Migration and food habits - Continuity and Change

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Abstract:

This article analyses how migration affects eating habits and the process of dietary acculturation. As mobility patterns become more complicated and practically every country is affected by migration in some way, this period offers both opportunities and challenges. Migration has the ability to enhance not just the economics but also the cultural, political, and social lives of both the countries of origin and the country of destination. Various studies pointed out that food and dietary patterns were affected by the migration process. Similarly, in some cases, migrants' culinary traditions and eating habits go with them. This is an effort to examine how traditional dietary practises and eating habits have changed and persisted throughout the migration.

Keywords: Migration, Dietary Practices, Food Habits, Food Acculturation.

Introduction

The history of humanity is the history of migration. The origins of migration can be traced to prehistoric times when individuals habitually traveled long distances for purposes of hunting, fishing, establishing a livelihood, and securing a place to call home (Messina and Lahav: 2006). The well-known historical types of migration were caused by colonialism and capitalism. The national awakenings caused by the industrial revolution and the collapse of feudalism led to a great labour migration. Asian, African, and European mass migration had a crucial role in shaping the nineteenth-century world. Twentieth and twenty-first-century migrations have played an important part in the evolution of the post-world war, post-imperial world order (Brown, Foot: 1994).

Commonly, migration implies- permanent or semi-permanent relocation by individuals or households in search of opportunities (Oberai: 1987). The reasons for leaving one's homeland can be for a wide range of reasons. Political oppression, religious persecution, eviction by dictatorial landowners, or the prospects of starvation were the driving forces at various points in time and in certain locations. The desire for adventure, the allure of money, or the allure of seeing a new place with endless

possibilities were also the motives (Sills: 1968). In reaction to shifting economic, social, political, cultural, or environmental conditions, migration may take place (Karin: 2007).

Determinants of Migration

Theoretical explanations of migration usually traced back to Revenstein's article from 1885, which traces the relationship between distance and the amount of movement that was at the heart of, which sought to establish the "laws" of migration. These regulations mandate that migrants transfer from places with few opportunities to places with many opportunities. The decision of where to settle is influenced by distance, with migrants typically moving close by. Migrants are motivated by the human desire to better themselves in material respects. Residents in rural areas are more likely to migrate than those of urban areas, and this tendency to move away quickens as trade and industry develop. Many researchers have now systematised and enlarged Ravenstein's fundamental laws, and empirical data have largely corroborated the relevance of the economic motivation in the decision to move, the detrimental effect of distance, and the step migration process.

One dominant approach explaining the determinants of migration is to regard migration as an equilibrating process arising from the interaction of 'push' and 'pull' factors introduced by Lee in 1966. While the former are 'negative' factors that tend to push migrants out of their originating areas, the latter are 'positive' factors that attract migrants to destination locations in the expectation of better their future lives. There are innumerable forces that function in any location to keep people there or draw them in, and there are other forces that have a tendency to reject them. Depending on one's age, experience, education, skill, etc., these forces have different effects on different people. He also introduced the concept of intervening obstacles like distance, cost of transport, restrictive migration laws, etc. which also exert varying levels of influence on migration.

Another formulation links migration with development. Lewis developed the first well-known dual economy model of development. Authors like John Fei, Gustave, and Ranis and at a later date Torodo are associated with the model. The process of transferring labour from rural to urban areas is an essential component of the economic model of development. This model sees migration as an equilibrating mechanism that finally leads to wage equality in the two sectors by transferring

labour from the labour surplus to the labour deficit. The dual economy theory, which incorporates subsistence, a sparsely populated rural agricultural sector, and a densely populated contemporary urban industrial sector, forms the basis of the concept.

Sjaastad, in the theory of human investment, regards migration as an activity involving the calculation of costs and returns (Joseph: 2006). He developed a theory of migration that views deciding to move as an investment choice that takes into account a person's anticipated costs and profits over time. Returns are made up of both monetary and non-monetary elements; the latter includes modifications to "psychic benefits" as a function of locational preference. Similar to expenses, costs can be both monetary and non-monetary. Transportation expenses, property disposal fees, lost pay during travel, and any training for new employment are all considered financial expenditures. Leaving familiar surroundings, acquiring new food practises and social traditions, and other similar expenses are all psychic costs.

In any study on migration, the aforementioned approaches centre on individual decision-making as the main concern. This premise's proponents emphasise that migrants make logical decisions. The social, economic, and political contexts in which a person lives and works have an impact on their decision-making. According to these theories, migration is a process of equilibration in which labour is transferred from one region with low production to one with high productivity. The causes of population shifts that are unique to particular historical periods are indifferent to the equilibrium method (Joseph: 2006).

In view of the inadequacy of the different versions of the equilibrium approach to uncover the process of migration specifically from the historical angle, an alternative formulation known as the historical-structural perspective has been introduced by some other scholars like Portes, Cardoz, Balan, Mangalam, etc. Their philosophy contends that historical processes determine labour availability and have an impact on changes in migration patterns. In any migrant stream, the structural modification of social setup takes precedence over individual incentives. Migration becomes a class phenomenon where the unit of analysis should be the stream rather than the individual components. Therefore, any study of migration must take into account a wider category of socioeconomic and political developments, of which migration is a component (Charles: 1982, Joseph: 2006).

Internal and exterior, or international, movements are both considered forms of migration. Internal migration is typically used to describe a population or individual movement within a social system. Internal migration is defined as the transfer of people within the same nation from one administrative unit to another, such as a region, province, or municipality (World Migration: 2005). Internal migration, as defined by the United Nations, is a long-term shift in residency from one geographic region to another within a single nation. Internal migration, for instance, could include moving from a rural to an urban area, from one city to another, or from one country's region to another. An individual undertaking such a shift is viewed as an in-migrant from the destination or receiving area, whereas the same individual is viewed as an out-migrant from the sending area (Crowdner, Hall: 2007).

One or more international borders must be crossed in order for a person to move internationally, which changes their legal status (World Migration: 2003). It is widely understood to mean moving from one country to another for one's primary residence. In order to distinguish between international migrants and international visitors, the United Nations suggested that this definition be expanded to include a time element of at least one year. Depending on how the place of origin or destination is seen, international migration can be either immigration or emigration. From the perspective of the destination, the movement is inflow or immigration, while the same movement is outflow or emigration from the sending area.

According to Castles and Miller (1993), global politics and society are being transformed by a transnational revolution that includes international migration. International migration has never been higher, with 175 million individuals living outside of their place of origin as of today (Messina and Lahav: 2006). Migration to other countries in search of opportunities has been prevailing in all the inhabiting countries. Among the destination areas of the world, the Middle East Arab countries or the West Asian countries receive a major share of international migrants. Due to a lack of available labour in these nations, both white-collar and blue-collar workers, both skilled and unskilled, had to be imported from other regions.

Migration and dietary acculturation

Migration's ability to affect change in either sending or receiving regions and nations depends on three primary factors: the number of people moving,

the length of the movement; and the movement's class makeup (Portes, Alejandro: 2008). Large-scale remittance and expenditure flows have produced significant economic transformations and increased savings for developing and underdeveloped nations. The capital scarcity experienced by the economy had been solved to some extent due to the accumulation of deposits by the migrants (Prakash: 1998). Remittances and their use are largely to blame for the economic effects, particularly those that affect immigrant households. Remittances are reportedly mostly used for domestic spending, with additional significant applications including debt repayment, building construction and maintenance, and bank deposits.

Kurien (2002) conducted ethnographic research in Kerala to understand the migration pattern and migration-induced social changes. It pointed out that "international migration introduces a sudden flow of wealth to the home communities, giving rise to attempts by migrants and their families to reinvent their community identity and practices to obtain a better status". Due to their considerable spending power, migrant households may buy items more frequently and effortlessly. Food patterns were also affected by a shift away from many of the home-grown tubers to a diet with greater amounts of ghee, sweets and meat (Kurien: 2002).

Although they are ingrained in people's personalities and are stable and long-lasting, eating habits can change. Changes in the social or physical environment may be one of the causes of this change. The interaction of a multitude of elements, such as the weather conditions, climate, beliefs and pracices, economy and educational levels among others, affects people's food patterns. People's nutritional well-being is influenced by the foods they choose to eat, which in turn has an impact on their overall health. A place's eating patterns have evolved over a considerable amount of time in response to a variety of environmental, cultural, and migratory influences.

Changes in migrant's diets are not simple, it is not linear and is determined by various components. There has been no observable shift away from 'traditional' eating habits towards 'westernised' ones since the migration. The migrants face opportunities and challenges as they move from a comfortable house to independent life in a more recent location. People who migrate frequently endure a loss of their familiar food alternatives and culinary customs as they are exposed to new social and cultural environments. A close relationship exists

between dietary changes and household income and economic standing (Akerele and Odeniyi 2015). Due to the time constraints faced by student migrants, fast foods, which are generally less expensive and easy to get, serve as convenience foods. As a result, there are unfavourable changes in their dietary diversity. The most significant rise in fast food consumption was noted by student migrants after they immigrated (Mishra and Anand.2020).

A research on Chinese immigrants in Australia (Lee et al. 2022) revealed that many of their eating habits resembled both Chinese and Australian culture, demonstrating some degree of acculturation. Dietary acculturation is the process through which an immigrant population acquires the eating habits and food preferences of their new cultural context. Due to their familiarity and established eating habits, participants made an effort to retain their traditional Chinese eating habits. Due to varied lifestyles, family structures, and food availability, they also encountered difficulties maintaining these eating habits in Australia's food environment. As a result, occasionally the general format of meals throughout the day remained the same but the actual items changed. Participants' retention of eating habits from their native country in their new surroundings was a clear indication of this.

Because lifestyle changes can affect eating patterns, people's lifestyles and what they eat are closely related. It has been noted that developing nations have experienced a significant demographic shift from rural to urban areas during the previous few decades (Solomons and Gross.1995). As a result, when a person moves, their environment and lifestyle change, which in turn affects their eating habits as they succumb to the demands of the new environment. The quality of the prior diet may vary as a result of these modifications. Rural-urban migration is on the rise and is likely to continue as long as rural residents lack prospects for economic and social growth in many emerging nations, including Ghana. In-migrant families, which are an increasing segment in most countries, are particularly understudied when it comes to urban nutrition in developing nations.

Continuity in food habits

It is revealed by some of the studies that the culinary practices and food habits of the migrants travel with them. They might not be in their main luggage, be rare or nonexistent, but as they get to their new destination, they immediately begin to retrieve them. As shown by many studies, individuals who initially arrive are mostly young people who have not cooked often before. Their diets tend to be lacking; they frequently consume fast

food, items from the bar downstairs, etc. However, once somewhat acclimatised, individuals begin to revert to their own customs and habits (Obisaw. et.al 2000).

The substitution of traditional meals with alternatives that are easily accessible in the destination location, the addition or introduction of new foods, and the alteration of recipes have all resulted in changes to dietary practises. For migrants, these shifts may have both favourable and unfavourable nutritional and social implications. Additionally, it was observed that some of the migrants were successful in keeping, at least in part, their traditional cuisine. The traditional eating and socialising habits of the migrants were modified by rapid modernization and close contact with the host culture in a complex way (Renzaho and Burns 2006).

The study conducted to examine patterns of dietary practises among first- and second-generation Ghanaian migrants living in Greater Manchester, highlighting the complexity of dietary change and showing that it is a non-linear process that depends on a number of variables. The study population was a mixed-race group that included both British and Ghanaian dietary customs. Although there were differences in the significance of cultural identity as a motivator of dietary practises among groups, all individuals remained with certain traditional practises, which is an indication of how migrants regard their native customs. The four primary clusters of interrelated elements that influenced dietary practises were: the social and cultural milieu, food accessibility, the context of migration, and food beliefs/perceptions. The likelihood of adopting UK eating habits was significantly increased by being a second-generation immigrant, having non-Ghanaian social networks, leading a hectic lifestyle, and not having enough time to make Ghanaian cuisine (Kwasi. 2017).

Conclusion

A growing number of academics are interested in studying migration since it is still a crucial political, economic, social, and cultural problem that is subject to rapid change. Unavoidably, migration brings about change, and it has the potential to bring about additional changes in both the sending and receiving communities. When people move to a new place, they frequently change from the food choices and culinary traditions they were accustomed to. It depends on the type, traits, and individuals engaged in the migration process for these adjustments to be generally applicable. Dietary acculturation is the process through which a migratory group adopts the eating customs and food preferences of their new cultural environment. These behavioural

changes are a result of both increasing rates of urbanisation and migration from underdeveloped to industrialised countries. Dietary acculturation is an intricate, multifaceted phenomenon that varies widely as a result of the merging of so many different cultures and environmental factors. However, there are migrants who want to continue with the traditional culinary practices in the receiving areas too. As shown by several studies, those who initially migrate are mostly young men who may not cook often and they eat convenience food. However, after becoming somewhat accustomed to their new surroundings, individuals begin to revert to their native habits and dietary practices.

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