

Intragenerational Social Mobility and Migration Among Malaysian Professionals During the Post-Pandemic Era

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ABSTRACT

The issue of intragenerational social mobility among Malaysian professionals is a critical aspect of social dynamics, reflecting the determinants and opportunities individuals face in navigating upward or downward trajectories within the professional sphere. This paper discusses the issue of migration and intragenerational social mobility among Malaysian professionals during the post-pandemic era. The main objective of this study is to analyse the patterns of migration and its factors as experienced by Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era. This study also examined the patterns of intragenerational social mobility experienced by Malaysian professionals due to the migration patterns in the said period. This study used qualitative methods using in-depth email interviews with ten Malaysian professionals who experienced migration from December 2019 until December 2022. The email interview lasted three weeks, from December 2022 to January 2023. The study has found that informants experienced four types of migration patterns, i.e., urban-urban, urban-rural, rural-urban, and rural-rural movements. Economic opportunity, social networks, cost of living, COVID-19, currency rate, education, and facilities influence these patterns. The findings further demonstrate that informants experienced horizontal and vertical upward intragenerational social mobility patterns due to migration activity during the post-pandemic period. Since this study delves into the factors influencing intragenerational mobility, it aims to illuminate the complexities of social advancement among Malaysian professionals, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the said phenomenon in the Malaysian context. This is vital to fill the research gaps, provide new insights into the sociological body of knowledge, and contribute new inputs for certain government agencies and researchers in the field.

Keywords: factors of migration, Malaysian professionals, migration patterns, patterns of social mobility, social mobility

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INTRODUCTION

Social mobility is a prevalent social phenomenon in developing and developed countries (Fakhruddin et al., 2023; Fakhruddin & Noor, 2020; Fakhruddin & Noor, 2019; García & Heckman, 2023). It can be defined as individuals' ability to change their social positions within the social hierarchy, either horizontally or vertically (Fakhruddin et al. (2023). Social mobility generally relates to various issues, including its patterns and determinants, such as education, sociocultural issues, and religion (Dyhouse, 2001; Fakhruddin, 2019; Juma & Simatwa, 2014). There are two main issues revolving around the discussion of social mobility. The first involves its patterns, i.e., horizontal and vertical mobility. Horizontal mobility refers to the transition of individuals who did not change their social status to a higher or lower social stratum. In other words, their social standing had no upward or downward movement.

Meanwhile, vertical mobility refers to a shift in individuals or social objects that transforms their original social stratum into a new one. Sorokin (1959) classified vertical mobility into two types, i.e., ascending or social climbing or upward mobility and descending or social sinking or downward mobility. The second issue is connected to its aspect, which concerns intragenerational mobility and intergenerational mobility. Intragenerational mobility can be an individual's mobility change measured twice. On the other hand, intergenerational mobility refers to a comparison between two generations, i.e., between parents and children.

Malaysia is not immune to the phenomenon above. Since its independence in 1957, the country has undergone numerous social, economic, and political changes. Changes could have been caused by migration, urbanization, globalization, modernization, and industrialization (Othman et al., 2009). Migration, for instance, is a primary means for individuals to achieve upward social mobility since it is often synonymous with the displacement of a person in search of a better source of income or career. It involves the movement of an individual or a group of individuals across an international border or within a state regardless of its composition, length, or causes (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017).

During the pre-pandemic period, i.e., in 2018, there were about 524,100 Malaysians who migrated (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). However, the trend changed once the COVID-19 pandemic struck and the Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented in 2020. The number decreased to 484,100 yearly (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). In this regard, it is necessary to shed some light on the issue among Malaysians, particularly professionals who migrate for various demands, necessities, and conditions.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Migration is a complex phenomenon involving the movement of individuals or groups from one location to another, frequently influenced by factors such as economic opportunities, social networks, and education. Understanding the dynamics of various migration patterns, such as urban-rural, urban-urban, rural-urban, and rural-rural necessitates a conceptual comprehension of the fundamental processes and theoretical frameworks. The Family Systems Theory, for instance, highlights the role of the family in migration decisions (Baldassar et al., 2014). The theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of family dynamics and migration processes. According to the theory, migration decisions are not isolated but deeply embedded within familial relationships and structures. The theory underscores the influence of family members' aspirations, needs, and obligations on individual migration choices, recognizing the reciprocal nature of support and dependence within family units. This perspective highlights the importance of considering family dynamics and relationships when studying migration, offering insights into the interplay between familial ties and mobility decisions.

On the other hand, De Haas' (2010) Integrated Migration Theory, built upon Lee's (1966) Theory of Migration, acknowledges the multifaceted nature of migration factors and incorporates additional dimensions such as employment opportunities, social networks, institutional factors, and individual agency. De Haas argues that migration decisions are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including economic disparities (push and pull factors) and social, political, and cultural dynamics. By integrating various perspectives, the theory provides a deeper understanding of migration processes, emphasizing the importance of context-specific analyses and recognizing migrants as active agents navigating diverse influences.

Lucas (2004) further proposes a theory that emphasizes the role of expected lifetime earnings differentials in driving rural-urban migration decisions. The theory highlights that individuals are motivated to migrate from rural to urban areas when they anticipate higher earnings prospects in urban environments over their working lives. The theory suggests that migrants weigh the long-term benefits of higher urban wages against the immediate costs and risks associated with relocation. Lucas argues that these expectations of higher lifetime earnings serve as a powerful incentive for rural residents to pursue migration, contributing to the ongoing urbanization process in many developing countries. The theory provides insights into the economic factors shaping migration patterns and emphasizes the importance of considering long-term earnings prospects in understanding rural-urban migration dynamics.

Migration is a complex phenomenon influenced by numerous factors. Recent empirical research has shed light on some key factors affecting migration patterns worldwide. Amongst them, economic opportunity is a major factor that makes people migrate. They tend to migrate to areas where they can earn more money and have better job opportunities. According to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) study, economic factors were the most frequently cited reason for migrants leaving their home countries (ILO, 2020). Carré et al.'s (2020) study, for instance, found that Europeans were found to be more likely to migrate to regions with more robust labour markets

and higher employment prospects, indicating the importance of job opportunities as a pull factor, attracting migrants to areas with better job and income prospects. Similar findings were also found by Marshall et al. (2021) in the United States, who revealed that regions with sturdy job markets and diverse industries saw higher rates of in-migration. Similar trends are also observable in African (Dustmann et al., 2019) and Asian (McKenzie & Yang, 2018) countries.

Social networks further influence migration patterns. People are more likely to migrate to areas where they have close relatives, peers, or other people they trust who can assist them in navigating the challenges of relocating to a new country. According to the Migration Policy Institute's (2021) study, family ties were the primary reason given by immigrants for settling in specific locations. Similar findings were also found by Ditoiu et al. (2020), who explored the impact of social networks on migration in European countries. The study discovered that social networks, such as family, friends, and community connections, played an essential role in facilitating migration by providing migrants with information, resources, assistance, and support. In addition, studies done in the United States (Massey et al., 2019), Middle Eastern (Dahinden et al., 2020), and Asian (Li et al., 2019) countries also emphasized the significance of social networks in migration decisions, especially for individuals seeking opportunities in unfamiliar environments.

Besides social networks, the cost of living is also considered an important factor influencing migration patterns. Rising urban living costs, for example, have prompted many people to seek cheaper living alternatives in rural areas. According to the United States Census Bureau (2020) study, population growth in cities with the highest cost of living, such as New York City and San Francisco, has decreased in recent years. In the meantime, many rural areas have seen an increase in population due to more affordable living costs. People in high-cost urban areas are more likely to express their intent to relocate to a less-expensive area. In a 2019 survey conducted by Pew Research Centre (2019), roughly half of respondents living in urban areas with high costs of living stated they would like to relocate to a less expensive area. On a global scale, the impact of the living cost on migration patterns is also apparent. For instance, the expensive cost of living in urban areas such as London has prompted many people to think about other options, such as relocating to other cities with a cheaper rate of living or even moving to other countries. Similar findings are also found in the case of China (Wu et al., 2019), India (Sharma & Garg, 2020), and Malaysia (Fakhrudin, 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2018).

Further, recent empirical studies have shown that COVID-19 is another critical factor influencing migration during the post-pandemic era. In Europe, the pandemic has caused changes in migration patterns, with some people choosing to return to their countries of origin or relocate to countries with better healthcare systems and networks of social support (Bilgili & de Graaff, 2020). In India, on the other hand, the pandemic has increased migration to the countryside. This phenomenon occurs because individuals seek refuge from the virus in areas with a lower population density and greater possibilities for remote work (Crespo et al., 2021).

Next, the currency rate is also observed as one of the factors inducing migration. According to a study by Ramos (2019) in Europe, people from countries with weaker currencies were likelier to relocate to countries with more powerful currencies because the earning potential was more promising and living costs were more affordable. In addition, Khattak et al.'s (2021) study found that currency fluctuations can influence both the decision to migrate and the destination, especially for skilled workers and highly educated individuals in Middle Eastern and Asian countries.

Further, education is also seen as an imperative factor influencing individuals' domestic and international migration. This is evident in the study conducted by Hendricks et al. (2021), where African individuals with higher levels of education were found to be more likely to migrate internationally, particularly to destinations with better educational and career opportunities. It also shows how education is a social mobility mechanism, propelling individuals to seek opportunities outside their home countries. A similar situation is observed in Aissaoui and Marzouk's (2019) and Kumar and Mishra's (2020) studies. Middle Eastern and Asian individuals migrate from rural areas to urban centres for better educational opportunities. It also marks the vital role of education as a catalyst for regional urbanization and economic development.

In addition, facilities further affect individuals' decision to migrate. A study conducted by Braun et al. (2020) highlighted the crucial role of facilities as a pull factor, with migrants seeking locations with better amenities and services. The presence of better facilities, educational institutions, and healthcare in certain parts of European countries drew migrants, mainly from less developed areas. Similar findings were also found in the United States (Bae et al., 2019), and the Middle East (Abdullah et al., 2020) which emphasized that regions with better educational facilities, access to healthcare, and transportation networks had higher rates of in-migration.

A notable literature gap exists in the evolving landscape of intragenerational social mobility among Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era, which needs a comprehensive analysis of how migration changes the professionals' social mobility. Furthermore, there is a substantial gap in current academic discourse on the subject due to the need for more research examining the specific factors contributing to the occurrence of the aforementioned social phenomenon. Thus, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the patterns of migration experienced by Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era.
2. To examine the social factors responsible for the different patterns of migration experienced by Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era.
3. To examine the patterns of intragenerational social mobility experienced by Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era.

METHOD

This study used the qualitative research design. It is the most appropriate design because it allows researchers to explore and delve into the nuances of informants' experiences and perspectives on the issue under study (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). It is especially well-suited to investigate complex and context-specific phenomena, as it allows for a thorough understanding of informants' thoughts and feelings related to the issue of migration and intragenerational social mobility.

Purposive sampling is used to select specific individuals to be the informants in the study. It enables researchers to identify and select information-rich cases, maximizing the efficient use of the study's limited resources (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample chosen is presumed to be a representative and adequate representation of the target population, implying that a larger sample size is not required. The sample was selected by using the snowball sampling technique. It is done by asking informants to refer others to become the following informants (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A total of ten informants who experienced migration from December 2019 until December 2022 were interviewed, with 5 Malaysian male professionals and 5 Malaysian female professionals representing different occupations. The total number of samples was determined using the data saturation principle. It occurs when no new issues or information are discovered, and the data begins to repeat itself, indicating that an adequate number of samples has been obtained.

Asynchronous email interviews were used in this study. They are a flexible and asynchronous technique for data collection that allows informants to provide feedback at their convenience, accommodating diverse schedules and locations (Fakhrudin & Zaini, 2021). An interview protocol was devised to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing for exploring emergent themes. Informants were encouraged to provide feedback in detail and reflectively, resulting in a rich dataset for analysis (Li, 2022). The interview was conducted for three weeks, from December 2022 to January 2023.

Thematic analysis was used to understand, analyse, examine, and report on data patterns. The analysis followed a systematic process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting responses to derive meaningful themes. The coding process was assisted with the help of NVivo software. Team discussions and member-checking were used to improve the trustworthiness of the analysis. Ethical guidelines such as confidentiality and informed consent were strictly followed throughout the research process. Informants were assured that their answers would be anonymized and that no personally identifiable information would be revealed in the final research output.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first section of this research result and discussion part elaborates on the demography, which provides a foundational understanding of the characteristics and composition of the informants, offering insights into their diversity, which includes age, marital status, ethnic group, level of education, occupation, monthly income, places of residence, and origins. In addition, the discussion related to the first research objective, i.e., patterns of migration experienced by Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era, focuses on describing various patterns such as urban-urban, urban-rural, rural-urban, and rural-rural demographics for further analyses.

Tables 1 and 2 show the demographic information of both male and female samples' age, marital status, ethnic group, level of education, occupation, monthly income, place of residence, and place of origin. As for the male samples, Table 1 shows that all of them are unmarried, between the ages of 25 and 27. This age range indicates a relatively homogeneous group, which may influence the study's perspectives. All male informants have a Master's Degree, indicating that the sample has a high level of educational attainment. They work primarily in engineering, focusing on System-on-Chip (SoC) design and related roles. Their monthly incomes range from RM3000 to

RM4000. They all live in Penang, indicating that the sample is geographically close. Their origins, however, vary, with people originating from Perlis, Kedah, Penang, and Sabah. The diversity of their origins may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of regional influences on their perspectives.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Male Informants

Informant	Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3	Informant 4	Informant 5
Demography					
Age	25	25	27	25	25
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Ethnic Group	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
Level of Education	Master's Degree	Master's Degree	Master's Degree	Master's Degree	Master's Degree
Occupation	System-on-Chip Design Engineer	System-on-Chip Design Engineer	System-on-Chip Design Engineer	System-on-Chip Physical Design Engineer	Yield Engineer
Monthly Income	RM3500	RM3000	RM3100	RM3500	RM4000
Place of Residence	Penang	Penang	Penang	Penang	Penang
Place of Origin	Perlis	Penang	Kedah	Penang	Sabah

Table 2: Demographic Information of Female Informants

Informant	Informant 6	Informant 7	Informant 8	Informant 9	Informant 10
Demography					
Age	25	36	30	26	27
Status	Single	Single	Married	Single	Married
Ethnic Group	Chinese	Malay	Malay	Chinese	Malay
Level of Education	Master's Degree	Doctor of Philosophy	Doctor of Philosophy	Master's Degree	Master's Degree
Occupation	System-on-Chip Design Engineer	University Lecturer	University Lecturer	System-on-Chip Structural Design Engineer	Quality Assurance/Quality Control Engineer
Monthly Income	RM3500	RM6764	RM7455	RM4300	RM3500
Place of Residence	Johor	Johor	Johor	Penang	Johor
Place of Origin	Johor	Johor	Perak	Kedah	Johor

Table 2 specifically shows the demographic information of female samples, indicating that the female informants' ages range from 25 to 36 years. They have diverse marital statuses, i.e., three unmarried and two married. The female sample includes individuals from both Chinese and Malay ethnic groups, adding an ethnic diversity dimension to the study. Female informants have different levels of education than the male sample, ranging from a Master's Degree to a Doctor of Philosophy. This sample also reflects occupational diversity, with informants holding positions such as System-on-Chip Design Engineer, University Lecturer, System-on-Chip Structural Design Engineer, and Quality Assurance/Quality Control Engineer. Their monthly incomes range from RM3500 to RM7455. All of them live in Johor except one informant who lives in Penang. Their origins, however, vary, with the majority originating from Johor and 2 from Perak and Kedah, respectively.

Patterns of Migration Among Malaysian Professionals in Post Pandemic Era

Table 3 shows migration patterns experienced by the 10 informants participating in the study. The data reflects different migration experiences, categorised into urban-urban, urban-rural, rural-urban, and rural-rural movements. 5 of the informants experienced relocation from one urban area to another within Malaysia. 4 of them have shifted from an urban to a rural environment. Additionally, 4 informants have experienced rural-urban migration, which involves moving from rural to urban settings. Finally, 1 informant has undergone rural-rural migration, indicating a relocation between different rural areas. Understanding these patterns is critical for contextualising informants' perspectives on the research topic, as migration can substantially affect individuals' cultural, social, and economic contexts. The various migration experiences add complexity to the study, enriching the exploration of diverse perspectives.

Table 3: Patterns of Migration Experienced by Informants

Informant	Patterns of Migration			
	Urban-urban	Urban-rural	Rural-urban	Rural-rural
1		√		√
2	√			
3	√			
4	√			
5	√			
6	√			
7	√	√	√	
8			√	
9			√	
10		√	√	

Factors of Migration Among Malaysian Professionals in the Post-Pandemic Era

The second section of this research result and discussion part elucidates the second research objective, i.e., factors responsible for the different patterns of migration experienced by Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era. Based on the findings, 7 factors influence the migration patterns as experienced by the informants. They include economic opportunity, social networks, cost of living, COVID-19, currency rate, education, and facilities.

Economic opportunity

First, economic opportunity is found to be the major factor for the majority of the informants to migrate. They tend to migrate to areas where they can earn more money and have better job opportunities. This is reflected in the narratives of informant 9 as follows:

"The main reason I moved to Penang was to start my first work after graduation. Penang is a place with a strong and growing cluster of sectors and a supply chain ecosystem. For example, semiconductor, medical device, and electric and electronic industries are among the rapidly developing sectors, especially for Bayan Lepas, a southern part of Penang Island which has the first free trade zone that includes a lot of high-tech manufacturing companies; it known as an island's main industrial hub. As an engineering student, Bayan Lepas, Penang is one of the nearest cities to my hometown and has more job opportunities compared to my hometown; that is the reason I chose to move to Penang as my first workplace. My experience is moving to an urban area which is to get more job opportunities compared to my hometown. Not only that, but the positive impact also is higher wages or salary compared to my origin city."

These findings are parallel to the studies done by the International Labour Organisation (2020), Carré et al. (2020), Marshall et al. (2021), Dustmann et al. (2019) and McKenzie and Yang (2018), which point out that places with higher employment prospects and sturdy labour markets with diverse industries attract migrants and have high in-migration rates.

Social networks

Second, social networks also play an imperative role as one of the factors of migration. For this, informant 7 had to say:

"If I observe my mother's social life, a native villager, most of her friends are alumnus of the local school who also reside in the village. Their relationship is close. They help each other and celebrate each other's birthdays. However, there is no such connection in the village for young people like me. I am detached from social relationships with friends because I do not have any alumnus friends from the same village as my mother. Therefore, young people are prone to move out of my village for these reasons. Particularly, urban areas offer cultural attractions that appeal to youngsters. It is commonly understood that urban culture is more individualistic, which usually brings relief to certain parties."

In addition, informant 3 also said:

"When trying to understand why people choose to move to a certain locality than being in their original state would have to be depending on the push and pull factors that generally mean what forces a person to perform something. In our contexts, that would mean the pull factor would be what motivates a family to go somewhere, and usually, it is because it is better than the previous place. The push factors would mean what forces a family to go away from their original place. Spiritual and belief systems, when properly "peeled out" of their shell, it is more towards a sense of security and a sense of culture because of the ability to be together in a group or a housing area that believes what you believe, allowing you to have a sense of security and belonging to a particular group. Besides that, in a community group, a culture will indirectly form when everyone has a sense of security and a sense of belonging. When considering the pandemic that is occurring around us, with lockdowns and social distancing happening, people are getting more isolated from each other in the sense that it causes all of us to feel different and not culturally the same anymore. Therefore, when we co-relate the culture and sense of security, we can understand that it makes sense for families to migrate out of an area in order to able to achieve those."

These findings are in line with the data observed by Migration Policy Institute (2021), Ditoiu et al. (2020), Massey et al. (2019), Dahinden et al. (2020), and Li et al. (2019) which state that social networks such as family, close relatives, friends, and community connection influence individuals to migrate by providing them with resources, information, support, and assistance to navigate the challenges of relocating to a new and unfamiliar environment.

Cost of living

Third, informants also claim that the cost of living has its role in determining their migration patterns. About this, informant 1 said:

"Based on my experience, the high unemployment rate during the pandemic has led to the decision to move back home for cost-saving purposes, especially on rental and food, as living in certain urban areas is expensive. Staying at the outskirts requires far fewer expenses than in a city. Since I was no longer required to go to the office every day, I decided to move back to my hometown to cut down the cost of living in fear of losing my job at any time."

This finding is parallel with the ones found by Wu et al. (2019), Sharma and Garg (2020), and Sulaiman et al. (2018). This indicates that the high cost of living in certain areas has prompted people to consider other options, such as relocating to a less expensive area. This is especially true for younger people who place a high value on financial security and a high standard of living.

COVID-19

Fourth, it is worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic is also listed as one of the factors contributing to migration patterns that the informants experienced. This is reflected in the narratives of informant 3 when he said:

"When the COVID-19 lockdown started on 18 March 2020, I still pondered around my rented 500 square feet flat. At that moment, the company was still deciding whether to fully allow employees to work from home or come to work based on weekly quotas. Even though we were given the freedom to occasionally work from home, now, when the pandemic strikes, the company would have to decide on a fully working-from-home model. During the start of COVID-19, our team was working almost all the time due to the increasing number of demands of users from the cloud farm. Everything was fine from the beginning until the numbers started to increase, and the risk of the employees getting infected increased. Suddenly, a few company employees were infected with COVID-19, causing another meeting with the directors; there was a plan to disinfect the building with employees infected. The manager from the team then decided to have a redundancy farm, Kulim, which is my hometown, to allow continuous connectivity to the cloud users. I was then tasked to move to be the lead in Kulim farm to perform a replication of the current farm in Penang. I was then told by the manager from my team to move to Kulim to manage the farm to ensure reliability."

Further, informant 6 also shared her experience as follows:

"The first migration occurred on 9 March 2020 due to the pandemic spread in Malaysia. Due to the Sri Petaling COVID-19 cluster, the number of cases of COVID-19 infections increased abruptly in Malaysia, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia decided to stop all the physical classes and co-curriculum. Thus, considering safety reasons, I decided to return to my hometown in Johor."

The findings are in line with the findings observed by Bilgili and de Graaff (2020) and Crespo et al. (2021), which state that individuals choose to return to their place of origin, to places with better healthcare systems and social support networks, and areas with more opportunities for remote work.

Rate of currency

Fifth, the informants further add that the low rate of Malaysia's currency influences out-migration to seek better-paid jobs. Concerning this, informant 10 said:

"The Malaysian currency has become lower recently. As I lived in Kedah and went to Thailand frequently before the pandemic, it is obvious that the purchasing power of the Malaysia Ringgit has already decreased at a terrible rate. Suppose we migrate to another country that has a higher currency, such as Singapore. In that case, we can earn Singapore dollars and send the money to parents or family in Malaysia to improve the quality of life."

Informant 2 also adds:

"A few friends migrated to Singapore to get their first job after graduation. The direct reason is that working for 3,000 Singapore dollars equals around 10,000 Ringgit in Malaysia. Three times difference in earning is much more attractive for them to work for."

These findings are in line with Ramos's (2019) and Khattak et al.'s (2021) findings, which suggest that currency fluctuations can influence both the decision to migrate and the destination, with individuals from weaker currencies are more likely to relocate to countries with stronger currencies because the earning potential was greater and living costs were lower.

Education

Next, education is further stated by the informants as another factor that influences migration. This is reflected in the narratives of informant 2 as follows:

"I still remember seeing my friends leave their hometown for another state in Malaysia or some moving to a foreign country to pursue their studies. After secondary school graduation, I remembered a few friends whose families had the financial capability to support them in pursuing studies in foreign countries like the US and Taiwan. One reason I heard from them is that their parents believe certificates from outside Malaysia will have better work opportunities in Malaysia or foreign countries."

Informant 4 also personally shared her experience regarding this issue. He said:

"It is normal in society nowadays to move to a city or country with better education resources. My personal experience is that I sacrificed the chance to stay with family and move to Petaling Jaya to study at the top university in Malaysia."

The findings are parallel to the ones observed by Hendricks et al. (2021), Aissaoui and Marzouk (2019), and Kumar and Mishra (2020), which demonstrate how education acts as a social mobility mechanism, propelling individuals to look for opportunities outside of their place of origins.

Facilities

Finally, the informants also state that facilities are another factor which determines the decision to migrate. About this, informant 2 said:

"Public transport info like what kind of public transport is present near the university and bus route, so this will be easier for me to buy stuff or plan to go somewhere. Furthermore, knowing the hospital or clinic location is good when we need medical assistance."

Informant 7 further added:

"In December 2019, I was in the final phase of my PhD, spending significant time at a university far from home. I temporarily migrated to facilitate my studies and save on expenses. I also wanted to avoid the fatigue of commuting daily to meet my supervisor and access the library."

The findings are parallel to the studies conducted by Braun et al. (2020), Bae et al. (2019), and Abdullah et al. (2020) that emphasised the importance of facilities as a pull factor, with migrants seeking locations with better amenities and services such as educational facilities, healthcare access, and transportation networks.

Patterns of Intragenerational Social Mobility Among Malaysian Professionals in the Post-Pandemic Era

The third section of this research result and discussion part elucidates the third research objective, i.e., the patterns of intragenerational social mobility experienced by Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era. The various patterns are shown in Figure 1 and Table 4 as follows:

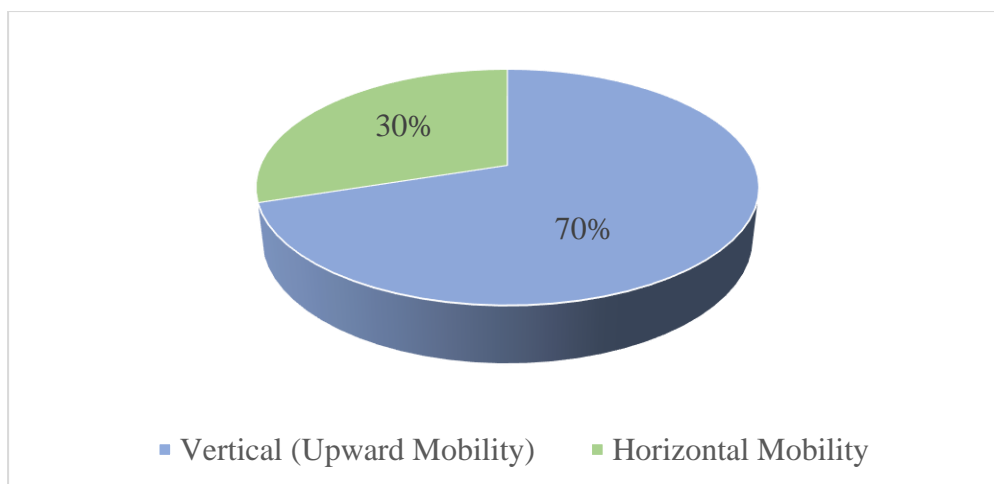


Figure 1: Patterns of Intragenerational Social Mobility Experienced by Malaysian Professionals

Table 4: Patterns of Intragenerational Social Mobility Experienced by Malaysian Professional

Informant	Patterns of Intragenerational Social Mobility
1	Horizontal
2	Vertical (Upward)
3	Horizontal
4	Vertical (Upward)
5	Vertical (Upward)
6	Vertical (Upward)
7	Vertical (Upward)
8	Horizontal
9	Vertical (Upward)
10	Vertical (Upward)

Figure 1 and Table 4 show there are 2 types of social mobility experienced by the informants i.e., horizontal and vertical (either upward or downward). 3 informants (30%) exhibit horizontal social mobility patterns, which involve movement within the same social stratum without substantial shifts in social status or class. 7 informants (70%), on the other hand, exhibit patterns of vertical upward social mobility. Vertical upward mobility denotes an increase in social status, which is associated with advancements in education, career, or income. Informants who experience upward mobility move into higher social strata, indicating that their socioeconomic circumstances have improved. This is mainly demonstrated by the shift from unemployed (after graduation stage) to the employed situation.

Overall, the findings of the study, which show various migration patterns and their impact on intragenerational social mobility among Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era, are consistent with several prominent migration theories. The study's identification of social networks as one of the influential elements in migration decisions is consistent with Baldassar et al. (2014) emphasis on family-related factors. The presence of these factors reflects the subtle interplay of family considerations in shaping the informants' migration choices.

The De Haas' (2010) Integrated Migration Theory provides a lens through which to interpret the identified migration patterns. The study's recognition of economic opportunity as a major influencing factor aligns with De Haas' (2010) conceptualization of favourable conditions attracting individuals to new places. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of living, and the availability of facilities all align with the negative conditions that act as push factors in De Haas' (2010) theory. The study's emphasis on both urban and rural migration patterns demonstrates Lee's theory's versatility in explaining a variety of migration streams.

The study's identification of shifts between different migration patterns demonstrates Lucas' (2004) theory related to rural-urban transition. The transition from rural to urban migrations, influenced by economic and social changes, echoes Lucas' (2004) theory. The study's evolving dynamics correspond to Lucas' (2004) insight into changing migration patterns across different spatial scales.

The patterns of horizontal and vertical upward intragenerational social mobility identified are consistent with theories, particularly Baldassar et al.'s (2014) consideration of family-related factors influencing migration choices. The pursuit of economic opportunities, combined with factors such as education and social networks, is consistent with theoretical frameworks, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of migration's impact on social mobility. The incorporation of Baldassar et al.'s (2014), De Haas' (2010), and Lucas' (2004) theories with the findings of the study improve our understanding of the entrancing interplay between migration patterns and social mobility among Malaysian professionals in the post-pandemic era.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Migration occurs due to various factors and leaves its impacts, indirectly leading to the issue of individuals' intragenerational social mobility. Migration in Malaysia shows fluctuations during the pandemic, affecting urban and rural areas. Economic opportunities, social networks, cost of living, COVID-19, currency rates, education, and facilities influence the likelihood of pattern changes. Before migration, individuals, specifically professionals, primarily consider the strategic location and available amenities. The family system theory is also essential, focusing on the family's role in migration decisions. Moreover, migration entails adapting to a new environment, requiring time for adjustment, but social relations facilitate this process. Overall, migration brings numerous positive impacts, including enhancing individuals' intragenerational social mobility.

This study enriches the understanding of migration in the light of important theoretical frameworks. It provides empirical evidence supporting the Family Systems Theory (Baldassar et al., 2014) by highlighting how familial relationships influence migration decisions. Additionally, the study aligns with De Haas' (2010) Integrated Migration Theory by exploring the multifaceted factors shaping migration within the Malaysian context, emphasising the importance of individual agency and context-specific analyses. Furthermore, the study resonates with Lucas' (2004) theory on rural-urban migration by elucidating the economic motivations driving migration patterns in Malaysia, emphasising the role of expected lifetime earnings differentials. Together, these theoretical perspectives offer a comprehensive understanding of migration dynamics, underscoring the interconnectedness of familial, economic, and contextual factors in shaping migration processes.

This study illuminates the complexities of social mobility issues among Malaysian professionals, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the migration phenomenon in the Malaysian context. This is vital to fill the research gaps, provide new insights into the sociological body of knowledge, and offer practical implications by providing valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and community stakeholders. By understanding the factors influencing migration patterns, such as social and economic considerations, policymakers can formulate targeted policies to address the needs of both sending and receiving communities. Urban planners can use the findings to develop sustainable urbanisation strategies that accommodate population growth while preserving environmental integrity. Additionally, community stakeholders can utilise the insights to foster social cohesion and support networks for migrated individuals, promoting inclusive and resilient communities.

Finally, since the focus of this qualitative study is limited to a small number of Malaysian professionals, future research may expand the scope to include the B40 and M40 groups, providing diverse and compelling data. In addition, the findings might be enhanced by using a quantitative approach and focusing on other related and more

specific scenarios about the issue of social mobility and migration, ensuring findings that satisfy research objectives.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Faizah Mohd Fakhruddin devised the project, developed the interview protocols, carried out all the interviews, transcribed, coded, and analysed the data, and contributed to the writings of interpretation and discussion of the findings. Fadilah Zaini wrote the Background of the Study and double-checked the discussion and the abstract.

DECLARATION OF STATEMENT

The lead author affirms that this manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study being reported that no important aspects of the study have been omitted and that any discrepancies from the study as planned (and, if relevant, registered) have been justified.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest. The manuscript has been reviewed and approved by the co-author.

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