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Migrants Remittances and Fertility in the Post-Soviet States

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Introduction:

Migration and remittances have gained increasing attention of academic scholars and policymakers in recent years. During the last two decades, international migration and remittances have increased substantially for most developing countries and remittances have become a major source of revenue and foreign exchange (Ahmed et al., 2021). Between 2000 and 2020, the number of international migrants grew from 150 million to 272 million, which corresponds to 2.8% of the world population in the year 2000 and 3.5% of the world population in the year 2020 (UN Migration, 2020). In the same vein, global remittances rose from $126 billion in 2000 to $702 billion in 2020 (UN Migration, 2020).

There is a large and burgeoning literature on the role of remittances from the developing world. The literature on the impact of remittances can be divided into macro- and micro-levels. Studies examined the impact of remittances on growth; poverty and inequality; financial development; exchange rate and trade; labour productivity; institutions; firm performance; household consumption and asset accumulation patterns; human capital accumulation and safe drinking water and sanitation (Askarov & Doucouliagos, 2020; Azizi, 2021; Cazachevici et al., 2020; Coulibaly, 2015; Farzanegan & Hassan, 2020; Kaba & Moustapha, 2021; Kakhkharov et al., 2021; Mamun et al., 2015; Tsafack & Djeunankan, 2021; Williams, 2017).

The possible demographic consequences of remittance flows has so far received scant attention. In two studies on the question, Anwar & Mughal (2016a) and Ben Atta et al (2021) examined the role of migrant remittances on fertility in South Asia and North Africa.

Data and Methods:

In this study, we examine the impact of migrants' remittances on fertility by employing panel data for Post-Soviet states from 1990 to 2020. Post-Soviet states are an interesting case study. First, there is large-scale out-migration and receipt of migrants' remittances is also substantial. Second, like other parts of the world, this region also passed through a demographic transition moving from a high mortality and high birth rate to low mortality and low birth rate. Third, in these states, there is the existence of a traditional family structure with rapid social change (Kazenin & Kozlov, 2021).

The Baseline model can be written as,

$$\log(F_{it}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log(RPC_{it}) + X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

$for\ i = 1, \ldots\ldots, N\ and\ t = 1, \ldots\ldots, T$ where F is fertility rate in country i at time t. RPC is the per capita remittances received by country i at year t. X_{it} is a vector of other control variables that potentially affect F_{it}. We controlled for various economic and socio-demographic factors.

We use a variety of panel methods to estimate our baseline model. First, we employed pooled ordinary least squares (OLS), and random- and fixed-effect models. To overcome the issue of endogeneity, we used three variables as instruments are weighted GDP per capita of host country, weighted GNI per capita of host country and weighted unemployment rate of host country.

If the host country's GDP per capita or GNI per capita increases, the migrants' income also increases, which implies that the migrant' have more money to remit. Therefore, we can expect the rise in remittances in response to rise in host country's GDP per capita or GNI per capita. Likewise, if the unemployment rate goes up in the host country, migrants can lose their jobs, and as a result the total remittances sent by migrants' could fall.

Main Results:

The baseline estimates for the impact of impact of migrants' remittances on fertility are presented in Table 01. The first three columns show the results with pooled OLS, random effects and fixed effects. The last three columns show the results of IV-estimations. The findings show that, on average, a 1% increase in per capita remittances leads to a reduction of fertility in the Post-Soviet states of 1.7% to 10.7% respectively. Columns 1 to 3 of Table 2 show estimations with remittances per capita respectively lagged by one, two and three years. According to Kakhkharov et al (2021), International labour migration and remittances in the former Soviet Union have increased dramatically during the last two decades. So, columns 4 and 5, reports results of estimations carried out on subsamples for two time period: 1990-2000 and 2001-2020. The estimates suggests on average, a 1 % increase in per capita remittances lead to 1.3% to 3.4% decrease in fertility. Interestingly, we do not see the significant effect of remittances on fertility in the 1990-2000 subsample. Column 6 shows the model incorporating time-fixed effects. These estimations account for the possibility of time variation. The relationship maintains its sign and statistical significance.

Next, we estimate the impact of migrants' remittances on fertility by considering the space and size dimension (Table 3). The potential threat to our estimates could be through sex-selection. According to Duthé et al (2012) and Guilmoto (2009), the sex

ratio at birth increased considerably and simultaneously in the three independent Caucasian countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia during the 1990s. As a result, couples could stop their fertility at earlier birth order after attaining the male child through sex-selection. To overcome this issue, we exclude the Caucasian countries from our sample and reestimate the effect of migrants' remittances on fertility (columns 1). We find that a 1% per capita increase in remittances leads to 1.4% decrease in fertility. Column 2 shows estimation excluding outliers. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are largest recipients of remittances among the Post-Soviet states, accounting for around 31.3% and 26.7% of their GDP. Controlling for these outliers does not compromise the gist of our baseline estimates. Columns 3 and 4 report the estimations pertaining to sub-samples of countries in the above-median per capita remittances and below-median per capita remittances. Here, we do not see the effect of remittances on fertility in the below-median per capita remittances subsample. However, the significance persists in the above-median per capita remittances subsample. Column 5 displays a model incorporating country-fixed effects. These estimations account for the possibility of cross-sectional variation. In this model, the sign and significance of the coefficient of interest remains intact.

In addition to the above described parsimonious specifications, we consider extensions to the baseline model by including other explanatory variables. The Government policy on population and birth control may significantly influence the fertility rates through concerted media and social awareness campaigns (Anwar & Mughal, 2016b). First, we used an additional control i.e. Government policy on population in our baseline model. In addition, we included under-5 mortality rate, health expenditure (% of GDP), health expenditure per capita and out-of-pocket expenditure. The relationship between migrants' remittances and fertility maintains its statistical significance after extensions to the baseline model (Table 4).

Finally, to check the robustness of our baseline estimates, we used alternate variable of interest, outcome of interest and also employed alternative empirical strategies (Table 5 to 7). In all of these models, the sign and significance of the coefficient of interest remained in line with our baseline estimates.

Our findings can be linked to the fact that remittances increase the income of recipient households—that is, income effect—thereby increasing the use of contraception and

augmenting health expenditure. Besides remitting money, migrants' also remit ideas, technologies and knowledge they acquired in the host countries.

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Table 1: Remittances and Fertility- Baseline Estimation

VARIABLES	(1) Fertility	(2) Fertility	(3) Fertility	(4) Fertility	(5) Fertility	(6) Fertility
lp_remittances_per_capita	-0.025***	-0.017***	-0.025***	-0.081**	-0.074**	-0.107**
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.046)
l_gdppc	-0.008	-0.004	-0.008	0.003	0.002	0.006
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.012)
lf_female	-0.042***	-0.022***	-0.042***	-0.041***	-0.039***	-0.049***
	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.018)
women_15_49	-0.017***	-0.028***	-0.017***	-0.011	-0.013	-0.005
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.015)
contraceptive_pr	-0.003***	-0.002	-0.003***	-0.003	-0.003	-0.003
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
se_secondary_per_gross	-0.004***	0.000	-0.004***	0.002	0.002	0.003
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
gp_fertility	-0.181***	0.138***	-0.181***	0.094	0.099	0.076
	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.042)	(0.071)	(0.068)	(0.089)
host_w_tfr	0.081	0.059	0.081	0.239**	0.220*	0.312**
	(0.061)	(0.048)	(0.061)	(0.117)	(0.115)	(0.153)
Constant	3.748***	2.501***	3.748***	2.740***	2.714***	2.837***
	(0.245)	(0.380)	(0.245)	(0.573)	(0.543)	(0.711)
Observations	138	138	138	138	138	138

Source: Author's calculations using the data from World Bank, United Nations and World Health Organization 2020. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 2: Remittances and Fertility- Time Dimension

VARIABLES	(1) Fertility	(2) Fertility	(3) Fertility	(4) Fertility	(5) Fertility	(6) Fertility
L.lp_remittances_per_capita	-0.017***					
	(0.005)					
L2.lp_remittances_per_capita		-0.016***				
		(0.005)				
L3.lp_remittances_per_capita			-0.013***			
			(0.004)			
lp_remittances_per_capita				-0.034	-0.016***	-0.034***
				(0.031)	(0.005)	(0.006)
l_gdppc	-0.002	-0.003	-0.004	-0.109	-0.009	-0.011
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.093)	(0.006)	(0.008)
lf_female	-0.022***	-0.020***	-0.018***	0.033	-0.023***	-0.051***
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.027)	(0.006)	(0.004)
women_15_49	-0.028***	-0.028***	-0.030***	-0.094*	-0.015***	-0.015***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.040)	(0.005)	(0.003)
contraceptive_pr	-0.002*	-0.002	-0.001	0.001	0.001	-0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)
se_secondary_per_gross	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.001	0.000	-0.007***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gp_fertility	0.140***	0.152***	0.171***		0.133***	-0.153***
	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.046)		(0.043)	(0.041)
host_w_tfr	0.057	0.057	0.047	0.647	0.132***	-0.401***
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.413)	(0.047)	(0.103)
gp_fertility	0 .140***	0.152***	0.170***	-	0.133***	-0.152***
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.046)	-	(0.042)	(0.041)
Constant	2.527***	2.397***	2.317***	1.563	1.929***	5.192***
	(0.378)	(0.377)	(0.382)	(1.569)	(0.366)	(0.350)
Observations	138	138	138	18	120	138

Source: Author's calculations using the data from World Bank, United Nations and World Health Organization 2020. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 3: Remittances and Fertility- Country Dimensions and Size effect

VARIABLES	(1) Fertility	(2) Fertility	(3) Fertility	(4) Fertility	(5) Fertility
lp_remittances_per_capita	-0.014**	-0.028***	0.004	-0.024*	-0.017***
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.005)
l_gdppc	-0.011	-0.000	-0.000	-0.037***	-0.004
	(0.007)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.006)
lf_female	-0.014*	-0.030***	-0.050***	-0.041***	-0.022***
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.007)
women_15_49	-0.050***	-0.022***	-0.023	-0.025***	-0.028***
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.023)	(0.004)	(0.005)
contraceptive_pr	-0.008***	0.000	0.000	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
se_secondary_per_gross	-0.000	-0.003**	-0.012***	-0.002	0.000
	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.001)
gp_fertility	0.012	-0.399***	-0.170**	-0.469***	0.138***
	(0.040)	(0.083)	(0.077)	(0.140)	(0.046)
host_w_tfr	-0.010	-0.282	-0.196	-0.647***	0.059
	(0.118)	(0.194)	(0.186)	(0.157)	(0.048)
Constant	3.479***	3.837***	5.024***	5.215***	2.501***
	(0.488)	(0.556)	(0.856)	(0.429)	(0.380)
Observations	73	95	57	81	138

Source: Author's calculations using the data from World Bank, United Nations and World Health Organization 2020. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 4: Remittances and Fertility- Health and Policy Factors

VARIABLES	(1) Fertility	(2) Fertility	(3) Fertility	(4) Fertility	(5) Fertility
lp_remittances_per_capita	-0.017***	-0.012**	-0.017***	-0.017***	-0.017***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
l_gdppc	-0.008	-0.004	-0.009	-0.011**	-0.010*
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
lf_female	-0.024***	-0.024***	-0.025***	-0.027***	-0.025***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
women_15_49	-0.021***	-0.035***	-0.018***	-0.014**	-0.017***
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
contraceptive_pr	0.000	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
se_secondary_per_gross	0.000	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gp_fertility	0.095*	0.159***	0.151***	0.142***	0.148***
	(0.054)	(0.045)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.043)
host_w_tfr	0.092*	0.195***	0.107**	0.039	0.093
	(0.052)	(0.064)	(0.052)	(0.066)	(0.061)
c_health_exp	-0.003		-0.002		
	(0.005)		(0.005)		
gp_population	0.075*				
	(0.043)				
lmortality_u5		0.085***			
		(0.027)			
c_health_exp_pc				0.000	
				(0.000)	
out_p_exp					0.000
					(0.000)
Constant	2.247***	2.055***	2.137***	2.192***	2.135***
	(0.400)	(0.395)	(0.399)	(0.398)	(0.399)
Observations	119	138	119	119	119

Source: Author's calculations using the data from World Bank, United Nations and World Health Organization 2020. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5: Remittances and Fertility- Alternative Remittances

VARIABLES	(1) Fertility	(2) Fertility	(3) Fertility	(4) Fertility	(5) Fertility	(6) Fertility
lp_remittances	-0.020***	-0.015***	-0.020***	-0.067**	-0.065**	-0.086**
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.038)
l_gdppc	-0.011	-0.006	-0.011	-0.004	-0.004	-0.003
	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.011)
lf_female	-0.044***	-0.020***	-0.044***	-0.031***	-0.031***	-0.036**
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.015)
women_15_49	-0.018***	-0.027***	-0.018***	-0.009	-0.010	-0.003
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.016)
contraceptive_pr	-0.002**	-0.002	-0.002**	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
se_secondary_per_gross	-0.004***	-0.000	-0.004***	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
gp_fertility	-0.212***	0.119**	-0.212***	0.015	0.019	-0.023
	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.042)	(0.091)	(0.094)	(0.114)
host_w_tfr	0.062	0.059	0.062	0.215*	0.209*	0.273*
	(0.060)	(0.047)	(0.060)	(0.113)	(0.119)	(0.143)
Constant	3.854***	2.423***	3.854***	2.369***	2.371***	2.349***
	(0.244)	(0.373)	(0.244)	(0.578)	(0.565)	(0.711)
Observations	138	138	138	138	138	138

Source: Author's calculations using the data from World Bank, United Nations and World Health Organization 2020. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6: Remittances and Fertility- Alternative Outcome

VARIABLES	(1) Birth rate	(2) Birth rate	(3) Birth rate	(4) Birth rate	(5) Birth rate	(6) Birth rate
lp_remittances_per_capita	-0.498***	-0.202**	-0.498***	-0.026***	-0.012**	-0.026***
	(0.145)	(0.101)	(0.145)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.008)
l_gdppc	-0.111	-0.031	-0.111	-0.012	-0.000	-0.012
	(0.193)	(0.113)	(0.193)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.011)
lf_female	-1.024***	-0.067	-1.024***	-0.050***	0.000	-0.050***
	(0.088)	(0.125)	(0.088)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.005)
women_15_49	0.074	-0.044	0.074	-0.006	-0.002	-0.006
	(0.079)	(0.091)	(0.079)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
contraceptive_pr	-0.054**	-0.073***	-0.054**	0.000	-0.002	0.000
	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
se_secondary_per_gross	-0.116***	0.004	-0.116***	-0.007***	0.000	-0.007***
	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.025)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gp_fertility	-3.893***	3.907***	-3.893***	-0.197***	0.199***	-0.197***
	(0.951)	(0.860)	(0.951)	(0.054)	(0.046)	(0.054)
host_w_tfr	5.972***	5.580***	5.972***	0.304***	0.326***	0.304***
	(1.382)	(0.904)	(1.382)	(0.079)	(0.048)	(0.079)
Constant	70.964***	16.318**	70.964***	5.692***	2.442***	5.692***
	(5.587)	(7.116)	(5.587)	(0.318)	(0.378)	(0.318)
Observations	138	138	138	138	138	138

Source: Author's calculations using the data from World Bank, United Nations and World Health Organization 2020. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 7: Remittances and Fertility- Alternative Techniques

VARIABLES	(1) Fertility	(2) Fertility	(3) Fertility
lp_remittances_per_capita	-0.025***	-0.025***	-0.017**
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.007)
l_gdppc	-0.008	-0.008	-0.004
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.006)
lf_female	-0.042***	-0.042***	-0.022**
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.008)
women_15_49	-0.017***	-0.017***	-0.028***
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.007)
contraceptive_pr	-0.003***	-0.003***	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
se_secondary_per_gross	-0.004***	-0.004***	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gp_fertility	-0.181***	-0.181***	0.138**
	(0.040)	(0.056)	(0.053)
host_w_tfr	0.081	0.081	0.059
	(0.059)	(0.053)	(0.044)
Constant	3.748***	3.748***	2.501***
	(0.237)	(0.205)	(0.507)
Observations	138	138	138

Source: Author's calculations using the data from World Bank, United Nations and World Health Organization 2020. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

APPENDIX

Table A1: Description of variables and data sources

Variables	Description	Data source
lfertility	Log of fertility rate, total (births per woman)	World Bank (2020)
brate	Birth rate, crude (per 1,000 people)	World Bank (2020)
l_brate	Log of Birth rate, crude (per 1,000 people)	World Bank (2020)
lp_remittances_per_capita	Log of personal remittances per capita, received (current US$)	World Bank (2020)
lp_remittances	Log of personal remittances, received (current US$)	World Bank (2020)
l_gdppc	Log of GDP per capita	World Bank (2020)
se_secondary_per_gross	School enrollment, secondary (% gross)	World Bank (2020)
contraceptive_pr	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of women ages 15-49)	World Bank (2020)
host_w_tfr	Weighted host country fertility rate (total migrants)	United Nations (2020)
women_15_49	Women of age 15-49 (% of total)	World Health Organization (2020)
lf_female	Labor force, female (% of total labor force)	World Bank (2020)
gp_fertility	Government policy on fertility level	United Nations (2020)