

Migrant Women's Economic Success in Russia: Objective Reality and Subjective Assessment

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Abstract

Whereas the prospects of better economic opportunities fuel international migration, these potential opportunities do not automatically translate into better earnings for migrants. Moreover, migrants' assessments of their economic performance may vary depending on their pre-migration expectations or adjustments of these expectations in the host society. In this paper, we use data from a recent survey of working migrant women from three Central Asian countries and native working women conducted in three Russian cities to analyze the effects of human capital, legal status, social ties, and ethnocultural background on migrants' earnings. In addition, we examine the association of these factors with two perceptual indicators of economic success – overall job satisfaction and perception of wage fairness. The preliminary results reveal considerable variations between migrants and non-migrants and within the migrant sub-sample. We seek to interpret the results within the socioeconomic, legal, and ethno-cultural context of migrants' reception in the Russian Federation.

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Extended abstract

Background and conceptualization

Perceived economic opportunities in the receiving country, relative to those available in the country of origin, are at the core of most explanations of international labor migration. However, upon a migrant's arrival in the host society, its potentially favorable labor market opportunities do not automatically translate into better earnings. Migrant workers in similar host environments display a wide range of economic outcomes. Moreover, migrants' assessments of their economic performance may vary depending on their pre-migration expectations or adjustments of these expectations while already in the host society. In this paper, we focus on migrants' objective success, measured by their earnings, and their subjective assessments of that success. Specifically, in addition to actual income, we examine two perceptual indicators of economic wellbeing – perception of wage fairness and overall job satisfaction.

For the potential economic opportunities and expectations of economic benefits to translate into actual earnings, several forces should come into play. The most direct factors are those that have to do with migrants' human capital. Another important factor is migrants' legal status which may affect labor market outcomes in less direct but no less potent ways – for example, by constricting the negotiation space when it comes to wages or by prohibiting migrants' access to better paying positions. Less obvious yet potentially important influences on migrant labor market outcomes may originate from their personal networks. Finally, these outcomes may be impacted by migrants' ethnocultural backgrounds. In this paper we explore the relative importance of these four types of factors for migrants' earnings, their perception of wage

fairness, and their job satisfaction using recent survey data on working women migrants from Central Asia and their native counterparts in urban Russia. Although our sample consists only of women and therefore does not allow us to examine gender differences in migrants' economic outcomes, our theoretical reasoning and interpretation of empirical findings are guided by the vast evidence that migrants' labor force experiences in the host society are highly gendered.

Data and method

We use data from a survey conducted in three Russian cities—Moscow, Yekaterinburg, and Novosibirsk—in 2012-2013. The survey targeted three largest migrant groups —Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Uzbeks—and included a control group of non-migrant (native) women. Because the vast majority of female Central Asian migrants work in eateries (mainly as waitresses and cleaners), semi-formal produce and clothing bazaars (as stall owners and/or vendors), and formal retail and grocery stores (as sales clerks and cleaners), the survey focused on women working in these economic sectors. The respondents were identified through a combination of time-location sampling (eateries and retail) and random walk algorithm (bazaar). The analytical sample includes 937 women aged 18-40, about three-fourth of whom were international migrants (one-fourth from each ethno-provenance group) and one-fourth were Russia's natives (among whom we do not separate internal migrants). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the analytic sample.

To test our conceptual framework we fit multivariate regression models. For each outcome of interest, a pair of models is fitted—one for the entire sample and another for the migrant subsample so that we can better identify factors that are shared by migrants vs. those that are unique to certain migrant subgroups. In this extended abstract, we present the results of

preliminary models. These models will be further fine-tuned as we prepare the paper for the conference presentation.

Preliminary results

We start with a pair of OLS models predicting total monthly income. The results of these and other models are presented in Table 2, Section A. The results show that legal status and education have positive effects on income. Within the migrant subgroup, women with more relatives living in the city tend to have higher income (although the effect is marginally significant). The sector of employment also has a significant effect on income. Finally, we detect ethnic differences in income within the migrant subsample; interpretation of these differences requires additional examination that would take into account the diversity of group migration trajectories.

In the second section of Table 2 (Section B), we present the results of a logistic regression model predicting perceived fairness in wages, compared to wages of other women of Russian ethnicity in the same occupations. Here the dependent variable is a dichotomy: if the respondent thinks that other women of Russian ethnicity earn more on the same type of job, it is coded “1”, “0” if otherwise. The model controls for monthly income in addition to other characteristics. As can be seen, nativity and legal status matter in perceptions of fairness whereas education has no effect. Women who found their current jobs themselves or with relatives’ help are less likely to feel discriminated against in wages. Again, there are some differences within the migrant subsample; these differences will be further explored as we continue working on the paper.

The last section of Table 2 (Section C) displays the results of a logistic regression model predicting complete satisfaction with current job (as opposed to being partially satisfied or

unsatisfied). The model includes the same covariates as the previous model. Here, legal status does not seem to have any effect. Respondent's educational level does not affect job satisfaction either. Interestingly, respondents who found their current jobs with the help of relatives are more likely to be satisfied with them than those who found their jobs through other channels. The results also show considerable variation across the sectors of employment. Finally, there is again significant variation across migrant groups.

Next steps

As we continue to work on the paper and prepare it for the conference presentation, we will refine our theoretical and empirical models taking full advantages of the rich data at our disposal. These further analyses will focus on identifying and measuring other dimensions of migrants' economic performance (especially, those related to types and nature of their occupations) and their perceptions of their performance and on exploring and explaining variations in these outcomes within Russia's legal, economic, and ethnocultural context.

Table 1. Respondents' selected characteristics

Variable	Ethnicity/provenance				ALL
	Kyrgyz	Tajik	Uzbek	Native	
Age (mean)					
All	29	30	31	30	30
Moscow	29	31	32	30	30
Novosibirsk & Yekaterinburg	29	29	29	30	29
Regular partner, married or unmarried (%)					
All	63	71	71	70	69
Moscow	64	75	73	66	69
Novosibirsk & Yekaterinburg	61	64	68	76	67
Some university education (%)					
All	46	22	14	39	31
Moscow	53	23	13	39	32
Novosibirsk & Yekaterinburg	37	22	17	40	29
Total personal monthly income, RUR (mean, rounded to 1000)					
All	24000	18000	18000	23000	20000
Moscow	25000	20000	18000	30000	22000
Novosibirsk & Yekaterinburg	20000	15000	17000	16000	16000
Number of other people sleeping in the same room as her (mean)					
All	3.9	2.8	2.8	1.1	2.6
Moscow	5.0	3.4	3.5	1.1	3.2
Novosibirsk & Yekaterinburg	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.1	1.8
Years continuously lived in current city, mean					
All	2.8	3.8	2.9	7.3	4.2
Moscow	2.2	3.6	2.4	6.5	3.8
Novosibirsk & Yekaterinburg	3.5	4.1	3.5	8.5	4.9
Has at least one close adult kin living elsewhere in same city (%)					
All	69	92	60	76	74
Moscow	70	97	59	70	74
Novosibirsk & Yekaterinburg	68	84	61	84	74
Years continuously lived in Russia, migrants only, (mean)					
All	3.0	3.9	3.0	n/a	3.3
Moscow	2.4	3.6	2.5	n/a	2.9
Novosibirsk & Yekaterinburg	3.9	4.4	3.7	n/a	4.0
RF citizen, migrants only (%)					
All	42	19	11	n/a	24
Moscow	34	6	3	n/a	14
Novosibirsk & Yekaterinburg	54	38	22	n/a	38

Table 2. Labor market outcomes: earnings - OLS, perceived unfairness and job satisfaction - logistic regression parameter estimates

Predictors and controls	A. Total monthly income (in thousands of Russian Rubles)		B. Perceived unfairness in wages (compared to other women in the same positions)		C. Overall complete job satisfaction	
	All	Migrants	All	Migrants	All	Migrants
Kyrgyz		4.299 **		-0.316		-0.500 *
Uzbek		-0.301		-0.867 **		0.607 **
[Tajik]						
Native	6.371 **		-1.729 **		-0.143	
Migrant who is a Russian citizen or permanent resident	6.070 **	3.998 **	-0.542 **	-0.476 +	0.300	0.307
[Migrant who is not a Russian citizen or permanent resident]						
Total monthly income			-0.003	-0.011	0.027 **	0.079 **
All salary is paid officially	-2.004 +	0.160	0.272	0.228	0.213	-0.039
Found the job her self	1.588	1.358	-0.432 *	-0.408 +	0.240	0.367
Found the job with the help of relatives	-0.464	0.032	-0.679 **	-0.523 **	0.725 **	0.736 **
[Found the job with the help in all the other ways]						
Works in retail	-2.459 *	-4.508 **	-0.291 **	-0.008	0.190	0.571 **
Works in an eatery	-1.728	-2.949 **	-0.385 +	-0.104	0.567 **	0.861 **
[Works in a bazaar]						
Has another job	8.033 **					
Moscow [Novosibirsk or Yekaterinburg]	7.520 **	4.336 **	-0.158	-0.482 *	0.192	-0.022
Age	0.122 +	0.199 **	-0.031 **	-0.016	-0.010	-0.023
Some university education	3.921 **	2.634 **	0.089	-0.131	-0.120	-0.130
Father has/had university education	1.452	-1.035				
Had permanent partner	1.040	1.237 +	0.040	0.182	0.314 *	0.332 +
Has close adult kin living elsewhere in city	0.604	1.291 +				
Believes that hard work is important for success			-0.672 **	-0.627 *	-0.052	-0.308
Believes that connections are important for success			0.042	0.096	-0.280	-0.029
Has reported at least one discrimination in 12 months				1.186 **		-0.162
Years spent in Russia				-0.056 +		0.013
Intercept	10.07 **	9.825 **	1.467 **	1.138 *	-1.109 *	-1.861 **
Fit statistic (R-square, Chi-square)	0.164	0.263	78.43	86.92	82.66	83.20
Number of cases	937	690	937	690	937	690

Notes: Reference categories in brackets; significance levels: ** <.01, * <.05, + <.10