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The temporariness of Bangladeshi migration in Greece

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Abstract

Bangladeshi overseas workers migrating to the West, who once aimed to establish long-term prospects, have been increasingly relying on temporary migration since the mid-2000s, as a result of changes in the migration policies and economic conditions of destination countries and corresponding shifts in migrant strategies. This paper examines the "temporariness" of low-skilled Bangladeshi migrant workers in Greece, by comparing the experiences of those who arrived in the 1990s and were issued resident permits with those who arrived in the mid-2000s with the support of the former immigrants, but who have not been able to secure any kind of visa. Members of the first generation have been forced to shorten their long-term stays and shift to temporary migration, while members of the second generation have had to suspend their lives in a state of extended temporariness. Despite these challenges, the enduring positive image of overseas migration in villages in Bangladesh allows migrants to maintain their motivation and they therefore continue to promote the migration culture.

Keywords: Temporariness; Greece; Bangladesh; Migration; Overseas Workers

Introduction

Although working abroad has been a commonly shared desire among male youth in Bangladesh for some decades, the perception and pattern of how one does it has changed in recent years. Many young Bangladeshi men assume that they work abroad for some years to earn money and return to home to establish their own business, which is defined as "short-term migration" (Siddiqui, 2003). Contrary to such short-term migration, long-term or permanent emigration from Bangladesh to the West has a longer history that dates back to the 18th century.

When I conducted field research in a rural village of Bangladesh, one of my host brothers, Bulbul,[2] had strong desire to go to Greece, where his eldest brother, Amin, had lived. Amin migrated to Greece in the 1990s and secured a resident permit there in 1998. With Amin's support, in 2005, Bulbul finally migrated to Greece. However, soon after he arrived, the Greek government stopped issuing resident permits to foreign laborers and his life has been suspended; he is not able to live freely in Greece nor is he able to go back home. Because of the Greek economic crisis, Amin also gave up his life in Greece and returned home in a Bangladesh's village in 2011.

Prior to the mid-2000s, migration from Bangladesh to the West primarily followed a pattern of long-term residency used to be understood as long-term migration (Siddiqui, 2003). Since then, however, "many destination country governments, including more industrialised

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[2] All names in this paper are pseudonyms in order to maintain privacy.

European countries, are…attracting *temporary* foreign workers as a part of their national development strategies" (Aksakal et al., 2018, p. 6, emphasis added). Such temporary migration is today keenly discussed as integral to neoliberal economic policies. Latham et al. (2014) notes of this integration: "Temporariness is being institutionalized as a condition acceptable for growing numbers of people worldwide, including those whose residency status is shaped by national and multilateral measures that secure national borders, those for whom temporary employment is the norm, and those who have limited social rights" (p. 3).

In this paper, I will examine the "temporariness" of Bangladeshi migration to Greece. To do so, I contrast the experience of first-generation Bangladeshi migrants, who arrived in Greece in the 1990s and have been issued resident permits, with members of the second generation, who began coming to Greece in the mid-2000s with the support of the first generation, and who have not been able to secure any kind of visa. Both groups illustrate how the shifting nature of this temporariness shapes the struggles and life paths of Bangladeshi migrants.

Background of overseas workers from Bangladesh

Increase in overseas migration, the complexity of temporariness and permanence

Bangladesh has a history of sending migrant workers abroad that stretches back to before independence. Recently, more workers have been sent than before. Workers, primarily men, are seeking a measure of economic security that they cannot achieve within Bangladesh. The number of migrants, mostly of low-skilled workers, has rapidly increased since the 1970s, and, since the 1990s, particularly to Middle Eastern countries (van Schendel, 2009, p. 226).

Overseas employment in Gulf countries is allowed under bilateral government agreements and Bangladesh government, BMET (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training), offers overseas worker applicants with training programs prior to departure. These migrants go abroad for "short-term" employment under specific job contracts (Siddiqui, 2003, p. 2), although many of them repeat the process multiple times, engaging in what has come to be known as "circular migration" (Vertovec, 2007).

While the short-term migrants to Gulf countries are mostly married males, many of the migrants to the West are younger, single males. Their "migration is through work vouchers; in other cases, by changing their visa status from student to work and, in others, through family reunification" (Siddiqui, 2003, p. 2). Yet, their migration is far from an individual strategy; they are highly expected to bring economic benefit to their family and kin in the home village (van Schendel, 2009, p. 230). Those who immigrate to the West and are issued with residential permits tend to get married to women from their home areas and invite not only their wives, but also their relatives to join them in the host countries. They also continue sending remittances home, particularly to their parents. As a work by Gardner (2008) in Sylhet indicates, some villages in Bangladesh have been strongly connected with and dependent on global capitalism through sending migrants.

However, the majority of today's overseas workers in the West are not skilled or educated enough to secure status as students or professionals when they migrate, and therefore take advantage of the Global North's expanding temporary migrant work programs (see Latham et al., 2014). The actual situation in these days, therefore, cannot be clearly distinguished between the short-term migration to the Gulf countries and the long-term migration to the West.

The perceived image of overseas migration

Bangladesh's rapid economic growth since the beginning of the 21st century has been supported by two main sources: remittances from overseas workers and the country's export-oriented ready-made garment industry. Laborers from rural villages predominantly support both of these, as many young people have been migrating to urban areas or abroad to seek employment opportunities.

In order to clarify the nature of overseas work, I would like to compare it to work in Bangladesh's cities. Many young men from my research site have migrated to Dhaka, predominantly to work in the export-oriented garment industry. They are part of a wider pattern of migration by members of the "first educated generation" (Minamide, 2015) to work in Dhaka after being educated at least through the primary level. Although it is said that about 70 percent of Bangladesh's garment workers are women, single males are also working in the industry. As is widely known, the industry's working conditions are problematic, with long hours and very low salaries. Workers are frustrated, but without other options, they consider it a temporary job.

The negative image of working in the garment industry in Bangladesh demotivates young workers from continuing to work in the country. In addition to the problematic working conditions, the ease with which one can enter the industry also creates an image of the work as not very respectable (as the garment industry is labor-intensive, demand for unskilled labor is high and thus anyone, even those without a primary school education or from a very low economic class, can enter the industry.)

On the contrary, working overseas requires sending fees and thus only those families who can prepare them can send a member abroad. Although the actual jobs available overseas are similarly semi-skilled or unskilled whether in Bangladesh or abroad, the salary gap and their family backgrounds create a more positive image and higher status for overseas migrant workers. Moreover, since overseas migrants are expected to create further opportunities for their relatives to migrate abroad, the status of overseas migrants, particularly to the West, is highly valued in marriage considerations, for both brides and grooms.[3] Regarding the image and ideal of overseas migrants in Bangladesh's villages, Gardner (1993, p. 1-2) comments: "the economic dominance of families with migrant members has meant that *bidesh* is associated with success and power, which the *desh* is unable to provide".

Research process and target area

Data for this paper was collected in a rural village in north central Bangladesh (hereafter Village X) and in Athens, Greece, where migrants from Bangladesh, including those from Village X, are working. The number of married males from the village migrating to the Gulf to support their families has been increasing since the early 2000s. In 2019, 18 male migrants from the village (or 15 percent of the adult male population) were working abroad.[4]

Previous research indicates that more migrants come from locations in Bangladesh that are either more densely populated or more prone to natural disasters, particularly floods (see

[3] A groom working overseas is expected to create opportunities for his bride's brothers; conversely, a bride whose brother is working overseas can provide her husband with a chance to migrate.

[4] The total population of Village X was approximately 400 in 2019.

Ikeda, 1993, p. 164). Geographically, Village X has a relatively high elevation compared to other districts, allowing rice cultivation throughout the year. Seasonal labour migration to urban areas used to be a common practice in Bangladesh during the rainy season when it was difficult to cultivate the land, but the lower risk of flooding in the village has meant that the people there have not needed to seasonally migrate (Minamide, 2015, p. 36). Nowadays, however, both the increasing demand for cash income and limited job opportunities beyond the agricultural sector have motivated people to seek jobs outside the village. It can thus be said that Village X is among those that have only recently begun sending people abroad.

I have been conducting anthropological fieldwork in Village X and other rural villages in Bangladesh since 2000, including stays of a few years long. The primary theme of my research has been the social transformations unfolding among the "first educated generation", those who were born in the 1990s and were the first in their families to attend school. Primary education was rapidly expanded across rural Bangladesh during the 1990s, not only by the government, but also by private sectors. Some of the parents who choose private schools to send their children by paying tuition are overseas workers, and the number of private schools has been steadily increasing since the mid-2000s (Minamide, 2005). Those who migrate abroad do not necessarily have a higher education than other villagers. They are, however, extremely concerned about their children's education, and cite it as one of the core demands of the cash income.

In addition to education, buying land has become a key way that overseas workers and their families invest remittances. All of the migrants from the research area are male, which means that the village is losing farm labor to cultivate land. Yet, migrant families continue to buy land, not only as a property investment, but also as a symbol of the change in their economic status. As a result, land prices have been rising year by year. Gardner (1993) also notes "that the land is seen as ailing spiritually is an expression of the economic and political dominance of *bidesh*, and of radical changes within the *desh*" (p.8).

This paper deals with young men who migrated from Village X to Athens. I have lived with the same host family since I began doing fieldwork there in 2000 until the present. One of my host brothers, Amin worked in Athens from the 1990s to 2011, and in 2005, his brother Bulbul also migrated to Athens. Through my long-term relationship with them, I have come to know why they desired to migrate, how they maintain contact between Bangladesh and Greece, and what the two brothers have contributed to their family lives.

In August 2011, I visited the two brothers in Athens and conducted a small study of their friends and colleagues who had also migrated there from Bangladesh.[5] My host brothers introduced me to 13 Bangladeshi migrants with whom I conducted informal interviews about the process and path of their migration to Athens, their professional history, their home village and family, their living situation in Athens, and their future prospects (see Table 1). After visiting them in Athens, I again conducted follow-up research back in Village X.

[5] I revisited Athens in November 2014 to conduct follow-up research.

Table 1. Interviews in Athens

	Name	Current Profession	Current life	Hometown in Bangladesh	Relationship with former migrants	Migrating Year	Legal Status Secured	History before arriving in Athens	Going Home to Bangladesh
First Generation	ZA	Owner of Supermarket, 2 Grocery Stores, and Travel Agency	Married with two kids	Dhaka	Greek wife (married in Russia)	1990	1990 (partner visa)	Studied in Russia, worked as engineer in different countries	Every year
	MSD	Garment Work Street Vendor	Living at shared room with other immigrants	Mirzapur		1989	2001		Every year after 2001; wife went to Greece in 2003
	Amin	Garment factory Owner	Married with two kids	Jamalpur		1992	1998	Worked in Pakistan for 2 years (garment industry)	Every year after 2000; wife went to Greece in 2003
	M	Owner of a garment factory and 2 Grocery Stores	Married with two kids			1994	1998		Thinking to return home
	A	Garment factory Owner	Single living alone			1996	1998		has not yet returned to Bangladesh
	R	Garment factory Owner	Married with two kids	Jossore		1997	1998	Worked in Pakistan for 3 years (garment industry)	Wife went to Greece in 2006; called 8 relatives to Greece
Second Generation	MSR	None	Living at shared room	Kariganj		2004	N	Worked in Germany for 3 years	
	K	Garment Work Street Vendor	Living at shared room	Jamalpur	Amin's uncle	2004	Up to 2008	Worked in an agriculture program of Greek government for 4 years	
	Bulbul	Garment factory Owner		Jamalpur	Amin's brother	2005	N		
	R	Garment Work		Jamalpur	Amin's brother-in-law	2006	N	Worked in Dubai for 2 years (construction)	(Left for France in 2012)
	S	Garment Work	Living at shared room	Brahmanbaria	Brother who came in 1991	2005	N		
	BH	Indian Restaurant Staff	Mosque	Norsindi		2006	N		
	H	Imam				2008	N	Imam in Pakistan for 20 years	

(Source: Author's Survey in 2011 and 2014)

Bangladeshi migrant workers in Greece

A few in-depth studies have been conducted on Bangladeshi workers in Greece (Kassimeris and Samouris, 2012; Fouskas, 2012). I would like to refer to these for a better understanding of my case study.

The number of immigrants in Greece rose sharply from the early 1990s until the early 2000s. As Kassimeris and Samouris explain: "Greek society did not feel the real impact of migration flows before the beginning of the 1990s, when factors such as the end of the Cold War and the thrust of globalization facilitated the movement of people" (2012, p. 176). Subsequently, "It was the boost in the Greek economy in the mid-1990s and the early 2000s that led Asian and African immigrants to stay in the country for longer periods" (Kassimeris and Samouris, 2012, p. 175). The cheaper labour force in Greece compared to other EU countries positioned the country to expand export-oriented manufacturing to EU markets. For this, South Asian migrants were indispensable, particularly in the garment industry.

For Bangladeshi overseas workers, Greece has been considered a gateway to the EU economic sphere, and today it is one of the few Western countries that hosts Bangladeshi immigrants (Siddiqui, 2005, p. 80-81; Kassimeris and Samouris, 2012, p. 175; Fouskas, 2012, p. 62). Before the economic crisis of 2009, the Greek economy was able to tolerate immigrants arriving by road without a visa. According to my research, Bangladeshi immigrants who were staying in the country without permission were issued resident permits in 1998 by the Greek government. Resident permits were also issued in 2001 and 2005.

At the time of my visit in 2011, however, Greece had already been facing an economic crisis for two years and the EU had imposed austerity measures on the country. Both local and immigrant workers had lost jobs and suffered in a difficult situation. Yet, at that time, many immigrants from South Asia and Eastern Europe were continuing to work in Greece. While there are no official statistics about those staying in Greece without legal permission, the

chairperson of the Bangladeshi Association in Greece told me that approximately 30,000 Bangladeshis were living in Greece in 2011. According to Kassimeris and Samouris (2012, p. 176), of the 50,000 Pakistanis and 12,000 Bangladeshis legally living in Greece in 2007, 90 percent were in Athens or the broader Attika region.

In this paper, I categorize those who came in the 1990s as "the first generation." Many of these were able to secure legal status by 2005. Members of the "second generation," or those who began arriving in the mid-2000s, have not been able to secure legal status in Greece. This is because the Greek government stopped issuing resident permits to immigrants after 2005, as the Greek economy has been declining since the mid-2000s. Table 1 shows that six of my interviewees were first generation immigrants and the remaining seven were of the second generation.

Challenges of the first generation of Bangladeshi immigrants in Greece

As a case of the first generation, I will first introduce Amin's experience. Born in 1971 in Village X, he left his home after studying up to the 9th grade. He first went to Pakistan and worked at a garment factory there for a few years. In 1992, he moved to Greece by road, crossing the borders of Jordan and Turkey. After arriving in Athens, Amin worked under a Pakistani employer first and then operated a factory with a local Greek partner. After securing legal status, he started his own factory in 2000. He hired mainly Bangladeshi immigrants, employing 100 workers at the height of his business.

It is common for Bangladeshi immigrants to work in the garment industry in Greece and indeed, the majority of garment factories in Athens were owned by Bangladeshi immigrants in the mid-2000s. According to the chairperson of the Bangladeshi Association in Greece, in 2011 approximately 200 factories were operated by Bangladeshi owners in Greece. Similar to Amin's experience, Pakistanis operated many of Greece's garment factories in the 1990s. When Pakistanis abandoned the factories due to the Greek economic crisis, factory ownership shifted to Bangladeshi immigrants. Just like Amin, many Bangladeshi migrants "were [first] employed as tailors, an occupational craft that they had learned in Pakistan or Turkey during their journey to Greece" (Fouskas, 2012, p. 62).

After securing legal status in Greece in 1998, Amin returned home in 2000 for the first time since leaving in 1990. I was in Village X for long-term fieldwork when he suddenly returned. He stayed for one month and during his stay, he planned the family's house re-construction. The family lived in a tin house with only a few rooms, which was too small for his parents and six siblings. Amin planned to build a brick house with seven rooms.

After Amin's temporary return, his mother searched for his partner and arranged his marriage in 2002. He could not come back home for his own wedding because of his job in Greece, instead conducting a "mobile telephone marriage" (Minamide, 2006). He returned again in 2003 and took his wife to Greece, where their daughter was born in 2004 their son in 2005. He arranged to bring his younger brother Bulbul and his brother-in-law to Greece in 2005. However, by that time the economic situation in Greece was declining and his business had also shrunk.

Amin's wife and children moved back to Bangladesh in 2010 when their daughter reached primary school age. Amin and his wife did not want their daughter to be socialized in Western culture and wanted to ensure that she was educated in a Muslim society. They did not return

to Village X, but stayed in Dhaka and sent both their children to a private school in the English medium. Although they returned to Bangladesh, they maintained hopes that their children would migrate to Europe again for their higher education and beyond. Amin's wife told me that since their children were born in Greece and had citizenship there, they could go back to Europe easily. She noted that while they should be socialized as proper Muslims in their early childhood, it should be no problem for them to get a higher education in a non-Muslim society when they become mature.

In 2011, Amin gave his business to his brother and also returned to Bangladesh. With the savings he earned in Greece, he tried to start a business in Dhaka, but it was too difficult for him as he had no networks, having been absent from Bangladesh for two decades, and had no experience living in Dhaka. After a few years, he moved his family back, not to his original village, but to the nearby town in Jamalpur. He tried to start an agricultural business in the village by hiring local farmers, but again without success. Since he had been issued an EU green card in Greece, after depleting his savings, he decided to migrate by himself again to Europe, this time not to Greece, but to Germany, where his friends worked. After looking for a job in Germany without success, he worked in Italy for a few years. In 2017, he returned to Bangladesh and told me that it had already become too tough for someone his age (he was nearly 50 years old at that time) to survive the hard work in Europe. He moved back to his village and started his agriculture business again. Although he could not save money during his second migration, he had bought lands in the village during his first migration and was able to sell a part of them. The land price had risen more than ten times in a decade and with that benefit, he has started dairy farming at his family home.

When interviewing other first-generation migrants, I collected stories similar to Amin's struggles in Greece. As Table 1 shows, five of the first generation arrived in Greece in the early 1990s and secured legal status either in 1998 or in 2001. When they arrived, all of them were single. Fouskas (2012) also notes of Bangladeshi migrants in Europe whom he interviewed: "most were single men, only a few were married, most having left their family in Bangladesh" (p. 58).

During my research trip to Athens in 2011, I visited two garment factories owned and operated by Bangladeshis. One of the owners, Rasel was Amin's friend and had quite a similar experience, first coming to Greece by himself and securing a resident permit in 1998. He returned to his home in Bangladesh to marry and then brought his wife to Greece. He helped eight relatives, including his brother, his brother-in-law, and his uncle, to migrate to Greece. The other owner, Alam, also secured legal status in 1998 and ran a factory that employed about 40 Bangladeshi workers. Alam has not returned to Bangladesh or married.

Like Amin and Rasel, once they secure legal status and start traveling back and forth between Bangladesh and Greece, migrants often try to bring their brothers or relatives to Greece. This costs them about 1 million Taka (the equivalent of 15,000 USD in 2011) per person in agent fees.[6]

[6] Although first-generation migrants were able to secure their own residence permits, they are not legally allowed to bring relatives other than their wives to join them.

Struggles of the second generation of Bangladeshi immigrants in Greece

Compared to the first generation, second generation immigrants followed a similar path in travelling from Bangladesh by road through Jordan and Turkey, but unlike the first generation, they did not stay in any other country, instead going directly to Greece. At first, they depend on their brothers for accommodation and finding a job (see also, Fouskas, 2012, p. 62; Kassimeris and Samouris, 2012, p. 175).

Despite their support network, however, those who arrived in the mid-2000s have been unable to secure legal status. Without it, the second generation can never return home or even walk freely in Athens. The decline of the Greek economy has also created a series of new and serious challenges for them. When I visited Athens in 2011, not a few immigrants were working as street vendors, selling flowers, handkerchiefs, cosmetics, or distributing flyers to survive. Fouskas also describes the obstacles that these immigrants have faced and their subsequent employment in low-prestige jobs with reference to Psimmenos (2007, p. 19): "(a) lack of work or residence permits and incapability of their renewal, (b) dependence on others for work and social benefits, (c) failure in legal employment and work authorization acquisition because of immigrants' initial informal condition, and (d) incapacity of legal status maintenance due to economic or personal changes" (Fouskas, 2012, p. 55).

As a case of the second generation I would like to now introduce Bulbul's story. Bulbul had a strong desire to go abroad, and just after arriving in Greece, he worked at Amin's factory for three and a half years. However, he quarreled with his brother and quit his factory, working as a street vendor for one month and taking a ship-cleaning job for two months. He also worked at another Bangladeshi owner's garment factory for half a year. Later, he reconciled with his brother and came back to his factory. When Amin decided to go back to Bangladesh in 2011, Bulbul took over the factory. Bulbul had a fiancé, originally his maternal cousin, in the village before going to Greece and got married over the phone after migrating. Yet, as he could not return to see her, or bring her to Greece, his wife had been waiting for him in the village without anything to do.

Among the second generation, some went to Greece after working in the Gulf, some coming directly to Greece from the Gulf. During my stay in Athens, I often heard from second generation migrants that they regretted coming to Greece. Those who had worked in the Gulf before coming to Greece said, "working in the Gulf was much better with legal permits, I could return to my village for vacation." They came to Greece because of the better image of Europe and a desire to earn more. Most of the second generation told me that if they could not secure legal status, they might go back home to Bangladesh after working one more year or so, but when I revisited three years later, in 2014, most were still in Greece under the same situation.

The temporariness of migration to Greece

Long-term migration turns temporary

Overseas Bangladeshi workers in Greece have obviously been affected by the economic crisis and the political transformation of the host country, dimming their prospects as long-term migrants. For them, Greece seems to have changed from the gateway to life in the West to a place of temporary migration where one earns money to return home.

The first generation of Bangladeshi immigrants were able to secure resident permits and maintain family lives in Greece with Bangladeshi wives. Some were able to operate businesses and hire Bangladeshi employees. As Mapril, who examined Bangladeshi immigrants in Portugal, has noted, migrants are measured by their achievements, and the marker of a successful migrant is that he becomes a "patron:" "he has his own business, he is his own boss, [he] no longer depends on others to make a living" (Mapril, 2011, p. 292). Moreover, successful migrants financially support their relatives to join them. By these measures, first generation of Bangladeshi migrants in Greece seemed to have succeeded in their migration to the West.

However, as the economic crisis in Greece and neoliberal policies to increase temporary migrant workers in Europe widened (Vosko et al., 2014), these first-generation migrants, like Amin, were forced to shift their strategies and return home. As a result, their migration, which previously offered more long-term prospects, could now be recognized as following a typical pattern of temporary labour migration, where "one important objective of temporary labour migrants is to accumulate sufficient financial resources abroad in order to build a house, start a small business or invest in other types of assets on returning home" (Aksakal et al., 2018, p. 7).

Extended temporariness

The experiences of the second generation are vastly different from those of the first generation. Their undocumented status has put their lives in a state of seemingly permanent suspension. They suffer, and fear, their circumstances. Mapril contrasts the successful patron with the "madman" who cannot secure legal status: "The anguish of not being able to return, due to lack of documentation, of being now 'poor' and 'little' people, of being vulnerable and afraid of going out because of deportation … is unbearable and stressful" (Mapril, 2011, p. 293).

The suspension of their lives is not merely about where they live, but also about their life course and plans. Since they immigrate to Greece as single men, the unexpected extension of their "temporary" status causes them stress about their future life. Mapril explains: "they cannot contribute to the parents' household nor marry and constitute their own household and consequently their access to adulthood is blocked" (Mapril, 2011, p. 290). In my interview, Bulbul complained about this point: "I have lost many things. My life is passing without what I need at this age. These six years will never come back." It is obvious that "his loss" includes his marriage life. In this sense, overseas migration is "one of the only opportunities to reach adulthood (Mapril, 2011, p. 290)," and for the second generation who are stuck in their life course, they cannot even reach a sense of adulthood.

The pride as overseas migrants

What motivates these migrants to continue working abroad in this difficult situation? One of my interviewees in Athens, Alam, a first-generation immigrant, explained to me how hard it is to work abroad and emphasized that crossing borders causes immigrants unimaginable troubles. When I asked him why Bangladeshis aimed to go abroad even with such risks, he answered:

> Listen, if I come home now with money, young people would look at me and want to be successful like me. They are the age of the dreamer. They dream about going

> abroad and earning money at 18-19 years old. No one wants to be poor. Everyone desires to success. (fieldnotes, August 2011)

His statement highlights two important aspects of overseas migration. One is that people dream of achieving success by working abroad. As Gardner (1993) describes: "Most villagers learn about foreign countries from return migrants, whose stories are later reproduced in increasingly fantastic form by non-migrants" (p. 9). The other has to do with the pride of those working abroad; they believe that the villagers do envy them as successful people, and this is borne out in practice. Bulbul also emphasized this point:

> People in the village think living abroad is easy. But life in a foreign country is full of trouble. I have to work hard as hell. In Bangladesh, I could survive peacefully with half of this toughness. I could have spent a good life with half the trouble. If I do this garment work in Bangladesh, it would be much better, living with my parents and siblings. But, if I had worked at a garment factory in Bangladesh, people might have said, "you are doing such poor work." And I would be humiliated. It is not shameful if I do just the same work, but far away. Full of troubles. But people in Bangladesh say working abroad is good…. They look up to me. That's it! Only their respect I got, nothing else.

It is his belief in the positive image of overseas migrants held back home—a belief he also had before migrating—that can keep up his motivation to survive in difficult conditions.

Conclusion

Migration of Bangladeshi overseas workers to the West, which once aimed to establish long-term prospects, has been steadily transformed since the mid-2000s. It might be caused by the change of migrant policy in the destination countries, by the migrants' intentions, or by a mixture of both (Aksakal et al., 2018, p. 3). As we have seen in this paper, the economic health of the destination country also plays a large role. Immigrating to Greece was originally intended as temporary, a transit place in Europe; it has now become more flexible and uncertain. As the actions of the first generation indicate, when migrants cannot fulfill their expectations and further their lives in Europe, they shift their objective to return to their own country and start some type of business. As short-term migration, particularly to Gulf countries and Southeast Asia, became more popular and incentivized, they could flexibly adapt their migration strategies from the long-term to the short-term. However, like the second generation of Bangladesh immigrants in Greece, economic uncertainty and host country dynamics have suspended their plans, leaving them stranded in a state of extended temporariness.

Migrating overseas for work, particularly for men migrating to Europe, has thus far been positively understood and desired by people in Bangladesh's rural villages. This positive image has helped the migrants maintain their pride and endure their hard lives abroad. The unexpected but forced temporariness of their overseas work, as a result, can continue to be perceived as a level of achievement as a step to start a business in their home country. In addition, although prospects of long-term migration have failed and turned into temporary migration, as Amin's wife mentioned, many overseas workers and their families hold on to a vision of realizing global migration over the generations. In this way, the culture of overseas migration from rural villages in Bangladesh continued, and continues, to be promoted.

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