

The Education Migration Trade Off: Why Balinese Youth Prefer Overseas Employment Over University Study

I Gusti Ngurah Santika¹, I Nyoman Jampel², Ida Bagus Putu Arnyana³,
I Gusti Ngurah Pujawan⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Ganesha University of Education, Singaraja. Bali, Indonesia

Email: santika.pd@undiksha.ac.id, jampel@undiksha.ac.id, putu.arnyana@undiksha.ac.id,
ngurah.pujawan@undiksha.ac.id

HOW TO CITE:

I Gusti Ngurah Santika, I Nyoman Jampel, Ida Bagus Putu Arnyana, (2026). The Education Migration Trade Off: Why Balinese Youth Prefer Overseas Employment Over University Study
International Journal of Special Education, 41(20s), 1477 - 1492

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:

Copyright: © 2026 Authors.
Open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

ABSTRACT:

The choice between continuing university education and working abroad is increasingly important among young people in Indonesia, particularly in Bali. This study examines why young Balinese people prefer working abroad to university education, considering the expected rewards of university education, the burden of education costs, domestic job opportunities, the attractiveness of overseas employment, migration aspirations, family migration experiences, social networks, family economic pressures, and international opportunities. The research method is a mixed sequential exploratory approach. The quantitative phase surveyed 450 young respondents in Bali, consisting of 350 men and 100 women. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, binary logistic regression, gender moderation, and robustness tests, followed by thematic analysis of interviews with selected respondents. Illustrative findings indicate that 57.8% chose working abroad and 42.2% chose university education. The attractiveness of overseas employment was the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = 0.86$; OR = 2.36; $p < 0.001$), followed by migration aspirations, the burden of education costs, and family economic pressures. Conversely, expected rewards from university education and domestic employment opportunities are negatively associated with overseas employment preferences. Family migration experiences, social networks, and international opportunities also reinforce migration-oriented preferences. This study shows that university education and overseas employment are perceived as competing pathways for human capital investment and socioeconomic mobility among Balinese youth.

Keywords: Balinese youth; education migration trade off; university education, overseas employment; migration aspiration

1. Introduction - The choice between pursuing higher education and entering the international job market is increasingly becoming a crucial

issue in the life transitions of young people in developing countries. In the post-secondary phase, young people face not only the decision

of what to study, but also the more fundamental question of where and how to build their future. Higher education is conventionally viewed as an investment in human capital to enhance competence, productivity, and better employment opportunities. However, international migration offers alternative pathways to income, work experience, social mobility, and economic independence that can be achieved in a relatively shorter timeframe. This makes the decision to pursue university or work abroad not simply a question of education versus employment, but rather a trade-off between various future investments. In an increasingly uncertain job market, young people's rational choices may shift from long-term educational investments to economic opportunities that offer faster returns (ILO, 2024; Pujawan & Suryawan, 2021).

This issue becomes increasingly relevant as youth transition to higher education and the workforce occurs amidst regional unequal opportunities. Research on the spatial structure of Indonesian youth migration shows that education and economic opportunities interact differently in shaping mobility patterns. Youth with lower levels of education tend to be more responsive to economic opportunities in more developed regions, while the migration patterns of highly educated youth exhibit a broader geographic reach. These findings indicate that mobility decisions cannot be separated from the unequal distribution of educational and employment opportunities (Malamassam, 2022). A study of cruise ship migrant workers from Bali, for example, found that poverty had a positive and significant effect on the number of cruise ship migrant workers, while education level showed no significant effect. These findings demonstrate that formal education is not always the dominant pathway in shaping labor migration decisions when there are economic pressures and international job opportunities (Ningrat & Karmini, 2023). Research on the motivations of Indonesian migrant workers indicates that decisions to work abroad are shaped by life

experiences, economic needs, aspirations for improved well-being, and considerations regarding the opportunities available in the destination country (Anggara et al., 2024).

Somaiah and Yeoh (2023) This suggests that young men in migrant families do not develop aspirations individually, but rather negotiate them through emotional experiences, family relationships, gender, and perceptions of the future. In this context, young men are more likely to develop aspirations to migrate as part of a masculinity orientation and economic achievement. Meanwhile, more recent research has found a link between parental migration experiences and the migration aspirations of subsequent generations. Paternal long-term migration experiences, in particular, are associated with increased migration aspirations among young people in Indonesia (Somaiah & Yeoh, 2023; Jordana et al., 2025). These findings broaden our understanding of migration, as young people's decisions are not solely influenced by economic push and pull factors. Migration can be part of a process of aspiration formation that is inherited, learned, and negotiated through family networks (Chow et al., 2023).

Research on educational migration in Indonesia shows that education is also an important source of mobility. (Mustika et al., 2022) They found that the decision to migrate for educational purposes is influenced by consumption expenditure, geographic location, gender, education, age, cognitive ability, parental education, and province of origin. (Minza & Herlusia, 2022) Furthermore, it was shown that educational aspirations and migration decisions are also shaped by hope, trust, and social networks. More interestingly, the relationship between education and migration is bidirectional. A study by Kulka et al. (2025), using data from students from seven countries, including Indonesia, found that perceptions of the applicability of their education abroad were strongly related to aspirations and intentions to migrate. These findings suggest that the more an individual views education as an asset with international value, the more likely they are to consider migration as part of their career strategy.

Thus, education and migration are not necessarily mutually exclusive options but can be part of the same mobility trajectory

However, studies on educational migration in Indonesia still tend to view education and migration as two separate forms of mobility. Some studies focus on educational migration, namely moving to obtain education, while others focus on labor migration and the economic factors that drive individuals to work abroad. (Malamassam, 2022), for example, outlines how education differentiates the spatial structure of Indonesian youth migration, while (Efendi et al., 2021) show that Indonesian nursing students' intentions to work abroad may be influenced by overseas experience, family circumstances, foreign language skills, knowledge of migration routes, and economic motivations. Patrilineal culture has been found to be negatively associated with the tendency to migrate outward for educational purposes (Mustika et al., 2025). These findings are significant because they demonstrate that Balinese youth mobility decisions lie at the intersection of economic characteristics, education, gender, family, and cultural structures.

Another gap relates to the consequences of educational choices and migration. (Mustika & Yuliarmi, 2024) found that approximately 49.08% of educational migrants in Indonesia did not return to their hometowns after completing their education and chose to work in their destination areas or other regions. This decision was influenced by, among other factors, income, marital status, parental location, healthcare facilities, gender, age, province of origin, and geographic factors. These findings demonstrate that education alone does not automatically lead to return migration; instead, educational mobility can transform into job mobility and lead to a brain drain phenomenon.

From a labor market perspective, the choice to work abroad is also inextricably linked to perceptions about the quality and availability of domestic jobs. (Palmer, 2024) shows that labor market institutions and regulatory status play a significant role in determining the experiences and

protections of migrant workers in Indonesia. This suggests that migration is not solely driven by individual decisions, but also by institutional structures that determine how job opportunities and labor protections are provided. At the same time, studies (Arifin & Ananta, 2023) show that the pandemic has also changed the employment conditions of highly skilled migrants in Indonesia, demonstrating that labor mobility always occurs within a dynamic economic and institutional environment. In the Indonesian context, family networks, previous migration experience, household economic conditions, language skills, and information about overseas employment can serve as capital that reduces barriers to migration (Efendi et al., 2021; Jordana et al., 2025). Meanwhile, perceptions of the benefits of education and career opportunities at home and abroad can determine whether university is seen as an attractive investment or as too long a path compared to the economic benefits that can be gained through international employment.

Based on this gap, this study offers novelty by positioning Balinese youth's choices not as a simple dichotomy between "educated" and "migrated," but as a decision-making process regarding the allocation of future investments. This framework integrates three main dimensions. First, the economic opportunity dimension encompasses income expectations, job opportunities, education costs, and economic returns. Second, the aspirational and social capital dimension encompasses family migration experiences, social networks, information, social mobility aspirations, and perceptions of migrant success. Third, the institutional-cultural context dimension encompasses access to universities, the quality of local job opportunities, gender, family norms, and Balinese cultural characteristics. This approach allows the study to explain not only whether young people migrate, but also why overseas employment may be perceived as more attractive than university education. The finding of a relationship between perceptions of the international applicability of education and migration aspirations reinforces the idea that education and migration decisions are linked

through expected returns to human capital (Kulka et al., 2025). Parents' experiences as migrants can shape the perception that migration is a realistic and achievable life path, while the presence of migrant networks reduces information costs and decision uncertainty (Somaiah & Yeoh, 2023; Chow et al., 2023; Jordana et al., 2025). This perspective aligns with international attention to youth transitions, job quality, and social mobility uncertainty (ILO, 2024).

This study aims to analyze why Balinese youth prefer working abroad over continuing their university education, and to identify the economic, educational, family, social, cultural, and aspirational factors that shape this choice. More specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions: (1) how do Balinese youth perceive the benefits and costs of university education compared to working abroad; (2) how do family migration experiences and social networks influence aspirations for working abroad; (3) how do domestic job opportunities, income expectations, and perceptions of returns to education shape the education–migration trade-off; and (4) how do gender, family, and the Balinese sociocultural context moderate these decisions? By answering these questions, the study is expected to provide empirical contributions to the literature on youth migration and education as well as policy contributions to the development of

strategies for higher education, youth employment, and international migration governance in Bali.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods approach with an explanatory sequential design. This design consisted of two main stages: a quantitative stage followed by a qualitative stage. The quantitative stage was used to identify factors related to youth's choice between continuing their university education and working abroad. The qualitative stage was then used to explain the social, economic, family, and aspirational mechanisms underlying the relationship patterns found in the quantitative analysis. The quantitative results served as the basis for determining aspects that needed further investigation through interviews in the subsequent stages. (Toyon, 2021) The study viewed education and migration choices as future investment decisions. Youth compared the expected benefits of university education with the perceived benefits of working abroad. This framework aligns with research by Kulka et al. (2025), which showed that perceptions regarding

The validity of overseas education is related to aspirations and migration intentions. The conceptual model of the research is formulated as follows:

Gender is then positioned as a variable that can directly influence these choices and as a moderator of the relationship between expected return differential and migration preferences.

2.2 Research Location and Context

The study was conducted in Bali Province, Indonesia, with respondents from young people residing within the administrative region of Bali. Bali was chosen because of its socio-economic characteristics relevant to the study of education and migration, including connectivity to the tourism and services sectors, labor mobility, and international migration networks. The Balinese context is also relevant because young people's decisions about education and employment occur in an environment that intersects higher education

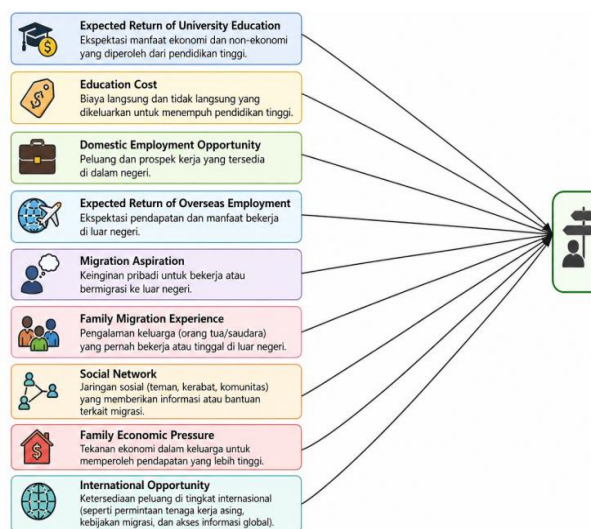


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study.

opportunities, the domestic labor market, and international employment opportunities. Research on the migration structure of Indonesian youth indicates that youth migration patterns differ according to education level and the characteristics of their origin and destination regions (Wapa et al., 2024). The study included respondents residing in Badung, Bangli, Buleleng, Gianyar, Jembrana, Karangasem, Klungkung, Tabanan, and Denpasar.

2.3 Respondents

The research population was Balinese youth aged 18–24 years who were in the transition phase from secondary education to higher education and/or the job market. This age group was selected because it is the phase when individuals begin to make decisions regarding further education, employment, geographic mobility, and future investments (Widiana & Jampel, 2016).

The study used 450 respondents, consisting of 350 men (77.8%) and 100 women (22.2%). Respondents were selected using purposive sampling with stratification based on gender and region of residence. This technique was used because the study required respondents who met specific characteristics, namely Balinese youth who were in the decision-making phase of education and/or employment. The inclusion criteria for respondents were: (1) youth domiciled in Bali; (2) aged 18–24 years; (3) having completed high school or equivalent; (4) currently pursuing higher education, not continuing higher education, currently working, or considering employment abroad; The minimum sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula: $n_0 = Z^2 p(1-p) / e^2$ with $Z = 1.96$, $p = 0.50$, and $e = 0.05$. Thus: $n_0 = (1.96)^2 (0.50) (0.50) / (0.05)^2 = 384.16$. Rounding up, the minimum sample size is 385 respondents. This study used 450 respondents, 350 of whom were male and 100 of whom were female.

2.4 Respondent Distribution

Respondent characteristics based on gender, age, educational status, family migration experience, overseas work experience, and migration aspirations are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Respondent Distribution

Characteristics	Category	N %	%
Gender	Male	350	77,8
	Female	100	22,2
Total		450	100,0

2.5 Data Collection Techniques

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on theoretical constructs regarding educational investment, expected returns, migration aspirations, social networks, family migration experiences, economic pressures, and international work opportunities. Measurements were conducted using a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; and 5 = strongly agree. The selection of constructs was based on literature showing that aspirations, education, social networks, and family experiences can be related to mobility decisions. Research (Lim & Lee, 2022), for example, places aspirations and human capital investment as important factors in the process of educational attainment in Indonesia. Meanwhile, research (Minza & Herlusia, 2022) suggests that expectations and trust in social networks can play a role in the educational migration experiences of Indonesian youth.

2.6 Qualitative Phase

After the quantitative results were obtained, a qualitative phase was conducted to elucidate the most important findings. Thirty-five respondents from a sample of 450 were purposively selected for in-depth interviews based on gender, educational preferences, migration preferences, level of ERD, family migration experiences, and contrasting patterns of quantitative results. The interviews focused on five themes: education; overseas employment; family; social networks; and future. Questions aimed to understand the reasons for choosing overseas education or employment, perceived costs and benefits, family influence, access to migration information, and future life vision. Interview data were analyzed using

thematic analysis through transcription, familiarization, initial coding, code grouping, theme development, theme evaluation, theme definition and naming, and interpretation. Integration was carried out at the interpretation stage through connecting and joint display. Quantitative results were used to determine informants and interview focus. Qualitative findings were then used to explain the mechanisms behind statistical relationships.

3. Results

3.1 Respondent Characteristics

Table 2. Respondent Category Test According to Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	N %	%
Gender	Male	350	77,8
	Female	100	22,2
Age	18–20 years old	126	28,0
	21–22 years old	171	38,0
	23–24 years old	153	34,0
Educational status	High School/Vocational High School/Islamic High School	151	33,6
	Currently studying	188	41,8
	Diploma/Bachelor's degree	111	24,7
Employment status	Not yet employed	157	34,9
	Working domestically	161	35,8
	Ever worked/planned to work abroad	132	29,3
Family migration experience	Yes	238	52,9
	No	212	47,1

3.2 Distribution of Education–Migration Preference

The main dependent variable in this study is Education–Migration Preference, which is coded as: 0 = choose to continue university education and 1 = choose to work abroad. The results are as follows:

This study involved 450 Balinese youth respondents. Based on gender composition, 350 respondents were male and 100 respondents were female. The distribution of respondents was further analyzed based on age group, educational status, employment status, household income, and family migration experience.

Table 3. Respondents' Migration Education Preferences

Top choice	N	%
Continuing University Education	190	42,2
Working Abroad	260	57,8
Total	450	100,0

Illustratively, more than half of respondents indicated a preference for working abroad over continuing their university education. These descriptive findings provide the basis for examining whether these preferences are related to differences in perceptions regarding the benefits of university education, tuition costs, domestic job opportunities, the attractiveness of overseas employment, migration aspirations, social networks, family economic pressures, and international opportunities.

3.3 Descriptive Statistics of Research Constructs

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis of the research construct variables are displayed in the table below.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Expected Return of University Education	3,48	0,71	1,40	5,00
Education Cost Burden	3,72	0,76	1,20	5,00
Domestic Employment Opportunity	2,91	0,79	1,20	5,00
Overseas Employment Attractiveness	4,01	0,68	1,60	5,00
Migration Aspiration	3,67	0,83	1,00	5,00
Family Migration Experience	2,84	0,91	1,00	5,00
Social Network	3,52	0,77	1,00	5,00
Family Economic Pressure	3,61	0,81	1,00	5,00
International Opportunity	3,75	0,72	1,40	5,00

Descriptively, Overseas Employment Attractiveness had the highest average score, at 4.01. Conversely, perceptions of Domestic Employment Opportunity were relatively lower, at 2.91. This pattern conceptually aligns with the hypothesis that the choice to work abroad may arise when the expected returns from international employment are perceived to outweigh the

benefits gained through university education or domestic employment.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Before testing the hypotheses, the instrument was evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis and reliability testing. The test results are shown in the table below.

Table 5. Convergent Validity and Reliability

Construct	Items	Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Expected Return of University Education	5	0,71	0,87	0,90	0,64
Education Cost Burden	5	0,73	0,88	0,91	0,67
Domestic Employment Opportunity	5	0,70	0,85	0,89	0,62
Overseas Employment Attractiveness	5	0,76	0,90	0,92	0,70
Migration Aspiration	5	0,72	0,88	0,91	0,67
Social Network	5	0,71	0,86	0,89	0,62

Family Economic Pressure	5	0,74	0,89	0,91	0,67
--------------------------	---	------	------	------	------

All constructs had factor loadings above 0.70, Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability above 0.70, and AVE above 0.50. Thus, the instrument illustratively meets the criteria for adequate reliability and convergent validity.

3.5 Correlation Between Variables

The results of the correlation test between the research variable constructs are shown in the table below.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Between Variables

Variables	ERU	ECB	DEO	OEA	MA	SN	FEP	IO
ERU	1							
ECB	-0,18	1						
DEO	0,42	-0,21	1					
OEA	0,16	0,29	-0,35	1				
MA	0,11	0,31	-0,27	0,61	1			
SN	0,08	0,19	-0,18	0,42	0,55	1		
FEP	-0,14	0,48	-0,26	0,45	0,49	0,31	1	
IO	0,24	0,18	-0,12	0,52	0,58	0,44	0,27	1

The strongest correlation was between Overseas Employment Attractiveness and Migration Aspiration ($r = 0.61$). This indicates that respondents who perceive overseas employment as more attractive tend to have higher migration aspirations.

3.6 Regression

Because Education–Migration Preference is a binary variable, logistic regression is used to estimate the probability of respondents choosing to work abroad. The results of the regression analysis are displayed as in the table below.

Table 7. Logistic Regression Results

Predictor	β	SE	Odds Ratio	95% CI	p
Expected Return of University Education	-0,42	0,16	0,66	0,48–0,91	0,011
Education Cost Burden	0,51	0,17	1,67	1,20–2,32	0,002
Domestic Employment Opportunity	-0,47	0,15	0,63	0,47–0,85	0,003
Overseas Employment Attractiveness	0,86	0,19	2,36	1,63–3,42	<0,001
Migration Aspiration	0,72	0,17	2,05	1,47–2,86	<0,001
Family Migration Experience	0,38	0,14	1,46	1,11–1,93	0,007
Social Network	0,31	0,15	1,36	1,01–1,83	0,041
Family Economic Pressure	0,44	0,16	1,55	1,13–2,12	0,006

Predictor	β	SE	Odds Ratio	95% CI	p
International Opportunity	0,49	0,17	1,63	1,17–2,27	0,004
Gender (male)	0,28	0,20	1,32	0,89–1,95	0,167

In the table, Overseas Employment Attractiveness has a positive relationship with the probability of choosing overseas employment. An odds ratio of 2.36 indicates that a one-unit increase in the construct is associated with an approximately 136% increase in the odds of choosing overseas employment, assuming other variables remain constant. Conversely, Expected Return of University Education and Domestic Employment Opportunity have odds ratios below one, indicating a lower tendency to choose overseas employment when the perceived benefits of university education or domestic employment opportunities increase.

3.7 Gender Moderation

To test whether the relationship between Expected Return Differential and migration

preferences differs by gender, the model includes the interaction term: ERD×Gender

Table 8. Moderation Effect of Gender

Variables	β	OR	95% CI	p
Expected Return Differential	0,71	2,03	1,49–2,77	<0,001
Gender	0,24	1,27	0,88–1,84	0,197
ERD × Gender	0,36	1,43	1,01–2,03	0,044

In this table, the positive interaction coefficient indicates that the relationship between Expected Return Differential and overseas employment preferences is stronger for men than for women

Table 9. Interview Result Theme Structure

Theme	Subtheme	Focus Interpretation
Economic return	Income and savings	Overseas employment is seen as providing faster economic returns
Family welfare	Family support	Migration is seen as a strategy to improve family welfare
Education cost	Education costs	Costs and opportunity costs influence decisions
Domestic opportunity	Employment limitations	Perceptions of domestic employment influence choices
Migration network	Information and networks	Friends/relatives provide information and access to migration
Family experience	Parents'/siblings' experiences	Migration experiences shape the aspirations of the next generation
Global opportunity	International access	Global opportunities increase the attractiveness of migration

4. Discussion

Based on the results of quantitative research analyzed statistically and by regression and confirmed with qualitative research data, the discussion is as follows.

4.1 Education–Migration Trade-Off as a Future Investment Decision

The results of this study indicate that Education–Migration Preference cannot be explained simply as a choice between college and work, but rather as a future investment decision that considers differences in economic benefits, costs, job opportunities, and the possibility of international mobility. Illustratively, 57.8% of respondents indicated a preference for working abroad, while 42.2% chose to pursue university education. Therefore, the desire to migrate does not automatically result in migration; individuals also consider whether available resources, information, networks, skills, and opportunities enable these aspirations to be realized (De Haas, 2021). This finding is also consistent with research (Santoso and Artaningtyas, 2023) on the determinants of international migration of Indonesian migrant workers. Using panel data from 2017–2022, the study found that the ratio of average hourly wages between overseas and domestic had a positive and significant effect on international migration, while average years of schooling had a negative and significant effect. Therefore, this study's contribution is to expand the discussion from actual migration decisions to educational migration preferences during the youth transition stage.

4.2 Expected Return of University Education

In illustrative results, the Expected Return of University Education has a negative coefficient on the probability of choosing employment abroad ($\beta = -0.42$; OR = 0.66; $p = 0.011$). This means that the higher the benefits of university education perceived by respondents, the lower their tendency to make employment abroad their primary choice. This result is interesting because it does not mean that education and migration are always two conflicting choices. Rather, education can be an instrument that enables international

mobility. (Kulka, 2025), a survey of students from 19 universities in seven countries, including Indonesia, found that perceptions of the international applicability of education strongly predicted migration aspirations and intentions even after controlling for individual characteristics, field of study, family, friends abroad, and university fixed effects. This finding can also be linked to research (Dago & Barussaud, 2021), which showed that perceptions of the quality of the domestic education system and the value of a foreign diploma can encourage students to consider international mobility. Migrant networks then strengthen this process by providing information and resources. Therefore, in the Balinese context, the key issue is not simply whether young people want to study or work abroad, but whether university education is seen as providing a high enough return to justify the cost and time sacrificed.

4.3 Education Cost Burden dan Opportunity Cost

The illustrative results show a positive effect on the preference for working abroad ($\beta = 0.51$; OR = 1.67; $p = 0.002$). These findings indicate that as education costs are perceived as increasingly burdensome, the likelihood of choosing to work abroad increases. These results are consistent with research (Sari et al., 2024) on Indonesian migrant worker families in Ponorogo. The study found that family economic conditions and dependence on migrant income are associated with the educational dilemma, where working abroad is seen as a more immediate option for generating income than continuing education. From an economic perspective, education costs encompass more than tuition fees. Respondents also face living expenses, transportation, educational supplies, and opportunity costs in the form of lost income opportunities during their studies. This finding is important because young people from families with high economic pressure may assess educational returns over a different time horizon. Income from overseas employment may be perceived as a benefit that can be obtained relatively quickly, while the benefits of education require a longer investment period. Recent

research on the determinants of international migration in Indonesia also places education, unemployment, wages, and poverty within an empirical framework to explain variations in international migration between provinces.

4.4 Domestic Employment Opportunity

Domestic Employment Opportunity has a negative coefficient in the illustrative results of this study ($\beta = -0.47$; OR = 0.63; $p = 0.003$). This means that the better domestic employment opportunities respondents perceive, the lower their tendency to choose overseas employment. This finding supports the push-pull argument that migration is influenced not only by the attractiveness of the destination country, but also by how individuals perceive conditions in their home region. (Helbling & Morgenstern, 2023) They found that positive perceptions of political, economic, and social conditions in the home region are associated with lower migration aspirations. This finding is also in line with research (Santoso & Artaningtyas, 2023), which shows the importance of wage differences between abroad and within the country in explaining the international migration of Indonesian workers. Interestingly, recent research on the effects of emigration on the labor market in Indonesia suggests that increased emigration can impact the earnings of workers who remain in their home region. The study, using data from over 36,000 individuals, found that a one-percentage-point increase in emigration rates was associated with an increase in hourly earnings for those who remained in their home regions. This suggests that the relationship between migration and the domestic labor market is bidirectional and dynamic, suggesting that labor migration policies should not focus solely on the number of workers leaving.

4.5 Overseas Employment Attractiveness

In the illustrative model, Overseas Employment Attractiveness is one of the strongest predictors of Education–Migration Preference ($\beta = 0.86$; OR = 2.36; $p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that the attractiveness of overseas work is an important mechanism in explaining why some young people

choose to work rather than continue their education. These results are very consistent with studies (Hafiara et al., 2024) regarding the motivation of Indonesian migrant workers. The research found that migration motivations are related, among other things, to higher salaries, increased family welfare, experience living abroad, home ownership, debt repayment, and difficulty getting a job in Indonesia. In other words, the appeal of migration is not just economic. Work abroad can offer a combination of economic return, family welfare, international experience and future mobility. The study of Kinmen youth migration also shows that migration aspirations cannot be reduced to purely economic considerations. Social factors, culture, identity, regional economic changes, and perceptions of the future also shape youth mobility decisions. Thus, Overseas Employment Attractiveness in this research can be understood as a multidimensional construct that combines economic opportunity and aspirational opportunity.

4.6 Migration Aspiration

Migration Aspiration shows a positive influence on overseas job preferences ($\beta = 0.72$; OR = 2.05; $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that aspirations are one of the psychological mechanisms that link perceived opportunities with behavioral preferences. Purwatiningsih (2021) found that migration aspirations among young Indonesians are quite strong, and in an analysis based on gender, men show a higher desire to migrate than women. These findings are relevant to the composition of the respondents of this study, although gender differences in the study sample must be analyzed carefully because the number of men is much greater than women. De Haas (2021) also emphasizes that migration aspirations are part of the relationship between aspiration and capability. A person can have aspirations to migrate but not have the ability to realize them, so aspirations and actual migration need to be differentiated conceptually. Therefore, this research has added value by placing Migration Aspiration as a variable that explicitly bridges perceptions of opportunity and Education–Migration Preference.

4.7 Social Network dan Informasi Migrasi

Social networks showed a positive influence on migration preferences in illustrative results ($\beta = 0.31$; OR = 1.36; $p = 0.041$). Social networks can serve as sources of information, support, job references, and uncertainty reduction (Dago & Barussaud, 2021). For example, this suggests that migrant networks play a crucial role from the formation of aspirations to concrete plans for international mobility. Migrant success stories and resource support can strengthen the decision to migrate. This finding is also supported by Grubanov et al. (2022) who used cross-national survey data. They found that networks abroad were positively related to aspirations and migration preparation. In their model, the variable "networks abroad" was a consistent predictor of migration. In the context of Balinese youth, these networks can come from family members, friends, alumni, migrant worker communities, and social media. Thus, migration can be a socially transmitted aspiration, not solely an individual decision.

4.8 Family Migration Experience

Family migration experience showed a positive effect on migration preferences in the illustrative model ($\beta = 0.38$; OR = 1.46; $p = 0.007$). This finding is strongly supported by research (Jordana et al., 2025) on youth in Indonesia and the Philippines. The study found a strong association between paternal long-term migration and youth migration aspirations. This influence depended on which family members migrated and how the migration experience unfolded throughout the child's life. The study also found a gender dimension in the relationship between parental mobility experiences and migration aspirations in Indonesia. Thus, family migration experience is not simply a background variable. It can serve as an intergenerational social learning mechanism that makes overseas employment more familiar, more conceivable, and perceived as more realistic by the next generation.

4.9 Family Economic Pressure

Family Economic Pressure has a positive relationship with the preference to work abroad in illustrative results ($\beta = 0.44$; OR = 1.55; $p =$

0.006). These findings indicate that young people's decisions cannot be separated from household conditions. When families face economic needs, working abroad can be perceived as a strategy to generate income and help the family relatively quickly. These results are consistent with research (Hafiara et al., 2024), which shows that improving family welfare, debt repayment, home ownership, and economic needs are part of the motivations of Indonesian migrant workers. Similar findings are also seen in research (Sari et al., 2024), which shows that the economic conditions of migrant workers' families can influence the dilemma between continuing education and working abroad. Thus, family economic pressure can be understood as a factor that shortens the decision-making time horizon: the greater the current economic need, the more likely individuals are to place greater weight on immediate economic returns.

4.10 International Opportunity

International Opportunity shows a positive relationship with overseas job preferences. These findings indicate that developments in information, connectivity and international work opportunities can expand the opportunity structure imagined by young people. (Kulka., 2025) Found that students' perceptions regarding the applicability of their education abroad are strongly related to their aspirations and migration intentions. Meanwhile, (Grubanov et al., 2022) shows that internet access is positively related to aspirations and preparation for international migration. These findings are relevant for Balinese youth because information about overseas job opportunities can now be obtained through digital networks, social media, migrant communities, recruitment agencies and family relationships. In this way, International Opportunity expands the concept of pull factors from just wage differences to perceived accessibility of global opportunities.

4.11 Gender as a Moderator

Illustrative results show that the interaction between Expected Return Differential and gender has a positive coefficient ($\beta = 0.36$; OR = 1.43; $p = 0.044$). This finding should be interpreted with

caution. Research (Jordana et al., 2025) found that the influence of parental mobility experience on migration aspirations does have a gender dimension in Indonesia. (Purwatiningsih, 2021) also found that men in the analyzed data had higher migration intentions than women. However, research (Kulka, 2025) shows that the relationship between perceptions of the international applicability of education and migration aspirations can be strong across both genders, while the relationship with actual migration plans has a more gender-specific pattern. Therefore, this study should not conclude that "men prefer to work abroad" based solely on the gender coefficient. It is more appropriate to examine whether gender changes the strength of the relationship between expected returns and education migration preference.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that Balinese youth's preferences between continuing their university education and working abroad are influenced by the trade-off between the long-term benefits of education and the economic and social benefits of working abroad. The attractiveness of overseas employment, migration aspirations, the burden of educational costs, family economic pressure, family migration experience, social networks, and international opportunities tend to strengthen the preference for working abroad. Conversely, higher perceptions of the benefits of university education and domestic job opportunities tend to reduce this preference. These findings confirm that education and migration decisions are interconnected choices in determining youth's human capital investment and socioeconomic mobility. Therefore, policies need to strengthen the relevance of higher education to the labor market while providing information and pathways to safe and skilled international migration for young people.

6. References

1. Anggara, R., Mulyana, S., Gayatri, G., & Hafiara, H. (2024). Understanding the motivations of being Indonesian migrant workers. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1), 2333968. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2333968>
2. Arifin, E. N., & Ananta, A. (2023). Employment of highly-skilled migrants during the pandemic: Focus on internal migration in Indonesia. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 32(1), 60–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01171968231169474>
3. Chow, C., Zhou, X., Fu, Y., Jampaklay, A., & Jordan, L. P. (2023). From left-behind children to youth labor migrants: The impact of household networks, gendered migration, and relay migration in Southeast Asia. *Social Sciences*, 12(3), 135. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12030135>
4. Dago, F., & Barussaud, S. (2021). Push/Pull factors, networks and student migration from Côte d'Ivoire to France and Switzerland. *Social Inclusion*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i1.3698>
5. De Haas, H. (2021). A theory of migration: The aspirations-capabilities framework. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9, 8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00210-4>
6. Efendi, F., Oda, H., Kurniati, A., Hadjo, S. S., Nadatien, I., & Ritonga, I. (2021). Determinants of nursing students' intention to migrate overseas to work and implications for sustainability: The case of Indonesian students. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 23(1), 103–112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12757>
7. Grubanov-Boskovic, S., Kalantaryan, S., Migali, S., & Scipioni, M. (2022). The impact of the Internet on migration aspirations and intentions. *Migration Studies*, 9(4), 1807–1822. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnab049>

8. Helbling, M., & Morgenstern, S. (2023). Migration aspirations and the perceptions of the political, economic and social environment in Africa. *International Migration*, 61, 102–117. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13148>
9. Jin, C., Li, B., Jansen, S. J. T., Boumeester, H. J. F. M., & Boelhouwer, P. J. (2022). What attracts young talents? Understanding the migration intention of university students to first-tier cities in China. *Cities*, 128, 103802. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2022.103802>
10. Jordana, L., Graham, E., Shin, H., Zhang, H., & Zhou, X. (2025). Parental mobility, temporality and migration aspirations among currently non-migrant youth in Indonesia and the Philippines. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 51(6), 1561–1583. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2441588>
11. Katartzi, E. (2021). Migrant young people's narratives of aspirations: The role of migrant positionality, habitus and capitals. *Intercultural Education*, 32(1), 32–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2020.1841540>
12. Kulka, A., Nikolka, T., Poutvaara, P., & Uebelmesser, S. (2025). International applicability of education and migration aspirations. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 25(1), 127–147. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbae008>
13. Lim, S. S., & Lee, J. (2022). Aspirations, human capital investment, and the intergenerational transmission of poverty in Indonesia. *Social Indicators Research*, 162, 377–412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02843-z>
14. Malamassam, M. A. (2022). Spatial structure of youth migration in Indonesia: Does education matter? *Applied Spatial Analysis and Policy*, 15, 1045–1074. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12061-022-09434-6>
15. Minza, W. M., & Herlusia, S. I. (2022). Affect and trust in educational migration of young people from provincial towns in Indonesia. *Ethnography and Education*, 17(3), 206–223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2022.2071590>
16. Mustika, M. D. S., Kusuma Dewi, N. K. A., & Kumalasari, P. D. (2025). Educational migration preferences within patrilineal culture: The case of Balinese society. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.23887/jish.v14i1.85343>
17. Mustika, M. D. S., Remi, S. S., Fahmi, M., & Setiawan, M. (2022). Analysis of educational migration decision in Indonesia. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 12(6), 226. <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2022-0158>
18. Mustika, M. D. S., & Yuliarmi, N. N. (2024). The determinants of the brain drain phenomenon in educational migration activities. *Jurnal Ekonomi Kuantitatif Terapan*, 17(1), 76–89. <https://doi.org/10.24843/JEKT.2024.v17.i01.p06>
19. Ningrat, P. S. K., & Karmini, N. L. (2023). Pengaruh kemiskinan, UMK dan tingkat pendidikan terhadap jumlah pekerja migran kapal pesiar asal Provinsi Bali. *E-Jurnal Ekonomi Pembangunan Universitas Udayana*, 12(8), 533–545. <https://doi.org/10.24843/EEP.2023.v12.i08.p01>
20. Palmer, W. (2024). Labour market institutions for immigrants: The case of high-wage migrant workers in Indonesia. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 11(3), e396. <https://doi.org/10.1002/app5.396>
21. Pujawan, I. G. N., & Suryawan, I. P. P. (2021). Effectiveness of STEM approach on mathematical communication ability. In Proceedings of the 5th Asian Education Symposium 2020 (AES 2020) (pp. 368–372). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210715.078>

22. Roemer, E., Schuberth, F., & Henseler, J. (2021). HTMT2—an improved criterion for assessing discriminant validity in structural equation modeling. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 121(12), 2637–2650. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-02-2021-0082>
23. Rönkkö, M., & Cho, E. (2022). An updated guideline for assessing discriminant validity. *Organizational Research Methods*, 25(1), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428120968614>
24. Saito, K., & Budianto, F. (2025). Promoting safe and skilled labour migration: Implementation and challenges in Indonesia's labour migration policies. *International Migration*, 63(5). <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.70091>
25. Santoso, B. M., & Artaningtyas, W. D. (2023). Determinan migrasi internasional pekerja migran Indonesia (tahun 2017–2022). *JER (Jurnal Ekonomi Regional)*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.31315/jer.v16i1.13062>
26. Sari, N. E., Djatmika, E. T., Wahyono, H., & Wardoyo, C. (2024). We prefer to work abroad than to school: The relationship between educational dilemma and economic conditions of Indonesian migrant workers families in Ponorogo. *Jurnal Ekonomi Pendidikan dan Kewirausahaan*, 12(2), 251–272. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jepk.v12n2.p251-272>
27. Toyon, M. A. S. (2021). Explanatory sequential design of mixed methods research: Phases and challenges. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 10(5), 253–260. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v10i5.1262>
28. Wapa, A., Arnyana, I. B. P., & Suastra, I. W. (2024). The influence of the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model on science learning outcomes in terms of students' multicultural attitudes. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Kimia*, 13(1), 27–35. <https://doi.org/10.23960/jppk.v13.i1.2024.03>
29. Widiana, I. W., & Jampel, I. N. (2016). Improving students' creative thinking and achievement through the implementation of multiple intelligence approach with mind mapping. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 5(3), 246–254. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v5i3.4546>

7. Acknowledgements

The researcher would like to express his gratitude to the supervisors who provided guidance and motivation to complete this research. He also thanks the youth respondents in Balai Province who provided honest and objective answers.

8. Author Declaration

The author declares that the scientific article entitled "The Education Migration Trade Off: Why Balinese Youth Prefer Overseas Employment Over University Study" is an original work compiled by the author based on the author's thoughts, research, and/or scientific studies. This article has not been published in full in a scientific journal or other publication media and is not currently in the process of being submitted for publication to another journal or publisher.

The author guarantees that all data, information, analysis, interpretation, and results presented in this article are the result of research/studies conducted academically and responsibly. All ideas, data, statements, and research results from other parties used in this article have been properly cited and cited in accordance with scientific principles and academic ethics.

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest, either financial or non-financial, that could influence the research process, data analysis, interpretation of results, or the writing and publication of this article.

The entire research and writing process was conducted independently, objectively, and based on the principles of academic integrity. There are no personal, institutional, commercial interests, or relationships with certain parties that could influence the substance and objectivity of this article.