. Furthermore, building up the working conditions for the successful return of academics and health professionals might further enthruse the return of other skilled migrants, which will help in sustaining the country's competitiveness (Lanvin & Evans, 2018). It seems that Gambia's higher education institutions are not creating an atmosphere where university workers can teach and perform cutting-edge research. They are not exploring the potential of the academic diaspora in combating the adverse effects of brain drain, as they are generally unable to promote links to attract Gambian academic diaspora to local institutions. Therefore, home tertiary education organizations and health care institutions, on their part, may build solid international partnerships with the host institutions that are employing skilled Gambian migrants, especially if they do not want to definitively lose these professionals.

Regarding the host institutions, this study shows that qualified migrants are a valuable source of talent, which, however, may not remain. Several psychological, work, and non-work factors influence skilled Gambians decision to stay abroad. For instance, migrants who are highly embedded in the host country (have a good fit in the host culture) in the host job and family, find it hard to sacrifice the economic opportunities, lifestyle, and the career prospects abroad in order to return. This suggests that to retain these skilled workers host institutions need to provide work opportunities and career progression that are fair, comparable to those provided to locals, and more beneficial and competitive than those at the home country if they wish to reduce migrants' turnover. Host institutions may rely on the following factors to retain skilled migrants: (a) enhanced economic/salary and life opportunities that allow migrants' self-development and make them embrace the host country lifestyle; (b) challenging work opportunities that lead to a career abroad and prevent a career loss; (c) rewards and benefits that cater for the migrants' family, since these workers are from a collectivist country where families play an important role in their lives.

Concerning Gambian skilled migrants and 'would-be migrants', this research shows that they need to: (a) be mindful that demographic variables (such as gender and age, marital status, and

family considerations) can influence their migration choices; (b) give attention to family considerations, whether they are staying together or are left behind; and (c) minimise spouse/couple sacrifices, children sacrifices, and give priority to family needs when planning to stay, migrate or return.

Finally, to home and host employers and managers, this study suggests that they can induce skilled workers to integrate into the organisation through work and non-work factors. To attract and retain this talent pool, they need to: (a) fight discrimination; (b) set up a culture of meritocracy in the workplace; (c) provide extensive training; and (d) address job embeddedness by increasing migrants/employees' level of sacrifice through resilient job fit and support their efforts to generate work and community links.

6. Conclusions

Exploring the choice of staying, migrating, remaining abroad and return is an opportunity to fully understand the complexity of the migration process. Because of specific disciplines investigating migration phenomena, the proposed migration theories commonly share an emphasis on the factors that prompt the initiation and the perpetuation of migration but often overlook the countervailing work and non-work factors (such as family and country embeddedness) that hinder or encourage the migration choices. Consequently, existing theories of migration struggle to explain the comprehensive process of migration, which includes immobility, migration and return altogether. To fully understand the potential forces influencing international skilled migration, researchers should study these options altogether.

To advance the research agenda on skilled migration, this dissertation proposes a comprehensive conceptual approach that combines migration and embeddedness theories. The two frameworks deal with different aspects related to migration choice, each of which clarifies important work and non-work factors related to understanding the migration of skilled workers. For example, by exploring the various choices related with the migration, one can discover factors that promote or prevent skilled migration. The prevalence of skilled migration in The Gambia challenges the conventional view that people from impoverished nations are less likely to emigrate (Dao et al., 2018; McKenzie, 2017), revealing instead that home country push and host country pull factors are key driving forces of Gambian skilled migration. However, it is worth nothing that skilled migration is not always driven by economic reasons, and the return is not always predicted by migration success. Instead, a combination of other factors applies. The migration choices of skilled workers in the Gambia are explained by factors different from those predicted by economic reasons. Exploring the reasons prompting or hindering skilled migration and return, therefore,

move migration choice models away from an exclusive economic rational to include work and non-work factors, such as family and country embeddedness that led the choice of whether to migrate or not, remain or return.

Finally, these migration choices highlight that, far from being a standalone decision, skilled migration is multifaceted and differentiated. The migration of skilled workers is the privilege of those who have the intellectual and financial means to travel, the social and human capital, and the hope of a 'greener pasture', along with those who do not belong to an affluent or politically connected family. Furthermore, the choice to stay abroad or not, is then not a matter of personal preference – for example preferring an apple to an orange- but rather it is influenced by how one is embedded to the home or host country. These dimensions serve in more or less overt ways to enforce the choice to remain abroad or return.

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Appendix A – Interview Guide

Research Question		Migrants	Returnees
RQ1: Why, under similar hazardous circumstances, some skilled Gambians stay home while others go abroad?	Stay Home	What reasons could have prevented you from migrating	
		In that scenario, what would you do (Plan B)? Why?	
	Go Abroad	When did you leave your country of origin? Why did you make such decision?	
		Which was your country of destination? Why did you choose that country?	
		How did prepare your migration?	
		Did you have acquaintances who lived in that country?	
		What role did these acquaintances play in your decision and arrangements to travel to that country?	
		How long did you originally intend to stay abroad? Why?	
		What were your expectations from migration? Why?	
		Were your expectations met ? Why?	
		If you could go back in time, what would you make different? Why?	
		Would you recommend to others to migrate? Why?	

RQ2: why have you returned?	Return migration		How long have you stayed abroad?
			Why did you decide to return to The Gambia?
			What were the main reasons that make you return?
			For how long have you been planning to return?
			When did you return?
			How did you plan your return?
			What were the reasons that might prevent you from returning? In that
			What were your personal and professional expectations before return? Are
			What are the real outcomes of your stay abroad? And of your return, so far?
			What problems and difficulties did you encounter upon return, if any, in
			Who made the decision for your return?
			What was your spouse and children's attitude/feelings towards return?
			Do you know any persons who have already returned? If yes, how are they
			What do you think, why some migrants decide to return?
			Did you ever visit The Gambia temporarily while you were abroad? How
			Do you encourage others migrants to return home?
RQ3: Why some skilled Gambians remain abroad while other skilled Gambians returned?	Eventual return	What are your feelings and plans regarding return?	What are your feelings and plans regarding return?
		A) If you are planning to return,	A) If planning to stay abroad,
		When do you plan to return and what are the main reasons?	Why did you decide to remain abroad?
		For how long have you been planning to return?	What are the main problems and constraints regarding return?
		How do you intend to return (permanently, temporarily)?	What are your expectations of staying abroad? Are your expectations met,
		What are the reasons that might prevent you from	What are the real outcomes of your staying abroad?
		Who makes the decision for your return?	Who makes the decision for your return?
		What is your spouse and children's attitude/feelings toward	What is your spouse and children's attitude/feelings towards return?
		Do you know any persons who have already returned? If yes, how are they doing back home?	
		What do you think, why some migrants decide to return?	What do you think, why some migrants decide to stay abroad?
		Do you visit The Gambia temporarily? How many times?	Do you visit The Gambia temporarily? How many times? How long?
		Do you encourage others migrants to return?	Do you encourage others migrants to stay abroad?
		If you could go back in time, would you make the same	If you could go back in time, would you make the same decision to stay

Other factors	Future plans	Do you plan to re-migrate? Why or why not?	Do you consider going abroad again if you would get the opportunity?
		If yes, where?	If yes, where?
		Would you encourage others to re-migrate? (i.e. if	Would you encourage others to re-migrate? (i.e. if someone come to you
	Demographics	Gender?	Gender?
		When were you born? Where?	When were you born? Where?
		What is your citizenship?	What is your citizenship?
		What is your marital status?	What is your marital status?
		Is your spouse currently living with you abroad?	Is your spouse currently living with you in The Gambia?
		Where was your spouse born?	Where were your spouse born?
		What is your spouse's current citizenship?	What is your spouse's current citizenship?
		What is the highest level of education of your spouse? And	What is the highest level of education of your spouse? And yours?
		What is the occupational status of your spouse?	What is the occupational status of your spouse?
		Do you have children? If yes how many? What is their age?	Do you have children? If yes how many? What is their age?
		Where are they currently leaving?	Where are they currently leaving?
		Do you have any school going age children? If yes, how many?	Do you have any school going age children? If yes, how many?
		Do you have any children going to university? If yes, how many?	Do you have any children going to university? If yes, how many?
		What is your profession?	What is your profession?
		Why did you choose this career, type of work?	Why did you choose this career, type of work?
		What is your current type of work?	What is your current type of work?
		What is your current position?	What is your current position?
		What is your present or more recent employment? For how long?	What is your present or more recent employment? For how long?
		Is there anything else you would like to share with me?	Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Appendix B – Participants Characteristics

Interview	Migrant types	Age	Gender	Host country	Marital Status	Education Level	Interview location	Length of stay in years
1	Migrant	25-34	F	Sweden	S	Bachelor	Online	5
2	Migrant	25-34	F	Sweden	MA	Master	Online	20
3	Migrant	25-34	F	UK	MA	Bachelor	Online	3
4	Migrant	25-34	M	UK	MA	Master	Online	2.5
5	Migrant	25-34	F	UK	S	PhD	Online	28
6	Migrant	25-34	F	USA	MA	Master	Online	11
7	Migrant	25-34	F	USA	MA	Bachelor	Online	2.6
8	Migrant	35-44	F	Norway	MA	Master	Norway	16
9	Migrant	35-44	M	Norway	MA	Master	Norway	9
10	Migrant	35-44	F	Norway	S	Bachelor	Norway	17
11	Migrant	35-44	M	Sweden	MA	Bachelor	Online	3
12	Migrant	35-44	M	UK	MA	Bachelor	Online	19
13	Migrant	35-44	M	USA	MA	Master	Online	19
14	Migrant	35-44	F	USA	MA	PhD	Online	11
15	Migrant	35-44	M	USA	MA	Master	Online	16
16	Migrant	35-44	M	USA	MA	Master	Online	14
17	Migrant	45-54	F	Norway	MA	Master	Norway	26
18	Migrant	45-54	M	Norway	MA	Master	Norway	26
19	Migrant	45-54	F	Sweden	MA	Master	Online	32
20	Migrant	45-54	M	Sweden	MA	PhD	Online	28
21	Migrant	45-54	F	UK	DV	Master	Online	17

Interview	Migrant types	Age	Gender	Host country	Marital Status	Education Level	Interview location	Length of stay in years
22	Migrant	45-54	M	UK	DV	Master	Online	15
23	Migrant	55-65	M	Norway	MA	Bachelor	Norway	34
24	Returnee	25-34	M	Norway	MA	Master	Gambia	2
25	Returnee	25-34	F	USA	MA	Bachelor	Gambia	4
26	Returnee	25-34	F	USA	MA	Master	Gambia	8
27	Returnee	35-44	M	Sweden	MA	PhD	Gambia	20
28	Returnee	35-44	F	UK	DV	Bachelor	Gambia	2
29	Returnee	35-44	F	UK	MA	Master	Gambia	4.5
30	Returnee	45-54	M	UK	MA	Master	Gambia	7
31	Returnee	45-54	M	UK	MA	Master	Gambia	17
32	Returnee	45-54	M	UK	MA	Master	Gambia	13
33	Returnee	45-54	F	UK	MA	Bachelor	Gambia	30
34	Returnee	45-54	F	USA	MA	Master	Gambia	16
35	Returnee	45-54	M	USA	MA	PhD	Gambia	18
36	Returnee	45-54	M	USA	MA	Master	Gambia	11
37	Returnee	55-65	M	Norway	MA	PhD	Gambia	12
38	Returnee	55-65	M	Norway	MA	Master	Gambia	11
39	Returnee	55-65	M	Sweden	MA	Bachelor	Gambia	41
40	Returnee	55-65	M	Sweden	WD	Master	Gambia	20
41	Returnee	55-65	M	USA	MA	Master	Gambia	9

Appendix C – Participants Demographics

Demographics											Children						SPOUSE					
Person	Age Group	Citizenship	Employment	Gender	Host Country	Education Level	Marital Status	Migrant type	Place of Birth	Profession	Children Number	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Child 5	Spouse Citizenship	Spouse Education	Spouse Occupation	Spouse Birth	Spouse Place of	Staying with Spouse
1	35-44	GMB	Emp	F	UK	BA	DV	Ret	GM	Tourism	1	6-12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	25-34	GMB	Emp	F	US	BA	MD	Ret	GM	Banking	1	0-5	NA	NA	NA	NA	For	AD	Emp	GM	No	No
3	25-34	GMB	Emp	F	UK	BA	MD	Mig	GM	Health Professional	1	0-5	NA	NA	NA	NA	For	HS	Emp	GM	Yes	Yes
4	35-44	For	Emp	F	NO	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Acctg	1	0-5	NA	NA	NA	NA	GMB	HS	SE	Abroad	Yes	Yes
5	35-44	Dual	Emp	M	US	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Econs	2	0-5	6-12	NA	NA	NA	Dual	BA	Emp	GM	Yes	Yes
6	45-54	GMB	Emp	M	UK	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Tourism	3	0-5	6-12	13-18	NA	NA	GMB	HS	SE	GM	Yes	Yes
7	25-34	GMB	Emp	F	US	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Aviation	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	For	HS	Student	GM	No	No
8	25-34	Dual	Emp	F	US	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Health Professional	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Dual	PhD	Emp	GM	No	No
9	25-34	GMB	Emp	M	UK	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Health Professional	2	0-5	6-12	NA	NA	NA	GMB	MA	Emp	GM	Yes	Yes
10	35-44	GMB	Emp	F	US	PhD	MD	Mig	GM	Academics	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	For	PhD	Emp	Abroad	Yes	Yes
11	35-44	GMB	Emp	F	UK	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Academics	1	0-5	NA	NA	NA	NA	GMB	HS	Emp	GM	Yes	Yes
12	35-44	Dual	Emp	M	US	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Academics	2	13-18	13-18	NA	NA	NA	For	BA	Emp	Abroad	Yes	Yes
13	55-65	Dual	Ret	M	SE	BA	MD	Ret	GM	Engineer	6 >	25 >	25>	25>	13-18	25>	GMB	BA	Emp	GM	No	No
14	45-54	GMB	Emp	F	UK	MA	DV	Mig	GM	Academics	1	6-12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	45-54	Dual	Emp	M	UK	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Econs	3	0-5	6-12	13-18	NA	NA	GMB	HS	Student	GM	Yes	Yes
16	35-44	Dual	Emp	M	SE	PhD	MD	Ret	GM	Academics	2	0-5	0-5	NA	NA	NA	For	BA	Emp	Abroad	No	No
17	45-54	GMB	SE	F	SE	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Health Professional	4	6-12	19-24	19-24	25>	NA	GMB	MA	Emp	GM	No	No
18	45-54	For	Emp	F	NO	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Lawyer	2	0-5	6-12	NA	NA	NA	For	MA	Emp	GM	Yes	Yes
19	35-44	GMB	UE	M	SE	BA	MD	Mig	GM	Acctg	1	0-5	NA	NA	NA	NA	Dual	HS	Emp	GM	Yes	Yes
20	35-44	Dual	Emp	M	UK	BA	MD	Mig	GM	Health Professional	3	0-5	0-5	0-5	NA	NA	GMB	BA	Emp	GM	Yes	Yes

21	25-34	Dual	Emp	F	SE	BA	S	Mig	GM	Health Professional	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
22	45-54	GMB	Emp	M	UK	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Health Professional	4	0-5	13-18	19-24	19-24	NA	GMB	PS	UE	GM	Yes
23	35-44	GMB	Emp	M	NO	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Admin	1	6-12	NA	NA	NA	NA	For	MA	Emp	Abroad	No
24	25-34	Dual	UE	F	UK	PhD	S	Mig	GM	Dev	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
25	25-34	GMB	Emp	F	US	BA	MD	Mig	GM	Health Professional	1	0-5	NA	NA	NA	NA	GMB	MA	Emp	GM	Yes
26	45-54	Dual	SE	F	US	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Econs	2	13-18	19-24	NA	NA	NA	For	MA	SE	GM	Yes
27	45-54	Dual	SE	M	UK	MA	DV	Mig	GM	Dev	2	13-18	19-24	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
28	55-65	GMB	Emp	M	NO	PhD	MD	Ret	GM	Academics	3	6-12	13-18	13-18	NA	NA	GMB	BA	Emp	GM	Yes
29	55-65	Dual	Emp	M	US	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Facility Manager	3	0-5	0-5	6-12	NA	NA	GMB	BA	UE	Abroad	Yes
30	35-44	For	Emp	F	NO	BA	S	Mig	GM	Facility Manager	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
31	45-54	For	UE	F	UK	BA	MD	Ret	Abroad	Academics	2	6-12	13-18	NA	NA	NA	For	HS	Emp	GM	No
32	45-54	For	Emp	M	NO	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Policy Advisor	2	0-5	6-12	NA	NA	NA	For	MA	Emp	GM	Yes
33	55-65	GMB	SE	M	SE	MA	WD	Ret	GM	Engineer	3	13-18	13-18	13-18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
34	55-65	GMB	Ret	M	NO	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Naval Officer	4	0-5	6-12	6-12	13-18	25>	GMB	HS	SE	GM	Yes
35	25-34	GMB	Emp	M	NO	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Academics	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	GMB	BA	Student	GM	Yes
36	35-44	Dual	Emp	M	US	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Social work	1	0-5	NA	NA	NA	NA	GMB	BA	Emp	GM	Yes
37	55-65	For	SE	M	NO	BA	MD	Mig	GM	Fitness	3	6-12	13-18	25>	NA	NA	GMB	HS	Emp	GM	No
38	45-54	GMB	Emp	M	US	PhD	MD	Ret	GM	Agronomy	3	0-5	6-12	13-18	NA	NA	GMB	none	UE	GM	Yes
39	45-54	GMB	Emp	M	US	MA	MD	Ret	GM	Dev	6 >	0-5	0-5	6-12	13-18	19-24	GMB	HS	SE	GM	Yes
40	45-54	For	Emp	M	SE	PhD	MD	Mig	GM	Social work	5	0-5	6-12	19-24	19-24	25>	Dual	HS	Emp	GM	Yes
41	25-34	For	Emp	F	SE	MA	MD	Mig	GM	Health Professional	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	GMB	BA	Student	GM	No