

Youth Migration In GBAO: Staying, Leaving, Coming Back?

A THESIS

Presented to the MA Programme

of the OSCE Academy

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Politics and Security (Central Asia) Programme

By

Latofat Garibshozoda

January 2024

Declaration

Herewith I declare that I clearly understand §11 of the Academic Regulations and that the submitted paper is accepted by the OSCE Academy in Bishkek on the understanding that it is my own effort without falsification of any kind. I declare that I am aware of the consequences of plagiarism or/ and cheating.

Name: Latofat Garibshozoda

Date: January 6, 2024

Signature: 

ABSTRACT

In the place where I was born and grown up, Khorog, migration has always been an essential and normal part of every family's life. I remember that every household had one or two migrants in their families. It was perceived as a culture or something similar, sending someone from your family to Russia. In particular, it was quite practiced in regard to men, and what is good is that most of them were supposed to leave for Russia once they graduated university. Men (and sometimes women as well) left the region for several years in order to enhance their economic conditions, support and help their families, get prepared for an independent life (building a house and earning money for marriage), and then come back and continue living their lives. It was considered an important step in order to get on a higher rung of life's ladder. Since then, nothing has changed except that people, in particular youth, tend to migrate more, immediately after graduation from high school, with the very small intentions of coming back. It led to the situation that the region- Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), Khorog and other rural areas, are getting less populated, with the remaining old people, very few youth (who decided to stay there), and students (who have not decided yet whether they will stay or will also leave after their studies). For that reason, I decided to study the migration process and its causes in GBAO with a focus on the youth generation and their intentions regarding their migration decisions: whether they will stay in the region, migrate, or leave and then come back. For studying this question, it is very important to focus on the motivations behind the decisions that youth make.

Another reason for choosing this topic is that different motivations and causes push people, in particular Tajik people, to migrate, which are not the same for all migrants. Generally, current migration studies mostly focus on and study the economic and social factors as the main factors of migration in Tajikistan, in particular youth migration. These are general factors and causes of migration that refer to every Tajik migrant despite specific characteristics or distinctions (age, gender, group, social factors, and so on). However, this thesis argues that the motivations and causes of migration are not the same in the country and are distinguished due to the specific conditions and characteristics, as in the context of GBAO. It is to say that general motivations and driving factors of migration cannot be applied to all Tajik migrants, and they differ from

each other. This paper will look at how the causes and factors of the migration in GBAO are different from those in other regions of Tajikistan.

ABBREVIATION

BCE	Before Common Era
CIS	The Commonwealth of Independent States
DRD	Direct Ruled Districts
GBAO	Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region
EU	The European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labour Organization
RT	Republic of Tajikistan
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UN	The United Nations

Acknowledgement

This research would not be possible without the support of many people.

First, I want to express my special gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Emil Dzhuraev for his abundant help, support, guidance, invaluable assistance, and his belief in my ideas. You have been a tremendous mentor for me. Thank you!

Second, I would like to offer my special thanks to my dear family and friends, whose support, love, patience and encouragement assisted me during every page of writing this thesis and my friends who incited me to strive towards my goal. In particular, I want to thank my dear parents and my lovely sisters. Without their support, love and inspiration, completing my studies would have been impossible.

Moreover, I am grateful for the OSCE Academy and all professors for their knowledge, support, guidance, and contribution to my academy life.

Last but not the least, many thanks go to my respondents, who were open with me and made a great contribution to this thesis. I would like to mention that this work is devoted to all those migrants, who are physically far from their families and Pamir, but at heart are at home!

TABLE OF CONTENT

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Tajikistan after Civil War: Economic and living conditions.....	1
1.2. Research question.....	3
1.3. Preliminary hypothesis.....	4
1.4. Research Significance.....	5

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction of Exit, Voice, and Loyalty theory by Albert O. Hirschman....	6
2.2. Explanation of how the framework applies to youth migration in GBAO....	8
2.3. Methodology and research focus of the study.....	9
2.4. Interviews.....	9
2.5. Observations and analysis of secondary data.....	10
2.6. Data analysis techniques.....	11
2.7. Preliminary working schedule.....	12
2.8. Risks and limitations.....	13

CHAPTER 3. UNDERSTANDING MIGRATION FROM TAJIKISTAN - A BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

3.1. Conceptualization and operationalization of the study.....	14
3.2. Traces back to the history of migration in Tajikistan.....	17
3.3. Push factors of migration: youth migration; minority migration; in Central Asia; in Tajikistan.....	18
3.4. GBAO (Pamir) context and background. Migration in GBAO.....	21

4. CHAPTER 4. MIGRATION CHOICES FROM GBAO - INSIGHTS FROM INTERVIEW RESEARCH

4.1. Youth migration in GBAO and motivations.....	29
4.2. Slow level of development and lack of the infrastructure.....	31
4.3. Geographical location and climate.....	38
4.4. Cultural and religious issues.....	42
4.5. Depopulation of the region as a result of high migration flows.....	46
5. CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
5.1. Summary of the thesis/research.....	56
5.2.Recommendations.....	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	63
APPENDIX A: Question of the interview with youth migrants from GBAO.....	70
APPENDIX B: Interview questions for the old individuals.....	72
APPENDIX C: Photo album of the research.....	73

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Working schedule of the research

Table 2. Number and location of the interviews

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Top Recipients of Remittances among Low-and Middle-Income

Figure 2. The unemployment rate un GBAO and other regions of Tajikistan

Figure 3. National Poverty Rate of Tajikistan by regions

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1. The Political Map of Tajikistan

Illustration 2. GBAO, Khorog (the administrative center of the region)

Illustration 3. A Pamirian House (Pomere Chid), Bartang, GBAO, Tajikistan

Illustration 4. A small village among the mountains, Bartang Valley, GBAO; 2023

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Tajikistan after Civil War: Economic and living conditions

Tajikistan experienced a civil war (1992–1997) following the fall of the Soviet Union, which significantly altered the country's population's living conditions. The ongoing transition to a free-market economy that Tajikistan, like other ex-soviet governments, undertook made life for the people even more difficult, as there was a sharp fall in production across all sectors. For many citizens of Tajikistan, migration (especially to Russia) was one of the popular ways to survive and feed their families. Moreover, the gap between ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ and rapid population growth, high unemployment rates in the sending countries played an even greater role in encouraging mobility than population density.¹

Over the past three decades, the situation has changed and there were improvements regarding the living and economic conditions. Although Tajikistan has made tremendous progress in reducing poverty and has had some economic growth (Economic growth is forecast at 6.5% in 2023 and 4.5-5% over the medium term)², it still ranks among the poorest countries in Asia (4-5th rate)³ and the entire world (45th rate)⁴.

¹Saodat Olimova, Igor Bosc, “Labour Migration from Tajikistan”, *International Organization for Migration* in cooperation with the *Sharq Scientific Research Center*, (Dushanbe, 2003), 10-14, accessed September 1, 2023 https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/labour_migration_tajikistan.pdf

² The World Bank, “Tajikistan Economic Update – Summer 2023”, *the World Bank*, (Dushanbe, June 30, 2023), 14-26, accessed September 1, 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/publication/economic-update-summer-2023>

³World Population Review, “Poorest Asian Countries 2023”, *World Population Review*, accessed September 1, 2023, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/poorest-asian-countries>

⁴ Luca Ventura, “Poorest Countries in the World 2023”, *Global Finance Magazine*, accessed September 17, 2023, <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world>

Moreover, Tajikistan is regarded as one of the countries in the world that depends most on remittances:⁵

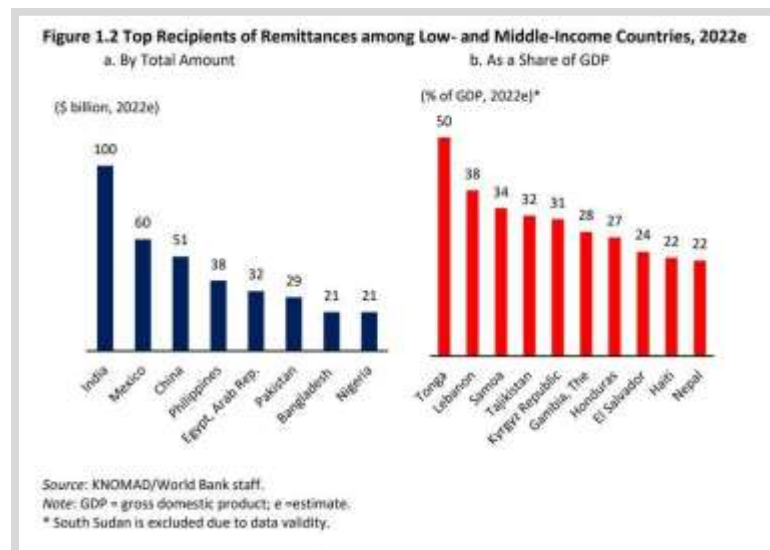


Figure 1. Top Recipients of Remittances among Low-and Middle-Income countries in 2022. Source: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/remittances-money-world-bank/>

All these conditions have intensified and escalated the process of migration in the country. With an increasing number of Tajik citizens seeking better opportunities abroad, the issue of migration has taken center stage in the country's socio-economic landscape.

Currently, the number of Tajik migrants out of the country is estimated to be about 3 million people and only in the first half of 2022, 516 000 people migrated from Tajikistan, and 364 000 were considered labor migrants. Until the end of the year, this number reached 987 000 people who left Tajikistan for different reasons.⁶

Scholarly studies on Tajik migration, particularly youth migration, have predominantly focused on economic factors as the primary drivers behind this migration

⁵ World Economic Forum, “*Migrants sent home \$800 billion remittances to these countries in 2022*”, World Economic Forum, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/remittances-money-world-bank/>

⁶ Payrav Chorshanbiev, “Labor migration from Tajikistan to Russia in the first quarter of this year increased by 40%”, trans. *Asia-Plus*, (Dushanbe, May 11, 2023), accessed September 5, 2023, <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20230511/trudovaya-migratsiya-iz-tadzhikistana-v-rossiyu-v-i-kvartale-etogo-goda-virosla-na-40>

trend. However, it is important to recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot properly explain the intricacies across the regions of this phenomenon. This thesis proposes that the motivations and determinants of migration in the GBAO of Tajikistan may differ significantly from those in other regions of the country.

In light of these complexities, this paper's aims to delve into the distinct causes and migration factors specific to the GBAO region with Pamiri youth minorities. By closely examining the unique circumstances and experiences of the youth minority migrants from this region, the study seeks to shed light on the underlying dynamics that shape migration patterns in GBAO. By doing so, the goal of this research is to contribute a valuable insight into the broader discourse on migration in Tajikistan, into possible subnational variations in the example of GBAO and its distinct factors and motivations therein. Moreover, it is important to note that the study will focus on the 20-years period - from 2000 to 2021, as after 2021 the tendency and motivation of the migration flow from GBAO include only political factors.

Gaps in the literature: It is significant to highlight that, first, aside from economic or social considerations, very few studies have examined other driving forces behind migration, including migration's causes and motives in Tajikistan. Second, the existing research rarely focuses on generation. There is a lack of literature on youth migration in Tajikistan and in particular by regions. Third, and most importantly for this paper - we do not have any studies on Pamiri youth migration that examine migration and its factors and motivations only from a youth perspective.

The intriguing aspect of studying the youth migration phenomenon in GBAO becomes apparent in the following scenarios: a) if Tajikistan has the same migration patterns and issues throughout the nation, as well as the same living, geographic, social, and economic conditions, why is GBAO becoming less populated than other regions? b) when Tajikistan is experiencing high population growth, why does GBAO still tend to be a less populated region in the nation? The reason for all of these questions is that Pamiri migrants, especially the young, have a tendency to prefer staying in their host countries rather than pursue the possibility of returning to Tajikistan, GBAO.

In this regard, this paper recognizes the necessity to give this particular issue some attention and attempts to fill these gaps. So, this proposal outlines the distinction of youth migration in GBAO by exploring the varying factors that drive young Pamiri people to leave their homeland, the reasons that influence some to stay in their host countries, and the compelling aspects that draw others back to GBAO.

1.2. Research Question

In pursuit of researching and grasping the above issues, this thesis proposes to explore the likely key reasons why different migration decisions are taken by the young residents of the GBAO region. Specifically, the main research questions are posited:

1. Why do some GBAO youth – presently or potentially likely to migrate out of the country – choose to migrate (leave), some decide not to (stay) and still others migrate but then they come back (return)?
2. How and why the geographic, economic, political, and cultural conditions and factors that are specific to GBAO influence the youth Pamiri people to make decisions regarding staying, leaving, and coming back to GBAO?

These are rather open-ended questions. It is aimed at exploring all the likely, possible reasons that motivate the GBAO youth's decisions regarding migration. In posing these questions, there is interest to reveal also the comparative differences and particularities of GBAO communities in terms of their migration patterns to the rest of Tajikistan and to other Central Asian communities in general. The assumption in the questions is that different geographically, culturally, politically and otherwise distinct communities would reveal differences in terms of migration, just like in other socially significant areas, and those differences can lead to significant implications for such communities more broadly.

1.3. Preliminary Hypothesis

This thesis, working with open questions and being of a qualitative exploratory nature, does not rest on a strict testable hypothesis. Even so, it works with a working causal assumption that GBAO youth's migration decisions are formed by the geographic,

economic, political, religious and cultural conditions specific to GBAO. The puzzle in this project is to find out to what extent and in what ways do such regional specificities affect the migration patterns of the region's minorities.

1.4. Research Significance

This research proposal highlights the importance of addressing the pressing issue of migration, which has become a global challenge due to economic crises and political instability. The proposal emphasizes the need to fill a research gap by focusing on the specific factors influencing migration decisions of the youth minority in GBAO, as existing literature predominantly examines national-level economic, geographical, and social factors without considering the region's unique circumstances and minorities. As it was mentioned earlier, data and information regarding the migration and migration issues about the particular region are not available and relevant enough. Especially, when it comes to the GBAO or migration of the minority in Tajikistan. There is a significant lack and shortage of the migration studies about the Pamiri minorities' migration. Thus, by investigating these factors, the research helps:

- to contribute to policy formulation, enhance regional development, and provide valuable insights for academia;

- these findings can inform policymakers on developing targeted strategies for managing migration and leveraging its potential benefits;

- understanding migration dynamics in GBAO can guide initiatives aimed at fostering regional development, ultimately benefiting the socio-economic conditions in this remote and economically disadvantaged region;

- the research's academic contribution lies in expanding the knowledge base on migration studies in Tajikistan and serving as a resource for scholars, researchers, and students interested in migration, regional development, and socio-economic dynamics in Central Asia;

-at a more general and conceptual level, this research can contribute to a critical understanding of sub-national migration dynamics and the interaction of migration with other socio-political processes and problems;

-the study also sets the stage for future comparative analyses in other regions or countries facing similar migration challenges;

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction of Exit, Voice, and Loyalty theory by Albert O. Hirschman

There are several theories and concepts that might explain migration, its processes, causes and consequences. As the causes and motivations of migration in GBAO are not only economic and include also some political, social and cultural causes, Albert O. Hirschman's work: "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty" is one of the most applicable explanations for the motivations behind the Pamiri people decisions' regarding migration. Hirschman's "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty" work explains factors and motivations behind the peoples' actions in response to specific phenomena or occurrences. The book was first published in 1970 and remains influential in the fields of economics, political science, and sociology. In "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty", Hirschman explores how individuals and groups respond to deteriorating conditions in organizations, institutions, and states. He focuses on three possible responses. Hirschman argues that the interplay between exit, voice, and loyalty shapes the dynamics of organizations, markets, and societies. He examines how these responses can lead to different outcomes, such as revitalization, organizational reform, or decline.

"The deterioration in performance is reflected most typically and generally, that is, for both firms and other organizations, in an absolute or comparative deterioration of the quality of the product or service provided. Management then finds out about its failings via two alternative routes: a) Some customers stop buying the firm's products or some members leave the organization: this is the exit option. As a result, revenues drop, membership declines, and management is forced to search for ways and means to correct whatever faults have led to exit. b) The firm's customers or the organization's members express their dissatisfaction directly to management or to some other authority to which management is subordinate or through general protest addressed to anyone who cares to listen: this is the voice option. As a result, management once again

engages in a search for the causes and possible cures of customers' and members' dissatisfaction."⁷

It is to say that Hirschman defines "exit" as the voluntary withdrawal from a political system, business, or institution that is suffering from a fall in performance: "People who choose emigration were obviously dissatisfied in some way with the country and society they were living"⁸. As in the example of youth migration in GBAO, the 'exit' option might be chosen due to the dissatisfaction of the people to the distinct characteristics of the region, such as geographic, climatic, environmental and so on. In contrast, "voice" is defined as a direct statement of discontent, aimed at encouraging improvement or change within the organization, firm, or political system without exiting. Moreover, the author explains migration and mass- migration as a way of reducing the risk of protests and dissatisfaction (voice) within the state (undermines protests) and calls it "safety valve", however, sometimes it might lead to "loss of blood".⁹ Regarding this point, Bert Hoffman adds that 'exit' does not always mean leaving and not participating in political actions. In contrast, it can be one of the active ways of the people's participation and showing their voices: "If a citizen by choosing an exist option can free himself for the conditions that have impeded the articulation of the voice domestically, he might raise his voice all the louder from outside after the migration"¹⁰ Hirschman explains numerous ways to express

⁷ Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, (Harvard College, United States of America, 1970), 15-67, accessed on September 6, 2023, [https://pages.ucsd.edu/~bslantchev/courses/ps240/05%20Cooperation%20with%20States%20as%20Unitary%20Actors/Hirschman%20-%20Exit,%20voice,%20and%20loyalty%20\[Ch%201-5\].pdf](https://pages.ucsd.edu/~bslantchev/courses/ps240/05%20Cooperation%20with%20States%20as%20Unitary%20Actors/Hirschman%20-%20Exit,%20voice,%20and%20loyalty%20[Ch%201-5].pdf)

⁸ Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, 102.

⁹ Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, 95.

¹⁰ Bert Hoffman, *Bringing Hirschman Back In: Conceptualizing Transnational Migration as a Reconfiguration of "Exit", "Voice", and "Loyalty"*, German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), No. 91, (Hamburg, 2008), 10-12, accessed September 8, 2023, <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/47792/1/609104209.pdf>

one's voice while investigating the connection between speech and exit, including grievances, protests, and political activism.

2.2. Explanation of how the framework applies to youth migration in GBAO

Regarding the youth migration in GBAO in terms of 'exit' option (until 2021), the first explanation of Hirschman might be more appropriate (undermining voice).

Hirschman introduces 'loyalty' as a third type, a broad continuum encompassing everything from steadfast identification and impassioned support to passive acceptance or submissive quiet. When a person has a deep relationship to a group or institution that is performing poorly, they will react in this way. Hirschman's model suggests that dissatisfaction in a particular state might cause migration.

Exit as a response to dissatisfaction: The concept of exit can be used to understand why youth in GBAO choose to migrate to other countries. By examining the factors that lead to dissatisfaction, such as limited economic opportunities, lack of infrastructure, or political instability, the thesis can explore how these factors drive youth to leave their home region in search of better prospects.

Voice as a mechanism for change: The concept of voice can be applied to understand how youth in GBAO express their concerns and aspirations within the region. The thesis can explore the ways in which youth engage in collective action, participate in local governance, or advocate for policy changes to address the issues that push them to migrate. Understanding the forms of voice available to youth and their effectiveness can shed light on the potential for change within the region.

Loyalty: The thesis can examine the factors that contribute to youth's attachment and loyalty to their home region, such as cultural ties, family connections, or a sense of identity. By understanding the role of loyalty, the thesis can explore why some youth choose to stay in GBAO or even return after migrating elsewhere. Additionally, another point of this question will be discussed whether the youth that have migrated or migrants' decision about not coming back to their home means that they are not loyal. So, the 'loyalty' will be studied and examined from this perspective too.

Overall, by applying Hirschman's theories and concepts, the thesis can provide insights into the motivations, decision-making processes, and potential solutions related to youth migration in GBAO. It can also help understand the interplay between staying, leaving, and coming back, providing a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon within the context of the region.

2.3. Methodology and research focus of the study

This thesis is a qualitative sub-national case study aimed at revealing any salient factors specific to the region – GBAO, and its youth that explain how they come to any decision about migrating abroad or not. The thesis is an open-ended research project, guided by a tentative expectation/hypothesis, that GBAO youth's migration decisions are affected by the region's geographic, cultural and political circumstances. To carry out the research defined in this way, my main methodological approach will be to go into the field, to the midst of GBAO communities, and learn from people there, through interviews and observation.

To ensure a comprehensive data collection process for my research on youth migration in GBAO and the factors impacting their decisions to stay, leave, or return, I have developed a diverse approach using multiple methods. These methods include in-depth interviews, field observation, and the utilization of secondary sources. By employing this multi-method approach, my aim is to capture various perspectives and gather rich and detailed information that will facilitate a nuanced analysis.

2.4. Interviews

In order to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the issue, I have conducted in-depth interviews. These interviews targeted the youth population and provided them with a platform to share their personal experiences, motivations, challenges and future plans related to migration. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, allowing for flexibility and the exploration of emerging themes and ideas. Interviews were conducted in particular with youth of GBAO: young people who have migrated and also people who have remained in the region.

People for the in-person interviews were selected randomly-Pamiri youth people: migrants and non-migrants. Besides that, online interviews were conducted with Pamiri youth migrants from different parts of the world. The overall number of the interviews is 20 (with both males and females): 20 interviews with youth migrants (5 interviews with Russia migrants, as most of the Pamiri youth have been migrating to Russia and 10 interviews with youth migrants from the other countries) and the rest 5 interviews were conducted within the region, with the youth that stayed in GBAO. Moreover, there were interviews with the state officials (migration specialist), professor- historian, and also aged Pamiri people, in order to get insight about the dynamics of the migration in GBAO, its evolution throughout the history, and old generations' opinion about the youth decisions regarding migration. Overall, 20 interviews were conducted with different category of people: youth migrants (both male and female), non-migrants, old people, specialist of different fields that have data about migration or work with migrants. Through these in-depth interviews, my aim is to capture the nuances, emotions, and unique narratives of the youth population, which may not be fully captured through quantitative surveys alone. These interviews added depth and richness to the collected data, contributing to a more comprehensive analysis of the research topic.

The respondents were asked to sign an informed consent form before the observation and interviews. The informed permission form guarantees the anonymity and confidentiality form and informs that only the researcher, the supervising professor, and the OSCE Academy would have an access to the responses and other information obtained for this study. All interviews were recorded with the respondents' consent.

2.5. Observations and analysis of secondary data

In addition to conducting interviews, field observation entails walking around a community to observe daily life. This involved learning about the local economy, what people do, who sells what, who works in what capacity, what the activity is, how the town center is populated, and what messages seem to be conveyed by people's actions in public spaces. With this method the general living conditions of the people in GBAO was observed from different angles: economic, political, and cultural. In other words, this

would be an unobtrusive method of data collection without disrupting people's/informants' routines.

In addition to primary data collection through interviews, I gathered and analyzed relevant secondary data. This involved an extensive review of existing literature, reports, and statistical data related to youth migration, regional demographics, and socio-economic conditions in GBAO and other regions of Tajikistan. By examining this secondary data, I was able to provide context to the primary data collected through interviews, and also strengthen the credibility of my research outcomes. Comparing my findings with existing information will help identify patterns, trends, and potential discrepancies, further enhancing the analysis.

Moreover, the analysis of secondary data involved synthesizing existing literature, reports, and statistical information. By critically analyzing and comparing the findings from these secondary sources with my primary data, I was able to validate and strengthen my research outcomes.

2.6. Data analysis techniques

Regarding data analysis techniques, the research focused on qualitative approach. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed thematically. I thoroughly reviewed and coded the interview transcripts to identify key themes, recurring ideas, and emerging patterns, allowing for a deeper exploration of the complexities and nuances of youth migration experiences and the underlying factors influencing migration decisions in GBAO.

Throughout the analysis process, I adopted a comparative approach, examining the similarities and differences in responses among the three target groups: migrated youth, youth who have remained in GBAO, and migrants, who have returned to the region, and those who have not. This comparative analysis helped identify commonalities, disparities, and potential factors influencing migration decisions.

By employing a combination of these techniques, my aim is to provide a comprehensive and robust analysis of the collected data. This enabled me to answer the

research questions and draw meaningful conclusions regarding youth migration in GBAO and its implications.

2.7. Preliminary working schedule

Table 1. Working schedule of the research

Month	Tasks that were done:
July	Develop research proposal and refine research questions Review relevant literature on migration, youth migration, and Tajikistan Finalize theoretical framework and hypotheses
August	Design data collection instruments (interviews and observation) Obtain necessary approvals and permissions for data collection Pilot test data collection instruments and make necessary revisions
September	Identify and recruit participants for surveys and interviews Begin data collection process Start organizing and analyzing secondary data sources
October (2d of October first proposal submission)	Continue data collection and analysis Conduct in-depth interviews with selected participants Analyze and interpret survey and interview data
November	Conduct comparative analysis of migration flows in Tajikistan's regions Analyze outcomes of youth migration for GBAO and migrated individuals Review and synthesize literature for the literature review section
December	Complete data analysis and interpretation Write findings and discussion chapters Finalize conclusion and recommendations sections Edit, revise, and proofread the entire thesis

2.8. Risks and limitations

There are several risks and limitations that might occur during conducting this research. The main challenges might be the availability and accessibility to the essential

information (official statistics, reports regarding migration), lack of literature and research on youth migration in Tajikistan, especially regarding youth migration of the GBAO.

Gathering comprehensive and up-to-date data on youth migration in Tajikistan, particularly in the GBAO region, can be challenging. Official statistics and reports may not always cover specific aspects or may not be readily accessible. This limitation can hinder the researcher's ability to obtain a complete picture of the situation.

The scarcity of existing literature on youth migration in Tajikistan, particularly in relation to the GBAO region, can pose a significant challenge. The lack of prior research may limit the availability of relevant theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and best practices to inform the current research. This may require the researcher to rely on broader migration studies or adapt methodologies used in similar contexts.

Tajikistan, like any country, has its unique political landscape and social dynamics that can impact research on sensitive topics like migration. Therefore, due to potential political sensitivities or fear of repercussions, individuals might be reluctant to participate in interviews or disclose sensitive information, which can limit the depth and accuracy of the data collection.



Illustration 1. The Political Map of Tajikistan. Source: <https://www.mapsofindia.com/world-map/tajikistan/>

CHAPTER 3. UNDERSTANDING MIGRATION FROM TAJIKISTAN - A BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

This study focuses on the motivations and factors of the youth individuals in Pamir regarding their decisions about migration and explores how these factors make their migration situation different. To that end, the literature reviewed explains debates around the (2.1) conceptualization and operationalization of the work, (2.2) traces back to the history of migration in Tajikistan, (2.3) push factors of migration: youth migration; minority migration; in Central Asia; in Tajikistan; (2.4) GBAO (Pamir) context and background. Migration in GBAO

3.1. Conceptualization and Operationalization

It is essential to become more familiar with the thesis' main concepts in order to comprehend the stated aims and gaps more clearly. Although there are no internationally

recognized and agreed concepts or definitions for youth, migration, or minorities, the most common and widely used definitions were chosen based on the study's objectives and were found to be suitable and appropriate for the purpose of the research.

On the one hand, **migration** is described as a shift in a people's "usual place of residence" and their travel across a certain distance (or at least from one "migration-defining area" to another). On the other hand, the definition of migration denies the demands that migration requires a change of residency and moving over some distance.¹¹ IOM defines migrants as 'a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.'¹² For this study, the IOM definition is the most relevant one.

The concept of **youth** is quite debatable and also does not have specific, fixed and exact definition. The definition of youth usually depends on the field in which youth is going to be studied. Thus, sometimes the concept or definition of 'youth' is created that fits with a specific discipline or area. The age at which an individual can be considered a young/youth individual is the main topic of discussion around the term "youth". The UN defines youth as: "A period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. That's why, as a category, youth is more fluid than other fixed age-groups. Yet, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment, because 'youth' is often referred to a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education and finding their first job. The reviewed literature acknowledges the age of youth depends on the field of study and might vary in different parts of the world, different fields of study, or different purposes of using this term. For instance, UN Secretariat-Youth: 15-24; Statistics UN Habitat (Youth Fund) -Youth 15-32

¹¹ Kok Pieter, "The Definition of Migration and its Application: Making Sense of Recent South African Census and Survey Data", *Southern African Journal of Demography* 7, no. 1, (1997), 19–30, accessed September 10, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20853242>.

¹² International Organization for Migration, "Definition of Migrant: Who is a Migrant?", International Organization for Migration, accessed September 10, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/who-migrant-0>

Agenda; UNICEF-Youth: 15-24; The African Youth Charter Youth: 15-35 African Union.”¹³

There is no agreed definition for the term "minority" on a global scale, as well. So, in keeping with the objectives of the study, we selected the United Nation (UN) and the European Unions' (EU) as a suitable definition.

The EU defines a **minority** group as a: “A non-dominant group which is usually numerically less than the majority population of a State or region regarding their ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics and who (if only implicitly) maintain solidarity with their own culture, traditions, religion or language.”¹⁴ Similarly, the UN states that: “Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and as such to contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live.”¹⁵ In this regard, Louis Wirth, an American sociologist, might also be cited. In his book "Morale and Minority Groups," he defines the term "minorities" as those who because of social or physical and cultural differences receive differential treatment and who regard themselves as a people apart.¹⁶

By addressing the factors of migration of the youth in Pamir, the duration of migration should be taken into consideration of at least 6 months. According to the objectives of this study, a migrant is defined as any person from GBAO between the ages of 18 and 35 who has spent more than six months away from their household. The age

¹³ Fact-Sheet, “Definition of Youth”, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), accessed September 16, 2023, <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

¹⁴ European Union, “Minority Definition”, Migration and Foreign Affairs, European Union, accessed September 16, 2023, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/minority_en

¹⁵ Michelle Bachelet, “Minorities: Who are minorities under international law?”, the United Nations, accessed September 16, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/minorities>

¹⁶ Louis Wirth, “Morale and Minority Groups”, *American Journal of Sociology* 47, no. 3 (1941), 415–33, accessed September 16, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2769291>.

rate that was chosen is based on the working abilities and because that age, people are usually still in the process of making decisions about their lives and future plans.

3.2 Traces back to the history of migration in Tajikistan

According to one of the latest executive summaries (in 2021) on the migration history of the country, Tajikistan has been actively involved in regional migration movements ever since it has attained independence in 1991. The nation's political and economic instability, a civil war that lasted from 1992 to 1997 for five years, and the lack of job prospects were some of the factors that contributed to the increase in migration out of the nation. The Russian-speaking people emigrated more frequently during the early stages of migration from Tajikistan. Nearly 42% of Tajikistan's Russian-speaking population (42% in 1995) emigrated to Germany, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Israel.

This report states that almost half of the workforce (or around 3 million people) currently works outside of the country, primarily in Russia, to support their family through remittances due to the lack of job possibilities, which is the main cause of emigration from the nation. Unlike the other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Tajikistan's population is continuously increasing despite the country's large external migration. Between 150,000 and 180,000 newcomers to the labor force each year. This amount is higher than the number of employment accessible on the Tajik market, which is why immigration from abroad continues to be the primary option. Every third household in the nation has at least one member who works outside of Tajikistan due to its demographics, which include 57% of the population being under the age of 24 and an increasing supply of labor market entrants. Over 90% of Tajikistan's migrants go to Russia, a country with which it has a long history of connection, regular air connectivity, visa-free travel, a sizable Tajik diaspora group, and numerous migrants who know Russian. Up to 10% or 12% of Tajikistan's population is made up of migrants; in particular, 20% to 25% of men between the ages of 18 and 40 are migrants. With between 17% and 30% of the working population coming from mountainous regions and experiences the biggest labor mobility in the nation. Although men make up the majority of migrants, the number of women leaving the country to work abroad has increased from

11% to 16% in recent years.¹⁷ Overall, the figures indicate that Tajikistan witnessed a significant migrant movement during the first ten years following independence as a result of the civil war and its aftereffects. Nevertheless, this trend has not decreased over time, and statistics are getting higher. In the next parts, the factors and causes of migration in the country will be covered in greater detail.

3.3 Push factors of migration: youth migration; minority migration; in Central Asia; in Tajikistan

The reviewed literature acknowledges that the debate around the push factors is quite wide and complex. People move from one area to another for a variety of reasons. These causes may differ depending on the geography, gender, generation, status in society, age, and other factors. To be more precise and logical, the push factors are broken down into distinct explanations for *a) youth, b) minorities, c) Central Asia, and d) Tajikistan.*

a) Push factors of youth migration: An empirical study on the migration among young skilled and creative people in Bucharest asserts that young people are attracted to countries that offer economic prosperity, high-quality services, and political stability.¹⁸ Also it indicates that the lack of opportunities and poor living conditions for young people in their home countries is the primary driving force to move to other countries.

Another article claimed that there is significant pressure on young people. Moreover, all their concerns, problems, and challenges that they are facing in their daily lives are not taken into consideration by policymakers. In addition, they do not have an opportunity to take part in the policy-making and decision-making processes. They are

¹⁷ Palazzo San Calisto, “Migration profile Tajikistan”, *Integral Human Development, Migrants and Refugees Section*, (Dushanbe, 2021), accessed September 16, 2023, <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2020-CP-Tajikistan-EN.pdf>

¹⁸ Suciu, M.C. and Florea C.A., “An Empirical Study on the Migration Among Young Skilled and Creative People”, *Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies*, (2017), 727-741, accessed September 16, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318860022_An_Empirical_Study_on_the_Migration_Among_Young_Skilled_and_Creative_People

not heard. As a result, they must leave. “Participants concluded that there was a need to ensure open and inclusive societies, where youth’s needs and concerns were heard, an open and free debate was recognized as a contribution to a comprehensive understanding of migration, and because the effects of a rapid demographic change are caused in part by the movements of young people.”¹⁹ Moreover, the consequences and the impact of migration on youth is under the current studies of many scholars. Sometimes young people take on adult duties that range from becoming the main providers of income for their families to raising their younger siblings and looking after members of their extended families. Such family obligations can significantly impede the intellectual and personal growth of immigrant adolescents since they can prevent them from participating in social and other personal activities.²⁰

b) Push factors of the minorities’ migration: In order to understand the uniqueness and distinct factors of the youth migration in GBAO, besides the above-mentioned factors, it is important to investigate the factors that are specific to the minority groups. In this regard, the Minority Rights International Group claims that minority people experience unique difficulties throughout the actual relocation process. They could face discrimination and persecution while traveling, such as being taken advantage of by traffickers or abused by the majority population in the nations they pass through. When they reach their intended country, they also encounter new challenges. They could face discrimination, for instance, in detention facilities and when requesting refugee. Many times, they will remain a minority in the new nations where they reside, continuing to face the prejudice and persecution they were attempting to flee:

“Indeed, for most people who change their place of residence (particularly members of minority or indigenous communities, as well as others belonging to marginalized or impoverished groups), internal displacement is a

¹⁹ International Dialogue on Migration, “Youth and Migration”, International Dialogue on Migration, (2020), accessed September 18, 2023, <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/idm-29.pdf>

²⁰ John Shields and Omar Lujan, “Immigrant Youth in Canada: A Literature Review of Migrant Youth Settlement and Service Issues”, Knowledge Synthesis Report, CERIS, (Canada, 2018), accessed September 18, 2023, <https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/IWYS-Immigrant-Youth-in-Canada.pdf>

more common experience than international migration – or, at least, the first step in a much longer process that may ultimately lead to fleeing their country of origin. Some may never leave their home country but remain for years or even decades in a near-permanent state of displacement. On the other hand, there can be compelling drivers of displacement such as conflict, persecution, natural disasters and other immediate threats that push them to migrate. Main push factors related to forced migration: conflict, corruption, poverty and marginalization, land rights, climate change, urbanization, intersectional discrimination in migration processes.”²¹

To sum up, the most vivid causes of minorities’ migrations are marginalization and discrimination in their home countries. Migration in the case of a minority can be difficult from the very beginning of the process—when they decide to leave their home country—through the whole journey, as well as throughout the whole process and even once they arrive at their destination—in the host countries.

Push factors of (youth) migration in Central Asia: The current literature and discourse that study the factors and motivations that define migration flows in Central Asian countries are similar to each other. Researchers and academics claim that the decisions of the people in this region regarding migration issues, in most cases, are influenced by economic factors. For instance, CABAR.Asia reports that: “The growth of labor emigration from the region is a confirmation of the fact that the causes of migration are a complex set of pushing factors in the country of origin and attracting factors in the country of achievement. In Central Asia, these are crisis phenomena in the economy, the closure of enterprises and businesses, a decline in living standards, corruption, nepotism, political stagnation, and the impossibility of self-realization”.²² Besides the economic factor another factor that has notably enhanced the number of migrants in Central Asia is following: “Apart from lack of economic opportunities, existence of blurred boundaries, emergence of authoritarian regimes with a tilt towards strong 'ethnic state' as well as the alienation of substantial number of population are contributing to the process

²¹ Minority Rights International Group, “Covering Migration”, Minority Rights International, accessed September 18, 2023, https://coveringmigration.com/learning_pages/migration-causes/

²² Zulfiya Raissova, “Trends in Modern Labor Migration in Central Asia”, *Central Asian Bureau for Analytical Reporting Asia*, (2020), accessed September 19, 2023, <https://cabar.asia/en/trends-in-modern-labor-migration-in-central-asia>

of flow of migration.”²³ The stated causes and motivations of migration in Central Asia are generalized and referred to the whole population of the region without any specific characteristics or distinctions. The above stated causes of minority migration in the world are quite close and appropriate push factors of the minorities’ migration in Central Asian countries. Discourses in the higher level- for the Central Asian region also admits that nowadays, migration is one of the most proper and popular way for minorities to escape from the violations of their rights and discrimination: “Initially as an indicator of ethnic tensions and discrimination of minorities, migration is becoming a mechanism of market transition, providing for the economic survival of population under crisis conditions”²⁴

Push factors of (youth) migration in Tajikistan: While there is a lack of literature specifically addressing youth migration in Tajikistan, it is important to recognize the broader focus on migration trends within the country as a whole. These studies have shed light on the socioeconomic factors that shape migration patterns, including the motivations and challenges faced by migrants of all age groups. Economic conditions, characterized by limited opportunities and high unemployment rates, have consistently emerged as significant push factors driving individuals, including the youth, to seek better prospects outside their homeland.

Sanchita Chatterjee claims that the lack of economic prospects, increasing poverty level, presence of blurred boundaries leads to the cycle of high migration flows, which resulted even in human trafficking in Tajikistan.²⁵

Supporting the above mentioned ideas Burulcha Sulaimanova and Aziz Bostan claim that economic factors such as GDP per capita, real wage(s), value added per worker

²³ Mohapatra, Nalin Kumar, “Migration and Its Impact on Security of Central Asia”, *JSTOR*, Quarterly 69, no. 2, (India, 2013), 133–57, accessed September 20, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45072718>.

²⁴ Korobkov, Andrei V, “Migration Trends in Central Eurasia: Politics versus Economics,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40, no. 2, (2007), 169–189, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48609600>.

²⁵ Chatterjee S, “Migration -Trafficking nexus in Post-Soviet Tajikistan”, *European Scientific Journal*, ESJ, 17(20), (2021), 84, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2021.v17n20p84>

in agriculture, remittances, exchange rates and demographic factors as the amount of labor force influence the emigration decision.²⁶ Moreover, the International Labor Organization report on Tajikistan migration states that the main reasons in Tajik youth migration are low salary level, lack of accommodation, conscription dodging, and unfavorable conditions for opening/developing one's own business.²⁷

3.4 GBAO (Pamir) context and background. Migration in GBAO

'Pamiris', or 'Badakhshanis' in popular discourse, form a small group of Iranic peoples who inhabit the mountainous region of Pamir-Hindu Kush, being the historical region of Badakhshan. The term "Pamiri" has been generally used in reference to a group of Iranic people in the Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Province in Tajikistan and in Afghanistan's Badakhshan province. Currently by "Pamiris" we refer to a particular group of people who speak the diverse indigenous languages in GBAO or as it is called now Pamir.²⁸

²⁶ Burulcha Sulaimanova, Aziz Bostan, "International Migration: A Panel Data: Analysis of the Determinants of Emigration from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan", *Eurasian Journal of Business and Economics*, (2014), 1-9, accessed September 22, 2023, <https://www.ejbe.org/EJBE2014Vol07No13p001SULAIMANOVA-BOSTAN.pdf>

²⁷ International Labor Organization, "Migration and Development in Tajikistan – Emigration, Return and Diaspora", (2010), 60-70, accessed September 22, 2023, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---sro-moscow/documents/publication/wcms_308939.pdf

²⁸ Dagikhudo Dagiev, "Who lives above the clouds? Discussing Pamiriness and Tajikness", *Central Asian Analytical Network*, (2018), 10-25, accessed September 22, 2023, <https://www.caa-network.org/archives/14779>



Illustration 2. GBAO, Khorog (the administrative center of the region). Source: <https://the.akdn/en/resources-media/whats-new/spotlights/infrastructure->

More than 20,000 years have passed since the earliest signs of civilization appeared in the Pamirs. In the Eastern Pamir, 50 Stone Age human sites as well as numerous cave paintings and petroglyphs have been discovered. Many castles exist now that date back to the third century BCE. Zoroastrian ceremonial structures, Buddhist stupas, and ancient shrines are only a few examples of the diverse history of this important Silk Route intersection. Zoroastrianism was the official religion of the Iranian Empire, which included the area that is now Tajikistan. Islam began to progressively expand over the Central Asian area in 636. The great majority of people in Tajikistan currently practices Sunni Islam. However, a large number of the population in the Pamirs practices the Ismaili faith and adheres to the Aga Khan. The Persian poet, traveler, and philosopher Nasir Khusraw converted the Pamiris to Ismailism in the eleventh century. The Pamirs, commonly referred to as the Roof of the World, are a group of mountains that span sections of Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. The largest peak (7495 m) in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is found in Tajikistan's GBAO, which makes up around 63,700 km² of the Pamir Mountains. There are now 220,000 people living in the territory, as a result of a significant rise in population over the past 50 years. The majority of the area is made up of stony, desolate mountains covered in glaciers, debris, and perpetual snow, with very little biomass production. The vegetative period is just 200 to 230 days per year due to the little

precipitation and temperature pattern. Good yields require irrigation, labor costs are expensive, and there is very little opportunity for mechanization.²⁹

The following report of CABAR.Asia indicates the statistics that show the significant difference and the level of development in various spheres of the region in comparison with other regions. GBAO is the most ruralized region in Tajikistan. Only 13.3% of people reside in urban areas here, with rural areas housing 86.7% of the population. The income of GBAO's inhabitants is revealed by data on shop turnover. Retail turnover per capita in GBAO was 74.9% lower than the national average, compared to Dushanbe city's 89.2% higher rate, the Districts of Republican Subordination's 61.8% lower rate, Sughd's 79.8% lower rate, and Khatlon region's 65.1% lower rate.

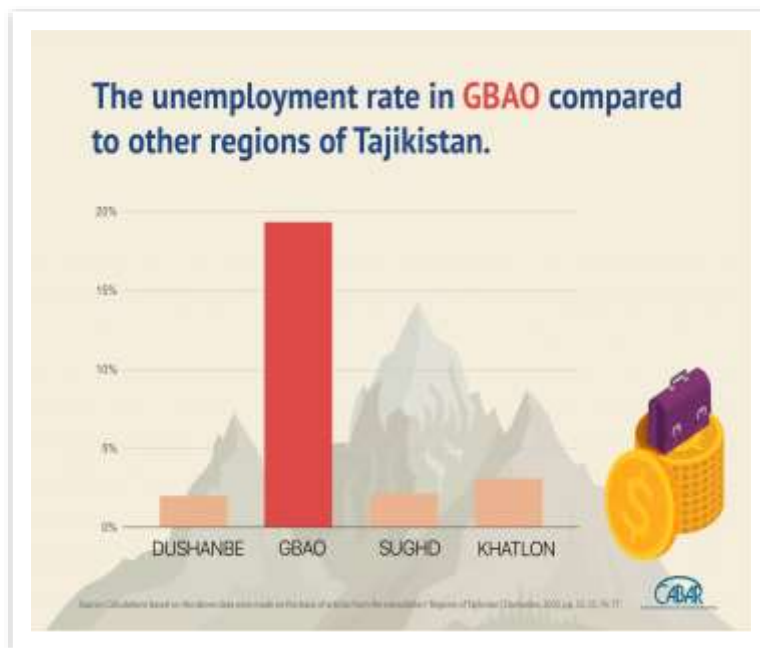


Figure 2. The unemployment rate un GBAO and other regions of Tajikistan

Source: <https://cabar.asia/en/development-specifics-of-gbao-help-from-the-center->

²⁹ Thomas Breu and Hans Hurni, “The Tajik Pamirs Challenges of Sustainable Development in an Isolated Mountain Region”, Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), Geographica Bernensia, ISBN 3-906151-74-3, (2003), accessed September 23, 2023, https://boris.unibe.ch/72599/1/The_Tajik_Pamirs.pdf

Since deurbanization causes a rise in rural overpopulation, the deurbanization activities that have been taking place in GBAO over the past ten years are viewed as a negative phenomenon. The latter results in a decline in employment and a rise in unemployment. This is a reference to signs of rising annual average employee numbers. The number of wage earners in GBAO has declined over the last five years. Nationally, the unemployment rate as a percentage of those who are employed is 4.1%, according to government figures. This indicator reaches 2.1% in the city of Dushanbe, 2.1% in the province of Sughd, 3.1% in the province of Khatlon, and 19.3% in the GBAO. Gorno-Badakhshan is behind Dushanbe (19.2%), Sughd (15.6%), Khatlon (14.1%), and the national average (19.9%). The living circumstances of the people living in GBAO are problematic in some ways. If the level of housing provision grew across the nation between 2010 and 2019—in particular, in Dushanbe city by 11.8%, the Sughd region by 13.9%, the Khatlon area by 15.8%, and the RRS by 26.7%—then this indicator decreased by 8.7% in GBAO. Crop and livestock industries have dominated development in GBAO's rural districts. Due to adverse transportation-geographical conditions, the rural population continues to be heavily dependent on the agriculture industry. According to this industry's data, agricultural product production has decreased significantly. For instance, during the past nine-ten years (2010-2019) grain output in the hilly Badakhshan province fell by 61.0%, although it increased in the Direct Ruled Districts (DRD) province by 4.2%, Khatlon province by 11.6%, Sughd province by 24.2%, and Tajikistan as a whole by 19.2%. Concerns have also been raised about the region's sharp reduction in vegetable crop productivity. During that time in GBAO, this indicator fell by 41.9%. For the purpose of comparison, it should be noted that whereas overall vegetable output increased nationwide by 99.9%, it increased by 2.4 times in Khatlon. Only fruits, whose growth in agricultural production in GBAO is 31.2%, are visible. However, over the same time period, fruit production outperformed the level attained in Badakhshan by almost a factor of 4, both on the scale of neighboring regions and the nation as a whole. Each citizen in GBAO has access to 0.05 hectares of land. For this indication, the province of Khatlon has a threshold of 0.13 hectares, 0.10 hectares in Sughd, and 0.9 hectares nationwide. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that the sown regions of the GBAO are distinguished by high levels of stoniness and low levels of natural fertility.

Additionally, the climatic environment does not favor many harvests per year. While alfalfa can produce 6-7 hay crops in the Khatlon province, in mountainous Badakhshan, the cold season begins with the third hay of this crop.³⁰

These are all indicators that demonstrate the distinct features of the GBAO from the other regions of the country.

One of the particular factors that is quite relevant to the motivations of the youth migrants in GBAO are psychological factors. “The psychological factors of the emigration intentions of young people, the growth of which is observed today in various countries of the world, are analyzed based on the data of numerous international studies. The psychological driving forces of the emigration intentions of young people, considered in international studies, are diverse and correspond to different levels of personality activity (individual, interpersonal and macrosocial)”³¹.

The literature regarding youth migration in Tajikistan, particularly in the GBAO, is relatively scarce and lacks specificity. Existing scholar’s works tend to concentrate on migration in Tajikistan as a whole, without distinguishing between different ages, groups (minorities and majorities, for example) or regions. Despite that, after revising the distinct characteristics of the region- GBAO-geographical, social, climatic, cultural and so on that make it different from other parts of the country, it will be quite possible to find out some motivations and reasons behind the youth migration of the region.

One of the projects for development of the economic conditions and facilities of the region describes GBAO as the following: “At 51 per cent, the poverty rate in the GBAO region is significantly higher than the national average. The transition to a strong market economy is hampered by historical factors, an example being the culture of bartering as a survival strategy. GBAO is undergoing profound social change. In

³⁰ Khojimuhammad Umarov, “Development specifics of GBAO: Help from the center and the international community is needed”, *CABAR.Asia*, (Dushanbe, March 30, 2022), accessed September 23, 2023, <https://cabar.asia/en/development-specifics-of-gbao-help-from-the-center-and-the-international-community-is-needed>

³¹ Nadezhda Murashchenkova, “Psychological Factors of Youth Emigration Intentions: A Review of International Studies”,(2021), 5-7, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1683-2021-18-1-25-41>

particular, large-scale labour migration, especially among men, has substantially changed and destabilized the social structures in both rural and urban areas. Major impediments include structural weakness in the region, the high risk of a climate catastrophe and changes such as crop failures, fluctuations in production and variations in quality. On top of this, women have insufficient access to primary products, markets and information, while the transport infrastructure is greatly neglected. High levels of emigration, especially among the young population, a lack of energy security, and the adverse effects on competition and production additionally hamper the region’s development. The most important economic area in GBAO is Khorog.”³²

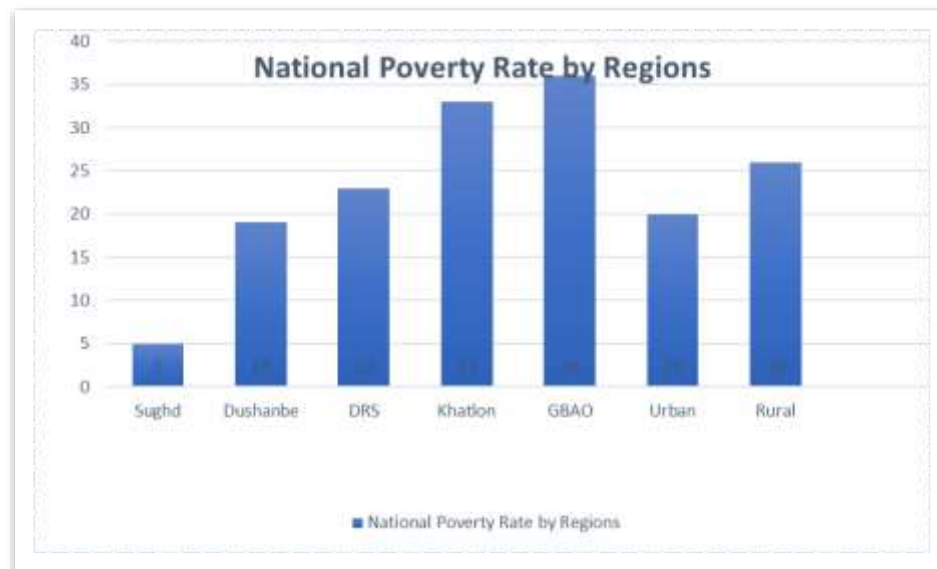


Figure 3. National Poverty Rate of Tajikistan by regions. Source: [World Bank Document](#)

Another similar report characterizes GBAO as the most mountainous and the most rural region of Tajikistan. The unfavorable geographical, climatic, and agricultural conditions lead to other negative consequences that make the region vulnerable, such as obstacles for the promotion of industry, challenges in producing agricultural products, high rates of unemployment and so on. If in other parts of the country people have an

³² German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Supporting the local economy in selected high-mountain regions”, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), (2016-2020), accessed September 23, 2023, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/82087.html>

opportunity to get two-three times crops (harvesting) a year, in GBAO crops might be grown barely only once. All these factors make the region distinct and more vulnerable in comparison with other regions of Tajikistan.³³ Hence, taking into account the stated characteristics, it can be assumed that these factors might be considered as push factors of the Pamiri people, in particular youth, to migrate.

It is crucial, however, to delve deeper into the unique dynamics of youth migration in GBAO, as this region may have distinct factors influencing migration patterns compared to other regions of Tajikistan. By examining the limited literature available and exploring the specific experiences and perspectives of young migrants in GBAO, this research seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of migration in Tajikistan. So, diligent efforts have been made to gather relevant literature to gain more understanding about this subject. Among the available articles and readings, a prevailing consensus emerges, emphasizing the influential role of economic conditions and the persistently high unemployment rate as primary drivers of migration in Tajikistan.

So, as it was mentioned above, all these claims illustrate the main causes and some factors of the migration in the whole country. These are the general motivations and factors of migration, in particular youth migration in Tajikistan that can be applied for all regions of the country, in particular for GBAO. According to the reports and statistics most of the Pamiri migrants-22,04% of GBAO population are in Russia. For instance, the Regional Public Organization “NUR” (was founded by representatives of GBAO in 2005) reports that over 50 000 Pamirian migrants have settled in Russia. The primary reason stated for their migration is the prevailing crisis in the economy and social power within their home country. Additionally, a low standard of living and high unemployment are among the factors that have played a role in their decision to leave their place of

³³ Khojimuhammad Umarov, “Development specifics of GBAO: Help from the center and the international community is needed”, CABAR.Asia, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://cabar.asia/en/development-specifics-of-gbao-help-from-the-center-and-the-international-community-is-needed>

origin.³⁴ Similarly, Minority Rights Group outlines: “Despite many hardships and human rights violations faced by migrants in Russia, the region’s youth still believe that leaving to work elsewhere is the best option to improve their living conditions. Many, once they return to GBAO, are still unable to find employment opportunities there.”³⁵

Accordingly, from various research articles and reports spanning different time periods, it becomes evident that the explanations and motivations for Tajik migrants are often generalized without specific differentiations and can be applied to any migrant, any region or in some cases, to any age (without distinction-are they youth migrants or not). Here comes the gap in the literature review that these factors, reasons, causes, and motivations can be applied to all three regions of Tajikistan, however, there are additional factors and motivations for migration or that are only unique for the GBAO that cannot be applied for the other regions of the country. Therefore, the central focus of this thesis is to address the distinct set of reasons (besides the general factors) that drive youth migration in GBAO.

Through such an analysis, the thesis expects to test the expectation whether the factors unique to GBAO affect the young people’s decisions about migration in correspondingly unique ways.

Having reflected on the driving factors of migration for this paper, the main debates arising from the developing research on migration, youth migration and minority’s migration tackle the above-listed debates. Notwithstanding, most traditional research on the process of driving factors of migration are focused on migrants’ economic

³⁴Garibova Farzona Maybaliyeva, “The Situation of Labour Migrants from the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of the Republic of Tajikistan in Russia Federation”, *Institute for Demographic Research FCTAS RAS*, (Moscow, 2021), 219, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.17059/udf-2021-5-3>

³⁵ Minority Rights Group, “With the future of labour migration uncertain, tourism could offer a lifeline for Pamir’s marginalized minorities”, Minority Rights Group, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://minorityrights.org/programmes/library/trends/trends2022/tajikistan/>

and well-being conditions. Therefore, the limitations of the reviewed literature will be critically addressed after studying these debates.

CHAPTER 4. MIGRATION CHOICES FROM GBAO - INSIGHTS FROM INTERVIEW RESEARCH

4.1 Youth migration in GBAO and motivations

Research indicates that individuals are more likely to engage in migration when their expectations, especially among the youth, are not met. This suggests that unmet expectations play a significant role in motivating people to seek new opportunities in different locations.³⁶ For the youth of the GBAO this theory might be attached. In order to support the hypothesis, I have conducted 20 interviews from September to November 2023 in Khorog and Moscow and online as well.

Table 2. Number and location of the interviews.

Theme	Location	Number	Male	Female
Youth migrants	Moscow	6	3	3
Youth migrants	Online: UEA, USA, UK, Poland,Germany	5	3	2
Youth migrants	Khorog	4	2	2
Old generation	Khorog	3	1	2
Specialists	Khorog	2	2	0
Overall		20	11	9

The interviews for the research were conducted in both online and offline formats. For that purpose, I have visited Russia—Moscow, in order to conduct in-person

³⁶ MilasiSanto, "What Drives Youth's Intention to Migrate Abroad? Evidence from International Survey Data" *IZA Journal of Development and Migration* 11, no.1, (2020), accessed September 30, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.2478/izajodm-2020-0012>

interviews with the youth migrants, as Russia, specifically Moscow, is one of the most popular destinations for the youth migrants from Central Asia, including Tajikistan. Another part of the interviews with youth took place in some villages of the GBAO and its capital- Khorog. Due to the fact that I was not able to conduct all interviews in person, some of the interviews were conducted online with the youth migrants from Pamir in the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Poland, and Germany. Before, Russia used to be the most popular place for migrants; however, the tendency has changed after the war in Ukraine. The mobilization process and strengthening of the repressive attitude towards migrants, in particular towards migrants from Central Asia, have changed the situation³⁷, and currently, migrants pursue and prioritize European states and the U.S. Pamirian youth also prefer to get to European countries or to the states, even by illegal means. Germany, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. are currently the most popular, convenient, and safe states for the Pamiri youth. The reason that forced youth to migrate to Europe or the United States was for their personal safety. They moved to these countries for their permanent residence. It is important to note that the names of the interviewees have been changed and the names that were used in the thesis, are not real names of the respondents.

The people that I have interviewed are people who have tried to stay, make a career, and live in GBAO or in Tajikistan. Initially, they did not have a plan to move, however, after some years, they decided to migrate. Interestingly, all the respondents to the interview had high education, and some of them even had 2-3 diplomas. Most of them have working experience in Pamir or Dushanbe, which might show that they have tried to stay and live in their home country. However, after a particular period of time, they migrated to other countries, and now, for many years, they are living and working there. The motivations behind the migration of young people from GBAO is different.

After conversing with young individuals from the GBAO region who have relocated to various countries, several unique factors were identified as contributing to

³⁷ VOA, “Under Pressure, Central Asia Migrants Leaving Russia Over Ukraine War”, *Agence France-Presse*, (November 15, 2023), <https://www.voanews.com/a/under-pressure-central-asia-migrants-leaving-russia-over-ukraine-war/7357290.html> accessed October 3, 2023,

their migration, distinguishing it from other regions of the country. These factors include the region's geographical location, which presents environmental and climatic challenges, as well as a lack of infrastructure due to slow development. Additionally, cultural and religious pressures and suppression were highlighted as significant causes for youth migration from GBAO.

GBAO faces a very slow pace of development, resulting in limited access to basic amenities and infrastructure. This lack of progress hinders economic growth and diminishes prospects for employment and education. As a result, young people feel compelled to migrate to regions or countries with better infrastructure and greater opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Cultural and religious pressures within GBAO contribute to the decision of many young individuals to migrate. In some cases, strict cultural norms and societal expectations can restrict personal freedom and limit individual choices. This can create a sense of suffocation among the youth, leading them to seek more liberal environments where they can freely express themselves and pursue their aspirations.

The geographical location of GBAO plays a significant role in driving youth migration. The region is characterized by challenging environmental and climatic conditions, such as harsh mountainous terrain and extreme weather patterns. These factors make it difficult for the local population to sustain their livelihoods and exacerbate economic hardships, prompting young individuals to seek better opportunities elsewhere.

4.2. Slow level of development and lack of infrastructure

Numerous migrants interviewed highlighted that the region has remained stagnant in terms of development for an extended period and shows no signs of progressing further. The impediments to the region's development act as barriers for its residents to thrive. They argue that this is primarily the responsibility of the state, asserting that the necessary work and initiatives needed for progress should be undertaken by the government. Consequently, residents find themselves unable to make substantial contributions to change their circumstances. This creates a sense of helplessness among the population, leading to a collective degradation alongside the region. As a

consequence, individuals are compelled to leave the region in search of better opportunities elsewhere.

One of the interviewees, who moved to the U.S. five years ago, claims that after working in a bank in Khorog for three years, he did not make any progress. *“I had the same pattern of life for three years without any changes. I had to be at work almost all day, from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Most of the time, there was nothing to do at work. After 5 p.m., everything closes in the town. There is no self-progress or entertainment, in particular for youth. The University of Central Asia (UCA)-School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) provides great courses for people, and I finished almost all of them, but where and how to use this knowledge?”* Several independent studies have consistently highlighted the region's lack of development and stagnant progress over the years. This becomes particularly evident when comparing it to other regions within Tajikistan. The region appears to be isolated and stuck at a certain level of development, with little improvement observed over the decades. For instance, CABAR. Asia reports that from 2016 to 2020, no outpatient and polyclinic facilities were established in the GBAO region, while a significant number of such facilities were opened in the Sughd and Khatlon regions, as well as in Dushanbe. Additionally, no hospitals were constructed or put into operation in GBAO during this time, whereas Khatlon province saw the commissioning of hospitals with 655 beds. It is also worth noting that there has been a lack of new pre-school institutions in GBAO for the past five years, which is in contrast to the commissioning of 1301 pre-school institutions for children in Khatlon province and 2049 beds in Dushanbe.³⁸ In the region, a significant number of people view education as their main way for survival and enhancing their livelihoods, despite the fact that it does not always lead to the desired outcomes. Many individuals in the region hold onto the hope that education will ultimately bring about positive change, even if the results are not guaranteed. Interviewees pointed out that they contribute a lot of money to their education, but it does not come back. Nazira (the name has been changed) is another

³⁸ Khojimuhammad Umarov, “Development specifics of GBAO: Help from the center and the international community is needed”, CABAR.Asia, accessed October 3, 2023, <https://cabar.asia/en/development-specifics-of-gbao-help-from-the-center-and-the-international-community-is-needed>

economist who used to work in a bank in Dushanbe before, moved to Dubai, and working there. She claims that besides the university diploma, she went through other extra-professional courses. *“I have all essential professional knowledge. Besides that, I speak two foreign languages. But the amount of the salary that I got was not appropriate for my knowledge. Moreover, I did not make any progress at work. The progress and professional developments got those colleges that had connections and friends in the bank.”* Another factor that forced many skilled people to leave the country is corruption and nepotism. This issue was pointed several times by migrants. Corruption is one of the main obstacles of the development in Tajikistan. The Corruption Perception Index for Tajikistan is estimated 24 out of 100.³⁹Corruption almost exists in all spheres, and it is one of the reasons that educated and good professionals leave the country. *“Knowledge, education, and professional skills are not valued in Tajikistan. What matters is your money and connections. If you have money you can find a good job and make a career and if not, you may stay in one position for many years”*, added Nazira. Moreover, for the people who decide to move to the capital, Dushanbe, it is more challenging to adapt and manage the financial sphere of their lives. Because the region is so far from the capital, a large number of individuals consider relocating to Dushanbe as akin to moving to a foreign country. There is a notable contrast in the level of development and living standards between Dushanbe and Khorog, particularly when comparing Khorog with Dushanbe, Kulyab, and Khujand. Despite the better living conditions and higher wages, many residents of GBAO do not see Dushanbe as a suitable place to migrate. *“Some of my local groupmates also started to work at the same bank or at another bank, but at the same level. However, for them, it was easier to be satisfied with this job, and the salary was more or less enough for them but not for me. Most of them had cars to get to work and did not have to pay for the rent, but I had to pay for the rent, which costed almost all my salary, all the products, transportation, and many other expenditures”*, claimed and interviewee, who is currently living and working in London. The students that come to Dushanbe to study, try to find a job and stay there. But if you are a newcomer and do not

³⁹ Transparency International, “Corruption Perception Index 2023”, Transparency International, accessed October 3, 2023, <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/tajikistan>

have any connections or relatives, you have to wait for years to adapt to this environment. As the practice and experience show, and moreover, interviewees approve, many people are waiting many years in order to make a good career that will be enough for the average life. One interviewee, Sohiba (name changed), hails from Khorog but has lived, studied, and worked in Dushanbe before (now residing in the U.S.), holds a contrasting perspective on the aforementioned issues. She believes that the primary cause of these difficulties is the impatience and distinct mindset of the people of GBAO. *"People who come from Pamir to work in Dushanbe are different from the rest in terms of their behavior and mentality. In a job, in order to go up the career ladder, you have to overcome a lot of obstacles and should tolerate a lot of things (maybe also some injustice sometimes). You should be patient and at the same time, stable. But our people (meant Pamiri people) want to make progress immediately."* She claims that all people and all citizens of the country have the same and equal opportunities, life conditions, and salaries, but some people can use them and some cannot. Regarding this question, Mansur (the name is changed), who is working in a hotel in Dubai, has asserted that: *"I do not say that there is no job at all in Tajikistan. There are, but the salary that is provided, does not match the qualifications at all. I have old parents in Pamir and two young sisters. I do not have time to wait and to be patient for 4-5 years in order to earn well and provide my family. What will they eat and wear, and how will they live during these years?"* The assertion holds that the distinctive geographical, climatic, and lifestyle attributes of the Pamir region have profoundly influenced the mindset, daily habits, and overall character of its residents. From this standpoint, the unique features of the Pamir region, like its geography and climate, have greatly influenced how people think and behave there. People living in the mountains are said to be more open and straightforward. Locals say that being genuine is highly valued in their community, and people express themselves honestly instead of pretending to agree just to fit in. This viewpoint indicates that the tough conditions in the Pamir have created a culture where honesty is important, as there might be a tendency to tolerate and pretend agreement even when opinions do not truly match. Firuz (the name has changed), a 28-year-old man living and working in the United Kingdom, pointed out that: *"When I studied in Dushanbe at university, my groupmates often told me that I was rude, conflicting, and not*

respectful towards them and also towards my professors. But I was straight-forward with everyone. I respected all my teachers and professors, but if they said bad words toward me or my groupmates, and sometimes insulted students, I could not tolerate this attitude. Or during some exams, we had to pay the particular amount of money even if we were ready for the exam. I went to university, not to the bazaar-buying, selling, and bargaining. I did not pay even 1 somoni, and because of these issues, sometimes I had conflicts". Such behaviors are occasionally labeled as aggressive and impolite. The earlier statements can be interpreted in two distinct ways. On one side, they could be perceived as reactions to certain actions that impede development in the region, such as corruption, nepotism, or inequalities. In this light, these behaviors may be seen as responses aimed at addressing underlying issues that hinder progress. However, on the flip side, some individuals interpret these statements as indicators of impatience among the local population toward ongoing processes. This interpretation raises questions about the mindset and behavior of the people involved. Shahnnoza (the name is changed), a 26-year-old girl, currently working and living in Germany, states that: *"After graduation from the university, I have worked in Tajikistan (in Khorog) almost for a year. The environment was very strict and pressing. Moreover, I had to work extra hours that were not paid, of course. Or I was ordered to make coffee or tea for my boss and his guests every day. However, it was not my responsibility. I cannot work and live under pressure. That is why I quitted".* After talking with Pamiri youth, most of them pointed out that they want to work independently and without pressure. They prefer and choose not to work by specialization and not to have a career, if their dignity, freedom, and pride are infringed.

Of course, there are some young people who have chosen to stay in Pamir and are planning to live and work there, although their numbers are not significant. To gain insights into their thoughts and attitudes towards the outflow of youth migration, we conducted several interviews with young people in Khorog. Among them, there is a group of young people who are actively involved in developing the IT sphere in Khorog. They have established an educational organization called "KhorogTech Academy" that offers specialized IT courses. The project manager of KhorogTech explained the process

of creating this organization, its purpose in the current situation, and the challenges they encounter in their daily work.

Fariza, (the name is changed), made the decision to return to her hometown Khorog after completing her studies at one of the top universities in Kazakhstan. She emphasized that: *"I enjoy learning, experiencing different cultures, visiting new countries and making friends from all over the world, but my love for Pamir compels me to grow and live here. The reason we choose to stay and build our lives here is the love we have for this place and these people."* In contrast to other interviewees, Fariza held a different perspective on the absence of opportunities: *"I believe that opportunities and conditions for growth and development exist everywhere, at all times. You just need to find them out or create them, if they don't exist. That's what our team did. We started our journey in the IT world from scratch in Khorog, and now we have made significant progress. Initially, there was no labor market or support for the IT industry, so we had to create one. We explained what IT is, why it is important, and how it works"*. Her view is that if people, especially the youth, are determined to do something and create something, it is always possible. She also highlighted the role of mentality in migration decisions. *"From my perspective, the main reason behind migration is a mentality issue. We often believe that somewhere else is always better and easier. Many people think that migration is the only option and that no other choices exist. But I believe that we should strive to make our own place better and make life easier here. Everything starts with our thoughts and mentality, how we shape our thoughts, and what we believe."* During the interviews, many migrants mentioned that the lack of opportunities, weak infrastructure, and slow development progress compel them to leave their homes, as they do not see a future in their homeland. While some of them initially attempted to work, develop, and live in Pamir, Tajikistan, they eventually realized that migration was the only viable option. However, some young people that chose to stay in GBAO have different view on that: *"I don't want to see Khorog or Pamir in the same condition and with the same limited opportunities in 30 years. Sometimes I think it is partly the fault of the previous generations for not considering the next generation and not creating better conditions. This is the outcome we face today. But I desire a good life—an easier life with improved conditions and opportunities for my children and the next generation in Pamir. That's*

why I am here. The KhorogTech team shares the same vision, and that's why we are working tirelessly to enhance the quality of life through education”, said Fariza.

Nekruz (the name is changed) is 22 and was graduating from Khorog State University this year. He is planning to migrate to Russia but claims that: *“It is not easy to live here now. Especially for men. I will go, earn money, and return back. If we all leave, who will change the situation and who will make it better? I want to start my own business, but it is impossible to do it now without certain conditions. I need time”.*

As it was mentioned earlier, for people, specifically the youth, continuing self-development and entertainment are important. But in GBAO, there is a lack of development possibilities and entertainment. The infrastructure is very weak, and the level of development is significantly slow. Education is the only sphere that people, in particular youth, are more or less satisfied with. *“Thanks to our schools and teachers, we have the opportunity to enter the top universities in different parts of the world and make our lives better. It is the only lever that helps us to survive and opens our way to the world”,* asserts Nisso (the name is changed), working in Germany as a doctor. *“But it is very unfortunate that we study abroad, learn several languages, and learn modern professions and knowledge, but when we come back to our home, Pamir, we cannot find an appropriate job and cannot use this knowledge,”* continues Nisso.

The interviews with Pamiri youth provide valuable insights into their aspirations, challenges, and perspectives on life and work in the Pamir region. Many Pamiri youth express a strong desire to work independently without external pressures. This might reflect a preference for autonomy and a reluctance to compromise on their dignity, freedom, and pride. The emphasis on independence might be a response to the challenges associated with traditional career paths, suggesting a desire for more control over their professional lives. Moreover, the youth's reluctance to specialize and pursue traditional careers can be notable. The establishment of "KhorogTech Academy" showcases a group of young people actively engaged in shaping their own opportunities, particularly in the IT sector. This entrepreneurial spirit suggests a willingness to create new avenues for personal and collective growth. In addition, some young individuals highlight the importance of love for Pamir as a motivating factor to return and contribute to the local community development instead of seeking this development in another place. This

group of people challenge the perception that opportunities are only available elsewhere, advocating for the creation of opportunities locally. Success in establishing an IT organization underlines the potential for grassroots initiatives to catalyze change.

Hence, the interviews shed light on the challenges faced by the Pamir region, including a lack of development possibilities and entertainment options. Weak infrastructure and slow development rates pose hurdles to the youth's desire for self-development and entertainment. Education emerges as a source of satisfaction, providing a gateway to top universities worldwide. However, the disconnect arises when returning graduates struggle to find suitable employment opportunities back home, raising questions about local job markets and utilization of acquired knowledge. In addition, it was emphasized that the role of mentality in migration decisions, challenging the notion that elsewhere is always better. This underscores the need for a shift in mindset and a proactive approach to shaping local environments. For instance, Nisso's comments highlight the discrepancy between the skills acquired abroad and the limited opportunities for application in the Pamir region. This calls attention to the need for aligning educational efforts with local job markets.

4.3. Geographical location and climate

The geographical remoteness from the capital, coupled with the unstable and harsh climate, as well as the infertile lands, compounds the challenges faced by the youth in the region. This extended distance intensifies the impact of existing challenges, creating a challenging environment for the youth. This prompts a notable trend of migration as young people seek better prospects beyond their native region. Additionally, the fertility of the land becomes a pivotal factor in this decision-making process. In contrast to other regions where the soil is conducive to multiple harvests and abundant crops, GBAO, particularly in areas like Shughnan, Rushan, Murghab, and Khorog, struggles to yield a satisfactory harvest even once a year.

This disparity in agricultural potential further motivates the youth to explore opportunities in regions where the land is more fertile and supports more bountiful harvests. The struggle for agricultural productivity becomes a driving force behind the decision to migrate in search of better living conditions and economic prospects. In

essence, the challenges posed by geographical factors, climate, and land fertility contribute significantly to the youth's inclination to seek a more promising future outside their current region. It is crucial to emphasize that the connection between environmental issues, particularly those arising from climate change, and their influence on migration, is becoming increasingly evident. However, there is a notable lack of sufficient studies and focus on understanding the effects of climate change on migration, particularly in the context of Tajikistan. IOM reports that migration data is scarce in vulnerable developing countries, often excluded from censuses. Few migration-focused social scientists engage in environmental research, and environmental researchers rarely study migration. However, increasing global interest in climate change and its impact on migration is fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, bridging gaps between these fields.⁴⁰

In the interviews, migrants frequently highlighted the scarcity of fertile and habitable land as a major concern. *“We have big fields (in Shugnan). Several years ago, we grew vegetables, such as potatoes, onions, and carrots. We used this crop for the whole family and brought it to Khorog for sale. But last years, because of the snowfall and climate change, we barely grew vegetables for the family. There are significant scars on the fertile and residential lands. The land is either infertile or risky to live on”*, said Daler (the name is changed) being in Moscow, Russia. As previously discussed, different regions and areas in Tajikistan boast fertile lands and favorable climates that support robust crop yields, often allowing for two or even three harvests annually. Only during a limited window of 4-5 months, from May to August, is the weather conducive to crop cultivation. The remaining months experience an early onset and late conclusion of winter, posing significant constraints on the agricultural calendar. This climatic disparity underscores the unique challenges faced by these specific regions in GBAO, impacting their agricultural productivity and economic activities. *“The fields are full of rocks, and the sand is very dry. Now even grass for animals grows there barely. Another big and significant issue for agriculture is the scarcity of water. Most people from my village still*

⁴⁰ Frank Laczko and Christine Aghazarm , “Migration, Environment and Climate Change”, International Organization for Migration, (Geneva, Switzerland, 2009), accessed November 1, 2023, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_and_environment.pdf

carry water from the river. It becomes much harder in the winter. We tried to use pipe lines for the water, but because of the cold weather, they froze, and the water did not come. As a result, the ice (inside the pipelines) and cold weather break the pipelines. We used to repair them regularly, but it was useless. People work very hard, but they get very small results or nothing”, explained Jahongir. Additionally, apart from the severe climate and the land's unsuitability for cultivation, concerns arise regarding the susceptibility to natural disasters. The local population experiences the adverse impacts of such disasters, with a considerable number of households being affected by rock falls and snowfalls. The community grapples with the aftermath and consequences of these natural events, further contributing to the challenges faced by the residents in the region. “Several years ago, these type of natural disasters were not so worrying for the residential areas. They mostly happened in the specific places that people were aware of and did not build anything. But in the last 5-8 years, several villages have suffered a lot from the natural disaster. The simple example will be the three floods in Roshtqala in the same village and snowfall in Khorog”, added one of the interviewees. In 2023, unexpected floods hit residential areas two to three times, surprising the residents. Even after relocating houses to different places, subsequent floods destroyed entire villages. The government built new houses for those affected, but the ongoing fear of floods and other disasters led many to leave not only their villages but the entire region. Moreover, a heavy snowfall in Khorog caused significant damage, destroying many houses and resulting in the tragic loss of 14 lives.⁴¹ “All safe places are already reserved and full of houses. Now it is very hard to find a place to build a house. Actually, it was one of the reasons that forced me to leave my home village. The population of the region is growing, and there is not enough space to build new houses”, said Muiz from Roshtqala, now studying and working in the U.S.

In the heart of the region, Khorog, the shortage of residential spaces emerges as a significant concern. Covering a modest expanse of about 10 square kilometers, Khorog

⁴¹Asia-Plus, “Avalanches caused by heavy snow leave 16 dead in Tajikistan”, Asia-Plus, (Dushanbe, February 16, 2023), accessed November 1, 2023, <https://asiaplustj.info/en/news/tajikistan/incidents/20230216/avalanches-caused-by-heavy-snow-leave-16-dead-in-tajikistan>

hosts a population of 30,000 residents.⁴² The growing realization is that the available space is becoming insufficient to adequately house the town's population. This issue underscores the pressing need for addressing residential challenges in Khorog to ensure suitable living conditions for its inhabitants. *"In Khorog, we are living in a three-room apartment in a section. We are three brothers, and two of us should build or buy a new house. I wanted to build a Pamirian house—Pomere Chid. However, I could not find a place; as they said (the local government), there is no area in Khorog, but it is possible to find small ones in the countryside, but I did not want to live in the countryside. It is difficult to live there"*, asserted Anvarsho, who is currently living and working in Dushanbe.

Although GBAO constitutes almost half of the country's area, the residential area is very small, and this issue is becoming a significant problem and growing more evident day by day. The lack of available residential land is creating challenges for families and individuals seeking to build or purchase homes in the region. As a result, many people have left the region and chosen other places outside of the region and outside of the country as a place of permanent residence. It is important to note that this year, a twelve-story building with a certain number of apartments was opened for use⁴³; however, more than half of this building and apartments were given to security agency officials, who came to GBAO for service reasons. Additionally, several families received apartments after losing their homes during a snowfall in Khorog two years ago. As a result, the building is almost full, and the residents of Khorog, or any other people from the region, did not have an opportunity to buy an apartment in this building. Currently, another thirteen-story building is being built and should be finished in 3–4 years. Some of the respondents assert that it is already too late to build huge buildings and thinking about

⁴² Oriental Express Causes and Asia, "Khorog, Tajikistan", Oriental Express Causes and Asia, accessed November 1, 2023, <https://www.orexca.com/tajikistan/khorog.htm>

⁴³ Asia-Plus, "Rahmon inaugurates a number of social and economic facilities in Khorog", Asia-Plus, (August 21, 2023), accessed November 3, 2023, <https://old.asiaplustj.info/en/news/tajikistan/power/20200821/rahmon-inaugurates-a-number-of-social-and-economic-facilities-in-khorog>

addressing this issue. *"Now we can see that many people are leaving and have left Pamir, and it is not about one or two members of the family; it is about the whole family. Until recently, people did not find a place to build or buy a house, but today the houses are becoming empty. People were not heard and were not supported. This issue continued for years, and most people left, and moreover it was not the only problem that people had,"* said Nazmiya, who is living in Moscow.

The interviews provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by the youth in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) region, shedding light on key factors influencing migration trends. The geographical remoteness from the capital and the harsh climate in GBAO create a challenging environment for the youth. Accordingly, the distance from the center exacerbates existing issues, fostering a trend of migration as young people seek better prospects elsewhere.

The fertility of the land also plays a crucial role in migration decisions. In contrast to other regions with conducive soil for multiple harvests, GBAO struggles to yield satisfactory crops, prompting youth to explore opportunities in more fertile areas. The scarcity of fertile and habitable land emerges as a major concern among migrants. According to the respondents of the interviews, climate change, snowfall, and infertile lands contribute to a decline in agricultural productivity, impacting families that once relied on agriculture for sustenance and income. Natural disasters, such as rock falls and snowfalls, have become more prevalent and impactful in recent years. The vulnerability to such events affects numerous households, leading to concerns about the safety and stability of residential areas. Thus, instances of floods and their aftermath have triggered fear and prompted residents to consider migration as a measure to escape potential risks associated with living in vulnerable areas.

Moreover, the shortage of residential spaces in Khorog, the central city of the region, highlights a critical concern. Limited available land for construction, combined with a growing population, contributes to the housing crisis. The allocation of housing to specific groups, such as security agency officials, raises questions about equitable distribution and accessibility of residential spaces for the local population. The challenges discussed in the interviews have led to depopulation, with families leaving the region due to a lack of suitable living conditions and economic opportunities.

4.4. Cultural and religious issues

An additional significant concern for Pamiri migrants revolves around the diminishing presence of their language, culture, and religion. As mentioned earlier, the Pamiri ethnic minority boasts unique languages, cultures, and religious practices, specifically adhering to the Shia Ismaili Nizari sect of Islam,⁴⁴ which distinguishes them from the broader national context. In the interviews, several Pamiri migrants expressed a deep sense of sadness over the neglect and erosion of their cultural heritage. When it comes to practicing their religion and speaking their native Pamiri languages, some migrants conveyed a sense of greater freedom in other countries compared to their own. The interviews shed light on their perception that their culture and linguistic identity are not receiving the attention or preservation efforts they deserve within their home country. This phenomenon contributes to a feeling of displacement and detachment from their roots, prompting reflection on the challenges faced by Pamiri migrants in maintaining and celebrating their distinct cultural and religious identity. The issue extends beyond mere physical relocation, emphasizing the emotional toll and cultural disconnection experienced by Pamiri individuals in the process of migration. *"... I think that the worst problem and thing that is happening is our (Pamiris) assimilation process. We use our language only in our houses with our family and with our friends. For instance, at school and in all its territories, we were asked to speak only Tajik and even with our classmates, who are all Pamiris. We studied in Tajik and spoke Tajik with our teachers, but speaking Tajik with our friends and classmates is too much, I think. Sometimes we got small punishments because for that... Or once there was a rule to wear a national skullcap at school. But it was the scull-cap of the other regions, not Pamiri. Just imagine, in Pamir, we had to wear the Kulyabi or Khujandi scull-caps at school, but not Pamiri. It was not allowed. I do not think that in other parts of Tajikistan they wear something Pamiri",* pointed Kamila, who is currently living and working in Poland. Pamiri migrants have highlighted that historically, their community has a rich tradition of coming together, providing mutual assistance, visiting each other's homes, and commemorating specific

⁴⁴Minority Rights Group International, "Minorities and indigenous people in Tajikistan", Minority Rights Group International, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://minorityrights.org/country/tajikistan/>

religious festivities. However, in the present day, all of these communal activities are prohibited in the region. This shift has significantly impacted the vibrant cultural and social fabric that once characterized their community. The restriction on these traditional practices has led to a sense of loss and a departure from the close-knit communal traditions that have defined their cultural identity throughout history. *“In the villages, we do not have ‘Jamoatkhona’ (a special place to pray together), and for centuries, every Friday, people gathered by order in each house and prayed together. Now it is not allowed. It is illegal. Moreover, we have other particular religious events and holidays that are also banned to celebrate or even to talk about. All these restrictions are in Pamir (in Tajikistan). But here we are, free. We can celebrate all our religious and cultural events freely, even in central places. Here we have a big ‘Jamoat’ (community) that is helping and supporting each other”*, added Muiz.

Volunteerism and helping others are integral aspects of Ismaili teachings and principles. Globally, the Ismaili community actively engages in volunteer networks. Yet, according to several individuals interviewed, volunteer activities have also been prohibited in GBAO. This prohibition on volunteer work stands in stark contrast to the teachings of the Ismaili faith, where service to others is highly valued and encouraged. The restriction on these altruistic efforts within GBAO represents a departure from the customary practices embraced by the Ismaili community worldwide. *“We once had a vibrant volunteer community across Pamir, engaging in various activities such as clearing snow, aiding the sick people, and supporting poor families. Volunteers, represented diverse professions and provided their services for free. However, it is now illegal and not allowed. Nevertheless, our volunteer network persisted, driven by our religious commitment to help not only Pamiri residents but anyone in need”*, said Jahongir, who is in London now.

Thus, the interviews with Pamiri migrants shed light on several critical issues faced by this community, primarily concerning the preservation of their language, culture, religion, and community practices. These challenges, deeply rooted in their identity, resonate across different aspects of their lives, transcending mere physical relocation.



Illustration 3. A Pamirian House (Pomere Chid), Bartang, GBAO, Tajikistan

The Pamiri interviewees were worried about the erosion of their cultural heritage and the diminishing presence of their language within their homeland. They express a sense of greater freedom in practicing their religion and speaking their native language in other countries, highlighting the restrictions and neglect faced in their homeland, contributing to a detachment from their roots. This displacement goes beyond physical relocation, encompassing an emotional and cultural disconnection experienced by Pamiri individuals. Moreover, the interviews highlight the challenges of assimilation and cultural restrictions faced by Pamiri youth, especially in educational settings. The enforced use of Tajik language, undermining the wearing Pamiri traditional attire, and the ban on communal activities like praying together or celebrating religious events within Pamir contribute to a growing sense of cultural displacement and disconnection among the Pamiri community. The prohibition of communal activities and religious events has significantly impacted the vibrant cultural and social fabric of the Pamiri community. Activities like collective prayers, communal gatherings, and traditional celebrations that once bound the community together are now prohibited, leading to a profound sense of loss and departure from their cultural identity.

It is important to note that Pamiri ethnic minorities have faced severe treatment and prosecutions all over the history due to their identity. A number of literature indicate

that due to the distinct culture and more significantly because of the distinct religious views- Ismaili Shia, Pamiri minorities were prosecuted and repressed by Sunni Muslims. For centuries, the Ismailis, both within and outside Central Asia, were labeled as heretics and faced corresponding treatment. While historical details of Ismailis in contemporary Central Asia are unclear, it is likely that those in Badakhshan settled there to escape persecution by fervent Sunnis. Taking refuge in the remote Pamir mountains, they led a challenging but relatively secure existence until colonial rule in the early 19th century opened up the area, ending their isolation. During the Soviet era, religious matters were marginalized, yet regionalism, where religion played a role, persisted as a socio-political phenomenon. Regional background remained significant in both Soviet and post-Soviet Tajikistan. Persistent bias against the so-called heretic Badakhshanis led to violent persecutions in Dushanbe in 1992 and 1993, seemingly under political pretexts. Many Badakhshanis viewed these persecutions as an attempted genocide. Since then, the Badakhshanis have emphasized their religious and ethnic identity more strongly.⁴⁵ After all, these interviews reveal the multifaceted challenges faced by Pamiri people in preserving their cultural, linguistic, and religious identity, highlighting the tensions between their aspirations for cultural preservation and the restrictions imposed within their homeland. The interviews underscore the struggle for cultural and religious autonomy within a broader context of societal and political changes in the region.

4.5. Depopulation of the region as a result of high migration flow

The departure of people and the inability to secure housing contribute to a decline in the region's cultural and social life, as expressed by the interviewees.

The interviews suggest that the government's response to housing issues has been insufficient, contributing to a sense of neglect among the local population. This is

⁴⁵Gabrielle van den Berg, "Keeping religion alive: performing Pamiri identity in Central Asia", International Institute for Asian Studies, (the Netherlands, 2016), accessed November 5, 2023, <https://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter/article/keeping-religion-alive-performing-pamiri-identity-central-asia>

exemplified by the allocation of housing to specific groups, leaving many residents without viable options.

The interviews collectively paint a picture of a region grappling with multiple challenges, ranging from geographical and climatic issues to agricultural limitations and housing shortages. The consequences are far-reaching, affecting the livelihoods, cultural richness, and overall well-being of the population.

The statistics show that the number of migrants that are leaving Tajikistan is increasing year by year, including the migration outflow from Pamir. According to the official report and statistics, the number of migrants from GBAO in 2018 constituted 33064 people (including 31194 of the migrants in Russia). This number reached 35067 people in 2019- 33394 of them were migrating to Russia. In 2021–2022, GBAO experienced a dramatic rise in the number of migrants, with 46144 migrants overall. Accordingly, the number of migrants in Russia reached 42312 people.⁴⁶ However, independent researches and nongovernmental sources indicate that the numbers are much higher. For instance, according to the latest report on migration (by December 5, 2023), Asia Plus reports that every 26 minutes, one person leaves Tajikistan. In 24 hours, it is estimated that 55 people are leaving the country.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, according to unofficial reports, about 50 thousand people have left within a year—between 2022 and 2023.⁴⁸ These statistics are very close to reality as last years migration became a more worrying issue. Many families have left the region and even the country. The number of external migrants is high in all parts of the country, but in the case of GBAO, it requires special attention. If there are 46,144 external migrants and 50 000 people leave the region every

⁴⁶ The Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Republic of Tajikistan, “The statistics of migrants of GBAO: 2018-2022”, (Dushanbe, 2023).

⁴⁷ Asia Plus, “Every 26 minutes one person leaves Tajikistan”, Asia Plus, (Dushanbe, 2023), accessed December 10, 2023, <https://www.asiaplustj.info/ru/news/centralasia/20231205/kazhdie-26minut-tadzhikistan-pokidaet-odin-chelovek>

⁴⁸ “50 thousand people have left GBAO within a year”, Telegram, December, 2023, accessed December 10, 2023, <https://t.me/pamirinside/2467>

year, and the total population is 220 000⁴⁹, it means that half of the region's population are migrants.

The interviews have affirmed this viewpoint, indicating that the region is experiencing a noticeable decline in population, especially among the younger demographic. For example, Nekruz asserted that all his classmates from school and all his groupmates from the university left Khorog. *“Several days ago, there was a case to celebrate, and we wanted to make a party of guys from our street-UPD. This was a party with six people. It was funny and sad”*. He pointed out that this situation is not only in his street but in all parts of Khorog.

The depopulation process is mostly apparent in the villages. For observing this problem and talking to the people of the villages regarding the migration, I have visited 4 villages in GBAO: Pitob, Pish, Khidorjev, and Nisur. Initially, I wanted to conduct an interview with the youth in these villages, but it was difficult to find young people who had decided to stay and live in the village. There were some youth that came to visit their parents or grandparents during the summer holiday. That is why I talked with old people from the region about what do they think about this problem and other issues related to this topic. A significant number of the households are closed, and the few people that have stayed in the villages are old people who either did not have an opportunity to leave (because of the health issue) or have strong emotional attachments to their lands.

Maki (uncle) Olimnazar is a 67-year-old man living in Pish, a remote village in Shugnan, with his 62-year-old wife and two grandchildren (10 and 13 years old). He has two sons and one daughter. His daughter is living in Dushanbe with her family, and his sons are working and living in Russia. *“For many years, I did not let my youngest son go to Russia or somewhere else, but I saw how he suffered here. Here (in the village), there is no workplace. Also, all his friends and classmates have left. He felt alone here among the old people. Thus, I let him go and live for himself”*.

Through careful observation and interviews, it became evident that a significant number of families in the region are composed of grandparents and one or two

⁴⁹ Oriental Express Causes and Asia, “Tajikistan: Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region”, Oriental Express Causes and Asia, accessed December 10, 2023, https://www.orexca.com/tajikistan/regions/gorno_badakhshan_region.htm

grandchildren. The primary rationale behind this arrangement is for the grandchildren to provide assistance and care to their grandparents. This family structure reflects a caregiving dynamic where younger generations take on responsibilities to support and look after their elderly relatives. The prevalent pattern underscores the role of intergenerational care within these families in the region. *“Now both of my sons have red passports (Russian passports) and have asked me and their mother to go and live there (in Russia), but we do not want to. We spent all our lives in this place. Our parents and grandparents lived here. We cannot live anywhere else. I cannot sleep anywhere else”, added Maki Olimnazar.* The village is grappling with a notable shortage of labor, with the majority of work being carried out by elderly individuals. Schools and medical centers primarily rely on personnel who are 40 years old or above. This situation highlights a demographic challenge, where a scarcity of younger workers is impacting these sectors and in general, the level of development in this area. In the interview in Khidorjev, a 57-year-old man who was mostly positive and optimistic and always made jokes, said, *“I feel the absence of the youth force and, in general, the absence of people when someone dies. There is almost no one to prepare the place for (digging the grave) who passed away. We either should leave the body with women alone or either take the body with us and wait until the work is done”.* This individual bravely brought attention to this sensitive and poignant issue, highlighting the emotional and practical challenges arising from the diminishing presence of the younger community members in such critical moments.

Given the challenging geography and living conditions in GBAO, a significant portion of the tasks demands substantial efforts and a sizable workforce. Consequently, much of the work, especially in rural areas, used to be accomplished collectively in a group known as 'kiryar.' However, currently, there is a notable absence of individuals available to participate in 'kiryar,' reflecting a shift in the community dynamics. Nisur is one of the remotest villages of the GBAO in the Bartang Valley. It is very hard to get there because of the dangerous roads and high geographical location. The total population of the villages is 56 people, and among them, 17 people are between 24-36 and 11

children until 18 years old. The school in the village has only 10 pupils of the school.⁵⁰ The people who remained in the village are concerned about the depopulation of their home village, but they say that they can do nothing. *“Our generation was different. We were satisfied and thankful if we could have a bread for 'shirchoy' (a milk tea, a very popular drink; the main dish in Pamir that is equaled with a main meal). But the current generation is different. They have many demands and requirements in life. It is not their fault, I understand. They saw the world, new beautiful places, and an easy life where you push a button and everything is done for you,”* said Khola (Aunt) Mobegim, a 66-year-old woman who is living alone with her husband (57 years old).



Illustration 4. A small village among the mountains, Bartang Valley, GBAO; 2023

The village has one small school and one medical center. There are four teachers working at the school and one nurse working in a medical center. People of the village pointed out that many things were done by migrants, such as making a playing yard for playing volleyball and football; the roads were built (but they are being destroyed every season due to the natural disasters and every season they are being repaired); the village's

⁵⁰ Statistics provided by the village residents during the interviews, ((Nisur, Rushan), GBAO, August, 2023).

school was repaired and provided with new books; after getting provided with electricity, now every household has basic and essential equipment, such as a TV, oven, fridge, etc. It is important to note that the village was provided with electricity only in the summer of 2021. However, these people got used to doing everything by hand that is why they are not so excited about the new technology. *“This is a place for the old people, not for the young ones. This nature, this blue and clean sky, these huge mountains, this silence, and this land are all that we old people need. They belong to us, and we belong to them”*, claimed Maki Muminsho (65 –years old), one of residents of Pish village. Residents of this village claim that it is the nature of young people that they want a more exciting life with innovation and adventures. But old people usually like calm and silent environments, and if there is noise, it should be the noise of nature or birds. *“You see, very few (old) people left here. The youth do not want to live here. I told them that you would not find a better place. Why do you need these big cities? Here, everything is free. Just come and live. Even if you do not have any money at all, you can live a good life. But in other places, they pay for everything. They cannot even drink for free. I do not understand what are they looking for. Now they are young, and they do not think about it, but when they realize that their parents had rights, we will not be here anymore. We are already old, and soon we will die, and all these gardens, fields, and houses will die with us. We will be the last people living in this blessed land,”* claimed Maki Asansho, 70-year-old man.

Following interviews with 15 migrants from GBAO, none expressed a desire to return to the region, citing a lack of perceived prospects for their future there. The interviewed migrants emphasized that their decision to leave was not driven by one or two isolated issues; rather, it was a culmination of numerous problems that compelled them to abandon their homes. The collective sentiment among these individuals paints a comprehensive picture of the multifaceted challenges that contribute to the widespread inclination to migrate from the GBAO region. *“I love Pamir, and I miss Khorog and my parents. I tried to stay and live there, but I could not. Now that I am here (in Germany), I know that I will not go and live there. Here, I have a good job. I love my job, and I earn well. I help my parents in Khorog. But what will I do there? I cannot even provide myself with basic needs, not even talking about my parents,”* said Nilufar (name is changed),

who is living and working in Moscow. Some of them believe that a lot of time is needed in order for living conditions and standards to increase. *"I cherish Pamir for its people and culture, which I find most significant. My allegiance to my culture, religion, and language remains steadfast wherever I am. I've chosen a place where I can enhance my knowledge and skills, where freedom and enjoyment of life prevail. In contrast, GBAO requires comprehensive reform and development across all aspects. While individuals might strive to address isolated challenges, the multitude of issues spanning from basic amenities like water and electricity to governance repression make meaningful change seem unattainable. I want to live my life fully and not spend it trying to alter the impossible"*, said Anusher, who is working and living in Dubai. Following a period of studying, working, or residing outside the region or country, individuals frequently show reluctance to return. Conversations with locals reveal that migrants or students who studied abroad used to return to Pamir at least once every one or two years. However, the trend has shifted, and students now seldom visit their homes, often doing so only once or twice over a span of four years. This shift in visitation patterns suggests a declining connection or attachment to their home region among individuals who have experienced life beyond Pamir.. The professor from Khorog State University pointed out that: *"We do not have many students. Almost 90% of the university students came from the district villages. We have very few students from Khorog. Also, we have a few students from other parts of the country. But they usually stay here for a few months or a year and then transfer to the universities (outside of the GBAO)"*. This is another case that shows the unwillingness of the youth to stay in Khorog.

The interviews shed light on the increasing trend of migration from GBAO, particularly Pamir, and the demographic challenges associated with this exodus. Official statistics report a significant rise in the number of migrants, with GBAO experiencing a dramatic increase. Unofficial reports suggest even higher figures. This data indicates a concerning depopulation trend, with about half of the region's population being migrants.

The interviews affirm this depopulation phenomenon, emphasizing a noticeable decline in the younger demographic. Many youth express a reluctance to stay, with instances of entire groups of friends and classmates leaving Khorog. The depopulation is

particularly evident in villages, where older generations, either due to health constraints or strong emotional ties, are the ones left behind.

The family structure reflects this dynamic, often composed of grandparents and one or two grandchildren. The younger generation takes on caregiving roles, contributing to a demographic shift impacting sectors like education and healthcare. The scarcity of young workers is evident, with schools and medical centers primarily relying on individuals aged 40 and above.

The interviews also highlight the clash of values between the older and younger generations. Older individuals express contentment with the simplicity of life in Pamir, emphasizing the beauty of nature, while the younger generation seeks more exciting and innovative experiences elsewhere. This divergence contributes to the ongoing depopulation.

Moreover, the interviews with migrants reveal a lack of intention to return, citing a multitude of challenges rather than isolated issues. The sentiment among migrants suggests a comprehensive set of problems influencing the decision to abandon their homes. The education sector is also affected, with fewer students returning to Pamir after studying abroad, indicating a declining connection to the region. The professor from Khorog State University notes a lack of students from Khorog, and even those from other parts of the country often transfer out of GBAO universities.

In essence, the interviews depict a complex scenario where all above mentioned factors and differences contribute to the depopulation of GBAO, posing significant threats to the region's social fabric and development.

Discussion and Analysis

The thesis embarked on its journey with the foundational premise that migration dynamics in the GBAO, specifically concerning youth migration, diverge from those observed in other regions of Tajikistan with respect to the motivations and causes behind the phenomenon. While widespread factors, such as unemployment and economic struggles play a significant role in migration across the country, GBAO stands out due to its possession of distinct and exclusive elements propelling migration. The central assumption posits that the region's unique geographical setting, coupled with its

distinctive culture and religious characteristics, wield a significant influence on the intricate processes underlying migration in GBAO.

The findings of this study derive from interviews conducted with both individuals who have migrated from the GBAO and those who have chosen to stay. The narratives gathered shed light on a complex array of challenges and issues that prompt people to leave the region. Notable factors include the region's considerable distance from the capital, limited or absent developmental initiatives, the challenging mountainous terrain, coupled with harsh climatic conditions, scarcity of suitable residential areas, and a lack of fertile land. Additionally, distinct differences in language, culture, and religion emerged as significant themes during these interviews, underlining the multifaceted nature of the difficulties faced by the residents of GBAO.

The region is developing at a slow pace and falls short of meeting basic living standards. This lack of progress leaves the residents feeling neglected and unhappy, as there are insufficient efforts to enhance their quality of life. The outdated and fragile infrastructure in the area poses obstacles to people trying to improve their lives. Although there are occasional minor changes, like constructing schools or medical centers once in 5-6 years, these do not lead to significant overall progress. The limited development impacts every aspect of life in the region, making it challenging to improve one area without addressing the broader issues.

A study about the nexus between the migration and development states that tackling the "underlying reasons" for migration through development cooperation in both sending and transit nations may not automatically result in a decrease in the total number of migrants. Additionally, this implies the need to address the root causes of poverty, instability, marginalization, and exclusion, as well as the absence of development and economic opportunities, especially concerning the most vulnerable populations. This comprehensive approach should be applied in both the countries of origin and destination.⁵¹ Thus, residents face difficulties staying and making positive changes

⁵¹ UNESCO "Migration as a development challenge: analysis of root causes and policy implications", January 2017, UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations (MOST), (Brussels, 2017), 4, accessed December 16, 2023, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247089>

because various aspects of the region are lagging behind. Achieving the level of development necessary for good living conditions is a time-consuming process. This prolonged timeframe contributes to the decision of many people to leave the region in search of better and easier opportunities. As a substantial portion of the population departs due to development challenges, this migration, in turn, affects the region's development. These two concepts are intricately linked and depend on each other.

“...we need to see migration as (1) a process which is an integral part of broader transformation processes embodied in the term “development”, but (2) also has its internal, self-sustaining and self-undermining dynamics, and (3) impacts on such transformation processes in its own right. This *contextuality* has important theoretical implications. Because migration is not an exogenous variable, but an *integral part* of wider social and development processes, the development impacts of migration are also fundamentally heterogeneous”.⁵²

The challenges are deeply ingrained, and addressing them requires long-term plans that encompass improvements in different areas. The pursuit of better prospects elsewhere becomes understandable, given the perception that achieving meaningful progress within the current environment is both challenging and time-intensive. Hence, it can be stated that the isolation of the region and geographic location intensify its challenges. The land in the area is less fertile compared to other parts of Tajikistan, necessitating the importation of nearly all products and necessities. This, coupled with the lengthy transportation distances, results in the imported goods being two to three times more expensive than in other regions. Despite these higher costs, salaries in the GBAO are not proportionally elevated and, at times, are even lower than those in other regions.

This geographical disadvantage compounds the economic strain on the residents, making essential items less affordable despite the increased expenses incurred due to the region's unique location and agricultural limitations. The economic disparities further contribute to the challenges faced by the people in GBAO, serving as an additional factor

⁵² De Haas H. “Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective”, (2010), 227-264, accessed December 13, 2023, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4744987/>

influencing the decision to migrate in search of more economically viable and sustainable living conditions.

Furthermore, beyond the tangible challenges posed by material and environmental factors, residents of the region grapple with mental and spiritual repression. According to the individuals interviewed, the country's legislation ostensibly advocates for the equal treatment of all citizens; however, the reality in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) tells a different story. Particularly, linguistic and religious minorities in GBAO are subjected to differential treatment, with their language, culture, and religion facing marginalization and a lack of respect.

This discriminatory environment creates a situation where individuals from these minority groups do not feel free to live authentically in their own country and practice their cultural and religious beliefs openly. Interestingly, they perceive more freedom and acceptance in other countries. Through observations and interviews, it became evident that this issue was notably more significant and distressing for the people of the region, especially the youth. The psychological and spiritual repression exacerbates the challenges faced by the residents, adding a compelling dimension to the overall decision-making process that propels individuals to seek a more inclusive and accommodating environment elsewhere.

These various factors have resulted in a substantial outflow of young people from the region to foreign countries. This trend not only contributes to the depopulation of the area but also poses a significant impediment to its overall development, giving rise to various adverse consequences.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary of the thesis/research

Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast stands as a refuge for a limited number of ethnic Pamiri minorities who migrated to this secluded region, opting for its inaccessible mountains as a means to escape persecutions and preserve their unique identity. Isolated from the outside world, these mountains and the challenging climate served as a protective shield, preventing the Pamiri people from vanishing, as potential adversaries

found it difficult to reach or had no inclination to venture into this harsh terrain, hoping that the Pamiris would fade away on their own.

Despite the formidable living conditions and centuries of isolation, the Pamiri community managed to sustain their distinctive culture, traditions, language, and religious beliefs, considering these elements as their most cherished possessions. The opening of the Pamir region to the world during the Soviet era brought about integration and initial developments. There was optimism that this newfound openness would positively impact the region's development, leading to improved living conditions and standards, especially after Tajikistan gained independence.

However, over time, the situation has evolved, and rather than witnessing prosperity and advancement, negative trends have become more pronounced. Despite over 30 years of the country's independence, developmental initiatives have been implemented, yet people argue that these efforts fall short of satisfying basic human living conditions. The initial hopes for continuous development have given way to a sense of disillusionment as the region grapples with persistent challenges.

The elevated geographical setting, severe climate, and distinctive identity of the people demand nuanced and tailored approaches and strategies that are not only effective but also realistic for this unique region. However, the ongoing substantial outflow of migrants from the region, especially the youth, with no intent of returning, underscores the inadequacy of current development strategies and the insufficient attention given to this demographic.

Upon comparing the lives of the GBAO residents across centuries, it becomes apparent, through conversations with the local population and careful observation, that living conditions have not undergone significant improvements. Environmental and climatic challenges have intensified, and the historical pressures and persecutions that initially compelled this community to seek refuge in the mountains are resurfacing. These factors serve as compelling motivations for individuals to migrate to more developed and secure locations. A noteworthy distinction between past centuries and the present era is that the region is now more connected to the world, affording its residents the opportunity to leave and choose safer and more developed places to reside.

All the above demonstrated situation and high (youth) migration flow may lead to significant negative consequences for both: for the region and the residents of the region.

During the interviews, participants were questioned about their reasons for migrating, while those who chose to remain in the region were asked about the factors influencing their decision to stay. Consequently, interviewees pointed out several factors that distinctly set the motivation for migration in this region apart from other parts of the country. Environmental and climatic challenges, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of development in the area, coupled with cultural and religious pressures, emerged as the primary motivations for migration. Respondents highlighted the arduous living conditions in the region, emphasizing a lack of progress and prospects for themselves and their children. Simultaneously, beyond environmental and climate concerns, individuals expressed a sense of insecurity and a lack of freedom in their home environment. They expressed concerns and worries that their religious and cultural values were facing pressure and assimilation. They indicated that their decision to migrate is not driven by a singular cause or motivation; rather, it is a combination of various issues compelling them to leave their homes. During discussions with Pamiri youth migrants, it became apparent, as highlighted by the interviews, that there is no inclination among them to return and settle in the region. While some mentioned the possibility of visiting GBAO in a few years to see their parents and families, the prospect of returning to live and work in the region was not on their agenda. The youth expressed challenges and, at times, the impossibility of instigating changes or developments in the region. It was noted that limitations exist in every aspect, including development. Additionally, the interviews revealed that any entrepreneurial or business initiatives by residents are subject to control and restrictions, hindering their potential to reach a level that could bring about significant development or change. Consequently, many young individuals opt to migrate and pursue opportunities elsewhere.

Nevertheless, there remain some ambitious young individuals who believe in the positive future of the region and have chosen to stay, striving to live and work in their hometown. They acknowledge the considerable challenges associated with staying, working, and attempting to foster development in the region rather than migrating. Hence, based on observations and interviews, it can be affirmed that among the options

of staying, leaving, and returning to the region, the inclination to leave is significantly high and increasing. The likelihood of returning is minimal, and only a small number of individuals decide to remain in the region.

Currently the tendency of migration of youth is intensifying day by day and that is why requires serious attention and solution. Despite this newfound mobility, the fundamental challenges persist, emphasizing the urgent need for comprehensive and effective strategies that address the region's unique circumstances, promoting sustainable development and improving the quality of life for its inhabitants.

It is important to note that the issue of migration has acquired a special character and urgency due to the events of the last couple of years in the political life of the region.⁵³ This thesis, based on considerations of a longer period for study, as well as for reasons of safety of both the respondents and the author, did not set out to analyze this factor. Correctly will believe that since the beginning of this period, political reasons for migration have become perhaps the most significant. However, in this work, due to the lack of empirical research on this topic, it is not possible to affirmatively state this.

5.2. Recommendations

Starting the prevention of youth migration in GBAO requires a concerted effort, involving a robust collaboration between the local populace and the government. Undertaking this challenge is complex, demanding innovative policy reforms and fresh approaches that can genuinely contribute to the region's development. The state must lead the way by implementing targeted developmental initiatives and strategies designed specifically for the mountainous terrain. These initiatives and policies should take into account the distinctive aspects and characteristics of the region, such as its climate and high geographical location, while also considering the unique needs and aspirations of its inhabitants. A comprehensive and tailored approach will be instrumental in fostering sustainable development and curbing the trend of youth migration from GBAO. In order

⁵³ Amnesty International, “Tajikistan, 2022”, Amnesty International, accessed December 15, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/tajikistan/report-tajikistan/>

to facilitate development, there is a pressing need for increased investment in infrastructure and industrial initiatives.

One of the viable approach to regional development and deterring migration involves the establishment of a substantial factory or other industrial projects within the area, leveraging and processing the region's existing raw materials and natural resources. This not only contributes to the economic growth of the region but also serves as a potential source of employment, attracting both local residents and individuals from neighboring areas.

Furthermore, a pragmatic solution involves the creation of a new job market aligned with contemporary employment opportunities. Many students from the region pursue education in modern professions (for example, in IT sphere) and acquire relevant skills, only to find limited avenues for employment upon returning. Addressing this disparity requires the establishment of modern job opportunities (software and digital; media and communication spheres) to complement traditional occupations. This strategic approach ensures that the skills acquired by the youth are not only valued but also contribute meaningfully to the region's socio-economic landscape, fostering a more sustainable and diverse job market.

In addition, enhancing integration with the region and its people is crucial, and one viable strategy involves relocating highly sought-after faculties or branches from one of the national universities, such as law and medicine faculties (as these faculties are the most demanded faculties in the country), to GBAO. This strategic move not only promotes regional development but also fosters stronger connections among different areas and communities within Tajikistan. The relocation of the important academic institutions or branches to GBAO can significantly improve regional integration, creating educational opportunities that are both accessible and relevant to the local population. The presence of these faculties not only boosts educational standards but also erves as a catalyst for comprehensive development across various sectors in the region. Moreover, this initiative is expected to elevate the region's profile, drawing increased attention from both governmental and non-governmental entities. The enhanced focus on GBAO is likely to generate a sense of belonging and pride among the local residents. By

establishing an educational environment that aligns with national standards, the region becomes more attractive for both current inhabitants and potential newcomers. As a result, residents may be more inclined to stay in GBAO, recognizing that the region offers sustained opportunities for personal and professional growth. This shift in perspective, from considering migration as an inevitable choice to viewing the region as a place of ongoing development, contributes to fostering a sense of community and shared prosperity.

Finally, in addition to economic, social, and industrial initiatives and reforms, it is imperative that the people in GBAO sense the safeguarding of their identity, encompassing aspects such as religion, language, and culture. One pivotal approach involves launching programs aimed at celebrating and preserving the unique cultural identity of GBAO. These initiatives could encompass a diverse range of activities, including cultural events, festivals, and projects dedicated to the preservation of heritage. By actively engaging in such endeavors, the community not only reinforces its cultural roots but also strengthens the bonds that tie its members together. Simultaneously, there should be targeted programs and informative initiatives, along with entertaining events, designed for residents of other regions. These initiatives would serve to educate and familiarize people from different areas about Pamir, its inhabitants, their rich culture, and time-honored traditions.

These collective efforts represent crucial initial steps towards the revitalization of the region. By actively promoting and cherishing the cultural distinctiveness of GBAO, these initiatives contribute to a sense of pride and belonging among the local population and also play a pivotal role in dissuading individuals from leaving their homes. The emphasis on cultural preservation becomes a driving force for community cohesion and resilience, fostering a renewed sense of purpose and attachment to the region.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Asia-Plus, “Avalanches caused by heavy snow leave 16 dead in Tajikistan”, Asia-Plus, Dushanbe, February 16, 2023.
<https://asiaplustj.info/en/news/tajikistan/incidents/20230216/avalanches-caused-by-heavy-snow-leave-16-dead-in-tajikistan>
- Asia Plus, “Every 26 minutes one person leaves Tajikistan”, Asia Plus, Dushanbe, 2023.
<https://www.asiaplustj.info/ru/news/centralasia/20231205/kazhdie-26minut-tadzhikistan-pokidaet-odin-chelovek>
- Asia-Plus, “Rahmon inaugurates a number of social and economic facilities in Khorog”, Asia-Plus, August 21, 2023.
<https://old.asiaplustj.info/en/news/tajikistan/power/20200821/rahmon-inaugurates-a-number-of-social-and-economic-facilities-in-khorog>
- Amnesty International, “Tajikistan, 2022”, Amnesty International.
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/tajikistan/report-tajikistan/>
- Andrei V, Korobkov, “Migration Trends in Central Eurasia: Politics versus Economics,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40, no. 2, 2007.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48609600>.
- Aziz Bostan, Burulcha Sulaimanova, “International Migration: A Panel Data: Analysis of the Determinants of Emigration from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan”, *Eurasian Journal of Business and Economics*, 2014.
<https://www.ejbe.org/EJBE2014Vol07No13p001SULAIMANOVA-BOSTAN.pdf>
- Bachelet, Michelle, “Minorities: Who are minorities under international law?”, the

United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/minorities>

Berg, Gabrielle, “Keeping religion alive: performing Pamiri identity in Central Asia”, International Institute for Asian Studies, the Netherlands, 2016.

<https://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter/article/keeping-religion-alive-performing-pamiri-identity-central-asia>

Calisto, Palazzo San, “Migration profile Tajikistan”, *Integral Human Development, Migrants and Refugees Section*, Dushanbe, 2021. <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2020-CP-Tajikistan-EN.pdf>

Chatterjee S, “Migration -Trafficking nexus in Post-Soviet Tajikistan”, *European Scientific Journal*, ESJ, 17(20), 2021.

<https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2021.v17n20p84>

Chorshanбиеv, Payrav, “Labor migration from Tajikistan to Russia in the first quarter of this year increased by 40%”, trans. *Asia-Plus*, Dushanbe, May 11,

2023. <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20230511/trudovaya-migratsiya-iz-tadzhikistana-v-rossiyu-v-i-kvartale-etogo-goda-virosla-na-40>

Christine Aghazarm, Frank Laczko, “Migration, Environment and Climate Change”, International Organization for Migration, Geneva, Switzerland, 2009.

https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_and_environment.pdf

Dagiev, Dagikhudo, “Who lives above the clouds? Discussing Pamiriness and Tajikness”, *Central Asian Analytical Network*, 2018. <https://www.caa-network.org/archives/14779>

De Haas H. “Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective”, 2010.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4744987/>

European Union, “Minority Definition”, Migration and Foreign Affairs, European Union.

https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/minority_en

Fact-Sheet, “Definition of Youth”, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

Florea C.A., Suciu, M.C. “An Empirical Study on the Migration Among Young Skilled and Creative People”, *Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies*, 2017.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318860022_An_Empirical_Study_on_the_Migration_Among_Young_Skilled_and_Creative_People

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Supporting the local economy in selected high-mountain regions”, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), 2016-2020.

<https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/82087.html>

Hans Hurni, Thomas Breu, “The Tajik Pamirs Challenges of Sustainable Development in an Isolated Mountain Region”, Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), Geographica Bernensia, ISBN 3-906151-74-3, 2003.

https://boris.unibe.ch/72599/1/The_Tajik_Pamirs.pdf

Hirschman, Albert. *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, Harvard College, United States of America, 1970.[https://pages.ucsd.edu/~bslantchev/courses/ps240/05%20Cooperation%20with%20States%20as%20Unitary%20Actors/Hirschman%20-%20Exit,%20voice,%20and%20loyalty%20\[Ch%201-5\].pdf](https://pages.ucsd.edu/~bslantchev/courses/ps240/05%20Cooperation%20with%20States%20as%20Unitary%20Actors/Hirschman%20-%20Exit,%20voice,%20and%20loyalty%20[Ch%201-5].pdf)

Hoffman, Bert. *Bringing Hirschman Back in: Conceptualizing Transnational Migration as a Reconfiguration of “Exit”, “Voice”, and “Loyalty”*, German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), No. 91, Hamburg,

2008.<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/47792/1/609104209.pdf>

International Organization for Migration, “Definition of Migrant: Who is a Migrant?”,
International Organization for Migration. <https://www.iom.int/who-migrant-0>

International Labor Organization, “Migration and Development in Tajikistan
Emigration, Return and Diaspora”, 2010.
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---sro-moscow/documents/publication/wcms_308939.pdf

International Dialogue on Migration, “Youth and Migration”, International Dialogue on
Migration, 2020. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/idm-29.pdf>

Kumar, Mohapatra, Nalin, “Migration and Its Impact on Security of Central Asia”,
JSTOR, Quarterly 69, no. 2, India, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45072718>

Maybalieva, Garibova Farzona, “The Situation of Labour Migrants from the Gorno
Badakhshan Autonomous Region of the Republic of Tajikistan in Russia
Federation”, *Institute for Demographic Research FCTAS RAS*, Moscow, 2021.
<https://doi.org/10.17059/udf-2021-5-3>

MilasiSanto, "What Drives Youth's Intention to Migrate Abroad? Evidence from
International Survey Data" *IZA Journal of Development and Migration* 11, no.1,
2020. <https://doi.org/10.2478/izajodm-2020-0012>

Minority Rights International Group, “Covering Migration”, Minority Rights
International. https://coveringmigration.com/learning_pages/migration-causes/

Minority Rights Group International, “Minorities and indigenous people in
Tajikistan”, Minority Rights Group International.
<https://minorityrights.org/country/tajikistan/>

Minority Rights Group, “With the future of labour migration uncertain, tourism could offer a lifeline for Pamir’s marginalized minorities”, Minority Rights Group.
<https://minorityrights.org/programmes/library/trends/trends2022/tajikistan/>

Murashcenkova, Nadezhda, “Psychological Factors of Youth Emigration Intentions: A Review of International Studies”, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1683-2021-18-1-25-41>

Olimova, Saodat, Igor Bosc, “Labour Migration from Tajikistan”, *International Organization for Migration* in cooperation with the *Sharq Scientific Research Center*, Dushanbe, 2003.
https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/labour_migration_tajikistan.pdf

Omar Lujan, John Shields, “Immigrant Youth in Canada: A Literature Review of Migrant Youth Settlement and Service Issues”, Knowledge Synthesis Report, *CERIS*, Canada, 2018. <https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/IWYS-Immigrant-Youth-in-Canada.pdf>

Oriental Express Causes and Asia, “Khorog, Tajikistan”, Oriental Express Causes and Asia. <https://www.orexca.com/tajikistan/khorog.htm>

Oriental Express Causes and Asia, “Tajikistan: Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region”, Oriental Express Causes and Asia.
https://www.orexca.com/tajikistan/regions/gorno_badakhshan_region.htm

Pieter, Kok, “The Definition of Migration and its Application: Making Sense of Recent South African Census and Survey Data”, *Southern African Journal of Demography* 7, no. 1, 1997. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20853242>.

Raissova, Zulfiya, “Trends in Modern Labor Migration in Central Asia”, *Central Asian*

Bureau for Analytical Reporting Asia, 2020. <https://cabar.asia/en/trends-in-modern-labor-migration-in-central-asia>

Statistics provided by the village residents during the interviews, ((Savnob, Rushan), GBAO, August, 2023.

Telegram, “50 thousand people have left GBAO within a year”, Telegram, December, 2023. <https://t.me/pamirinside/2467>

The Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Republic of Tajikistan, “The statistics of migrants of GBAO: 2018-2022”, Dushanbe, 2023.

The World Bank, “Tajikistan Economic Update – Summer 2023”, *the World Bank*, Dushanbe, June 30, 2023.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/publication/economic-update-summer-2023>

Transparency International, “Corruption Perception Index 2023”, Transparency International. <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/tajikistan>

Umarov, Khojimuhammad, “Development specifics of GBAO: Help from the center and the international community is needed”, *CABAR.Asia*, Dushanbe, March 30, 2022. <https://cabar.asia/en/development-specifics-of-gbao-help-from-the-center-and-the-international-community-is-needed>

UNESCO “Migration as a development challenge: analysis of root causes and policy implications”, January 2017, UNESCO’s Management of Social Transformations (MOST), Brussels, 2017.
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247089>

Ventura, Luca, “Poorest Countries in the World 2023”, *Global Finance Magazine*.

<https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world>

VOA, “Under Pressure, Central Asia Migrants Leaving Russia Over Ukraine War”,
Agence France-Presse, November 15, 2023.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/under-pressure-central-asia-migrants-leaving-russia-over-ukraine-war/7357290.html>

Wirth, Louis, “Morale and Minority Groups”, *American Journal of Sociology* 47, no. 3
1941. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2769291>.

World Economic Forum, “Migrants sent home \$800 billion remittances to these
countries in 2022”, World Economic Forum.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/remittances-money-world-bank/>

World Population Review, “Poorest Asian Countries 2023”, *World Population Review*.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/poorest-asian-countries>

APPENDIX A: Questions of the Interview with Youth Migrants from GBAO

1. Can you tell us how old are you?
2. Do you have any education background and work experience?
3. What do you like about living in GBAO?
4. What do you value the most in this place?
5. Do you think it used to be different in the past? In what ways? What has changed?
6. What do you hope to do when you go (somewhere\Russia?)? (Will you miss it there, do you think?)
7. When did you migrate from GBAO?
8. What made you decide that you need to leave? Is it just the lack of employment?
9. Did you fulfil and achieved the goals that made you to leave Pamir?
10. How often do you visit Pamir?
11. What are your plans regarding coming back to your home? (follow up questions: why?)
12. Do you think it is easier to leave GBAO and live in a foreign country than in your country? Why?
13. What can motivate you to return to Pamir?
14. Are there any specific challenges or barriers that young people face while considering returning to GBAO after migrating? How do these factors impact their decision-making process?
15. What do you think about migration in Tajikistan (in comparison with other regions), in GBAO and in particular, about the youth migration in GBAO?

16. Do you think that the migration patterns are the same in the whole country or they can be different?
17. What do you think about the statement that migration of the GBAO is different from the other regions (causes, affects)? Why do you think so?
18. How do young people perceive the quality of life in GBAO compared to other regions or countries? How does this perception influence their migration decisions?
19. How the current migration situation influences the development of the region GBAO (and also Tajikistan)?
20. What are the migration (youth migration) trends from your perspective? Why do you think so?
21. Is there any difference between the migration of youth and old generation (male\female)?
22. In your opinion, what are some potential recommendations or solutions that could be implemented to address youth migration in GBAO and create more opportunities for young people in the region? Are there any initiatives or programs that encourage them to stay or return?

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions for the Old Individuals

1. What do you think about the current migration situation in Tajikistan, in particular in GBAO?
2. From your perspective, are there any differences between the migration issues between the regions of the county, or are they similar in the whole country? Why? (Follow-up questions).
3. In your opinion, have migration and its factors changed over the years? If yes, how?
4. What do you think are the main factors and motivations behind the youth migration in GBAO?
5. What are the possible consequences of this migration flow?
6. What recommendations and suggestions do you have in order to reduce and solve migration issues?

APPENDIX C: Photo album of the research

Photos taken during the field research in the villages Khorog and villages of the GBAO;
July, August 2023.

(All pictures are taken and used with the consent of the interviewed people).



Old men are talking about the natural disaster that destroyed their field of crops and gardens.



Photos from the conversation with old people in Bartang and Gund valleys.



Old life style of the Pamiri people.





The only (central) Park of Khorog-Chorbogh
and the center of the town with almost no people.



