

Feelings of Social Alienation and Intention to Emigrate among Shiraz University Students

Serajeddin Mahmoudiani ¹ Roghayeh khosravi ² Mehdi rajabi ³ Shahrbanoo Behroozian ⁴

1. Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Economics, Management and Social Sciences, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. Corresponding Author, E-mail: serajmahmoudani@gmail.com
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Economics, Management and Social Sciences, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. E-mail: roghayeh.khosravi@gmail.com
3. M.A Student, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Economics, Management and Social Sciences, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. E-mail: mehdirajabi3008@gmail.com
4. M.A Student, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Economics, Management and Social Sciences, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. E-mail: behroozian.shahbanoo@gmail.com

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<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 24 February 2026 Received in revised form: 12 May 2026 Accepted: 21 May 2026 Published online: 15 June 2026</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Social alienation,</i> <i>Intention to emigrate,</i> <i>Human Capital,</i> <i>University students,</i> <i>Shiraz University.</i></p>	<p>Objective: In recent years, student migration has become one of the major social and developmental concerns in countries experiencing rapid social and economic transformations. In Iran, the growing tendency of students to migrate has sparked extensive debates about human capital flight and its long-term consequences. Although many studies have emphasized economic and structural factors as the primary determinants of migration intentions, less attention has been paid to psychological and social factors—particularly the sense of social alienation. Social alienation refers to an individual’s subjective experience of disconnection, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and social isolation within their surrounding environment. Drawing on both classical and contemporary theoretical frameworks of alienation, this study examines whether the subjective experience of social disconnection among students can reinforce their inclination to migrate. The main objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between the sense of social alienation and migration intentions among students at Shiraz University, and to assess the explanatory power of this variable in predicting migration intentions while controlling for demographic and educational characteristics.</p> <p>Method: This study was conducted using a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional survey design. The statistical population consisted of all students enrolled at Shiraz University across different academic levels and fields of study. Based on Cochran’s formula, the sample size was determined to be 376 participants, who were selected using proportionate stratified sampling and systematic random sampling. Faculties were classified into three main clusters: basic sciences, engineering, and humanities. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Social alienation was measured a standardized 26-item scale covering dimensions such as powerlessness, meaninglessness, social isolation, and normlessness. Migration intention was also assessed using validated items. All items were designed based on a Likert scale. The content validity of the instrument was confirmed through expert evaluation, and its reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The alpha value was 0.864 for social</p>



alienation and 0.896 for migration intention, indicating satisfactory internal consistency of the instrument. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 27, applying descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis.

Findings: The descriptive results indicated that 58.5% of the respondents reported a moderate level of social alienation, while 10.4% experienced a high level. The findings also showed that 46.3% of the sample had a moderate intention to migrate, and 22.6% reported a strong intention to leave the country. Multiple regression analysis revealed that the overall model explained 33% of the variance in migration intention. Among the variables entered into the model, social alienation was the strongest and the only statistically significant predictor. As the level of social alienation increased, the intention to migrate also increased. In contrast, demographic variables such as gender, age, marital status, level of education, field of study, employment status, ethnicity, religion, and class affiliation did not show a statistically significant effect in the final model.

Conclusion: Social alienation emerged as one of the main determinants of migration intention among students. Those who experienced higher levels of social alienation were more likely than others to view migration as an alternative strategy. These findings suggest that student migration cannot be understood solely within economic or opportunity-based frameworks; rather, the quality of students' lived experiences within the domestic social context also plays a crucial role. Therefore, policies aimed at reducing student migration should go beyond economic incentives and focus on strengthening students' sense of social belonging, enhancing institutional trust, expanding student participation, and promoting social capital. Managing the growing trend of student migration requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both the structural dimensions and the psychological-social aspects of student life.

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