

Circular Labor Migration and Remittance Patterns in Lake Victoria Basin, Tanzania

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Abstract: Circular labor migration is increasingly becoming a popular livelihood strategy among households. However, information on this type of migration has been scarce. This study was conducted in Ukerewe and Muleba Districts aimed at exploring the patterns of circular labor migration and associated remittances. Data were collected using mixed methods namely household questionnaire survey, secondary data review and key informant interviews. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in data analysis. A total of 512 households were involved in the study. Results indicates that males headed households are 1.9 times more likely in making circular labor migration than female headed households. We also observed that the likelihood of female migrating close to home was 2.9 times that of males. We further found that circular labor migration was higher among youths than any age category and the highest peak is normally reached earlier among females aged between 26 and 30 years than in males aged between 36 and 40 years. On remittances, males tended to remit 7.2 times more non-monetary remittances as compared to females while the opposite was observed for non-monetary remittances. We recommend establishment of the household demographic surveillance system; studies linking circular labour migration and livelihood should consider the contextual and local differences because circular labor migration is context and location specific; and equal opportunity should be provided to all household member to engage in circular labor migration regardless of gender so that they can equally contribute to improving of the livelihood of the household.

Key words: Circular labor migration • Migration Patterns • Remittance • Lake Victoria Basin

INTRODUCTION

Circular labor migration a form of spontaneous, repetitive and temporary movement that involves go and return movement of people from their residence to other places for the intention of work is increasingly becoming a popular livelihood strategy among households and presenting mixed patterns across a range of characteristics of households and migrants themselves [1, 2]. While it is very crucial to understand the pattern of circular labor migration and remittances accrued from circular labor migration for decision making and targeting strategies, information on this migration category has been very scarce and dearth [3]. Much of the available information not only bears very old and dearth facts on circular labour migration and remittance

patterns but also have tended to homogenize migration while in fact, migration itself is very heterogeneous [4]. It has further been obvious that the patterns of any migration category are dynamic, context and locational specific [5], a situation that calls for locational, context and time specific study. This is due to the fact that circular labor migration is never homogeneous in manifestation over time and space [4].

Circular labor migration forms a very important movement among Black African population in Sub-Saharan Africa despite the fact that such movement is rarely documented and that few documentations available are very scanty and old hence making such pattern of movement to be obscured in public discourse [6]. In Agincourt sub-district in South Africa for instance, Kok *et al.* [7] report that for every permanent migrant

there were three temporary migrants of which more than one million are circular migrants. A Study by Collinson, *et al.* [1] in the same area (Agincourt sub district) in 2003 also found that 55% of households surveyed contained at least one member who is involved in circular labor migration.

In Tanzania, circular labor migration is partly documented [2, 3, 8, 9]. Although no available country statistics established, the evidences in some areas have revealed an increasing trend following the recurrent climatic variations [2, 10]. Major attractions have been areas with economic potentials such as fishing islands, mines, towns and areas with a specific agricultural potential [2, 9].

In Lake Victoria basin, circular labor migration has been a dominant practice among households [2, 11] and the highest being observed among fishing folks [12]. The usual practice has been that of households sending part of their members to work in fishing sector for meeting their livelihood challenges [2]. With the recurrent adverse climatic condition which adversely affect their livelihood, the situation has been intensified [2]. Despite the evidence of increasing household involvement in circular labor migration, its patterns have been very difficult to establish and therefore obscured in public discourse. The objective of this paper is to assess the patterns of circular labor migration and associated remittances in the place of origin.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Kakukuru and Nyakabango wards in Ukerewe and Muleba districts respectively which are within the Lake Victoria Basin. These two districts have the highest level of Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of between 0.228 and 0.246 compared to the national average of 0.217 [13]. The two districts also occupy extensive fishing locations with a relatively large proportion of its people involved in fishing [14].

Different methods were used in collecting data. They included household questionnaire survey (512), key informant interviews (15), focus group discussions and secondary data review. Before administering the questionnaires, they were pretested. The questionnaires had open and closed ended questions. A total of 512 households sampled randomly were involved. Fifteen key informants were also involved in the study. These were seven local leaders and eight ordinary people. Data

analysis was done using IBM SPSS. Techniques of data analysis including; descriptive statistical analysis, chi-square and independent sample T-tests were used in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Respondents and Associated Patterns:

The socio-economic characteristics are presented in Table 1 below. Of the total respondents, 83.6% were male headed households and the remaining were female headed. The dominance of males probably represents a typical cultural characteristic of many households in Africa where males are culturally recognized as heads of household [15, 16]. As for marital status, 86.1% were married and the remaining were either never married, separated, divorced or widowed. According to Collinson, *et al.* [1] marital status is believed to have influence on the frequency and amount of remittance sent by migrants to the households. Regarding household size, the findings reveal that between 67.4% and 74.5% of households had family size of between 0 and 10 which can be regarded as large. Large household size are more likely to experience high risk of poor livelihood status as compared to household with households with small household size [16] thus suggesting that households with large household size are more likely to have a high propensity to move than households with small family size. As for main occupation, the majority (95.7%) were engaged in farming and fishing.

We also investigated the association between respondent's socio-economic characteristics (gender, household headship, age and main economic activities) and circular labour migrations referred in this study as migration patterns. Involvement in circular labor migration by gender revealed that males migrated eight times more than females (Table 2) indicating that roughly in every 9 males circular labor migrants, there was about one female circular labor migrant. Birchall, [17] observed that migration is highly gendered and that men migrants still outnumber the female migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa. Oishi [18] attributed this pattern to the fact that in many households, the decision to migrate is not individuals decision but rather households decision and many norms among fishing folks' household in rural area don't allow females to get involved in circular labor migration. Birchall, [17] further argues that discriminatory social norms and institutions play a key role in shaping female migration.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Variables		Wards (%)	
		Kakukuru (Ukerewe) n = 304	Nyakabango (Muleba) n = 208
Sex	Male	84.5	82.2
	Female	15.5	17.8
Marital Status	Married	85.5	87.0
	Never Married	1.3	1.9
	Separated	1.6	1.9
	Window(er)	10.9	9.1
	Divorced	0.7	0
Main Occupation	None	2.3	0
	Government employee	0	1.4
	Private company employee	0	1.4
	Fisherman	36.2	29.3
	Farmer	58.9	67.3
	Other	2.6	0.5
Household Size	0 to 4	15.1	16.3
	5-10	52.3	58.2
	11-15	27.6	25.0
	16 +	4.9	0.5

Table 2: Gender and Involvement in Circular Labor Migration

	Kakukuru		Nyakabango		Both Wards	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Males	147	89.6	68	89.5	215	89.6
Females	17	10.4	8	10.5	25	10.4

Source: Field data (2020)

The high proportion of male circular labor migrants than females was also echoed during male elder's focus group discussion in one of the villages. The discussant who preferred anonymity had this to say:

“Females are in most cases vulnerable to numerous risks including unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and early marriages of which these traits are prone among circular labor migrants. In this case, no parent or husband would like to subject her daughter or wife into such risks”

Several studies have found that gender of migrants shape every stage of migration experience and that males have high likelihood of making circular labor migration than female [17, 19, 7].

The association of household headship and migration revealed that male headed households' involvement in circular migration outweighed female headed households (Table 3). The majority of male headed households involvement in circular labour migration compared to that of females possibly can be explained by different coping strategy options between them. Angula, [20] observed that when faced with shocks,

women are more flexible in adopting through engaging in a range of informal activities including basketry, nut processing, chicken rearing and many other informal works whereas men because of having more of the technical skills required in formal employment, they usually prefer to migrate. The other explanation could be that, circular labor migration is taken as a livelihood strategy and males being in most cases the main breadwinner and culturally recognized as being powerful to initiate major decisions [16] might have influenced this scenario. Some studies have also revealed that males have a high likelihood of making circular labor migration than females [1, 21].

As for age, migration was higher among young adults (middle ages) than any other age category and reached its peak between 36-40 age category. Further observation indicated that age varied across localities of the studied area (Figure 1). While in Nyakabango, the peak was reached at a relatively lower age (26-30), the highest peak in Kakukuru was reached at the age of 36-40. Such variation may be attributed by disparities in the extent of deprivation and disruption of economic base across regions that drives people to rush into migration for their livelihood [2].

Table 3: Household headship and migration

Household Headship	Non circular labor migrant	Circular labor migrant	Total
Kakukuru (Ukerewe) n = 303			
Male headed	125(52.5)	122(47.7)	257(100)
Female headed	33(70.2)	14(29.8)	47(100)
Nyakabango (Muleba) n = 208			
Male headed	102(59.6)	69(40.4)	171(100)
Female headed	26(70.3)	11(29.7)	37(100)

Figures in brackets are percentages

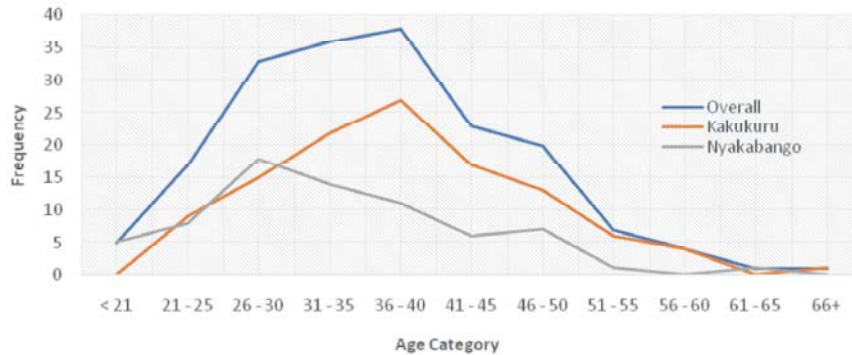


Fig. 1: Circular Labour Migration and Age of Circular Labour Migrants

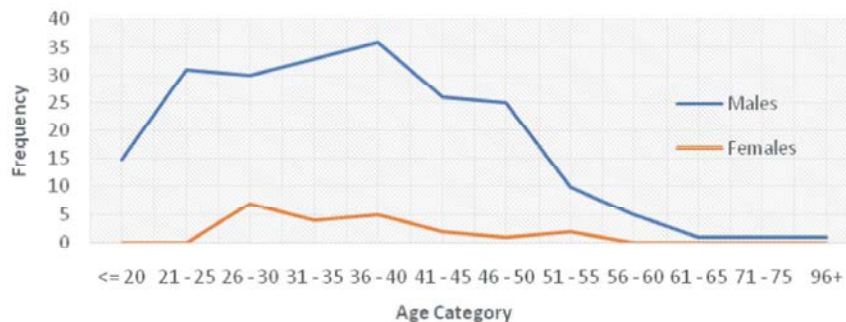


Fig. 2: Highest Peak of Involvement in Circular Labour Migration by Gender

Age of circular labor migrants is believed to shape migration in various ways [22, 23]. According to Vadean & Piracha, [23], in order for migration to be financially rewarding, it has to take place early in the active lifetime. While several findings have revealed that young adult population is having a greater propensity to migrate than any other age group [24, 1]. Collinson *et al.* [1] revealed that the likelihood of women's involvement in Circular Labour Migration declined earlier (at age of 48) than that of males which was at age of 55. Figure 2 below, shows that the highest peak of females and male's circular migrant was reached at the age between 26-30 and 36-40 respectively indicating that the likelihood of women and men's involvement in circular labor migration declined at the age below 30 and 40 respectively.

The earlier decline of women likelihood of involvement in Circular labor migration relative to that of men might be contributed to marriage decision by most of

females. As displayed in the Tanzania demographic survey, more than 50% of female at the age between 25-29 are married. This is age at which most female get married [25] and the trend increases at the higher age. In most married couples household responsibilities lie in the hand of females than males [26]. In this case, it is possible that as age increases, females would like to stay at home and take care of the household.

Circular labour migration and destination was also investigated. This is because, earlier studies have found that distance travelled by migrants varied by Gender, [1, 26]. This study was interested to ascertain this fact to see if it applies in circular labor migration. Destination places of circular labor migrants were categorized into two categories namely destination within the same district of residence and destination outside of district of residence with an assumption that those circular labor migrants whose typical destination place is

outside their district of residence are likely to travel long distance than those whose destination is within the same district of residence. Findings reveals the existence of association between gender and typical destination places of circular labor migrants (Chi-square (1) =4.651 p=0.033) (Table 4). Basing on the output results, the likelihood (odd ratio ($\exp(\beta)$) of women destination being within the same district was calculated and found that the likelihood of women typical destination to be within the same district of residence is 2.9 times than that of men.

The fact that females typical destination tends to be within the same district of residence and the existence of $\exp(\beta)$ value of 2.9 indicating that women are more likely to travel within the same district than men possibly confirm earlier finding by Collinson *et al.* [1] who observed that relative to men, female tend to work close to home and according to Ravenstein laws of migration, that “*women travel short distance relative to men*” [27].

The reason to explain this variation is diverse, however mostly relying on family or societal norms. Madden, [26] associate this habit by two factors namely the gender differences in household roles which puts lot of household responsibilities in the hand of women as well as low rate of earning relative to men that makes them unable to afford long distance travelling [26]. According to Birchall, [17] in many African societies, it may be less acceptable in some context for females to move or travel on their own, a situation that results into women to find it more difficult to migrate long distance hence opting for short distance.

Remittances: The cross-tabulation analysis with a chi-square test was performed to examine whether there was a relationship between gender (behaviour, frequency and amount remitted) and practice of remittance and marital status and practice of remittance. The results in Table 5 indicates that there was a non-significant difference (Chi-square (1) =1.74, p=0.187) between males and females in terms of remitting to the households implying that both males and females remits almost at the same proportion.

The frequency of sending remittances across both males and females also revealed similar results; that is, a non-statistically significant association between gender and frequency of sending remittance (Chi-square (1) =0.165, p=0.69) indicating that the frequency of sending remittance between males and females do not differ significantly (Table 6).

Table 4: Circular Labor Migration Destination Places and Gender

Typical Destination	Gender of Circular Labor Migrant		Total
	Males	Females	
Within same district of residence	124(57.7)	20(80.0)	144(100)
Outside the district of residence	91(42.3)	5(20.0)	96(100)
Total	215(100)	25(100)	240(100)

Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 5: Remitting Behaviour and Gender

Remitting behaviour	Gender (%)	
	Male	Female
Yes	178(82.8)	18(72)
No	37(17.2)	7(28)
Total	215(100)	25(100)

Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 6: Remitting Frequency across Gender

Remitting frequency	Gender	
	Male	Female
Less frequent	68(38.2)	6(33.3)
Frequent	110(61.8)	12(66.7)
Total	178(100)	18(100)

Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 7: Amount of Remittance Sent and Gender

Gender	N	Mean (TZS)	Std Error
Males	178	295, 778	70, 772
Females	17	277, 000	78, 663

This finding contradicts with the earlier finding by Collinson, *et al.* [1] who observed that the proportion of men who remit remittances were relatively less as compared to women. Such variation may be attributed by fact that circular labor migration itself is not homogeneous across regions but differ in its manifestation and so do the related characteristics [4]. Another possibility could be that, circular labor migration patterns are dynamic over time and possibly such pattern could have been changed recently and hence giving way to the observed scenario.

The amount of remittance across gender was also investigated. An independent sample T-test was performed to ascertain the amount of remittance remitted to the household. The remittances varied between males and females. The results in Table 7 reveals that, there was a non-statistically significant difference on the overall remittance (computed by combining both monetary and non-monetary) remitted by males and females (T(193)=0.081; P=0.935).

Table 8: Nature of Remittance across Gender

		N	Mean (TZS)	Std Error
Monetary remittance	Males	178	266, 376.	67, 599
	Females	17	36, 826	14, 178
Local Market value of Non-monetary remittance				
	Males	148	34, 240	4, 359
	Females	17	245, 765	6, 787

Table 9: Remittance Patterns across Marital status

Marital status		N	Mean (TZS)	Std error
Married circular labor migrants (Both Males and Females)	Married	146	353, 007	85, 646
	Not married	49	118, 745	30, 521
Married Males	Married	140	358529	89, 252
	Not married	38	64592	11998

The existence of non-statistically significant difference in means of remittance sent by males and females implies that both males and females almost remit equal amount to the household and that the existing difference is just by chance. This finding conforms to earlier findings by Lopez-Ekra *et al.* [28] and Orozco *et al.* [29] who observed that both women and men send similar quantities of remittance despite the fact that women on average sent a higher proportion of their income to their home. Birchall, [17] further observed female had one added advantage on account that their remittances are more consistent overtime and they are also more willing to help extended family than men.

The nature of remittances sent across gender revealed the existence of statistically significant differences between gender in terms of monetary remittance ($T(193)=1.047$, $P=0.001$) and non-monetary remittances ($t(163)=-8.168$, $P<0.01$) sent by both males and females. Females relatively sent more non-monetary remittance (TZS. 245, 765) than males (TZS. 34, 240) while males send more monetary remittance (TZS 269, 185.4) than females (TZS.36, 826) (Table 8). Possibly, this could be contributed by the nature of pay. Further analysis to validate this aspect was limited by the data collected and therefore opening room for another study.

The fact that female circular labor migrants remits more non-monetary remittance was also confirmed during a key informant interview in Nyakabango ward in which one old woman was quoted saying;

“I receive much food stuffs and clothes from my circular labor migrant daughter but my sons only spend money with their girlfriends in Islands and usually come empty ended”.

Findings by Guzman *et al.* ([30] cited by Birchall, [17]) observed that female circular migrant preferred to use their remittance on food, clothes and household equipment

while men migrants preferred to use their remittances on housing, car and other consumer goods. Such differences in preference between males and females might have contributed to this scenario.

We also investigated remittance across marital status, that is married and non-married. The overall results in Table 9 reveals that there was a statistically significant difference in the amount of remittance remitted by married and non-married circular labor migrants ($t(176)=2.577$, $p=0.011$) implying that on average married circular labor migrants remits a relatively larger amount than non-married circular labor migrants. The results are also true for married males’ circular migrant ($t(144)=3.264$, $p=0.001$). These results are similar to the finding by Collinson, *et al.* [1] who observed that married men remitted on average a high amount of remittance than never married men.

The situation that married circular labor migrants sends more remittance than non-married might be contributed by the behaviour of feeling of responsible among these two groups of circular labor migrants as a married circular labor migrant are likely to feel more responsible to the household than a non-married circular labor migrant.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Circular labor migration presents mixed pattern across various characteristics households and migrants. Males are more migratory than females as in every 9 male circular labor migrants, there is only 1 female circular labor migrants and this scenario is linked to cultural norms. Males headed households are 1.9 times more likely in making circular labor migration than females headed households. Females migrate close to home and the likelihood of female migrating close to home is 2.9 times that of Males. Circular labor migration is higher among youths than any age category and the peak is reached

earlier among females (26-30) than in males (36-40); Males tends to remit more monetary remittance (TZS. 266, 376) than female (TZS. 36, 826) while females remit more non-monetary remittance (TZS.245, 765) than males (34, 240). The frequency of sending remittance and the amount of remittance sent to the household did not differ significantly between males and females. We recommend establishment of the household demographic surveillance system, that is a system that records circular labor movements in the study area; studies linking circular labour migration and livelihood should consider the contextual and local differences because circular labor migration is context and location specific; and equal opportunity be provided to all household member to engage in circular labor migration regardless of gender so that they can equally contribute to improving of the livelihood of the household.

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