

## Social Capital and Migration: A Case Study of Rural Vietnam\*

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### Abstract

To investigate the short-run effects of social capital on migration decisions of individuals in the rural areas of Vietnam, we conducted dataset mining and performed regression model analysis in the form of panel data. As control variables, we employed the variable of social capital, which is measured by an individual's network, as well as demographic characteristics of individuals and households. We discovered that when a household is in financial distress, social networks such as linkages or asking for aid from others often enhance individual capacity. Individuals with a large social network outside of their immediate area are more inclined to relocate to the location where their connectors live. Individual participation and degree of participation in the organizational community, on the other hand, have little bearing on the likelihood of migration. In addition, this research examines theories and empirical research on the relationship between social capital and migration. Based on our research findings, we have recommended some measures to boost the efficiency of social capital and migration in rural areas of Vietnam through local government solutions.

**Keywords:** Social Capital, Migration, Individual, VARHS, Vietnam

**JEL Classification Code:** Z32, M38, O20, P25

### 1. Introduction

Internal migration has been seen as one of the driving forces behind the dramatic economic, political and demographic transformation of Vietnam over the past

25 years (Winkels, 2012). Chun and Sang (2012) have identified two main drivers of migration in Vietnam: (i) underemployment (stable), and (ii) low income in rural areas. At the same time, the National Migration Report (2016) also shows that the rural-urban migration flow accounts for the largest proportion among the internal migration flow, in which the social network of migrants plays an important role when one decides whether to migrate or not, especially from rural areas to large cities.

Members of the social network who play a critical role in migrating decisions are the source of information about job opportunities in the destination. Typically, these are relatives who lived and worked at the destination. According to the research, 46.7 percent of migrants learn about their current home through referrals from family or friends. Sixty-four percent of migrants stated they have relatives, friends, or countrymen in the destination.

Women account for a bigger percentage of the population than men. This is similar to empirical migration research that reveals that social media is a major factor of migration planning and destination choice (Palloni et al., 2001; Knack, 2002; Hotchkiss & Rupasingha, 2018). As a result, social network engagement has a major impact on migration decisions. Previous research has found that the stronger the social relationship, the higher the rate

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of migration (Massey et al., 1994; David et al., 2010; Curran et al., 2008; Garip, 2008). In addition, the impact of social capital on migration is not limited to family and local friends and establishes the relative importance of the multiple dimensions of social capital to migration decisions (Hotchkiss & Rupasingha, 2018). This evidence shows that social capital and migration are interrelated and to formulate the appropriate migration policies, a better understanding of this relationship is needed.

The contribution of migration to Vietnam's socio-economic development is significant and unavoidable. Migration provides an opportunity to foster inclusive, all-encompassing development while also reducing regional inequities. Migration moves money to poorer regions by satisfying the majority of labor demands created by the development of foreign-invested industries under Vietnam's Doi Moi program. Assuring migrants' rights and promoting migration's effects to maximize the advantages to migrants, their families, and communities is a critical job for Vietnam's future growth.

To provide empirical evidence for Vietnam's migration policies in the coming time, the study wants to assess how the social capital's people living in rural Vietnam affected the migration decision.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Social Capital Theory

There have been many different definitions and explanations of social capital due to different approaches in defining social capital (Baker, 1990; Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 2002; Henn et al., 2005; Portes, 1998; Putnam et al., 1994; Putnam, 2000). According to Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam (2000), the concept of social capital is constructed as a multidimensional construct that includes awareness (i.e. mutual trust) as well as structural elements (social networks). Researches have increasingly focused on the context and perception of social capital through tools such as community trust (Putnam, 1995), neighbor support (Perkins et al., 2002), community cohesion (Perkins et al., 1996), life satisfaction (Prezza et al., 2001).

In general, social culture is defined based on three approaches:

*First*, social capital is associated with social networks and social relations. For example, social capital connected to social networks is relatively stable (Bourdieu, 1986), social capital belongs to social relations (Coleman, 1988), social capital belongs to social networks (Lin, 2001), social networks are a component of social capital (Putnam, 2000).

*Second*, individuals can use social capital to seek benefits by investing in social ties, or social networks and individuals

can use social capital to seek benefits. According to Coleman (1988), social capital is created through interpersonal relationships. People form and sustain relationships for the purpose of making money. Individuals can generate and use social capital to serve their own objectives, according to Fukuyama (2002). Meanwhile, according to Putnam (2000), social capital is used to achieve economic or academic success.

*Third*, trust and reciprocity are mentioned by many authors when discussing social capital. The concept of social capital includes a norm of reciprocal relationships - based on recognized or known networks in which members interact and trust (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 2002; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000).

Varied dimensions of social capital can have different implications on economic and social outcomes such as education, economic development, health, and employment, as evidenced by the diversity of definitions and interpretations (Knack, 2002). Higher levels of social capital are linked to better academic performance (Hanifan, 1916), faster economic development (Knack & Keefer, 1997), more efficient economic development (Isham, 2002), lower crime rates (Akçomak & Weel, 2012; Buonanno et al., 2010), and more efficient government (Akçomak & Weel, 2012; Buonanno et al., 2010), and more efficient government (Boix & Posner, 1998).

### 2.2. Empirical Studies on The Relationship Between Social Capital and Migration

Social capital has been found to serve a positive effect in economic, social, and community growth in several studies across a variety of sectors. Different aspects of social capital can influence economic and social results in different ways (Knack, 2002). Several studies, in particular, have looked into the impact of certain aspects of social capital on migration decisions. The relationship between social capital and migration is emphasized in Putnam (1995), David et al. (2010), and Kan (2007). Social capital has been found to have a positive effect on economic, social, and community growth in several studies across a variety of sectors. Different aspects of social capital can influence economic and social results in different ways (Knack, 2002). Several studies, in particular, have looked into the impact of certain aspects of social capital on migration decisions (Deller et al., 2001; Graves & Linneman, 1979; Michaelides, 2011; Oehmke et al., 2007; Yao et al., 2016).

Granovetter (1973) used weak connection theory, which focuses on personal relationships, to examine the strength of social interactions in the job search of an individual. According to research, the following four criteria describe the quality or weakness of a relationship: time spent in the connection, emotional intensity, affection, and reciprocal services. As a result, members of a network with strong ties,

such as family, relatives, friends, and coworkers, benefit from the ability to instantly share information within the network. Social capital, according to Adams (2006), is a network of 'mutual support' or reciprocal exchange. As a result, during the migration process, networks can be considered the defining component of social capital.

### **2.3. Family and Relatives Relationship**

Spilimbergo and Ubeda (2004) showed that family relationship is the reason for differences in migration decisions between ethnic groups. Kan (2007) argued that the interaction between friends and family members at the place of residence is a necessary source of help and brings positive effects such as a lower crime rate and a better physical environment. Kan (2007) suggested that people benefit materially and spiritually from local social interactions, focusing on local social relationships. Simultaneously, the study discovered evidence that people are hesitant to relocate because of their social capital. According to Kan (2007), geographical distance limits the benefits acquired. The author employs a query about local social capital information for the empirical study (for example, is there someone nearby who can spend more time helping in an emergency?).

To depict the relationship between social capital and local migration, David et al. (2010) developed a model with two possible equilibria. (as assessed by contact with friends, relatives, neighbors, and members of local organizations) and actual evidence to back up the idea. Individuals with stronger family links are less likely to relocate, according to Alesina and Giuliano (2011), Alesina et al. (2015), and Jung (2020). Palloni et al. (2001) examined information based on family networks to evaluate the relationship between social capital and international migration.

According to research, social capital among family members and households has a significant impact on migration. In their analysis of inequalities in migration rates between whites and blacks in the United States, Spilimbergo and Ubeda (2004) investigated familial ties as a factor determining migration. They discovered that blacks are less likely than whites to emigrate because blacks have greater familial ties. Only friendships and migration were studied by Belot and Ermisch (2009), who discovered that having three best friends living close and having the option to meet them frequently reduced the likelihood of persons migrating.

### **2.4. Community Involvement**

Migration activities are also influenced by social capital in terms of community consciousness. According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), social capital is associated with a sense of belonging, a perception that members of a community are essential to one another, and a shared belief in commitment.

It's only natural that a group of residents will form at least one community organization to collaborate on similar issues. Social ties, shared interests, and shared beliefs are all part of community involvement. According to Abadi et al. (2020), families with higher social capital can send their members to work as migrant workers for other families.

People's social capital is strengthened when they belong to groups, associations, and participate in group activity clubs, according to pioneering social capital experts. Individuals engaged in communal activities, according to Putnam (1993), will develop habits of economic cooperation, solidarity, and collective spirit. Community participation, according to previous research, is a form of social capital that leads to increased social well-being. Potential migrants, according to David et al. (2010), see the community of groups and organizations as a positive component in their migrating process.

### **2.5. Political Activism and Participation**

According to Cheong et al. (2007), the value of social capital varies depending on the social, economic, and political setting of migrants. There hasn't been much research on the link between political participation and migrant social capital. Despite several obstacles, most migrants engage in political activity (Barreto & Munoz, 2003). In general, social capital has a positive influence on civic and political involvement for migrants; however, this effect varies depending on the country of origin and destination, as well as the type of participation (Lindstrom, 2005; Togeby, 2004; Santosa et al., 2020).

The differing relationship between social capital and civic and political participation in developing and developed countries, according to Palmer et al. (2011), can be attributable to two key conditions: adverse treatment and cultural differences. Social capital, for example, can help to organize community activities that promote local political participation (Putnam, 1993). People who are separated and alienated from social networks and the larger community, on the other hand, are more likely to disengage from political and social activity (Henn et al., 2005; Hoang & Truong, 2021).

### **2.6. Religion**

Religion-related social interactions have a mixed effect on economic and social results. If they are related to migration, we will focus on this element in this post. Religious views were linked to economic development, such as per capita income and growth, according to Guiso et al. (2002). It is measured using variables such as church attendance, how frequently a person joins a religious organization, and whether or not they participate

in a religious organization. The regularity with which a person participates in those activities can indicate how closely he or she is connected to the community. However, if they serve their own religion, religious activities at a high communal level may attract potential migrants. Predictions concerning the community's general belief level are extremely difficult to make.

## 2.7. Urban-Rural Context Differences

Current research suggests that rural migrants differ from those who live in cities in terms of social capital. According to Putnam (1995), urban areas are less socially connected than small towns and rural areas. Furthermore, Glaeser et al. (2002) found that city dwellers are more likely to employ social capital. Both possibilities are presented by Hilber (2010): While urban areas foster greater social connections as a result of large population densities, certain regions foster a more anonymous environment, resulting in less social interactions.

## 2.8. Internal Migration in Vietnam

Over the last three decades, Viet Nam has seen a significant migration process. Since 1986, economic reform has boosted economic prospects and supplied the rural labor workforce ready to relocate to urban regions in search of jobs. This is fueling large-scale rural-to-urban migration movements in Vietnam. This is fuelling large migration flows from rural to urban in Vietnam. At the same time, the social network of migrants has further supported the migration process, especially migration from rural areas to big cities. The results of the internal migration survey showed that 79.1% of the migrants came from rural areas, the rest were migrants originating from urban areas. Considering the four migration flows (rural-urban, urban-rural, rural-rural, and urban-urban), rural-urban migration flow accounts for the largest proportion of the internal migration flows. Internal migration plays an important role in population change and has a close relationship with many issues of socio-economic development. According to the General Statistics Office (GSO) (2015), 13.6% of the country's population are migrants. The proportion of migrants aged 15–59 is 17.3%, of which in-migrants account for 16.0%; Returning migrants and intermittent migrants make up insignificant. According to the research, 46.7 percent of migrants learn about their present location through referrals from relatives or friends, with women having a higher share than men. Few migrants acquire information about their origins through official sources such as employers and employment agencies, both of which are vital sources for migrants to be aware of. Approximately 64% of migrants claimed they have relatives, friends, or countrymen living in the destination.

## 3. Data and Methodology

### 3.1. Data

Our study draws on a cross-data sample from the Vietnam Access to Resources Household Survey 2016 (VARHS, 2016), which is conducted every two years by the General Statistics Office (GSO) in 12 provinces across Vietnam, including Ha Tay, Phu Tho, Lao Cai, Dien Bien, Lai Chau, Nghe An, Quang Nam, Khanh Hoa, Dak Lak, Dak Nong, Lam Dong, and Long An. The major goal of this survey is to collect extensive information to better understand the socioeconomic position of rural Vietnamese households, with an emphasis on access to and use of production resources such as physical, financial, human, and social capital. The survey, which has a sample size of 2,669 homes and 10,926 individuals, uses a stratified sampling method to collect data on migration, social capital, and demographic characteristics of individuals and households (age, gender, education, religion, land, income, etc).

### 3.2. Measurement of Migration Variables and Social Capital

We use a dummy variable to quantify migration in this study, which is equal to 1 if the individual has relocated from the locality in the recent 5 years and 0 otherwise. Then we assess an individual's social capital by looking at their social network in the community, which includes both formal and informal networks. To be more specific, the formal social network will be defined by whether or not the individual engages in community groups, as well as the level of personal involvement in these organizations. Furthermore, political engagement is a channel of the formal social networks, which we evaluate by asking if a member of the family, a relative, or a friend works in a state agency at the local or central level (Stone et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2014; Thomas, 2015).

Personal interactions with relatives, friends, colleagues, and neighbors create an informal social network. In more depth, the variable of getting help from others is assessed using questions. “Does the household receive help from other people when they face financial difficulties?”; Number of helpers’ variable is measured by the question “How many people are willing to help your family?”. Similarly, the questions used to assess the Year know helper variable, the level of interaction variable, and the Living helper variable are “How long have you known this person?”, “The level of interaction between households and this person?” and “Does this person live with the locality with you?” respectively (Cohen, 2004; Stone et al., 2004; Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010). Most variables representing social capital are either dummy variables or categorical variables. Furthermore, we assess social capital by determining whether or not an individual is a member of any form of group (Organizational participation



variable) and how frequently to join. We also use the variable Political links to see if people are related to friends or relative who work in government offices. A variety of control variables on demographic characteristics of individuals and households, such as age, gender, educational level, religion, marital status, per capita income, the number of dependents in the home, and the land area owned by the household, were also included in the study.

### 3.3. Descriptive Statistics

The information in Table 1 pertains to variables. Our sample comprises 9,122 people who live in rural areas in Vietnam, half of whom are women, and 4.19 percent of whom have ever moved out of their homes. These people have an average age of 37 years, 77.6% have no education, and 57.7% are married. They live in homes with an average size of 5 persons, an average number of dependents of 2, an average cultivated area of 0.82 hectares, and an average per capita income of VND 27.5 million.

Every person in the sample participates in at least one community organization, with 63.7 percent of them doing so on a regular basis. Furthermore, the data sample shows that when a household suffers financial difficulties, an average of 5 persons is eager to assist, with 70% of those wanting to assist living in the same area as the household. Furthermore, relatives, relatives, and acquaintances work

in state agencies in 7.36 percent, 16.15 percent, and 73.55 percent of households, respectively.

### 3.4. Estimation Methods

The main estimation method of this study is the logistic regression model. The authors assume the probability of migration of an individual as a function of social capital, personal and household characteristics as follows:

$$\text{Migration}_{ih} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Social Capital}_{ih} + \beta_4 X_{ih} + \beta_5 H_h + \mu_{ih}$$

in which represents migration status of the individual  $i$  of the household  $h$ , and it is a dummy variable indicating whether an individual has been migration for 5 years ago. Social capital includes some variables such as political links, the level of participation in organizations, the number of people who help when the household is having trouble, the number of years know this person, this person's living place, and the level of interaction with this person.  $X$  covers individual characteristics such as age, gender, education, and marriage;  $H$  includes variables of household characteristics such as the total number of household members, the ratio of the dependents, the area of residential land, and per capita income.  $\mu$  is the error term. The effects of social capital on the probability of migration of an individual are reflected in the estimated coefficients  $\beta_1$ .

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics

Variables	No. of obs.	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Migration	9.122	0.04	0.2	0	1
Participating in organizatio	9.122	0.07	0.26	0	1
Get help from others	9.122	0.16	0.37	0	1
Political links	9.122	0.74	0.44	0	1
Frequency participation	9.122	1.39	0.54	1	3
Level of interaction	9.122	1.31	0.49	1	3
Living helper	9.122	0.71	0.45	0	1
Education	9.122	1.58	1.31	1	7
Materrial	9.122	0.41	0.32	0	1
Gender	9.122	0.49	0.5	0	1
Number of helpers	9.122	4.6	5.29	1	70
Year_know helper	9.122	32.21	13.56	1	99
Age	9.122	36.68	21.89	2	103
Total members	9.122	4.85	1.74	1	13
Dependent	9.122	1.41	1.21	0	7
Own land	9.122	0.83	1.52	0	21.03
Per income	9.122	27.48	27.66	-38	469

### 3.5. Research Hypothesis

*Hypothesis 1:* Individuals who have a large social network and receive financial or emotional benefits from it are less likely to migrate out of their communities, implying that strong family, friends, and neighbor relationships will have a negative impact on individual migration decisions because the opportunity cost for migration decisions is currently very high. Spilimbergo and Ubeda (2004), Kan (2007), David et al. (2010), and Alesina et al. (2015) all support this hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 2:* Individuals who are involved in community organizations frequently have contacts, economic

cooperation, and information sharing with other members. They gain some advantages from involvement, such as lower transaction costs and more market options in production, credit, land, and labor (Narayan & Pritchett, 1999; Putnam et al., 1994). As a result, we hypothesize that participation in local community organizations reduces the likelihood of an individual migrating out of their locality. This hypothesis is supported by Hotchkiss and Rupasingha (2018).

### 4. Estimation Results

The model results in Table 2 reveal that social capital has an effect on the likelihood of persons living in rural

**Table 2:** Logit Regression Results for the Probability of Migration of Household Members

	Migration	P-value	Marginal Effects	P-value
Participating in organizatio	−0.1542	0.493	−0.0062	0.494
Get help from others	−0.0472	0.761	−0.0019	0.761
Political links	0.4653***	0.001	0.0186***	0.001
<b>Frequency Participation</b>				
Sometimes	−0.0657	0.596	−0.0026	0.593
Rarely/never	0.0679	0.868	0.0028	0.871
Number of helpers	0.0209**	0.013	0.0008**	0.013
Year_know helper	0.0097**	0.027	0.0004**	0.028
Living_helper	−0.2360*	0.074	−0.0094*	0.075
<b>Level of Interaction</b>				
Sometimes	0.1827	0.190	0.0075	0.204
Rarely	0.3845	0.355	0.0171	0.417
Age	−0.0253***	0.004	−0.001***	0.005
Gender	−0.0736	0.526	−0.0029	0.526
<b>Education</b>				
Short-term vocational training	0.4645**	0.022	0.0187**	0.047
Long-term vocational training	0.7014*	0.075	0.0312	0.163
Professional high school	0.6712***	0.009	0.0294**	0.036
Junior college diploma	1.1550***	0.000	0.0617***	0.000
Bachelor degree	1.4077***	0.000	0.0831***	0.000
Masters degree	2.4024**	0.015	0.1999	0.157
Marriage	−0.9771***	0.001	−0.0391***	0.001
Household size	0.1035**	0.017	0.0041**	0.017
Dependent	−0.6871***	0.000	−0.0275***	0.000
Crop land area	−4.75e−06	0.414	−1.90e−07	0.414
Per income	5.12e−06***	0.000	2.05e−07***	0.000
Constant	−1.5281***	0.000		
Observations	9.122		9.122	

\*Significant at 10%; \*\*Significant at 5%; \*\*\*Significant at 1%.

Vietnam migrating. Hotchkiss (2018), Garip (2008), and Kindler et al. (2015) all came to the same conclusion. To be more specific, at the 1% level of significance, the chance of migration of individuals with friends working in state agencies is 1.86 percentage points higher than that of other individuals. Besides, when the number of helpers increases by one member, the probability of migration grows by 0.08 percentage points. The number of years spent knowing the helpers increased by one year, resulting in a 0.04 percentage point rise in the likelihood of household members migrating. At the ten percent significance level, the risk of individuals in families migrating increases by 0.94 percentage points if help dwells in different cities. The amount of engagement with volunteers or participation in community groups is not statistically significant. As a result, there is insufficient evidence to establish that the level of engagement with assistance and membership in community groups influences the likelihood of migration.

The probability of migration is also influenced by some control variables relating to individual and family characteristics. At a 1% significance level, the likelihood of persons leaving the locality decreases by 0.1 percentage point as their age increases by one. Marital status plays a role in migration decisions as well; married persons have a 3.91 percentage point higher chance of emigrating than single people. Furthermore, educational achievement increases an individual's likelihood of migration, as shown in Table 2. Furthermore, increasing the number of dependents in a home by one reduces the likelihood of migration by 2.75 percentage points, whereas household income has no effect on migration preferences. Finally, as household sizes grow by one member, the likelihood of migrating increases by 0.41 percentage points. The above findings are in line with Grarip (2008).

Social capital has a significant impact on the migration behavior of persons living in rural parts of Vietnam, according to the research. The tendency of movement is from rural to urban regions, and it affects not just people in the family but also the entire household. This is due to reasons such as marriage, the relationship between members of the foreigner's family, migration, and educational achievement and money. Workers have relocated to cities in search of higher wages and a better quality of life. This has increased the population density in urban areas; however, when they face life events such as epidemics, unemployment, etc., the workers tend to return to the countryside.

As a result, we believe that local governments from rural to urban areas need to create mechanisms and policies to expand employment opportunities and attract workers with suitable and diverse jobs for different levels to solve the problem of migration, especially after the covid-19 epidemic caused a shortage of migrant workers in big cities. At the same time, reasonable social security policies are required so that employees feel safe working and settling in the places

where they migrate, limiting worker movement from one location to another and vice versa when changing residences, and limiting the societal loss caused by migration.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examines the impact of social capital on the likelihood of migration. When households are in financial distress, social networks such as political affiliations or getting support from others appear to enhance the likelihood of individual migration within the household. It is often easier for people from outside the locality to move to the locality to work if they have a large social network in their area of residence. Individual migration is also influenced by household and individual characteristics. Individual participation and level of involvement in community groups, on the other hand, had no effect on migration decisions.

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