Socio-Demographic Differentials in Employment Among Ugandan Migrant Youths

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to analyse socio-demographic differentials in employment among migrant youths in Uganda. It used secondary survey data collected in nine districts of the country. Two rural districts were randomly selected from each of the four broad national regions while Kampala City was purposively selected, owing to its status as largest destination of in-migrants. A sample of 1,537 youths was selected and proportionately allocated to the 9 districts. Chi-square and multinomial regression were used in analysis of sociodemographic differentials. Findings indicate that age, sex and marital status were significant predictors of employment status. 'Older youths' were more likely to be self-employed and regular employees than their younger counterparts. The odds of being self-employed and paid casual worker were consistently lower for females than males. The sex differentials in employment status call for strengthening interventions that reduce disproportionate opportunities between male and female youths.

Introduction

Contemporary youth migration in Uganda is largely explicable within the context of economic considerations, environmental and political factors notwithstanding. Considerable rural out-migrations are reported with significant migration outcomes (Tumwesigye et al., 2021). There are dominant migration streams moving to centres of agglomerations as well as real and upcoming growth poles (Ntozi et al., 2011). Young people appear to take up the largest proportion of the population on the move.

Studies indicate prevalence of migration differentials by socio-demographic characteristics (Nzabona et al., 2019). Uganda census indicates that almost 20 percent of the youths had lived in other districts by the time of the census (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Migration by location or type also shows that there was more rural-rural migration in Uganda with female youth leading in numbers compared to their male counterparts. More male youths migrated in the urban-urban and urban-rural categories compared to the female youths. On the other hand more female youth migrated in the category of rural-urban mobility than male youths. Migration has various employment outcomes at destination (Mirembe et al., 2019).

A considerable amount of work has been done in an effort to understand the genesis and outcomes of migration. This includes the works of Lee (1966), Mabogunje (1970), Zelinsky (1971), Todaro (1970), Piore (1979) and Massey (1993). However, universal consensus on any one theory and systematic theorisation has hardly been achieved, even in the more recent times. Although the theories remain fragmented, they constitute some good starting ground for understanding migration.

Various frameworks have been formulated to explain occupation and employment along the life course. The conceptual framework on self-employment (Halvorsen & Morrow-Howell, 2017) presents a research agenda for understanding later-life employment. Although our current study focuses on youth migrants, this conceptual framework has some aspects that are relevant to the understanding of background factors that influence employment outcomes. We adopt some of the antecedent individual factors (sociodemographic factors) and contextual factors (social and economic characteristics) as background variables in our study. We however argue that these work through proximate factors to affect the outcome (employment) variable. Figure 1 Shows the ultimate conceptual framework used in our study whose key objective was to analyse socio-demographic differentials in employment among migrant youths.

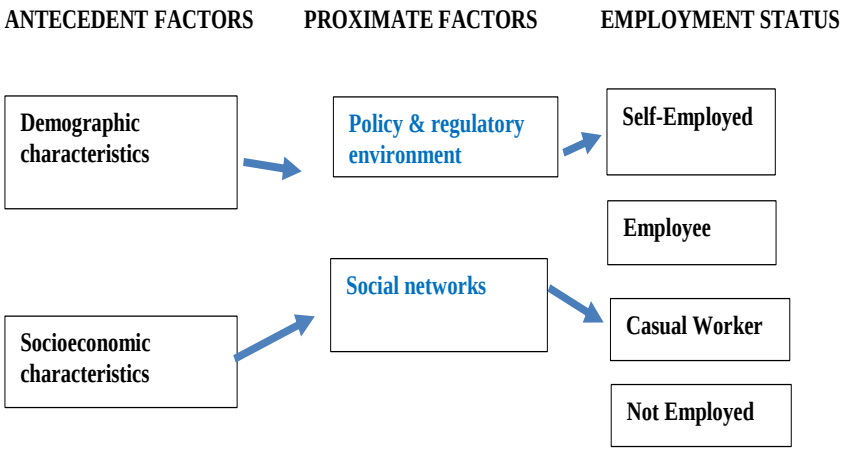

Fig 1. Conceptual Model of Migrant Youth Employment

Source: Adapted and customised from Halvorsen &Morrow-Howell (2016)

Data and methods

The paper used secondary data collected in a cross sectional survey conducted in nine districts of Uganda. Two rural districts were randomly selected from each of the four broad national regions namely: Masaka and Mubende (Central Region), Busia and Mbale (Eastern Region), Arua and Gulu (Northern Region) and Mbarara and Hoima (Western Region). Kampala Capital City was purposively selected as the ninth district owing to its primate city status, destination of large in-migrants and prevalence of complex employment dynamics.

A sample of 1,537 was used and this was proportionately allocated to the 9 districts factoring in the proportion of youths in each district. Simple random sampling was used to select the youths from each district for interview. This study operationally considered youths to be persons aged 18-35 years and this population subgroup constituted about 33 percent of the population in the selected districts. Using STATA software, Chi-square test was used at bivariate level to analyse socio-demographic differentials while Multinomial logistic regression was employed at multivariate level to analyse predictors of employment status.

Results

(a) Background characteristics of respondents

Results in Table 1 indicate that the majority of the youths interviewed were aged 21-25 (40%) followed by those in the 26-30 age bracket (29%) while those aged 31-35 were 14%. There were more male youths (56%) than female youths (44%). Just over half (55%) of the youths were never married the proportion of married was slightly over a quarter (27%). The majority of the youths belonged to the Catholic religious persuasion (36%) followed by Anglicans and Muslims (28% and 12% respectively). This relative distribution of youths by religion compares with the usual census distribution (UBOS, 2016).

Table 1 indicates that just over half of the youths were household heads (54%) while about 3 out of 10 (29%) were either spouses or children to household heads. Interestingly, the proportion of youths who were friends of the household head was only 4%; a possible indicator of insignificance of friendship vis-avi kinship in household composition.

Most of the youths reported the rural area as their home place (48%) and the proportion decreased with increasing nominal description of urbanization (28% for small rural town, 21% for municipality and only 3% for large city). Regarding employment, just under half (46%) reported being self-employed while slightly under one-quarter (23%) were paid employees and just under one-fifth (18%) were paid casual workers.

Table 1 Background characteristics of youths

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Age		
18-20	266	17.3
21-25	609	39.6
26-30	446	29.0
31-35	216	14.0
Sex		
Male	857	55.76
Female	680	44.24
Religion		
Anglican	425	27.69
Catholic	558	36.35
Muslim	300	19.54
Pentecost	191	12.44
Seventh Day Adventist	30	1.95
Other	31	2.02
Current marital Status		
Married	414	26.94
Co-habiting	204	13.27
Divorced/ Separated	71	4.62
Widow/ Widower	5	0.33
Never Married	843	54.85
Relation Household Head		
Head of household	830	54.00
Spouse	233	15.16
Daughter/Son	198	12.88
Others	218	14.18
Friend	58	3.77
Characteristic of place of origin		
Rural area	738	48.02
Small rural town	423	27.52
Municipal/Large town	321	20.88
Large city	45	2.93
Another country	10	0.65
Current work status		
Not working	202	13.14
Self-employed/ business owner	709	46.13
Paid regular employee (public/private)	346	22.51
Paid Casual worker	280	18.22
Total	**1,537**	**100.00**

(b) Correlates of employment status

Table 2 indicates the socio-economic correlates of employment status. It is shown that the proportion of youth migrants who were self-employed increased with age. Interestingly, the proportion of youths migrants who were self-employed was higher among those youths migrants who either did not undergo formal education or were educated up to just primary level than their counterparts with higher educational attainment. Predominance of engagement in

informal sector which does not necessarily presuppose high educational endeavours may explain the circumstances. Results in Table 2 further show that employment status was also significantly associated with age, marital status, relationship to head of household, father's education, mother's education, average household income at time of migration, international migration for work and pre-migration work.

Table 2 Selected correlates of employment status

Characteristic	Employment status								
	Not working		Self-employed		Employee		Casual worker		Total
Age	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
18-20	65	24.4	65	24.4	54	20.3	82	30.8	266
21-25	72	11.8	255	41.9	163	26.8	119	19.5	609
26-30	49	11.0	249	55.8	95	21.3	53	11.9	446
31-35	16	7.4	140	64.8	34	15.7	26	12.0	216
X^2 =19.4 p=0.000									
Sex									
Male	96	11.2	406	47.4	174	20.3	181	21.1	857
Female	106	15.6	303	44.6	172	25.3	99	14.6	680
X^2 =0.06; p=0.801									
Marital status									
Married	48	11.6	272	65.7	61	14.7	33	8.0	414
Co-habiting	20	9.8	115	56.4	34	16.7	35	17.2	204
Divorced/separated/ Widower	4	5.3	45	59.2	12	15.8	15	19.7	76
Never married	130	15.4	277	32.9	239	28.4	197	23.4	843
X^2 =148.3; p=0.000									
Relation to HH									
Head of household	74	8.9	434	52.9	172	20.7	150	18.0	830
Spouse	38	16.3	147	63.1	34	14.6	14	6.0	233
Daughter/Son	40	20.2	63	31.8	57	28.8	38	19.2	198
Friend	10	17.2	11	19.0	13	22.4	24	41.4	58
Others	40	18.4	54	24.8	70	31.1	54	24.8	218
X^2 =148.2; p=0.000									
Formal education									
No education	5	13.2	18	47.4	7	18.4	8	21.1	38
Primary education	62	15.4	212	52.5	42	10.4	88	21.8	404
Secondary education	91	11.7	345	44.5	182	23.5	157	20.3	775
Vocational/University	44	13.8	134	41.9	115	35.9	27	8.4	320
X^2 =82.1; p=0.000									
Home place									
Rural area	86	11.7	347	47.0	158	21.4	147	19.9	738
Small rural town	57	13.5	203	48.0	83	19.6	80	18.9	423
Municipal/large town	52	16.2	132	41.1	89	27.7	48	15.0	321
Large town/other country	7	12.7	27	49.1	16	29.1	5	9.1	55
X^2 =18.4; p=0.030									
Father's education									
No education	31	21.7	73	51.1	14	9.8	25	17.5	143

Characteristic	Employment status								
	Not working		Self-employed		Employee		Casual worker		Total
Age	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Primary education	31	9.8	167	52.7	72	22.7	47	14.8	317
Secondary education	31	13.0	102	42.9	61	25.6	44	18.5	238
Vocational/University	16	11.2	56	39.2	42	29.4	29	20.3	143
Do not know	33	10.4	147	46.5	66	20.9	70	22.2	316
X^2 =38.2; p=0.000									
Mother's education									
No education	41	16.6	128	51.8	37	15.0	41	16.6	247
Primary education	42	11.6	177	48.9	89	24.6	54	14.9	362
Secondary education	24	11.5	84	40.2	57	27.3	44	21.1	209
Vocational/University	8	11.3	27	38.0	25	35.2	11	15.5	71
Do not know	27	10.1	129	48.1	47	17.5	65	24.3	268
X^2 =36.1; p=0.000									
Average HH monthly earning									
<200,000	64	12.0	247	46.3	110	20.6	112	21.0	533
200,000-400,000	46	12.9	180	50.6	74	20.8	56	15.7	536
400,000-600,000	22	14.3	66	42.9	33	21.4	33	21.4	154
600,000+	10	8.8	52	45.6	38	33.3	14	12.3	114
X^2 =17.1; p=0.047									
International work travel									
Ever travelled abroad	9	7.3	76	61.8	23	18.7	15	12.2	123
Never travelled abroad	133	12.9	469	45.4	232	22.4	200	19.3	1,034
X^2 =12.8; p=0.005									
Pre-migration work									
Ever worked	48	9.1	267	50.4	137	25.9	78	14.7	530
Never worked	94	15.0	278	44.3	118	18.8	137	21.9	627
X^2 =24.8; p=0.000									

(c) Predictors of employment status

Table 3 shows Multinomial Logistic Regression results of the predictors of employment status. The factors are in reference to *not working* which is the *base outcome* category. Age, sex and marital status were the significant factors of **self-employment** with chances being increased for persons aged 21-25 (RRR=2.7), 26-30 (RRR=3.8) and 31-35 (RRR=5.6) in comparison with their counterparts aged 18-20. It is also shown that being female reduced the chances of being self-employed in comparison with being male (RRR=0.590). Being never married reduced the chances of being self-employed in comparison with being married (RRR=0.540).

In terms of **paid regular employee**, being aged between 21-35 increased the chances of being a paid regular employee compared to being aged 18-20 (RRR=2.2). The chances were also higher and comparable for those aged 26-30 and 31-35 (RRR=3.03 and 2.95 respectively).

Regarding paid **casual worker**, sex and marital status were significant factors. Just like with self-employed, being female reduced the chances of being a paid casual worker compared to being male (RRR=0.5). Cohabiting (RRR=2.9), ever married (RRR=4.4) and never married (RRR=2.5) increased the chances of being casual worker in comparison with the married.

Table 3: Multinomial logistic regression: Predictors of employment status

Characteristic	Self-employed			Regular employee			Paid casual worker		
	RRR	[95% CI]		RRR	[95% CI]		RRR	[95% CI]	
Not working (base outcome)									
Age									
18-20#									
21-25	2.721***	1.560	4.747	2.225***	1.220	4.058	1.260	0.721	2.201
26-30	3.793***	2.036	7.065	3.033***	1.534	6.000	0.923	0.466	1.829
31-35	5.648***	2.485	12.839	2.950**	1.162	7.490	1.354	0.530	3.460
Sex									
Male#									
Female	0.590**	0.395	0.881	0.796	0.514	1.233	0.483***	0.306	0.763
Marital status									
Married#									
Co-habiting	1.192	0.605	2.350	1.614	0.740	3.519	2.902**	1.244	6.770
Ever married	1.729	0.555	5.389	2.184	0.597	7.993	4.361**	1.179	16.133
Never married	0.540**	0.327	0.890	1.728	0.977	3.058	2.471***	1.271	4.803
Education									
No education#									
Primary education	1.487	0.479	4.613	0.607	0.164	2.251	1.365	0.376	4.956
Secondary education	2.077	0.663	6.502	1.623	0.443	5.950	1.871	0.510	6.866
Vocational/University	1.057	0.319	3.497	1.373	0.356	5.288	0.563	0.138	2.300
Home environment									
Rural area#									
Small rural town	1.034	0.648	1.649	0.843	0.502	1.416	0.884	0.522	1.497
Municipal/large town	0.767	0.453	1.299	0.820	0.468	1.437	0.564	0.305	1.041
Large town/other country	1.078	0.374	3.104	0.501	0.142	1.769	0.473	0.118	1.891
Father's education									
No education#									
Primary education	1.397	0.801	2.437	1.368	0.732	2.555	0.981	0.514	1.870
Secondary education	0.921	0.524	1.619	1.008	0.543	1.872	0.855	0.448	1.632
Vocational/Higher	0.923	0.442	1.926	1.113	0.512	2.422	1.546	0.676	3.540
Mother's education									
No education#									
Primary education	1.012	0.609	1.681	1.366	0.773	2.413	0.871	0.482	1.574
Secondary education	1.303	0.704	2.412	1.755	0.907	3.394	1.308	0.659	2.593
Vocational/Higher	1.292	0.502	3.327	2.053	0.777	5.427	1.159	0.378	3.552

**Significant at 5%
***Significant at 1%
Reference category

Discussion

The main objective of the study was to analyse socio-demographic differentials in employment among Ugandan migrant youths. Age, sex and marital status have emerged as the statistically

significant factors affecting employment status. Our finding that indicates rising chances for self-employment and paid regular employment with age could be suggestive of the role played by social capital networks. As youths get older along the life-course, there could be a rise in likelihood of acquiring friends, mentors and experience. These can constitute a sort of social capital that the migrants can draw upon to gain entry into or consolidate their status in the job market. Widening social networks that engender adaptation at destination have similarly been established in other studies (Massey et al, 1984).

Results indicate that the odds of being self-employed and paid casual worker were consistently lower for females than males. Although the lowly educated females in Uganda tend to be visible more in the informal rather than formal sector, our findings show that their chances of engagement in casual paid activities were less than those of their male counterparts. This fits into the broader perspective of unequal opportunities that have characterized gendered work over the past years. Some people often use their personal or family money while others obtain bank loans to set up enterprises but this is often more difficult for women than for men. Other studies have similarly indicated prevalence of restrictions on female engagement in diverse income-generating activities. It is argued that restricted choice, limited contacts of women and physical segmentation of the labour market perpetuate forces that hinder women engagement in economic work within a low-income context and this often has worse outcomes for women than men (Mitra, 2005).

Lastly, we found that marital status exerts influence on employment outcomes at destination. In comparison with married young people, the never married youths had less chances of being self-employed. It is likely that the never married persons were also younger and with less accumulated experience and skills for entrepreneurship. It has been argued for example that female entrepreneurship is influenced by factors such as women educational background, employment experience, business skills and capital sources (Spring, 2009) and that substantial movement from the informal to the formal sector is limited owing to limitations of entry requirements of capital, education or networks.

Like the ever married, the never married youths had a higher likelihood of being paid casual workers. The higher chances for engagement in paid casual work could stem from the fact that a substantial number of women are in informal work in which participation is most ideal for persons with less family commitments and restrictions at home. The never married are likely

to fit better than their married counterparts into informal income-generating activities such as food vending, selling manufactured wares, commercial transport taxi-touting and rendering late night bar services. In contrast, the married youths are less likely to be flexible and more restricted in time-utilisation and decision-making. Other studies have indicated that some women are unable to participate fully in the labour market because they are required to combine their household activities with income yielding jobs (Mitra, 2005). Such women may be restricted to work in the neighbourhood of their residence and male family members may have had a say on the type and location of the work the females do.

Conclusion and implications

Age is a significant factor influencing employment outcomes of the migration process. Overall 'older youths' are more likely to be self-employed and regular employees. The odds of being self-employed and paid casual worker are consistently lower for females than males. The sex differentials in employment status calls for strengthened interventions that address prevalence of disproportionate opportunities between male and female youths for better national development.

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