# Personality Characteristics as Predictors of Temporary Labor Migration Intentions and The Moderating Role of Family Influence: A Case of Prospective Ugandan Female Migrant Domestic Workers to Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

With the rising number of temporary migrant workers, there is growing scholarly interest in understanding the factors shaping labor migration intention. This study examined the role of personality characteristics in predicting labor migration intention as housemaids among prospective female migrant domestic workers from Uganda to the Middle East. Personality characteristics included the Big Five factor model, which categorizes personality into five broad dimensions; and core self-evaluation, which reflects the fundamental assessments people make of themselves. Data was obtained from female Ugandan university students ($N = 365$). According to our regression analyses, among Big Five traits, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and (tentatively) Neuroticism positively predicted labor migration intention, whereas Openness and Agreeableness did not. Core self-evaluation negatively predicted labor migration intention and explained additional variances beyond Big Five factor traits. Furthermore, family influence moderated the link between Extraversion and labor migration intention as well as Openness and labor migration intention. These findings pave way for more empirical studies aimed at understanding the influence of psychological characteristics on temporary labor migration, especially in Global South contexts. They also contribute to literature through extending personality studies to lower-level jobs and affirming the role of family influence in labor migration decisions in collectivistic cultures like Uganda.

**Keywords** Big Five factor traits · Core self-evaluation · Family influence · Labor migration intention · Migrant domestic work

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## Introduction

The number of world labor migrants is soaring, in particular, temporary migrant domestic workers (ILO, 2021). Temporary labor migration involves workers moving to another country or region for a fixed and predetermined period to cover labor shortages in specific sectors, with limited possibilities of permanent relocation (ILO, 2018). Temporary migrant workers primarily move from less developed to more developed and industrialized countries, to undertake roles that are typically shunned by the host country's nationals due to the low status they carry (Bosmans et al., 2016). Occupations commonly filled by temporary migrant workers include domestic work, construction work, agricultural and farm work, and hospitality work, among others (Yeates & Wintour, 2021). Additionally, these workers are frequently recruited to address seasonal labor shortages, thereby playing a critical role in balancing international labor supply and demand (Castles & Ozkul, 2014).

Generally, labor migration is commonly known to be triggered by the push and pull factors (Piper & Withers, 2018). Push factors refer to conditions within the migrant's home country that could initiate the decision to migrate, such as unemployment, low wages, poverty, family situation, and personal aspirations. Conversely, pull factors are attributes of the host country that could attract migrants, including higher wages, abundant employment opportunities, and improved working conditions (Asiimwe & Musinguzi, 2024). Also, high unemployment levels and lack of opportunities can motivate individuals to become temporary labor migrants. Particularly, temporary migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation, including unfair labor practices, poor working conditions, inadequate legal protections, and violations of basic human and employment rights (Masterson & Hoobler, 2019; Mucci et al., 2020). Moreover, they often lack access to adequate healthcare and are subject to inequitable compensation, with limited or non-existent mechanisms for addressing grievances. These harsh working conditions, which potentially lead to psychological, emotional, and mental health challenges and in extreme cases, the risk of death, are often known to prospective migrant workers before or during the migration decision-making process (Mucci et al., 2020). These inherent risks lead to considerable variances, as only some go while others are not interested. As such, the decision to migrate as a temporary worker likely reflects a complex resolve, consisting of individual's ability to endure poor working conditions for the promise of higher wages and or escaping poverty (Tasleem et al., 2022; Zewdu, 2018). This could include possessing specific personality characteristics (Crown et al., 2020).

Personality characteristics describe patterns of thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and motivations that determine how individual's relate with their environment: thus, it encompasses abroad spectrum of individual predispositions (Cervone & Pervin, 2022). Notably, the trait personality theory states that individuals possess unique and enduring characteristics that influence their responses across various domains (Roberts & Yoon, 2022). A highly regarded trait personality model for examining these individual characteristics is Big Five factor model comprising

Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to new experiences, which maps individual differences on a continuum (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). It has also provided a robust framework for classifying personality characteristics in the context of migration, albeit it remains barely extended to risky migration, such as temporary labor migration, and consequentially Global South contexts, which this study seeks to overcome (see Shuttleworth et al., 2021). Beyond Big Five factor traits, this study investigates core self-evaluation (CSE), a construct that encompasses individuals' judgments about their own capabilities and self-worth, forming their overall self-concept (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2020). Positive CSE is associated with a high self-concept, where individuals perceive themselves as capable and valuable (Farčić et al., 2020; Fouarge et al., 2019). This perception is crucial in the migration decision-making process, as it influences one's confidence in navigating the challenges and uncertainties associated with temporary labor migration.

Furthermore, the study explores the role of family influence as a boundary condition in the temporary labor migration process because of the pivotal role it plays in the migration decision of the members (Bélanger & Rahman, 2013; Chan, 2022; Ramos, 2018). Previous studies linking individual characteristics and labor migration have hardly explored boundary conditions such as the role of family, thereby limiting the scope and contextual relevancy (Arshad & Chung, 2022; Busse et al., 2017).

Thus, this study aims to explain labor migration intention for temporary work as housemaids from a low-income country (i.e., Uganda) to Middle Eastern countries (specifically Saudi Arabia) using the Big Five personality factor model and CSE, while also considering the moderating role of family influence. The study focuses on female migrant workers because they form the majority of migrant housemaids in Saudi Arabia and they are typically employed as live-in employees under the country's *kafala* (sponsorship) system (Braimah & Pyakurel, 2019; Shadmand et al., 2020).This system typically grants the sponsor substantial control over workers' movement and employment conditions, thereby increasing the workers vulnerability to unfair labor practices and challenging working conditions (Zewdu, 2018). Despite the risks involved, the demand for temporary labor migration continues to grow, often attracting individuals from low-income countries (ILO, 2021). The study argues that having certain personality traits can influence temporary labour migration intention and the ability to endure such risky employment. By addressing this gap, this study provides theoretical and practical insights for optimizing recruitment into temporary labor migration, improving worker protection, and enhancing the overall labor migration process. The theoretical model guiding this research is illustrated in Fig. 1.

## Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

### Labor Migration

Labor migration refers to the movement of people across regions and international territorial boundaries to offer services for pay (Chan, 2022; ILO, 2020). The number
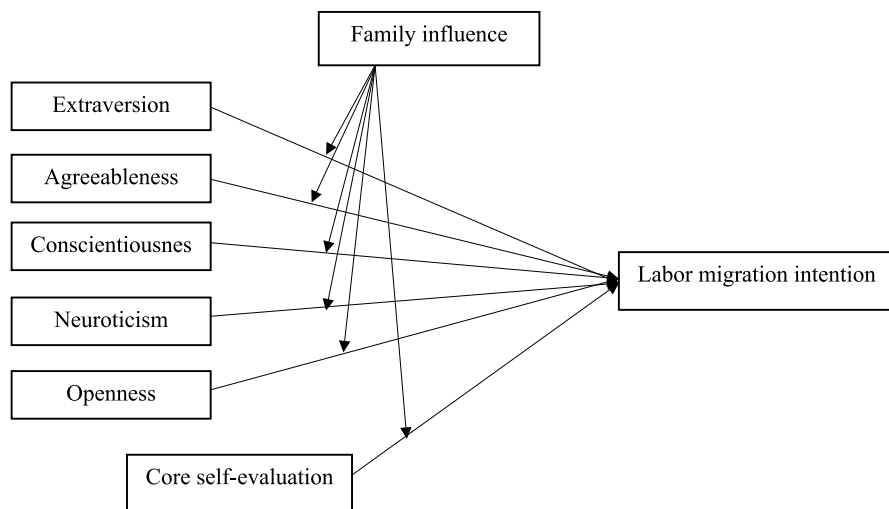
Family influence

Extraversion

Agreeableness

Conscientiousnes

Neuroticism

Openness

Core self-evaluation

Labor migration intention

**Fig. 1** Conceptual framework

of international labor migrants is steadily rising, with the most recent ILO report estimating 169 million migrant workers in 2019. This represents a 3% increase from 164 million in 2017 and 12.7% increase from 150 million in 2013 (ILO, 2021). Whereas professional and skilled labor migration is relatively secure, stable, and predictable; the opposite is true for temporary labor migration. Moreover, it is less recognized, less regulated, and less researched (Chan, 2022). Yet temporary workers generate revenue for the sending country through taxes and remittances; and they take on work that nationals of the host country are reluctant to do, playing a significant role in societal and economic development. Generally, temporary migrant workers move from low income countries to wealthier, high income countries in search for employment and better pay (Tasleem et al., 2022).

However, temporary labor migration faces numerous challenges. Temporary work is often undervalued in both the sending and destination countries and is considered to carry low status (Chan, 2022). This type of work, often termed "3-D work" (meaning dangerous, dirty and demeaning) is associated with harsh conditions including excessive workload, work pressure, sexual harassment, torture, inadequate pay, and sometimes denial of pay (Bosmans et al., 2016; Tasleem et al., 2022). Most of the housemaids are made to work in several houses or home alone without any assistance. In addition, temporary migrant workers typically have a weaker bargaining position in employment relationships, exposing them to exploitation and unfair work contracts (Braimah & Pyakurel, 2019; Dustmann & Mestres, 2010; Yeates & Wintour, 2021). For example, under the so-called *kafala* (sponsorship) system for managing workers in most Middle Eastern countries, where the *kafeel* (i.e., the sponsor and employer) has exclusive rights over the entry, stay, and exit of the *khaddamah* (i.e., the housemaid); which potentially exposes the worker to human rights and employment contract violation (Zewdu, 2018). Despite these challenges, the number of temporary migrant workers continues to rise. Several studies have

attributed this increase to the harsh economic conditions in migrants' home countries compared to the readily available temporary jobs as temporary migrant workers, which also offer comparatively better wages (e.g., Asiimwe & Musinguzi, 2024; Tasleem et al., 2022; Zewdu, 2018). However, there is scarcity of research that explores factors beyond economic drivers as determinants of temporary labor migration. This research employs the trait personality theory to examine whether individuals who migrate as temporary workers possess unique characteristics. Understanding these traits could offer theoretical and practical insights into the recruitment and selection of temporary migrant workers, as well as provide pathways for streamlining and improving the temporary labor migration processes.

## Personality Predictors

Personality is widely described as the unique and relatively stable individual patterns of thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that differentiate one person from another (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). Various personality taxonomies exist, but the trait approach has attracted the widest attention. Trait personality theorists allege that individual differences vary on a continuum (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). Among the trait personality theories, the Big Five factor model has attracted the widest attention among personality and interdisciplinary researchers, which has led to it being termed the universal standard measurement for personality (Babcock & Wilson, 2020; Feher & Vernon, 2021). Big Five dimensions include Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.

Extraversion is characterized by high energy, assertiveness, sociability, and enthusiasm (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). Extraverted individuals experience positive moods and emotions, which enables them to embrace novel situations. They excel at forming friendships even in new environments due to their social acumen, and are spontaneous decision-makers because of their flamboyant mood (Roberts & Yoon, 2022). Conversely, Introverts are reserved, withdrawn, and isolated.

A study involving German University students using the Big Five factor model found that Extraversion had the highest correlation with migration intention (Fouarge et al., 2019). Due to the sociable trait associated with Extraversion, a sense of control over behavioral outcomes in the new environment is created, increasing the migration intention. Similar conclusions were reached by (Crown et al., 2020) in a study involving Australian nationals, where Extraversion influenced migrants' mobility decisions. Extraverts often assume that people are trustworthy, leading them to positively evaluate the labor migration process, possibly more than the reality warrants. In studies involving Latin American countries (Canache et al., 2013) and the U.S.A (Jokela, 2009), Extraversion predicted migration intention, with assertiveness facilitating the ability to gather information and facts, consequently leading to feelings of confidence and control over the migration process. Furthermore, Shuttleworth et al's (2021) longitudinal study involving British nationals revealed that extraverted individuals did not only have intentions to move but also realized migration at least once in the five years. Thus, a positive relationship between Extraversion and migration intention is expected in this study as well.

Openness to Experience is characterized by value for change, inventiveness, inquisitiveness, and dynamism (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). It is associated with open-mindedness, intellectualism, liberal thinking, divergent thinking, and detachment from stereotypes. Open-minded individuals work around life challenges by focusing on their goals through accommodativeness and adaptiveness (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). Openness is also associated with curiosity, imaginativeness, cultural sensitivity, originality, and desire for alternative lifestyles (Roberts & Yoon, 2022). Individuals show eagerness to volunteer to pioneer in situations requiring risk taking.

Although labor migration involves overwhelming expectations and demands, open-minded individuals are likely to respond positively. Previous studies have indicated that Openness positively predicts migration intention (Canache et al., 2013; Crown et al., 2020; Fouarge et al., 2019). Openness is characterized by high opportunity-seeking behaviors which can result in high curiosity for exploring labor migration (Shuttleworth et al., 2021). In a study that explored the intention to work abroad among German university students, Openness also predicted migration intention (Remhof et al., 2014). Furthermore, across a sample of Malaysian college graduates, Openness to New Experiences was able to predict migration intention (Rashid et al., 2023). Therefore, a positive relationship between Openness and migration intention is expected in the context of temporary work.

Conscientiousness is characterized by feelings of being in control of one's thoughts, decisions, and goals (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). The concern for nitty–gritty is the basis upon which perceptions and behavioral intentions are developed. Additionally, Conscientiousness leverages on conventional thinking and self-confidence (Roberts & Yoon, 2022). It is also characterized by strict adherence to rules, norms and facts, as well as facets such as orderliness, competence, composure, and achievement orientation (Babcock & Wilson, 2020).

Past research has found Conscientiousness to be negatively related (Fouarge et al., 2019) or unrelated to labor migration intention (e.g., Jokela, 2009; Shuttleworth et al., 2021). Higher levels of Conscientiousness have been observed to decrease the propensity to migrate (Hooijen et al., 2020). However, a study on Australian nationals (Crown et al., 2020) observed that Conscientiousness was positively related to migration intention where there was an expectation for higher pay, but generally unrelated where there was low or no monetary expectation. Further still, where migration involves moving to places with better opportunities, conscientious individuals are positively associated with such movement (Rashid et al., 2023). Additionally, insufficient information and unpredictable situations might deter labor migration intention among conscientious individuals (Chan, 2022). Although the Middle East offers many job opportunities, the uncertainties and risks involved (e.g., during the migration process and while at work) could affect labor migration intention (Braimah & Pyakurel, 2019; Parrenas, 2021). Thus, a negative relationship between Conscientiousness and migration intention is expected.

The Agreeableness trait is known as the 'friendliness trait' because it involves a willingness to sacrifice personal goals for the sake of others (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). Agreeable individuals are trustworthy, loving, kind, warm, submissive, supportive, loyal, and tolerant (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). They avoid confrontations,

arguments, and conflicts, often being referred to as"people pleasers"because they exhibit a high willingness to sacrifice their interests for the common good. They seek to maintain commonly agreed-upon norms, standards, and rules (Babcock & Wilson, 2020).

Limited research exists on the link between Agreeableness and migration intention compared to other Big Five traits. The few studies conducted have not found significant effects of Agreeableness on labor migration intention (Fouarge et al., 2019; Shuttleworth et al., 2021). When decisions affect the significant others, agreeable individuals are reluctant to show intentions (Roberts & Yoon, 2022). This is because the opinions of others matter more than their wishes (Babcock & Wilson, 2020), making the endorsement of social ties more relevant for making labor migration decisions. Therefore, we hypothesize that Agreeableness is not significantly related to labor migration intention.

Neuroticism is characterized by negative thoughts and emotions such as anxiety, depressiveness, cynicism, anger, fearfulness, and tension (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). Neurotics are uncooperative, biased, opinionated, judgmental, and easily withdrawn, with unpleasant situations easily triggering them. This trait is classified under the emotional domain because it is based on the ability to regulate emotions (Roberts & Yoon, 2022). Neuroticism is also referred to as emotional instability, the opposite of emotional stability; describing attributes such as calmness, composure, and self-confidence (Babcock & Wilson, 2020).

Neuroticism is positively associated with migration intention when there is perceived instability and unpredictability at the present location and negatively associated under a state of calmness and stability (Jokela, 2009). Indeed, past research observed either a positive or negative relationship (Hooijen et al., 2020; Rashid et al., 2023; Shuttleworth et al., 2021). In the context of less developed countries where labor migration is largely triggered by instabilities and unpredictable conditions (Parrenas, 2021) such as lack of employment opportunities, family pressures, poverty, and inadequate capital for startup businesses (Zewdu, 2018), neurotics might act impulsively to seek labor migration as a viable option. Thus, the study aims at finding a positive relationship between Neuroticism and migration intention.

Based on the previous studies, certain personality traits within the Big Five factor model positively or negatively influence temporary labor migration intentions, while others might have no significant effect. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed for empirical investigation:

H1a: Extraversion is positively related to labor migration intention.
H1b: Openness to Experience is positively related to labor migration intention.
H1c: Conscientiousness is negatively related to labor migration intention.
H1d: Agreeableness is not related to labor migration intention.
H1e: Neuroticism is positively related to labor migration intention.

## Core Self-Evaluation

Although the Big Five factor model is widely considered as a global standard for measuring personality, it is likely too broad and generic to predict behavioral

intentions (Feher & Vernon, 2021; Rauch & Frese, 2007). Thus, there is an expressed need to go beyond Big Five traits to focus on other personality predictors that could be more specific. In particular, Fouarge et al. (2019) proposed that CSE could predict labor migration intention better than the Big Five model. CSE refers to the fundamental evaluation individuals make of themselves that determine their worth, competencies, and capabilities to handle tasks and challenging situations (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2020). Four traits are fundamental and core and these form the basis of the evaluations: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability (Judge et al., 2003). These are woven together to form a nested model with interlinked influence, loading highly as one trait. Although CSE is conceived as a four-dimensional factor, it is a single latent variable when predicting behavioral outcome (Farčić et al., 2020; Judge et al., 2003).

CSE is associated with a positive self-concept, which creates confidence in one's capabilities to succeed. In contrast, lack of CSE diminishes the self-concept and leads to feelings of naivety, incapability, victimization, self-pity, and unworthiness (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2020). Generally, CSE is a positive trait, capable of generating confidence in a person's abilities and expectation of positive outcomes from decision-making (Farčić et al., 2020; Jiang, 2015; Shen et al., 2021). Whether it is risky or safe migration, CSE is essential because it creates a sense of control over the process as individuals ponder about the possible obstacles that could impend the migration decision. However, high CSE is associated with attachment of greater worth and value to oneself (Jiang, 2015). This becomes essential as individuals deliberate the migration decision because they can direct their feelings and control their work environment (Debusscher et al., 2017). Contrarily, low CSE is related to decision-making difficulty, due to perceived worthlessness and lack of capabilities and control over behavioral outcomes (Shen et al., 2021). Hence, low CSE could be related to reluctance to migrate whilst high CSE is related to labor migration intention. Thus, this study investigated the following hypothesis and research question:

> H2: CSE will positively predict labor migration intention for temporary work.
> Q1: How much does CSE predict labor migration intention for temporary work beyond the Big Five factors?

## Family Influence as a Boundary Condition

Busse et al. (2017) suggested that boundary conditions are important in explaining the critical elements of the theory based on the "Who, Where, and When" questions and stating the "accuracy of theoretical predictions for any context" (p. 56). This makes boundary factors very essential, especially for the contextualization of studies. Based on the current debate among personality researchers on the inclusion of boundary conditions (Arshad & Chung, 2022; Shuttleworth et al., 2021), we explored the role of family influence in the labor migration process.

Mostly in collectivistic cultures, family is central in embodying norms, standards, and expectations and determines what, who, where, when, and how the family member migrates and which work they do (Bélanger & Rahman, 2013; Hugo, 1995). In addition, it might be the family that plans the migration of its members and defines

the goals to be attained. The family bridges the support needed in the migration process by providing the entry into labor migration through providing the financial, material, and emotional support needed, which the migrant member reciprocates with remittances (Boccagni, 2015; Bredtmann et al., 2019). Furthermore, in collectivistic cultures, family plays a central role in the migration decision making process of its members, who must obtain approval from at least a senior member of the family (Braimah & Pyakurel, 2019; Rahman, 2012). Thus, we aim to test the following hypotheses:

> H3: Family influence moderates the relationship between the Big Five factor traits (a) Extraversion, (b) Openness to Experience, (c) Conscientiousness, (d) Agreeableness, and (e) Neuroticism and labor migration intention.
> H3f: Family influence moderates the relationship between CSE and labor migration intention.

## Materials and Methods

### Context

#### The Economic Situation of Uganda

This study was conducted in Uganda, a country located in the Sub-Saharan region in East Africa. Uganda's population stands at approximately 47.5 million people, with an active labor force of 18.2 million (The World Bank, 2022). As a common characteristic of many low-income countries, Uganda faces significantly high unemployment rates, scarcity of gainful employment opportunities, and low job creation capacity (World Bank Group, 2020). These challenges are typically experienced by youth, who comprise the bulk of the labor force (Kempner, 2020) and the female (The World Bank, 2022). These have been forced to seek gainful employment elsewhere to meet the daily demands, making temporary labor migration a viable alternative. At the micro level, family influence remains the most significant factor in the temporary labour migration process (Asiimwe & Musinguzi, 2024), which this study seeks to examine as a boundary condition in the relationship between personality characteristics and migration intention.

#### Uganda's State Policy on Externalizing Labor

To address the high unemployment rates among youth, Ugandan government has actively promoted labor externalization, formalizing this through bilateral agreements with Middle Eastern countries (UHRC, 2021). More than 230 recruitment agencies are licensed to externalize labor, whose activities are supervised under Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, and a semi-autonomous body, Uganda Association of External Recruiters Association (UAERA) (UHRC, 2021). It is estimated that over 150,000 Ugandan workers are currently employed in Middle Eastern countries, with the actual numbers potentially higher due to undocumented

migration (UHRC, 2021). To be externalized, the potential labor migrant is required to be medically fit, between 20 and 35 years of age, and must undergo a mandatory 2-weeks orientation training at a government-regulated labor externalization training center (Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, 2021). Ugandan female migrant workers are mostly externalized as housemaids, and majorly to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as the two countries hold bilateral agreements (Atwiine, 2023). Ugandan migrant workers in Saudi Arabia earn a monthly wage that ranges roughly between $220 and $330 USD, which is 700% more than the average monthly wage of housemaids in Uganda, who earn between $11.11 and $41.67 USD (UHRC, 2021, pp 29); and 43% more than the gross pay of a lower salary scale graduate entry-level job in the Ugandan public service (Ministry of Public Service, 2024). The high salary expectation, unemployment rates, job scarcity, and increased dependence burden could therefore provoke individual and family-level decision-making to become externalized.

## Sample

Due to scarcity of employment opportunities in Uganda and the relatively attractive salaries for domestic migrant workers in Middle Eastern countries, university
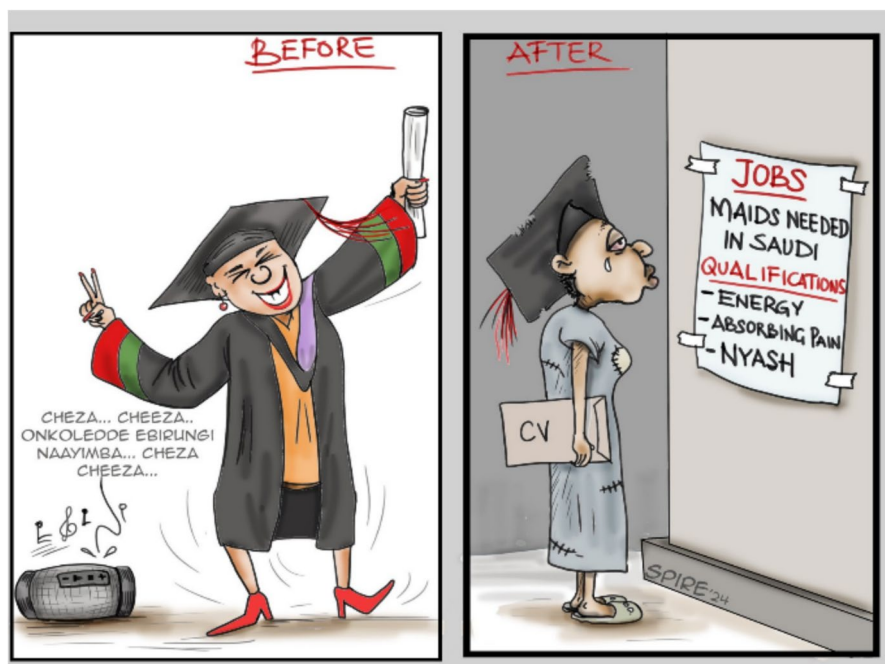


**Fig. 2** An Illustration of the Situation for Ugandan Female Graduates. Note. From "Spire Cartoons," by J. S. Ssentongo, 2024. https://www.facebook.com/100044117572017/posts/927073958773181/?mibextid=rS40aB7S9Ucb. Copyright (2024) by J. S. Ssentongo. Adopted with permission

graduates often also consider temporary migration to the Middle East as a viable employment option (The Independent, 2021) – a situation illustrated by Fig. 2. The study targeted female students from several Ugandan Universities (mainly from Makerere University, Kyambogo University, and Uganda Christian University). Participation was purely voluntary. An online survey link was distributed to participants via students' class WhatsApp groups with the assistance of research assistants, from May to September 2023, and 1,583 opened the web survey. At the end of the survey administration, we restricted the data download to include only participants who had completed the survey up to the last page without any missing responses. This yielded a total of 802 observations.

To address the potential impact of careless respondents on the validity of the findings, a common occurrence in online surveys, which is even higher among student populations (Ward & Meade, 2023), robust techniques were employed which included the time taken to complete the survey, outlier analysis, and Long String analysis (Curran, 2016).[1] The minimum time required to complete the survey was estimated at 8 min, equating to 2 s per item (Niessen et al., 2016). Mahalanobis distance was used to detect and eliminate outliers at $p < 0.05$ (Niessen et al., 2016); and we used an Excel macro developed by Landers (2020) to analyze Long Strings, with patterns greater than 9 indicating careless responses (Ward & Meade, 2023). After eliminating careless responses, 365 observations were deemed usable.

Participants were studying for various degrees, mostly bachelor's degrees, but also for Diplomas and Certificates (most common was a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences degree with 39.2%). Many were in year three of their study (34.8%), in year two (32.9%), and in year one (28.5%); the remaining were in year four or five (or this was not indicated). On average, participants were 23.0 years old ($SD = 2.3$). Most participants indicated that they stayed with their families (67.7%), which were typically large ($M_{\text{number of family members}} = 6.7$, $SD = 3.8$).

When asked if they knew someone close to them working in the Middle East, nearly half (47.7%) affirmed. Furthermore, 55.6% indicated awareness of the types of work done in the Middle East, with 23.3% specifically identifying it as domestic work. Participants learned about employment opportunities in the Middle East through various sources, including friends, mass media, family members, and social media.

## Measures

### Big Five Personality Traits

The 44-item Big Five Factor Inventory (BFI, Oliver & Sanjay, 1999) was used to measure the traits of the Big Five Factor model. Unlike other personality measures, the BFI has already been used in Sub-Saharan Africa (Papageorgiou & Callaghan, 2018). Furthermore, the instrument has a mixture of positively and negatively

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[1] Although we included attention checks to detect careless respondents, we did not use them because they seemed unfamiliar to our respondents.

worded items, which ensures attentiveness of the respondents. The instrument measures Extraversion with 8 items; sample items on this scale include: "I see myself as someone who is talkative"; "I see myself as someone who is reserved" (reversed); and "I see myself as someone who is full of energy." Agreeableness is measured by 9 items including, "I see myself as someone who tends to find fault with others" (reversed); "I see myself as someone who tends to find fault with others" (reversed)", "I see myself as someone who is helpful and unselfish with others; and "I see myself as someone who starts quarrels with others" (reversed). Conscientiousness is assessed by 9 items including "I see myself as someone who does a thorough job"; "I see myself as someone who can be somewhat careless" (reversed); and "I see myself as someone who is a reliable worker." Neuroticism is measured by 8 items including "I see myself as someone who is depressed, blue"; "I see myself as someone who is relaxed, handles stress well" (reversed); and "I see myself as someone who can be tense, easily stressed," and Openness is measured by 10 items including "I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas"; "I see myself as someone who is curious about many different things"; and "I see myself as someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker." Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a standard 5-point Likert scale with anchors ranging from 1 = 'disagree strongly' to 5 = 'agree strongly.'

## Core Self-Evaluation

CSE was measured using the 12-item CSE scale (Judge et al., 2003). In the different samples where it has been used, the scale has yielded high reliability scores (Farčić et al., 2020; Jiang, 2015; Shen et al., 2021). The instrument was scored on its standard 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'disagree strongly' to 5 = 'agree strongly.' Sample items on this scale include "I am confident I get the success I deserve in life"; "Sometimes I feel depressed" (reversed); and "When I try, I generally succeed."

## Family Influence

Family influence was measured using the autonomy subscale of the Adolescent Autonomy Instrument (Poole et al., 1986). The original scale consists of 40 items that measure daily and occasional family influence in the decision making of its members (cf. Cairns & Smyth, 2011). To ensure that items fitted the Ugandan context, the instrument was revised and modified using face validity and content validity. We worked together with somebody who knew the Ugandan culture very well to select items that were contextually relevant for our study. We pre-administered the instrument across a local sample of Ugandan women (N = 395) before implementing the data collection, and it yielded a good reliability score (α = 0.83). The modified scale had 24-items, which were scored on a 5-point Likert scale with anchors from 1 = 'always me' to 5 = 'always my family.' A sample item is "who decides the kind of food you should eat"; all items can be found in Appendix 1.

## Migration Intention

In this study, a 6-item scale was designed based on the measures of migration aspirations from the 'Migration Intention Question Bank' created by Carling and Mjelva (2021). The items were as follows: "I have seriously thought about moving to Saudi Arabia as a housemaid"; "I wouldn't mind working as a housemaid in Saudi Arabia at some point in time"; "If I were to choose, I would prefer working as a housemaid in Saudi Arabia than staying in Uganda"; "I have seriously considered working in Saudi Arabia as a housemaid"; "I would accept work that requires me to move to Saudi Arabia as a housemaid"; and "If somebody gave me the necessary papers for working in Saudi Arabia as a housemaid, I would go." We pre-administered the developed instrument across a local sample of Ugandan women (the aforementioned 395 participants) before implementing the data collection, and it seemed reliable ($\alpha = 0.88$). It was scored on a 5-point Likert scale with anchors from $1 =$ 'disagree strongly' to $5 =$ 'agree strongly.'

## Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using the statistical package for social scientists (SPSS version 27, IBM Corp, 2020), including hierarchical linear regression to test the hypotheses. To visualize the interaction effects, we utilized the jtools and ggplot2 packages (Wickham, 2016) within R Studio.

# Results

## Preliminary analyses

As a first reliability check, we calculated internal reliability for each instrument (see Table 1). We used Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega; all scales met the minimum acceptable omega threshold of 0.70 and above, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Table 1 also presents the correlation coefficients among the study variables.

## Test of Hypotheses

Table 2 presents hierarchical linear regression results for the hypotheses. Extraversion was positively related to labor migration intention in Step 1 ($\beta = 0.126$, $p < 0.05$), and the relationship remained significant in Step 2 and Step 3 but not Step 4a. Openness was not related to labor migration. Conscientiousness showed an unexpected positive relationship with labor migration intention in Step 1 ($\beta = 0.161$, $p < 0.01$), which remained stable in Step 2, 3, and 4c. Agreeableness did not have a significant relationship with labor migration intention. Neuroticism was significantly

**Table 1** Means, standard deviations, correlations with confidence intervals, and internal reliability coefficients

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Extraversion | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Agreeableness | 0.07 | | | | | | | |
| | [− 0.03, 0.17] | | | | | | | |
| 3. Conscientiousness | 0.33** | 0.65** | | | | | | |
| | [0.24, 0.42] | [0.59, 0.71] | | | | | | |
| 4. Neuroticism | − 0.38** | − 0.29** | − 0.49** | | | | | |
| | [− 0.46, − 0.28] | [− 0.38, − 0.19] | [− 0.57, − 0.41] | | | | | |
| 5. Openness | 0.37** | 0.48** | 0.50** | − 0.17** | | | | |
| | [0.28, 0.46] | [0.40, 0.56] | [0.42, 0.57] | [− 0.27, − 0.07] | | | | |
| 6. Core self-evaluation | 0.27** | 0.26** | 0.44** | − 0.58** | 0.18** | | | |
| | [0.17, 0.36] | [0.16, 0.35] | [0.35, 0.52] | [− 0.64, − 0.50] | [0.08, 0.28] | | | |
| 7. Family influence | − 0.17** | − 0.18** | − 0.28** | 0.29** | 0.01 | − 0.34** | | |
| | [− 0.27, − 0.07] | [− 0.28, − 0.08] | [− 0.37, − 0.19] | [0.19, 0.38] | [− 0.10, 0.11] | [− 0.43, − 0.25] | | |
| 8. Migration intention | 0.10* | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.04 | 0.05 | − 0.17** | − 0.04 | |
| | [0.00, 0.20] | [− 0.09, 0.11] | [− 0.02, 0.19] | [− 0.06, 0.14] | [− 0.05, 0.15] | [− 0.27, − 0.07] | [− 0.15, 0.06] | |
| M | 3.18 | 3.86 | 3.79 | 2.65 | 3.61 | 3.08 | 2.69 | 2.27 |
| SD | 0.72 | 0.78 | 0.83 | 0.80 | 0.62 | 0.64 | 0.75 | 1.22 |
| α | 0.61 | 0.78 | 0.80 | 0.68 | 0.83 | 0.72 | 0.92 | 0.95 |
| ω | 0.77 | 0.84 | 0.88 | 0.80 | 0.87 | 0.82 | 0.93 | 0.97 |

$M$, $SD$, $\alpha$, and $\omega$ represent mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients, and MacDonald's omega reliability coefficients, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. $N = 365$

$* p < 0.05$, $** p < 0.01$

**Table 2** Results of regression analysis

| Predictor variables | Labor Migration Intention | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4a | Step 4b | Step 4c | Step 4d | Step 4e | Step 4f |
| Step 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Extraversion | 0.126* | 0.133* | 0.123* | 0.080 | 0.123* | 0.122* | 0.123* | 0.104 | 0.124* |
| Agreeableness | − 0.044 | − 0.047 | − 0.055 | − 0.028 | − 0.049 | − 0.047 | − 0.052 | − 0.061 | − 0.052 |
| Conscientiousness | 0.161* | 0.218** | 0.203** | 0.198* | 0.200* | 0.191* | 0.203* | 0.191* | 0.203* |
| Neuroticism | 0.147* | − 0.020 | 0.023 | 0.026 | 0.024 | 0.025 | 0.026 | 0.000 | 0.021 |
| Openness | − 0.023 | − 0.027 | − 0.007 | − 0.042 | − 0.004 | − 0.018 | − 0.007 | − 0.064 | − 0.011 |
| Step 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| CSE | | − 0.271** | − 0.290** | − 0.285** | − 0.288** | − 0.297** | − 0.291** | − 0.302** | − 0.304** |
| Step 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| Family influence (FI) | | | − 0.084 | − 0.086 | − 0.078 | − 0.106 | − 0.086 | − 0.077 | − 0.092 |
| Step 4 | | | | | | | | | |
| Extraversion ×FI | | | | − 0.186** | | | | | |
| Agreeableness ×FI | | | | | 0.027 | | | | |
| Conscientiousness ×FI | | | | | | − 0.071 | | | |
| Neuroticism ×FI | | | | | | | 0.012 | | |
| Openness ×FI | | | | | | | | − 0.216** | |
| CSE ×FI | | | | | | | | | − 0.043 |
| $\Delta R^2$ | 0.032* | 0.047** | 0.006 | 0.031** | 0.001 | 0.004 | 0.000 | 0.041** | 0.002 |
| Overall $R^2$ | 0.032* | 0.079** | 0.084** | 0.115** | 0.085** | 0.089** | 0.085** | 0.125** | 0.086** |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.019 | 0.063 | 0.067 | 0.095 | 0.065 | 0.068 | 0.064 | 0.106 | 0.066 |

$N = 365$. Reported values are beta weights. *CSE* Core self-evaluation

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$

related to labor migration intention in Step 1 ($\beta = 0.147$, $p < 0.05$) but unrelated in Step 2, 3, and 4 d. Additionally, CSE negatively predicted labor migration intention (see Step 2, $\beta = -0.271$, $p < 0.01$) and remained significant in Step 3 and 4a to 4f.

Furthermore, Table 2 indicates CSE in Step 2 increases the $R^2$ from 3.2% to 7.9%, with a significant increase of 4.7%. This indicates that CSE explains an additional 4.7% of the variance in labor migration intention beyond what is explained by the Big Five factors alone. Therefore, CSE appears to be a stronger predictor of labor migration intention compared to Big Five personality traits (addressing Q1).

To assess the moderation effect of family influence on the relationship between personality predictors and labor migration intention, we grand mean-centered personality predictors and family influence. The interactions were then tested using the centered variables. Results (Models 4a to 4f in Table 2) reveal that although family influence moderated the relationship between Extraversion and labor migration intention ($\beta = -0.186$, $p < 0.01$, see Fig. 3). Similarly, family influence negatively moderated the relationship between Openness to Experience and labor migration intention ($\beta = -0.227$, $p < 0.01$, see Fig. 4). However, family influence did not significantly moderate the relationships of the other personality predictors with labor migration intention.

## Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between personality characteristics and labor migration intentions, as well as the moderating effect of family influence. Results revealed that among Big Five personality traits, Extraversion and Conscientiousness
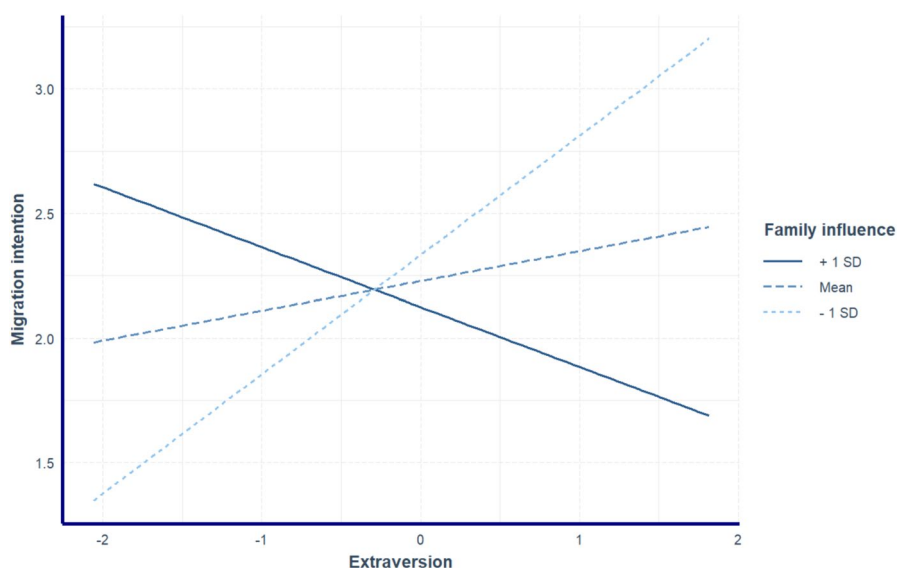


**Fig. 3** The association between extraversion and migration intention as moderated by family influence
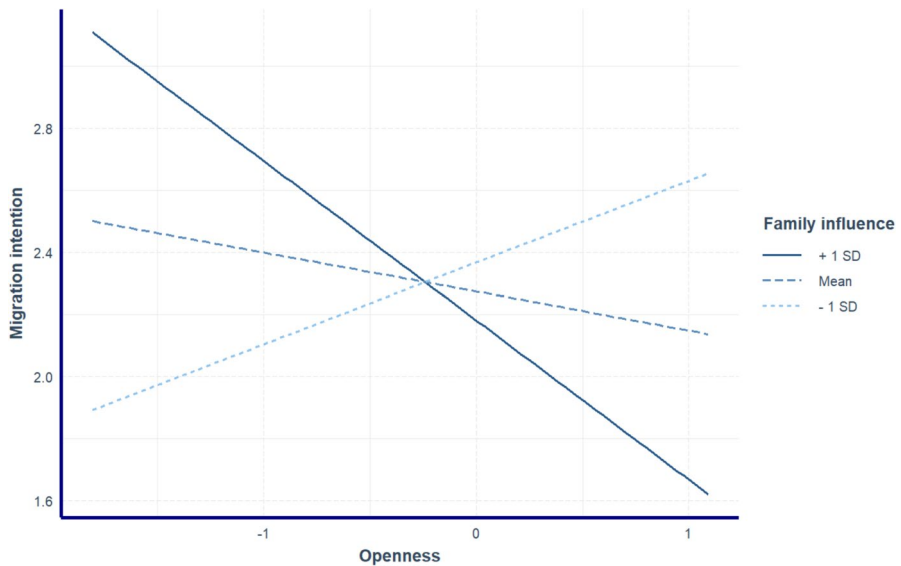
**Fig. 4** The association between openness and migration intention as moderated by family influence

(and, tentatively, Neuroticism) positively predicted labor migration intention, whereas Openness and Agreeableness were not significant predictors. Additionally, Core Self-Evaluations (CSE) negatively predicted labor migration intention and proved to be a better predictor than the Big Five traits. Family influence was found to moderate the effects of Extraversion and Openness on labor migration intention but not the effects of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and CSE.

The positive association between Extraversion and labor migration intention could be attributed to facets such as excitement-seeking, positivity, sociability, and assertiveness (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). Extraverts view obstacles and difficulties as opportunities for new experiences, making them more likely to consider migration. Their positive mood and assertiveness foster persistence in pursuing goals, and the allure of working abroad may further stimulate their migration intentions. Contrary to our expectations and previous research (Crown et al., 2020; Fouarge et al., 2019; Rashid et al., 2023), Openness did not predict migration intention for temporary work. While individuals high on Openness are driven by a desire for new experiences, they are also guided by personal values (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). When individuals perceive migration as incongruent with their values, they may be reluctant to migrate, despite their inherent curiosity and willingness to explore new experiences. Temporary migrant work, often associated with significant violations of the work contract and basic human rights (Acosta & Acosta, 2019), may conflict with the values of individuals high on Openness. As a result, such individuals are more likely to forgo migration than accept work that contradicts their core principles. Conscientiousness positively predicted labor migration intention, contrary to our hypothesis of a negative relationship. This finding aligns with the view that Conscientiousness involves careful deliberation and goal orientation (Babcock &

Wilson, 2020). Although temporary migrant work, especially domestic work, often carries a negative reputation, conscientious individuals may perceive migration as a strategic move to achieve their personal goals. This supports prior findings where Conscientiousness predicted incentivized migration (Crown et al., 2020) and migration for better or similar opportunities (Rashid et al., 2023), indicating a context-dependent decision-making process.

Agreeableness did not predict labor migration intention, as expected. Agreeable individuals prioritize interests of others and seek to maintain harmony, which can diminish their personal agency in making migration decisions (Roberts & Yoon, 2022). The opinions of close social ties heavily influence their intentions, making them less likely to independently pursue migration. Neuroticism positively predicted labor migration intention (at least in Step 1 of the regression analysis), aligning with the hypothesis that individuals facing harsh economic conditions may act impulsively in seeking opportunities abroad (Babcock & Wilson, 2020). Temporary labor migration is often perceived as an immediate escape from their personal and economic hurdles such as family problems, unemployment, and poor working conditions (Bélanger & Rahman, 2013; Parreñas, 2021); which factors facilitate sporadic migration decisions to mitigate these hardships. Additionally, CSE negatively predicted labor migration intention, suggesting that individuals with high CSE (who have a strong sense of self-worth and competence) find temporary migrant work particularly less appealing. This contrasts previous findings (Remhof et al., 2014), where CSE positively predicted migration intentions; indicating that context and job nature significantly influence the impact of CSE on migration decisions. Moreover, CSE emerging as a better predictor of migration intention than Big Five factor traits affirms the importance of considering other psychological constructs beyond the Big Five in understanding labor migration aspirations (Feher & Vernon, 2021).

Family influence negatively moderated the relationship between Extraversion and Openness and migration intention, suggesting that strong family ties can diminish the impact of personality traits on the labor migration decision. This underscores the central role of family in the migration process in collectivistic cultures like Uganda, where family approval and support are crucial (Hugo, 1995; Zewdu, 2018). Families provide the necessary support system, including emotional, financial, and informational assistance, which are essential for the migration process (Boccagni, 2015; Bredtmann et al., 2019).

Overall, our findings suggest that certain personality traits could be critical in determining which individuals might engage in temporary labor migration. This could guide recruiters and policymakers to develop more targeted and effective strategies for managing temporary labor migration process, such as identification of the right persons with suitable profiles; which might also predict successful migration (Remhof et al., 2014). Moreover, the centrality of family influence indicates the importance of aligning temporary labor migration policies and systems with the role of family in the decision-making process. Other than giving approval for migration, the family also controls essential resources, such as financial, emotional, social, instrumental and information support, and bridges migration networks (Boccagni, 2015; Braimah & Pyakurel, 2019). This influence is evident in our study through the moderating effect of family on personality traits considered migratory (i.e., Extraversion and Openness to Experience, see

Remhof et al., 2014). Therefore, this study deepens the understanding of the psychological and social dynamic factors that influence labor migration for temporary work in a Global South context.

## Practical Implications

The results of this study have important practical implications. In particular, our analyses indicate that temporary labor migration to Middle Eastern countries is especially an option for individuals with low CSE, who are also likely to appraise life events as stressful, demanding and overwhelming; because they lack CSE, a critical trait and resource for coping with stressful situations (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2020; Jiang, 2015). Temporary migrant work is typically associated with high workloads, work pressure, low pay, and poor working conditions (Bosmans et al., 2016; Tasleem et al., 2022), which work situations could be difficult for individuals with low CSE (Debusscher et al., 2017). Therefore, sending countries like Uganda, need to institute policies aimed at bolstering workers' self-esteem and feeling of control (which are components of CSE) to prepare them better for the demanding work conditions. This could be done during the mandatory orientation trainings before migrating; for example, during the two-weeks mandatory orientation training for Ugandan migrant workers.

Our findings also highlight the significant role family influence plays in shaping migration decisions. In collectivist cultures like Uganda, where family approval and support are paramount (Bélanger & Rahman, 2013; Boccagni, 2017; Braimah & Pyakurel, 2019), family involvement in migration processes should be considered by policymakers and recruiters. Families can either hinder or facilitate a worker's entry, stay, and exit. Family-centered policies that holistically engage the families of prospective temporary migrant workers should be developed, such as involving family members in the recruitment process, providing pre-departure counseling, and ensuring continuous communication between migrant workers and their families. This approach could enhance the overall migration experience and better prepare both migrants and their families for temporary labor migration.

Our study also emphasizes the importance of recruiting individuals whose personality profiles are suited for temporary migrant work, as they are more likely to realize migration and achieve successful outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). Currently, the recruitment model for temporary workers is based solely on sociodemographic factors (e.g., age, education, gender) and medical fitness, overlooking key individual characteristics that influence attitudes and behaviors at both the state and trait levels (Czaika & de Haas, 2014). This approach risks recruiting unsuitable candidates, which can lead to poor job fit, decreased job satisfaction, lower job performance, and heightened conflicts between employees and employers.

## Limitations and Future Research

The following limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. The use of a student sample provided homogeneity (Cemalcilar et al., 2021), but it is possible that students may have either understated or overstated their labor migration intentions due to the low status associated with migrant domestic work (Bosmans et al., 2016), often deemed suitable only for the uneducated. Although we assumed that high unemployment levels and examples from university graduates who have migrated for similar work (The Independent, 2021) could influence their labor migration intentions, the general perception of domestic work might have affected their responses and, consequently, the study's findings. Several respondents were excluded as careless respondents, following guidelines from studies on careless responding in online surveys (Curran, 2016; Ward & Meade, 2023). Moreover, the scope of our study was limited to women's migration intention for domestic work (as housemaids), excluding other types of temporary migrant work that might yield different results and excluding men's migration (e.g., as construction workers). Our theoretical discussion primarily relied on literature from the Global North due to scarcity of studies linking personality traits to migration intentions within the Ugandan context and the broader Global South. Whereas personality traits are generally considered universal (Babcock & Wilson, 2020), more studies within the Global South context are necessary to understanding the labor migration dynamics.

Furthermore, our results indicated that CSE is a stronger predictor of labor migration intention than Big Five personality traits. However, CSE continues to be overlooked in research, including recent reviews of trait personality psychology where it was not mentioned (Roberts & Yoon, 2022). We advocate for more empirical research replicating the CSE model and exploring additional personality predictors such as the dark triad traits (Machiavellianism, sub-clinical narcissism, and sub-clinical psychopathy), which have been suggested as alternatives to the Big Five due to their narrow and specific assessment of personality (Feher & Vernon, 2021). We also recommend that future studies on labor migration, particularly in collectivistic cultures, include at least one family member (preferably the main decision-maker) as a unit of analysis. This could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of temporary labor migration. Beyond family influence, future research could explore other potential boundary factors within the workers' environment such as better pay, poverty, and other social ties (e.g., peers and friends). Moreover, future research should utilize other research designs that assess the realization of labor migration intention; for instance, it could be a comparative study approach involving prospective migrants, actual migrants, and/or returnees. Additionally, there is a need for more research on collecting survey data in the Global South, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Our study highlighted that careless responding, a topic primarily researched in the Global North, is likely a significant obstacle to collecting valid data in other regions as well. Addressing this gap can enhance the reliability and validity of future research in diverse cultural contexts.

# Conclusion

Although unemployment levels and lack of opportunities can motivate women to become temporary labor migrants, there is still considerable variance, as only some go while others are not interested; our study applied the trait personality models to explain this variance. Using Big Five factor traits and CSE personality models, we found that Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and CSE (and, tentatively, Neuroticism) predicted labor migration intention. Moreover, CSE proved to be a superior predictor of labor migration intention, which aligns with previous studies which proposed that CSE might be a better predictor of the psychological factors underlaying the labor migration decisions (Fouarge et al., 2019). Additionally, family influence moderated the effects of some Big Five traits, particularly those considered migratory personality traits (Remhof et al., 2014), asserting the critical role that family plays in the migration decisions of its members, especially in collectivistic cultures.

# Appendix 1

To what extent do the following statements represent decision making in your life?
***Who decides (or decided) …***

1. …the kind of food you should eat
2. …the kind of friends you should have
3. …the places where you should meet your friends
4. …how you should behave in the presence of visitors
5. …how you should behave towards old people
6. …how you should behave towards young people
7. …how you should behave at parties and on other special occasions
8. …about your going to church/mosque or to other religious places
9. …about your observing religious practices such as saying prayers etc
10. … the things you should do in your free time
11. …about the persons with whom you should mix
12. …about the time when you should get up
13. …about the time when you should have entertainment (such as TV and radio)
14. …about the amount of time you should spend in amusement and entertainment (such as watching TV)
15. …what you would do when you grow up
16. …about the level of education, you should receive (e.g., Primary, S.4, technical, S.6, University)
17. …about the type of education, you should receive (i.e., UPE/USE, or Private)
18. …what subjects you should take in school (i.e., Sciences & Arts)
19. …about the school or college or University you should attend (i.e., day, boarding, single sex or mixed school)
20. …about the occupation (job) you should choose
21. …who should purchase books and stationery for you
22. …who should purchase your clothes and from where

| To what extent do the following statements represent decision making in your life? |
| --- |
| *Who decides (or decided) …* |
| 23.     …what style of clothes you should wear |
| 24     …about your pocket money, its amount, and how to spend it |

**Data Availability** The data associated to this paper can be accessed using this link: https://osf.io/em7b2/?view_only=7566320a1d054667a5f3ad235a49ba62

## Declarations

**Ethical Statement** The study was conducted under the ethical guidelines specified by Saarland University, Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (#21–05). Participants were required to give informed consent before responding to the questionnaire. The informed consent statement included a detailed explanation of the study, their role and benefits as research participants, a right to voluntary participation and to halt participation at any time, privacy and anonymity safeguards, and information on data protection and processing.

**Informed Consent** All participants involved in this study provided informed consent before their participation.

**Competing interests** We have no conflict of interest to disclose.

**Clinical Trial Number** Not applicable.

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