

TOLERABLE AND INVISIBLE: IRREGULAR EMPLOYMENT OF UZBEK
MIGRANTS IN RESTAURANTS IN THE BALGAT DISTRICT OF ANKARA
BEFORE AND DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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BEFORE AND DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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ABSTRACT

TOLERABLE AND INVISIBLE: IRREGULAR EMPLOYMENT OF UZBEK MIGRANTS IN RESTAURANTS IN THE BALGAT DISTRICT OF ANKARA BEFORE AND DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Economic globalization and consequent deregulation of markets contributed to the labor market segmentation and social inequalities all around the world. As a result, increasingly more countries have taken part in global migration systems in which the international labor movement has been unprecedented. In this process, the existing structure of job opportunities, the demand for migrant labor, and the restrictions and flexibilities defined by states appear to be the main determinants for migration decisions of and employment conditions for labor migrants. In Turkey, flexible visa policies and increased informalization of labor market are the main factors directing irregular labor migration flows to the country. Among the nations which Turkey grants visa exemption, Uzbekistan has an excessive labor resource which is compelled to search for ways to cope with the deteriorating economy. Although previously Russia and Kazakhstan were the main destination countries for Uzbek labor migrants, their direction turned more towards Turkey since mid-2010s. Interestingly, it became more possible to see Uzbek migrants in certain parts of Ankara working in restaurants. Despite their irregular status, they fill the gap in the sector in a very unique way. With this observation and under the influence of

COVID-19 pandemic, it is aimed in this thesis to examine the restaurant sector in Balgat district of Ankara by conducting a qualitative field research that focuses on irregular migrants and their employers. Why restaurant-owners prefer Uzbeks and why Uzbek migrants prefer to work in restaurants are discussed together with the impacts of the pandemic.

Keywords: Uzbek Migrants, Dual Labor Market, Irregular Migration, Migrant Network, Migration System, COVID-19, Ankara/Turkey

ÖZ

TOLERE EDİLEN VE GÖZE GÖRÜNMEYEN: COVID-19 PANDEMİSİ ÖNCESİ VE ESNASINDA ÖZBEK GÖÇMENLERİN ANKARA'NIN BALGAT SEMTİNDEKİ RESTORANLARDA DÜZENSİZ İSTİHDAMI

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Ekonomik küreselleşme ve buna bağlı olarak piyasaların deregülasyonu, tüm dünyada işgücü piyasasının katmanlaşmasına ve sosyal eşitsizliklere katkıda bulundu. Bunun sonucu olarak, eşi benzeri görülmemiş bir uluslararası işçi hareketinin bulunduğu küresel göç sistemlerine giderek daha fazla ülke katılmaktadır. Bu süreçte, iş fırsatlarının mevcut yapısı, göçmen işgücüne olan talep ve devletlerin tanımladığı kısıtlamalar ve esneklikler, göçmen işçilerin göç kararlarının ve istihdam koşullarının ana belirleyicisi olarak karşımıza çıkar. Türkiye'de esnek vize politikaları ve işgücü piyasasının artan kayıtdışılığı, ülkeye düzensiz işgücü göçü akışını yönlüten temel faktörlerdir. Türkiye'nin vize muafiyeti tanıdığı ülkeler arasında yer alan Özbekistan, bozulan ekonomiyle başa çıkmanın yollarını aramak zorunda kalan büyük bir işgücü kaynağına sahiptir. Önceden Özbek göçmen işçilerin başlıca hedef ülkeleri Rusya ve Kazakistan olsa da, 2010'ların ortalarından itibaren göç hareketinin yönü daha çok Türkiye'ye dönmüştür. İlginçtir ki, Ankara'nın belirli yerlerinde Özbek göçmenlerin restoranlarda çalıştığını görmek daha mümkün hale gelmiştir. Düzensiz statülerine rağmen sektördeki boşluğu çok özgün bir şekilde doldurmaktadırlar. Bu gözlemler ve COVID-19 pandemisinin etkisi altında, bu tezde

düzensiz göçmenler ve işverenleri odaklı nitel bir saha araştırması yapılarak Ankara'nın Balgat semtindeki restoran sektörünün incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Restoran sahiplerinin Özbekleri neden tercih ettiği ve Özbek göçmenlerin neden restoranlarda çalışmayı tercih ettiği, pandeminin etkileriyle birlikte tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Özbek Göçmenler, İkili İşgücü Piyasası, Düzensiz Göç, Göçmen Ağı, Göç Sistemi, COVID-19, Ankara/Türkiye

*To My Daughter Eylül Akpınar, With Much Love and Great Hope for a Better World
in Your Future*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DGMM	Directorate General of Migration Management
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labour Organization
İŞKUR	Türkiye İş Kurumu (Turkish Employment Agency)
LFIP	Law on Foreigners and International Protection
NELM	New Economics of Labor Migration
PMM	Presidency of Migration Management
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
TL	Turkish Lira
USD	United States Dollars
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Current World Order: Globalization and Migration

Capitalist world order continuously creates a mass of moving people for various reasons since its beginning (Akpınar, 2010:5). However, the shared belief is that international migration has speeded up through the past fifty years due to political, economic and technological processes, and it has much more complex patterns in the countries which experience great volumes of emigration and immigration of increasingly more diverse groups (IOM 2019:19; De Haas and Czaika, 2014:283-284; Kurekova, 2011:4; Ritzer, 2010:298-299).

All such changes in international migration are indeed outcomes of globalization processes which are connected to advances in transportation and communication technologies (Sert, 2018:29; De Haas and Czaika, 2014:284-293; Kurekova, 2011:4; Harvey, 2001:59). Technological revolutions have not only empowered migrant networks, but also simplified sending remittance, travelling, and accessing to information, all of which strengthen transnational ties (De Haas and Czaika, 2014:284; Ritzer, 2010:303). Easier and better access to information through mobile phones, satellite television and especially internet has increased people's awareness on the opportunities existing in other parts of the globe, and significantly contributed to abilities and desires to migrate (De Haas and Czaika, 2014:285; Ayhan and Erdoğan, 2015:6). So much that, rather than geographical positions, “distance” as a concept denotes legal, phenotypical, cultural, or linguistic matters in today's globalized world (De Haas and Czaika, 2014:290). Consequently, immigrants arrive at host countries from various countries of origin as well as emigrants leave for various destination countries regardless of geographical distances (De Haas and Czaika, 2014:291). According to the *World Migration Reports* prepared by

International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of international migrants in the world were estimated to be around 272 million in 2019, which was 3.5 per cent of the global population (IOM, 2019:19), and it reached to 281 million in 2020 under the impact of COVID-19 pandemic which is discussed in following parts, equating to 3.6 per cent (IOM, 2021:21).

On the other hand, globalization was caused by and also has resulted in political and ideological change that led towards liberal economic policies which lifted international barriers for flows of capital, ideas, knowledge, culture and – to some degree – of people (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:33; De Haas and Czaika, 2014:285). Globalization is essentially a geographical re-organization of capitalism (Harvey, 2001:57) in which liberalization of economic policies and developed technology have brought about incorporation of increasingly more countries into a global economy (De Haas and Czaika, 2014:316; Kurekova, 2011:16) that is made up of by multinational companies in a transnational economic structure with a global division of labor (Ritzer, 2010:35). *“As part of this process, a growing number of countries have entered the global migration market, increasing the global pool of potential origin countries”* as stated by De Haas and Czaika (2014:316), and they become destination, transit or source country, or all of them at the same time (Toksöz et al., 2012:11). As Massey (2009:26-34) concludes, the global influence of capitalist markets on underdeveloped or developing countries accompanies social, financial and political changes that lead to international migration. That is, the global economy with its powerful economic and social impacts has promoted such large-scale population movements between nations (Massey, 2012:20). Such process can for instance be observed in former communist countries – one of which is Uzbekistan – in which out-migration and remittances have become significant sources for economic growth (De Haas and Czaika, 2014:315). Hence, considering all, it is possible to state that globalization has expedited migration in ever greater numbers between geographically diverse areas of the world.

However, at this point, it must be reminded that geographical scope, diversity and directionality of migratory movements should still be examined to really understand the change in the patterns of global migration (De Haas and Czaika, 2014:287). Instead of merely focusing on the volume of migratory moves of people; spatial

patterns, regional differences, and the variety in immigration and emigration patterns must certainly be taken into consideration (ibid). Although recent trends in migration cannot be explained only by looking at particular country-to-country migration corridors (ibid), there nevertheless are certain geographies in which such bilateral corridors have higher importance for various reasons. In this sense, it is claimed in this thesis that the migratory route between certain parts of Uzbekistan and Turkey is worth analyzing. This will be done by focusing on Ankara. As discussed below, Ankara attracts a significant number of Uzbek migrants, and most interestingly, many of the young male Uzbeks are working in restaurants. The neighborhood of Balgat stands out in this sense with its high concentration of restaurants which serve – among others – the surrounding ministries and public institutions. This location of the gastronomy sector leads to the concentration also of informal labor. The foreign labor among the informally employed ones, however, remains unseen, and this argument will be discussed throughout the thesis.

1.2. Labor Migration

Rising inequalities within and between societies, persistent demand for both high- and low-skilled migrant labor in the segmented labor markets, population growth, lack of opportunities, and oppression and violence in developing countries are some of the factors driving labor migration (Massey, 2012:15; De Haas and Czaika, 2014:286). As explained above, economic globalization which has gained pace with liberalization and deregulation of markets in fact contributed to the increase in labor market segmentation and inequalities within societies (De Haas and Czaika, 2014:286). In this process, thus, markets have played a vital role in perpetuation of international migration (Massey, 2012:22). As a consequence of the restructured and flexible economic system of the “globalized” world, growing number of countries have taken part in global migration systems in which international labor movement with greater size and complexity has become unprecedentedly visible (Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:82; De Haas and Czaika, 2014:286; Massey, 2009:38-39, 2012:20). Highlighting the central argument of *Birds of Passage* (Piore, 1979), Piore (1986:24) stated that “... *large-scale migration between developed and underdeveloped regions has to be understood in terms of the structure of job opportunities in the developed areas and the peculiar motivation of migrant workers...*”.

Studying labor migration requires investigating migrants' needs and motives as well as the demand for migrant labor in receiving countries which either spend efforts to attract foreign high-skilled legal labor or permit irregular employment of low-skilled migrants tacitly (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:240). As a matter of fact, rather than the supply side, it is the demand that mostly determines the terms and conditions of labor migration. As Skeldon (2008:4) puts forward, “*most non-forced migration is demand-driven*”. The demand for migrant labor in global cities arises from the capital accumulation efforts in the economic globalization processes and increases with the formation of segmented labor markets in which migrants concentrate in certain sectors or occupations (Massey, 2009:30; Harvey, 2001:84). In fact, as Massey (2012:28) discusses, there is a significant connection between the demand for migrant labor and the segmentation of labor markets. As long as there is demand for migrant labor in labor markets of countries, relevant legal regulations – with certain deliberate gaps – are put in force either to promote and ease regular employment of some groups of migrants, or to tolerate and overlook irregular employment of some others. As Harvey (2001:14) discusses, nation states intentionally control labor migration in various ways to attract investments and global financial flows. Migrants are thus filtered by the state policies which yield them with certain characteristics (Massey, 2012:18). Since it is the existing legal structure itself which acts in relation to the needs of capital and intentionally canalizes certain groups of migrants to employment opportunities in which they will and can only work without necessary legal permissions, it must be referred as "irregular employment" instead of illegal. That is why irregular employment term will be used in this thesis to denote the situation in which migrants are employed without fulfilling legal requirements and having work permit.

Regularly or irregularly, increasing numbers of people migrate to more developed countries within the aim to work. According to IOM (2021:36), there were approximately 169 million migrant workers worldwide in 2019, which accounted for 62 per cent of then estimated number of international migrants, and 67 per cent of those labor migrants were residing in high-income countries. Those who could find work often send their earnings back to their countries of origin to provide support to the family members who are left behind (Ritzer, 2010:316). Despite being poorly paid in a disadvantaged position; they nevertheless continue to work because the

money they receive makes them and their families better off and have an increase in their living standards. Especially when the migrant belongs to lower-income group, remittance money is generally spent for living essentials such as food and clothing (Sadovskaya, 2006:43). IOM (2021:239) defines remittances as “*financial or in-kind transfers made by migrants directly to families or communities in their countries of origin*”. More often, the families of labor migrants use remittance money for their basic needs such as housing or education. On the other hand, remittances constitute a significant proportion of the economies of the countries sending labor migrants. In fact, the greatest amount of money that developing countries receive from more developed parts of the world is made up of migrant remittances (Ritzer, 2010:316-317). Although there is no evidence showing that the remittance money which generally is used directly for the immediate needs of the receivers leads to economic growth or development, and despite all the debated negative impacts of remittances for senders and receivers (see Ritzer, 2010:318-319), they are still highly and increasingly important both for the families of migrants and the economies of developing countries to improve the conditions and have an impact in reducing poverty (Skeldon, 2008:3-4; De Haas, 2005:1244). Therefore, remittance money should not be ignored when analyzing labor migration and will be part of the analysis in this thesis.

1.2.1. Irregular Migrant Labor

Irregular migrant labor is commonly defined as the un(der)documented labor which lacks official entrance, residence and/or work permits, and in such cases, the laborer who is in a precarious and vulnerable position mostly joins to the informal economy (Öner, 2018:16; Bloch and McKay, 2015:40; İçduygu, 2015:282; Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:83). According to International Organization for Migration, “*undocumented migrant worker is a migrant who is not authorized to enter, to stay and to engage in a remunerated activity in the State of employment pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is party*” (IOM, 2019:224). As can be understood from these definitions, it is the nation states which label migratory movements as regular or irregular in order to implement stricter controls and selection criteria (Öner, 2018:14; Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:85). Düvell (2011:286) states that “*...definitions are usually based on a mix of references to the illegal*

crossing of borders, irregular entry or stay, lack of residence permits, lack of work permits, obligations to leave the territory or violations of expulsion order. Sometimes there is no clear definition of irregular migration, so what is irregular is the result of what is considered or defined as regular. ...Often, no clear distinction is made between informal employment and irregular immigration and the two concepts are conflated". Thus, it is not possible to examine irregular migration without referring to its social, political, and legal construction (Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:86; Düvell, 2011). In any case, irregular migration is a part of the economy as much as regular migration, and both occur as a response to the demands of the labor market.

Regularity or irregularity of migrants' status is indeed highly decisive for their position in the labor market. The discussions on migration, especially of low-skilled and irregular migrants, generally concentrate around its negative impacts on the economies and labor markets of receiving states. Those migrants who are irregularly employed are usually seen as economic burdens not only because hosting states do not receive taxes, but also because their presence replaces certain groups of employees, and thus, contributes to unemployment. However, it should be noted that what replaces certain groups of workers from the employment market is not the arrival of migrants, but the employers themselves who seek a cheaper and more expendable work force. In other words, employers' demand for less-costly employees is the actual reason for displacement of low-skilled workers by migrants in the labor market. Hence, the demand side determines not only the specifics of labor movements as mentioned above, but also their consequences on the existing groups of workers in the labor markets of receiving states.

Another side of the discussion is that irregular labor migration is tolerated by the states because they are considered to fill the gaps in the labor markets. In this view, irregular employment of those migrants is seen not as a burden, but on the very contrary, as drivers of certain sectors which are not preferred by the national work force for various reasons. In such cases, migrant laborers – especially in the irregular status – fill the vacant positions which are not filled by the existing labor force. Yet again, non-preference of national workers or undesired positions actually imply undesired working conditions, lower prospects, greater insecurity and more. Thus, although labor immigration threatens particularly employment of non-migrant low-

skilled workers (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:243), most of the migrants, particularly the ones in irregular status, are also in highly disadvantaged positions as they are overrepresented in low-skilled jobs which typically provide poor pay and poor conditions, and little or no security (Bloch and McKay, 2015:38-39; Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:244, Toksöz et al., 2012:12). The policies of the states thus directly influence the flow and characteristics of migrant populations as well as determine migrants' positions in the labor market (Massey, 2012:18).

1.3. Informal Labor Market for Migrants in Turkey

Especially since 1980s, Turkey has become source country, focal point or transitory zone for international migration flows particularly of irregular migrants (Atasü-Topçuoğlu, 2018:512; Akpınar, 2010:2; Kaşka, 2006:23). Turkey receives migrants with differing motivations from a variety of countries in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe (Ayhan and Erdoğan, 2015:12; Akpınar, 2010:2). Whereas some of them move to Turkey to seek refuge, to work, to reside, to study or to unite with their family, transit migrants use Turkey as a road to pass towards more prosperous European countries (Ayhan and Erdoğan, 2015:12; İçduygu, 2015:280; Akpınar, 2010:2). Also, human trafficking towards Turkey is another way of how migrants forcefully arrive in.

It is generally discussed that irregular migration movements towards Turkey are caused by various factors including geographical proximity between countries of origin and Turkey, the existing informal sector in the Turkish labor market, commercial links between the origin countries and Turkey, and the flexibilities provided to certain countries in the visa regime (Ayhan and Erdoğan, 2015:13; Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:96; Kaşka, 2006:24, Toksöz et al., 2012:21). About the flow of irregular labor migration to Turkey, Akpınar (2010:4-5) believes that it can be explained by context-specific reasons and emphasizes that the policies in Turkey on visa regulations and particularly on economic liberalization in the period after 1980s which has transformed the labor market, were in fact the major drivers for the appearance of informal markets for migrants. Rather than appealing to such factors as geographical proximity, easier access to information, developments in transformation technologies and migrant social networks, Akpınar (2010:4) explains

the increase in the irregular labor migration move to Turkey with the demand for migrant labor at certain sectors of the economy. Similarly, Toksöz et al. (2012:21) stresses that the flexibility in the visa system of Turkey has a significant role in irregular migratory moves together with other factors including possibility of finding job in informal economy. Kaşka (2006:24) also concludes that entering Turkey with a tourist visa constitutes the basis of irregular migration in which arriving "tourist" migrants work during their visa period or even after its expiration. Likewise, Özçürümez and Yetkin (2014:452) points out the fact that the main source of undocumented migrant workers in Turkey is the nationals of the countries for which Turkey has adopted visa exemptions for touristic purposes. Thus, the intersection of visa exemptions for some countries and demands of employers for cheaper and more flexible labor power can indeed be considered as the major determinant of irregular labor migration in Turkey.

In this context, already-existing informal job market in Turkey has been a significant factor drawing migrants' attention to Turkey (Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:96; Akpınar, 2010:5; Toksöz, 2007). As discussed by Akpınar (2010:5-7), the economy policies that have been implemented since 1980s during articulation of Turkey to the global economy impacted labor market deeply and paved the way for informalization of labor. This process of opening to the world market has been accompanied by an economy oriented towards free trade and with labor-opponent practices. In this process, as discussed in various studies, informalization of labor market has become permanent feature of Turkey particularly after 1989. Thus, it can be understood that labor migration flows have been more directed towards Turkey since 1980s not due to the increase in opportunities, but because of increased informalization and changed visa regulations (Ünver, 2015:251; Akpınar, 2010:8).

In recent years, Turkey has implemented fundamental changes in relation to its policies for foreigners and foreign labor due to its geographical and geo-political location as well as its efforts for EU accession (Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:82). Such changes have been accelerated especially after the Syrian crisis that have been continuing since 2011 and affecting Turkey with a mass influx of people escaping from Syria to Turkey. Moreover, there are other groups who ran away from conflicts in their home countries and migrated to Turkey to seek refuge from Afghanistan,

Pakistan, Bangladesh, and some African countries. In addition to all, it also receives labor migration flows from the countries which constituted the former Eastern Bloc such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine (Ayhan and Erdoğan, 2015:12). As an outcome, Turkey has become not only transit zone, but more of a destination country hosting great number of migrants from various places. As Ayhan and Erdoğan (2015:11) assert, the country has gone through a transformation process in which it has become an immigration country as can be seen in the constant increase in net migration indicators.

In line with growing needs, a new law for foreigners – the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP)¹ – has been introduced in 2013 and followed by the establishment of Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) in the following year, which now has become Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) since October 2021. The law consists of three main parts such as foreigners, international protection and institutional structure, and brings an effective and systematic framework to visa and residence permit procedures². Among all the issues regulated in the LFIP, foreigners' entry, residence, travel, deportation and fair trial were framed in line with the European Convention on Establishment³ (Şeker, Sirkeci and Arslan, 2014:109). Moreover, temporary protection has been defined by the LFIP under the article 91, which is a status granted to the Syrians escaping from the conflict in their country. Published in the Official Gazette in 2014, the Directive for Temporary Protection⁴ regulates the scope of the status as well as rights and obligations for the status holders. On the other hand, in 2016, the International Labor Law with the number 6735⁵ was put in practice to define policies for work permits and exemptions to be given to foreigners. The legal consequences including detention, deportation, fines and entry ban for the foreigners working undocumented and falling to irregular status, however, are again defined under the LFIP.

¹ Law on Foreigners and International Protection, 2013, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/lfip>

² PMM, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/yabancilar-ve-uluslararasi-koruma-kanununda-gecici-koruma>

³ European Convention on Establishment, 13.12.1955, <https://rm.coe.int/168006457f>

⁴ Official Gazette, 2014, <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/21.5.20146883.pdf>

⁵ Official Gazette, 2016, <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuatmetin/1.5.6735.pdf>

Looking at the official statistics on irregular migration⁶ in the years when field research of this thesis was conducted, it is possible to see that a total of 454,662 foreigners were apprehended in 2019, which is the highest apprehension ever. In the following year, due to the influences of COVID-19 pandemic, number of apprehended irregular migrants decreased to 122,302 in 2020 and 162,996 in 2021. Of those, 7,478 apprehended irregular migrants had Uzbek nationality in 2019, whereas their numbers were 3,030 in 2020 and 4,819 in 2021. In all these years, apprehended irregular migrants with Uzbek nationality were among the top ten nationalities in apprehension statistics. Foreigners with Uzbek nationality was also among the top ten in statistics regarding the foreigners who are present in Turkey with residence permit – especially with short term residence permit for touristic purposes⁷. In addition, it should be noted that the Uzbek nationals with ordinary passport has visa exemption in Turkey for 90 days in each 180 days⁸.

1.4. Migration from Uzbekistan

Labor migration and remittances are among the major strategies for survival in Central Asia for long time (Sadovskaya, 2006:37-44). Indeed, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)⁹, which was formed after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), shows a common irregular and unregulated pattern in their migration movements (Sadovskaya, 2006:38-40).

Due to both demographic and economic factors, Uzbekistan is one of the major labor exporting countries in the region (Aslan, 2011:3). According to International Labour Organization, labor migration is estimated to be 19% of total employment in Uzbekistan (ILO, 2021:77). Despite having the lowest rate of migration among USSR countries during Soviet times and in the period after the dissolution of USSR, the dramatic decline in living standards with deteriorating economy compelled the

⁶ Retrieved from the Presidency of Migration Management through <https://www.goc.gov.tr/duzensiz-goc-istatistikler>

⁷ Retrieved from the Presidency of Migration Management through <https://www.goc.gov.tr/ikamet-izininleri>

⁸ Retrieved from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/yabancilarin-tabi-oldugu-vize-rejimi.tr.mfa>

⁹ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have been the member states of the CIS since 1991.

people in Uzbekistan to search for ways to cope with the economic reality in the beginning of 2000s (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:53-54; Ilkhamov, 2013:259-260). The country has a significant demographic potential and an excessive labor resource with its quite young population (Maksakova, 2016:82; Sadovskaya, 2006:39). Explained by geographical closeness and cultural similarity as well as by the demand for labor force, many studies indicate that Russia and Kazakhstan have been the most preferred countries of destination for Uzbek people (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016; Maksakova, 2016; Ilkhamov, 2013:260; Sadovskaya, 2006:39). Russia, in particular, attracts the highest number of migrants from all CIS members as it is the most economically developed country among them, and it has been the main source of remittances in Uzbekistan especially since 2000s (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:54; Sadovskaya, 2006:38-40). In recent years, it is possible to see an expansion in the distance of countries of arrival as many young and well-educated Uzbeks prefer the United States, Germany, Belgium, England, and United Arab Emirates, and yet, this expansion is considered to make up only 2% of the overall external migration (Maksakova, 2016). Considering especially Russia and Kazakhstan, transportation, construction, agriculture, trade, industrial enterprises, care work and service sector are among the sectors in which most labor migrants from Uzbekistan work (Maksakova, 2016).

As Ilkhamov (2013:260) states, Uzbekistan has always been a labor surplus country with significant rate of underemployment in the rural parts. However, as claimed by Hojaqızı (2008:306), the post-Soviet Uzbekistan continued the resource allocation model of 'one city centralization' even today, and the government directs vast majority of the investment to the capital city Tashkent, and as a result, Tashkent has more employment opportunities, better medical care and education facilities, and better services of all kinds compared to other provinces, whereas rural parts face with poor conditions and extreme levels of poverty which fuel emigration even within the country in addition to international movements. The remittance money sent by Uzbek migrants, therefore, provides survival for huge number of households in poorer rural regions of Uzbekistan (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:54; Sadovskaya, 2006:43-44). In fact, Uzbekistan appears to be the top remittance receiving country in Central Asia according to IOM (2021:78). With remittance inflows, families can keep on living without having to leave their homeland (Ilkhamov, 2013: 273). With

“the principle of solidarity” as denoted by Ilkhamov (2013:275), Uzbek labor migrants send their earnings to their household members to spend for the interests of the whole family although migrants themselves may not be the direct beneficiary.

Anti-migrant sentiments, structural constraints, widespread xenophobia, and discriminatory attitudes faced by Central Asian migrants in Russia were discussed in a number of studies (Urinboyev, 2021; 2018; 2016; Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016; Alexseev, 2011). Among the largest migrant-recipient countries, Russia hosts significant number of migrants – also from Uzbekistan – which is explained mainly by the increasing demand for cheap migrant labor (Urinboyev, 2018:31) and also by fast-growing economy and decreasing working-age population (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:115). Yet, as stated by Urinboyev (2021:40), “*Russia may be one of the most inhospitable and even dangerous places for migrants...*”. Research has shown that many labor migrants in Russia can only take place in the shadow economy because of their limited language skills and lack of legal permissions (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:54; Kaźmierkiewicz; 2016:60; Urinboyev, 2018:32; 2016:72). Urinboyev (2018:33) asserts that, amidst the clash between the reality of the need for cheap labor and prevailing xenophobia in the society, migrants in Russia are provided only with restrictive legal environment. As he states, “*the immigration laws and policies in Russia remain highly restrictive with potentially severe consequences for migrants’ livelihoods*” (Urinboyev, 2021:140). For instance, employment of migrants in the construction sector where high number of Uzbeks also work is carried out informally and through verbal contracts (Urinboyev, 2016:71-72). The strict immigration rules of Russia cause many migrants to become irregular as soon as they cannot obtain work or residence permit (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:116). Thus, despite being the main destination place, the common experience of labor migrants in Russia seems to be constituted by insecurity, exploitation, discrimination and fear of deportation (Urinboyev, 2018:34).

On the other hand, Kaźmierkiewicz (2016) claims that Uzbek labor migration to Russia and Kazakhstan has been decreased because of economic crisis affecting both countries since 2013 which have reduced the vacant positions in the labor market as well as migrant laborers’ earnings and remittances. The consequent implementation of control instruments aiming to introduce selective migration management and to

reduce certain migration movements with sanctions (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016:58) might be among the main factors directing Uzbek labor migration flows more towards Turkey during the period between 2018 and 2021 when the field research for this thesis was designed and carried out (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:56). Another reason for changing the direction of Uzbek labor migration could be the difference between the visa regimes and securitization policies of Turkey and Russia. About this issue, Bashirov (2018:18) points out the weak securitization of Turkey, and states that *“In the case of Turkey, migration was securitized with the Asylum Regulation of 1994, which contained provisions about ‘national security and public order’. The regulation was a response to growing migration flows from Northern Iraq and Bosnia due to ongoing wars in those countries. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection, adopted in 2013, maintained this emphasis on national security, clearly stipulating that, ‘the area of migration is a dynamic issue... that is deeply related to Turkey’s public order and national security’”*. He then adds that *“Until very recently, the security component of these laws and regulations did not particularly target Central Asian migrants. ...Turkey established a liberal visa regime with the Central Asian states, providing them with visa-free entry and a 90-day period of stay. The policy was more accommodationist than the Russian one because it did not require visitors to register with any government institution during their 90-day stay, thereby promoting the legality of Central Asian migrants”* (Bashirov, 2018:18-19). Russia, in contrast, is evaluated to have a strong securitization both at the institutional and practical levels, and the quotas that has been put for immigrant workers since 2007 as well as the existing restrictive legislation compelled labor migration to use illicit channels. In addition to the national strategy documents endorsing extreme measures to deal with migration, Central Asian migrants are also securitized in Russia through informal practices such as violent attacks by extremist right-wing groups (Bashirov, 2018:16-17).

Despite the existence of various research on the labor migration flows from Central Asia to Russia or Kazakhstan, wave of those flows which have been directed more towards Turkey have not been investigated sufficiently yet (Nurdinova, 2018:119). Together with the above-mentioned visa-free regime implementation of Turkey in 2007 for the people with Uzbekistan nationality, number of Uzbek people started to increase particularly in the Turkish vacation destinations (Nurdinova, 2018:119).

Simultaneously, higher numbers of labor migrants come to Turkey in order to find a job by taking the advantage of the new visa regime which grants visa exemption to the Uzbek nationals with ordinary passports for 90 days in each 180 days (Nurdinova, 2018:119, Akpinar, 2010). As evaluated by Tolkun (2008:214-216), the population density of Uzbeks in Turkey cannot be certainly known as many people with Uzbek origin consider themselves as Turkish and do not feel as a member of a minority group. Moreover, statistics on the foreigners with Uzbek origin have not really been questioned (Tolkun, 2008:216). Given that many Uzbeks stay in Turkey despite having an irregular status, their actual number exceeds the official numbers. Yet, it is possible to estimate the presence of a large group of Uzbek people in Turkey by looking at the remittances sent to Uzbekistan through official bank systems (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:55). Thus, it can be perceived that not only economic factors, but also shared ethnic and cultural roots are the main determinants in the Uzbek migration movements (Ünver, 2015:245-249), and the direction of the flow towards Turkey is worth investigating as it started to show a more distinct pattern.

1.5. COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impacts

At the end of 2019 and towards the beginning of 2020, a highly contagious disease called COVID-19 was detected firstly in China, and then in all countries around the world, and brought about tremendous impacts on the global and national economies as well as on everyday lives of people. As explained by the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 is disease which is caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus called SARS-CoV-2¹⁰. The most common symptoms of the disease which spreads through close contact between people are fever, chills, sore throat together with many other less encountered effects. WHO declared the disease as a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (Sülkü et al., 2021:346) and stated that “over 760 million cases and 6.9 million deaths were recorded since December 2019”, and yet, these numbers only represent the detected cases, whereas

¹⁰ World Health Organization, 9 August 2023, retrieved from [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int)

the actual cases of contagion and death are estimated to be much higher¹¹. During the period of combatting against the pandemic, many strict measures were taken at national as well as global levels, and all governments spent efforts to provide emergency medical response and to mitigate the social and economic impacts.

The first case of COVID-19 in Turkey was declared to be detected on 11 March 2020 (Sülkü et al., 2021:346). From that date onwards, the Government of Turkey had implemented a series of measures which were gradually increased in line with the acceleration in the spread of the disease. Chronologically looking at some of the measures implemented in this process (Sülkü et al., 2021:354-355):

- International flights were temporarily suspended on 27 March 2020;
- Online education methods were initiated for primary, secondary and high school students from 23 March 2020 onwards, and for university students from 26 March 2020 onwards;
- Many curfew decisions were taken for the general or partial population depending on the provinces and age groups on different dates;
- A new period of controlled social life was introduced in the beginning of June 2020.

In addition to all these measures, flexible or distant/home-based working arrangements were made in many workplaces in public and private sectors. Moreover, service types and working hours of many workplaces – including restaurants – were regulated by the government and changed throughout the process in line with the progress taken in the efforts to combat the pandemic. As a result of all, significant social and economic impacts were observed. Interruption or termination of operations in many workplaces in different sectors, financial difficulties and problems in the supply chain were among the negative outcomes of the pandemic (Can, 2021:834). Many enterprises had accumulated debts, whereas some of them went out of business (ILO, 2021:30-31). Service sector, including restaurants and international air transportation, was among the most negatively affected by the curfew decisions and quarantine conditions (Can, 2021:838-849).

¹¹ Ibid.

According to ILO (2021:30-32), recovery of economies and labor markets will be unequal globally, and the gaps opened up by the pandemic will not be easily closed.

Among the Central Asian countries which are on the trade route between China and Europe or the Middle East, the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Kazakhstan in March 2020, which was followed shortly after by Uzbekistan (Gleason and Baizakova, 2020:102). In that period, Uzbekistan was implementing economic reforms aiming to increase the link between the country and other neighboring and non-neighboring countries, which were evaluated as a huge success by the World Bank (Gleason and Baizakova, 2020:103). Similar to the process all over the globe, the appearance of the COVID-19 and its fast spread throughout the Central Asian region in the beginning of 2020, however, entailed preventive measures such as abrupt border closings, containments, travel bans, restrictions for commercial transportation, visa restrictions, closing stores and public institutions, lockdowns, curfews, physical distancing and contact tracing, all of which negatively impacted social and economic life (Gleason and Baizakova, 2020:104). As asserted by IOM (2021:11), “*Many migrants have suffered from disrupted travel plans, loss of income, or illness as a result of the crisis, and may be pushed into vulnerable or exploitative situations*”.

1.6. Aim of the Thesis and the Research Questions

The main purpose of the thesis is to make a thorough analysis on a branch of service sector in a specific location in which irregular employment of migrant labor fulfils the gaps. In particular, it is aimed to understand the dynamics in restaurants of Balgat, Ankara, Turkey which are operating within the participation of irregular migrant labor. Additionally, as it coincided the period when the field research for this thesis was carried out, this thesis concentrates on a highly specific and rare event in making the said analysis, which is a pandemic that affected everyone's lives. In other words, under the unexpected and significant influence of COVID-19 pandemic, it is aimed to examine the restaurant sector in the Balgat district of Ankara which benefits from Uzbek labor as it is a place characterized by a high concentration of restaurants and Uzbek workers. It is argued that the Uzbek migrants in this area are labor migrants who migrate with economic motivations and who seem to be more tolerable

due to such reasons as their cultural, religious, and linguistic closeness. They may turn “invisible” and tolerable for these cultural but also economic reasons as they also fill a gap in the local informal economy.

In order to reach aimed conclusions, this thesis asks the following research questions:

- Why are Uzbek nationals preferred in restaurants?
- How do they decide and migrate to Balgat, Ankara? What is the role of the family-kin-friendship networks?
- Why do Uzbek labor migrants prefer to work in the restaurants in Balgat district of Ankara?
- How did COVID-19 pandemic affect the employment of Uzbek migrants in restaurants?

1.7. Originality of the Thesis

This thesis will make a significant contribution to the existing literature by filling a gap in multiple ways. To begin with, carrying out research in the field of irregular migration is neither easy nor always possible due to the very nature of the phenomenon of irregularity which is made up of ambiguity, vulnerability, and illegality. Considering that research subjects might be hesitant to give consent not to risk their position and to avoid especially from legal consequences of revealing their status, it is highly difficult to establish communication or collect information.

It is difficult to reach out not only to irregular labor migrants, but also to their employers. Both irregular labor migrants and their employers are mostly acquainted with the legal regulations and sanctions, and do not want to risk their positions. As a matter of fact, although there are studies that involve migrants working irregularly in different sectors in Turkey¹², it is hard to find studies including research with

¹² For example: (1) Keough, Leyla J. 2016. *Worker-Mothers on the Margins of Europe: Gender and Migration Between Moldova and Istanbul*. Indiana University Press. (2) Dağdelen, Görkem. 2008.

employers of irregular workers. Employers of the irregular migrants do not usually give consent to take part in any kind of research to avoid sanctions.

However, the service sector analyzed in this thesis includes restaurants in which Uzbek migrants work irregularly in the front position as waiters and thus, in direct communication with the customers. As Balgat is a place where, among others, public institutions including some ministries are located, the clientele in the restaurants in Balgat contains state officials or staff of the law enforcement agencies. That is, a specific group of migrants are employed irregularly to work in front of everyone without necessarily hiding their status. Thus, considering the unique position of both irregularly working migrants and the employers hiring them in the context of restaurants, it was possible to make interviews not only with migrants with irregular status, but also particularly with their employers, which makes this thesis original. Not only irregular migrants, but also their employers took part in the analysis due to the fact that irregular labor was obvious but not clearly sanctioned – which seemed to have lessened employers' fear of receiving sanctions, and that anonymity was guaranteed as well as a level of trust was built from the beginning of the interviews.

Secondly, the field research of this thesis was carried out in a three-year time frame which coincides with the period before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The field research was started with the interviews especially with Uzbek migrants and also with some of the restaurant owners (employers) in October and November 2019 and continued in March 2020, and there was no outbreak of the pandemic during this period. After the pandemic started in Turkey and brought new regulations and curfews to people's lives, it was not possible to carry on the research for certain time. Then, it was continued during September and October 2020 when restaurants

Changing Labour Market Positions and Workplace Interactions of Irregular Moldovan Migrants: The Case of Textile/Clothing Sector in İstanbul, Turkey. MA Thesis, Middle East Technical University. (3) Badalic, Vasja. 2023. Trapped in the Underground Economy: Syrian Refugees in the Informal Labour Market in Turkey. *Third World Quarterly*, 44(5):967-984. (4) Eder, Mine. 2015. Turkey's Neoliberal Transformation and Changing Regime: The Case of Female Migrant Workers. In *Social Transformation and Migration*, pp 133-150, Palgrave Macmillan. (5) Dedeoğlu, Saniye. 2011. Survival of the Excluded: Azerbaijani Immigrant Women's Survival Strategies and Industrial Work in Istanbul. *Migration Letters*, 8(1): 26-33. (6) Erdoğan, Seyhan and Gülay Toksöz. 2013. The Visible Face of Women's Invisible Labour: Domestic Workers in Turkey. *Conditions of Work and Employment Series*, 42, International Labour Office, Geneva.

were allowed to provide only home-delivery or take-away services as part of the measures taken during the pandemic. Afterwards, the last part of the field research was carried out in October 2021 which was in the middle of a process that was called "re-normalization" by the government¹³. In this process, the government started to remove strict COVID-19 measures that had been implemented for some time, and people were allowed to go to the restaurants once again. By carrying out the research before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, it was possible to observe the impacts of COVID-19 on this branch of service sector in which irregular migrant labor fills the gaps. Moreover, whether the preference for Uzbek migrants in restaurants was changed or not during or after the pandemic and whether Uzbek migrants continue to come to Ankara to seek job in restaurants could also be questioned. Hence, the analysis of the research findings that is based on the data collected in a time span of three years is presented in three parts to reveal the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic – which highly contributes to novelty of this thesis as well as to the literature.

Thirdly, there are very few academic studies and comprehensive field research on the Uzbek regular or irregular labor migrants in Turkey as well as on their situation in the Turkish labor market. As a matter of fact, there is still need for reliable data about Central Asian labor movements since many of the existing studies predicated on estimates or generalizations about the labor migration flows (Aslan, 2011:4). The existing scarce studies, on the other hand, focus on the Uzbeks only in Istanbul¹⁴, whereas Ankara has not been analyzed despite hosting a significant number of Uzbek population. In general, the theses and research in the literature examined various groups of migrants that have been regularly or irregularly employed in different job sectors; the presence of Uzbek migrants in Turkish labor market, however, is extremely understudied. Although a number of academic studies analyzed migrants from the former Soviet Union countries in the Central Asia who came to Turkey to work in various low-skilled jobs in domestic work, industrial workshops, agriculture,

¹³ Ministry of Interior. 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/81-il-valiligine-kademeli-normallesme-tedbirleri-genelgesi-gonderildi>

¹⁴ (1) Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022; and (2) Şendur, Ahmet Cihad, 2019, Transnational Religious Mobilization: The Case of Uzbek Immigrants in Istanbul, MA Thesis, Istanbul Şehir University.

bakery or construction sectors and in such jobs as car washing, working at gas station and carpet washing, those studies regarded migrants as a unified group without separating their country of origin. Moreover, whereas some studies made analyses on macro factors behind migration processes on theoretical levels, other research concentrated on different parts of migrants' lives other than economic aspects. There are also theses on the internal migration processes in which migrants have moved from one city of Turkey to another. Furthermore, emigration of people from Turkey especially to European countries is among the most studied thesis topics in migration studies. In addition to all, more recent phenomena such as the movement particularly of Syrian and of Afghan people to seek refuge in neighboring countries have been the most popular topics for academic research in the past years. Both groups, but especially Syrians under temporary protection¹⁵ in Turkey, are examined in a significant number of studies. Yet, labor migration of Uzbeks to Turkey as a historical as well as recent phenomenon has not found much place in the academic sociological research up to now.

As a recent phenomenon since the past couple of years, it is nowadays more possible to see Uzbek migrants in certain parts of Ankara as waiters in restaurants and cafes. In other words, it is observed that Uzbek waiters have somehow become more common in the restaurants of some districts of Ankara in the last four or five years between 2018 and 2022. After such an observation, it is possible to anticipate that a certain type of networking among the Uzbek migrants helps them find job as waiters. So far as the mentioned situation is the outcome of a new line of migrant network or migration system, it is worth investigating.

As a matter of fact, it is highly important to examine Uzbek migrants and their participation in the Turkish labor market for several reasons. In general, they are considered to be of Turkish origin and in smaller numbers, which render them more tolerable and invisible both in society and in the labor market. It will be argued in this thesis that they are "*invisible*" in the sense that local people do not pay attention to the fact that they are foreigners and actually turn a blind eye to them. Hence,

¹⁵ See page 9, Section 1.3 of the thesis.

unlike other groups of migrants with different origins, their physically visible foreign identity does not prevent them from being employed in a position where they will be in constant contact with the locals. To elaborate, they are visible – for instance, visibly different and at the front position in restaurants working as waiters – but they are not seen or perceived as foreigner irregular labor by the people, and in that sense, their migrant identity is invisible.

Another argument in this thesis is that Uzbek migrants' undocumented participation in the Turkish labor market is hardly paid official attention. As will be discussed, auditing of foreign labor in Balgat remains limited, which was expressed in the interviews and could be observed in the fieldwork. As Agarwala (2009:319) states, "*Informal workers' lives were rendered invisible as they were not counted in national labor force surveys, analyzed in labor scholarship, or considered in state labor policies*". This way, it could be argued that Uzbek migrants are also rendered invisible by the Turkish state, and they are not counted in official statistics or considered in labor policies. As analyzed in more detail in the discussion chapter, one reason for this is that they are considered to have common ancestry and closer culture with the people in Turkey. Therefore, they are not perceived as different, alien, other or threat. Also, they learn Turkish more easily and faster than other groups of migrants, and thus, are able to adapt and work in such jobs in the service sector which require communication with natives. Furthermore, the relatively small size of the Uzbek population in Turkey is not perceived as a threat by the society. As a result of all, Uzbek migrants are also "*tolerable*" by the society. In other words, all the mentioned specifics of Uzbek migrants render them more tolerable and more easily acceptable for the society. Most importantly, they are considered as cheap labor, filling an important gap in the segmented labor market of Turkey. It could therefore be argued that the presence of Uzbek migrants in the Turkish labor market served to perpetuate its flexibility and in substituting for the indigenous labor force.

Moreover, Uzbeks work in a variety of jobs mostly in the service sector, and in some cases, fulfill the gaps in the labor market by working in jobs not demanded by Turkish people. In addition, one characteristic of the Uzbek migrants is that they are mostly migrants who are anticipated to move for the sole purpose of working and earning money. That is, contrary to other migrant groups such as asylum seekers and

refugees who escaped from war, crime, violence, civil unrest, natural disasters, the Uzbek migrants studied are labor migrants who move for a specific time period with mainly economic motivations.

To sum up, the field research carried out for this thesis included irregular migrant laborers as well as their employers. Hence, it is aimed in this thesis to conduct field research on irregular migrants and their employers. Therefore, it is possible to state that this thesis aims to make a significant contribution to the literature on labor migration and has an original topic which has not been comprehensively studied before.

1.8. Structure of the Thesis

After the initial parts on introduction and overview of the thesis, the following chapter is comprised of the theories on labor migration which constitute the theoretical foundation to discuss the research findings. Starting with the Dual Labor Migration Theory of M. Piore (1979) as the major theoretical base of this thesis, Chapter 2 also includes other theories which address transnational ties and agency of migrants.

Afterwards, Chapter 3 presents the methodological standpoint of the thesis as well as the method and research tools. Considering the sensitivity of the topic a qualitative and interpretative approach has been preferred. The details on the process of entering the field, contacting and building networks of trust, while being alert to issues such as the researcher's role and positioning oneself as a researcher as well as ethical concerns were presented. Moreover, the specifics of the research sample are described, and strengths, weaknesses and limitations of the field research are frankly explained in the third chapter.

Next, a comprehensive discussion on the research findings with the theoretical background takes place in Chapter 4. The analysis is presented in three main parts, which are before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of the field research which were carried out in different time periods, and their examination with the theories are given accordingly.

Lastly, Chapter 5 includes a general overview of the thesis, conclusive remarks on the analysis of the findings and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The findings obtained from the field research will be examined and the mentioned research questions will be answered within the framework of certain theories which provide foundations for an elaborate discussion. Considering that migration is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon in which many variables interact throughout the different stages of the movement, it is a challenge to conduct a conceptually and empirically sound analysis. To overcome this challenge, it is highly necessary and more efficient to benefit from theories focusing on different levels by combining their analyses in a complimentary fashion. Therefore, the following theories which study migration at macro (structural), mezzo (relational) or micro (agency) levels will be resorted to analyze the thesis topic in all layers.

2.1. Structural: Dual Labor Market Theory

Migration is considered to be an outcome of capitalist permeation to countries in the approach which is termed as *historical-structural* by Castles, De Haas and Miller (2014:32-35). In this stance with Marxist roots, individuals who are under the influence of the structural forces are compelled to migrate due to the global capitalist economic and political system that corrodes the existing local economic structures. It is believed that resources and power – both economic and political – are unequally distributed between countries in this system. Within these unequal terms of trade between countries, cheap labor force is mobilized for the benefit of the wealthy and the resources of poor countries are exploited by the rich, which indeed increases unequal development. As Castles, De Haas and Miller (2014:32) state, “... *migration is therefore seen as deepening uneven development, exploiting the resources of poor countries to make the rich even richer, leading to increased disequilibria*”. Moreover, states are seen as core of the system with their power to control and exploit labor and consequently, lead to migration (Castles, De Haas and Miller,

2014:35). Thus, it is believed in this approach that the social practices reproduce structural inequalities as individuals who migrate forcefully provide cheap and exploitable labor force to serve the interests of the wealthier.

Among the historical-structural theories, Dual Labor Market Theory by Michael Piore (1979) focuses on the demand for high- and low-skilled immigrant labor and explains migration by looking at the demand side together with the structural changes in the economy. In his Book "*Birds of Passage*", Piore (1979) tries to analyze the movement of workers from the less-developed countries to the more-developed parts in North America and Western Europe during 1960s and 1970s. As discussed by Piore (1979), international migration occurs due to the stable demand in advanced economies for both high- and low-skilled workers and can be understood by looking at the structure of job opportunities in them. This demand for migrant labor is inherent in the economic structure of developed countries (Gurieva and Dzhioev, 2015:104; McCollum and Findlay, 2015:429). In this view, not only high-skilled workers, but also low-skilled ones are demanded to perform production tasks in factories and to work in the service sector to carry out such jobs as catering, cleaning, care work, etc. (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:35). In fact, Piore (1979) argued that the upsurge of the service sector has brought about such demand for the low-skilled since the relevant labor cannot be outsourced.

Throughout these processes, as the Dual Labor Market Theory developed by Piore (1979) discusses, labor market segmentation with economic polarization between primary and secondary market happens (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:36). As Sassen (2001) similarly puts forward, a tremendous divergence between the high-paid workers of core sectors including finance and management, and the low-paid workers of the service sector takes place in "global cities". In this structure, primary labor market hosts the workers selected with regards to their human capital, membership of a dominant group due to their ethnicity, gender, legal status, education, etc. (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:36). In contrast, the secondary labor market is occupied by the disadvantaged who lack education and are discriminated against for their gender, race, and irregular legal status (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:36). Hence, the primary labor market is mostly dominated by

the national workforce, whereas the secondary is associated with migrant labor in this dual structure (Piore, 1979; McCollum and Findlay, 2015:429).

Importantly, Piore (1979) highlighted that the secondary labor market has been boosted through neoliberal reforms and deregulation of labor markets in capitalist globalization processes. In his analysis, the secondary sector is characterized by low wages, inferior social status, employment instability, limited opportunities for skill acquisition and lack of opportunities for upward occupational mobility which is filled by those who accept these unpleasant terms because of their marginal commitment (Piore, 1979; 1986:24; Gurieva and Dzhioev, 2015:104; McCollum and Findlay, 2015:429). The majority of the national workers refuse to take part in this sector. Among the nationals who accept to work in the secondary labor market were housewives, students or peasants seeking for supplementary earnings in the past, however, their participation has decreased due to such reasons as expansion of formal education, increase in women's involvement in primary market and decrease in birth rate (Gurieva and Dzhioev, 2015:104; Hagen-Zanker, 2008:7). When those positions are not filled by the nationals, they are filled by migrants who are ready to work for lower wages. In other words, within the decrease in the supply for the existing national low-skilled labor as a consequence of women's entry to the formal labor market and youth's longer attendance to education, low-skilled migrant labor is increasingly relied on by the employers (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:36). In such situations when immigration is necessary to fill the vacant positions, the needs of the market determine policy choices (Kurekova, 2011:9). Thus, as Dual Labor Market Theory puts forward, it is the labor demand that defines and controls the dynamics of migration (Piore, 1979; McCollum and Findlay, 2015:430; Kurekova, 2011:9).

According to Piore (1979; 1986:24-25), migrants arrive at more developed places for temporary periods within the aim of earning money and then turning back to spend their savings. That is, many migrants have an initial aspiration to earn money to use for pre-determined goals such as constructing or renovating houses, purchasing land, etc. (Gurieva and Dzhioev, 2015:104). Since migrants have the intention to stay temporarily, lack of career opportunities, instabilities, or the degrading nature of work in the secondary labor market do not discourage them. In Piore's (1986:25)

words, *“in any case, because they view their stay as temporary, they are undeterred by the lack of career prospects in the secondary labor market or by short-run instability of the employment. Since they are only working temporarily and in any case derive their social status from their roles in their home community, they are also untouched by the menial, even demeaning, character of the work”*. They simply see those jobs in the secondary market as a means of earning money for certain time period, and hence, do not judge them in terms of status or prestige (Gurieva and Dzhioev, 2015:104) because they do not think of themselves as part of the hosting society (Hagen-Zanker, 2008:7). Moreover, Piore (1986:25) states that the jobs in the secondary markets of the developed countries are better paying compared to the ones in migrants’ countries of origin where wages are very low, and adds that *“but even when the wage differential is small, the way in which they live in the industrial area and their peculiar motivation for coming enable them to save a great deal of more of their earnings than they would be able to do at home”*. As he discusses, the employment conditions considered to be degrading by the host community might be more acceptable to migrants compared to the ones in their country of origin, and they are willing to accept them due to their "dual frame of reference" (Piore, 1979; Wright and Clibborn, 2019:7). That is, they evaluate the jobs through a different frame of reference than the standards accepted by the workers of the receiving society, which they have due to comparing the conditions prevailing in their countries of origin. Thus, migrants accept those jobs with lower prospects, and this is what starts the migration process according to Piore (1979; 1986) in *Birds of Passage*. In this analysis, Piore (1979) indeed points out the role of the agency of migrants who accept the terms and conditions of the jobs in the secondary labor market of the host countries which are still more favorable compared to the ones at home (McCollum and Findlay, 2015:430). As long as migrants make decisions by comparing the prevailing wages and conditions in the host and home countries, it is possible to take their agency into analysis.

Piore's (1979) Dual Labor Market Theory also provides an explanation for the reason why migrants are preferred by the employers (Wright and Clibborn, 2019:8). In this system, irregular status of migrants serves for the benefit of employers by providing vulnerable, exploitable, and docile workforce (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:36). Such a workforce is more favorable for employers who often depict

migrants as having a better “work ethic” and select employees based on their stereotypical views about nationalities of migrants (McCullum and Findlay, 2015:431). This explains the over-representation of certain migrant groups in particular labor market segments (Piore, 1979; Wright and Clibborn, 2019:3). In reality, however; the employers’ preference is based on their intention to better control migrant workers and to reduce the labor costs as those migrants do not have many alternative employment options as well as they have lower expectations because of their frame of reference (Wright and Clibborn, 2019:8). Additional to all, restrictive immigration policies contribute to and legitimize the exploitation of migrants with irregular status who cannot access to any kind of rights and services (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:36). Thus, the role of states and the structural circumstances they provide must not be downplayed to fully understand the reality.

2.2. Relational: Theories on Transnational Ties of Migrants

It is also essential to consult theories analyzing transnational ties and networks of migrants to better comprehend the factors perpetuating migration (Massey et al., 1993). As focused on in this group of theories, the feedback and information sharing mechanisms created by the migrants indeed contribute to the perpetuation of migration processes. Through these mechanisms, migrants can overcome many structural constraints such as poverty, social exclusion and legal restrictions (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:39).

2.2.1. Migration Network Theory

Migration Network Theory mainly discusses that migrants establish ties with each other and with their family and friends back home, and this way, create social networks which eventually facilitate more migration (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:40; Massey et al., 1993).

After the migration processes are initiated by the factors explained above, and a certain number of migrants have settled in the host country, those pioneer migrants indeed influence the choices of subsequent migrants (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:40). In migration processes, the pioneer migrants stand up to many difficulties, but they provide information and support of various kinds to the subsequent ones and

thus, reducing the costs and risks of the migration for new migrants (Hagen-Zanker, 2008:17). Hence, as Migration Network Theory claims, the existence of network often influences migration aspirations especially for choosing the destination (Kurekova, 2011:10).

Migrant networks are the interpersonal ties between newly moving migrants, former migrants, and non-migrant acquaintances in the countries of origin and destination based on the relations of kinship, friendship or shared community (Massey et al., 1993:448). Previously settled migrants provide information for the newcomers, help them organize the travel, arrange work and housing, and provide support in adapting to a new place. As such, migrant networks act as location-specific *social capital* which significantly decreases the economic, social and psychological costs of migration (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:40). For Migration Network Theory, all these are provided through the network based on the norm of mutual assistance, solidarity, trust and accountability among migrants (Kim, 2018:271). By reducing the costs of movement, migrant networks contribute to more migration to happen as they impact people's capabilities as well as aspirations to move. As stated by Castles, De Haas and Miller (2014:40), "*thus, besides financial ad human capital, social capital is a third resource affecting people's capability and aspiration to migrate*". In this sense, considering the cost and risk-reducing role of migrant networks, it is possible to conclude that the higher number of people migrating from a certain community, the greater likelihood of more migration in that community (Hagen-Zanker, 2008:17).

2.2.2. Migration Systems Theory

The Migration Systems Theory developed by the geographer Akin Mabogunje (1970) focuses on the importance of flows of information and ideas for shaping migration patterns, and discusses that further migration is encouraged by the favorable information which in the long run causes organized migratory moves – or *migration systems* – from particular places to others (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:43).

According to Mabogunje (1970), migration is a dynamic spatial process (Hagen-Zanker, 2008:8). As he posits, the social, cultural, economic and institutional

conditions both at the sending and receiving areas are notably changed by migration and in this process, a new spatial arrangement is formed in which migration occurs (Mabogunje, 1970; Kurekova, 2011:10). Consequently, as Mabogunje (1970:13) shares the example, it is common to see that a group of migrants from certain villages dominates a craft occupation in North-African cities.

Thus, people, families and communities are connected over space when migration systems have been formed, and these systems promote more migration along these specific spatial pathways (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:43). As a result, a persistent geographical structure is formed due to highly stable exchanges of information and people (Mabogunje, 1970:12). As stated by Castles, De Haas and Miller (2014:42), *“Information is not only instrumental in facilitating migration by increasing people’s migratory capabilities, but new ideas and exposure to new lifestyles conveyed by migrants may also change people’s cultural repertoires, preference and aspirations.”*

An important contribution of Migration Systems Theory is that it stresses the existence of prior links between countries due to various reasons such as colonization, trade, investment, or cultural ties which lead to migratory movements (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:44). That is, as discussed in Migration Systems Theory, one kind of exchange between countries is likely to form other kinds, and that explains the interlinkages between regions despite their distance (Mabogunje, 1970; Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:44). Moreover, migration systems are *“circular, interdependent, complex, and self-modifying”* as Mabogunje (1970:16) expresses. Therefore, as emphasized in Migration Systems Theory, not only migration move itself but also both ends of migration flows must be examined together with all the linkages between them (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:43).

The above-mentioned theories which analyze labor migration at mezzo level by looking at the impacts of relations on the migration process provide an important perspective for understanding the continuation of the migratory movements. After migration flow is initiated for the reasons asserted by the Dual Labor Market Theory (Piore, 1979), its perpetuation in organized ways through specific routes can be understood more elaborately by these theories. Therefore, Migration Network

Theory (Massey et al., 1993) and Migration Systems Theory (Mabogunje, 1970) are consulted in this thesis for examining the findings obtained through relevant questions in the field research.

2.3. Agency: New Economics of Labor Migration

Although migration of persons is highly determined by structural conditions and factors in both sending and receiving ends, micro-level decision processes should also be taken into consideration to elaborate the analysis and to better understand the multifaceted migration process. In a number of discussions, migrants who move to achieve certain goals in response to the impacts of the global economy on national markets are not considered as merely passive actors (Massey, 2012:15). In this sense, the New Economics of Migration Theory (NELM) developed by Oded Stark (1991) in fact challenges the assumptions of the macro-level theories and points out a new level of analysis that does not merely focus on structural or individual independent factors, but rather on mutual interdependence of actors (Kurekova, 2011:7).

The main proposition of the NELM Theory is that it is not the isolated individuals, but the families or households who take the migration decision under the influence of various factors and existing conditions in the sending country (Stark and Bloom, 1985:174; Stark, 1991; Kurekova, 2011:7). Migration is the response of the household to income risks and failures of existing capital, credit and insurance markets, and a risk-minimization and risk-sharing act to protect the household income (Stark, 1991; Kurekova, 2011:8; Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:38). Thus, sending one or more household members to another country to work is the decision made by all members of the household as a “*calculated strategy*” for the wellbeing of the family (Stark and Bloom, 1985:175; Hagen-Zanker, 2008:12). In this process, the costs of migration are shared between the household members to diversify the income sources for the “coinsurance” of all (Hagen-Zanker, 2008:14). NELM Theory highlights the circular movement of earnings since the member who is chosen by the family to migrate sends earnings back to home in the form of remittances (Massey, 2012:16).

NELM Theory regards remittances as an important concept for household interconnectedness and risk-aversion method. The remitted money makes the

household less vulnerable to any kinds of risks, and this risk-reducing motive provides explanation for migratory movements even in the absence of income differentials (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:38). Moreover, remittance money is evaluated as a resource for investment in economic activities to improve the welfare of household in the NELM Theory (ibid). In fact, it is the only theory that establishes the link between migration decision and its consequences by including the remittances into analysis (Hagen-Zanker, 2008:13).

Furthermore, by comparing two villages, Stark (1991:145) adds the concept of relative deprivation felt by the household into the discussion. Hence, for NELM Theory, migration happens as a response to the relative deprivation within sending communities which provides a powerful incentive to migrate (Stark, 2003:11; Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:38). Although it might be expected for households with the lowest position in the income distribution to migrate more often, Stark (1991) reminds that the most deprived households need bare survival more urgently and might not be able to afford migration. Eventually, he points out that the existence of a greater unequal income distribution will lead to higher migration (Hagen-Zanker, 2008:13).

Starting from the structural level to relational and individual, the above-mentioned theories are used in this thesis to lay a ground for an elaborate discussion on migration which is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. As long as micro, mezzo and macro level variables interact throughout the whole process, it is a challenge to analyze migration conceptually and empirically. Therefore, it is very important and more efficient to benefit from the theories focusing on differing levels by combining their analyses in a complimentary fashion. Nevertheless, despite resorting to all the mentioned theories in a holistic way to examine the thesis topic, the main basis for discussion is constituted by the Dual Labor Market Theory by Piore (1979) because it explains labor migration in a much more comprehensive and sophisticated way as it takes structural determinants, the demand side, and the agency of migrants with their dual frames of reference into account. This way, Piore (1979) provides a macro level approach which does not ignore the importance of micro level factors. As can be seen in the discussions shared in the beginning of this section, it is believed that the dynamics of the restaurants which benefit from the

irregular employment of Uzbek migrants can be best analyzed with the Dual Labor Market Theory (Piore, 1979).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1. Methodological Standpoint

In line with the critical social science approach, this thesis pursues critical methodology in constituting the research design, choosing appropriate method and preparing research tools. In critical approach, the structural order that exists independently of perceptions can only be accessed through subjective experiences (Iosifides in Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018:99; Edwards and Holland, 2013:22). This way, the researchers aim at accessing and understanding the hidden structural influences of the external material and social world which underlie people's experiences (Edwards and Holland, 2013:22). In this framework, qualitative research seeks for deeper assessment of varying and interacting causes while equal emphasis is put on the individual meaning-making processes as well as on the surrounding material and societal conditions (Iosifides in Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018:100). Having in mind the hidden influence of the larger context – which is globalization, global capitalist order and the economic restructuration practices caused by them in this case – this thesis will try to demystify the situation of a sector in the Turkish labor market in which irregular migrant labor fills the gap.

With a critical epistemological approach, qualitative methodology, and in line with it, a qualitative research method was employed in this thesis. As Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz (2018:3) states, the reality that is under qualitative inquiry is always critically assessed. In qualitative methodology, moreover, the research is interactional in which both the interviewees and the interviewer learn (Edwards and Holland, 2013:3-4). This way, carrying out the research itself is highly didactic in the sense that the interviewer learns how to obtain necessary data during the interactional

exchange in given circumstances. The field research that was conducted for this thesis was also regarded in this sense, and the environment in which research was carried out and the limitations within were also considered as the data to be examined.

As understood from the relevant literature, migration studies have been refined with qualitative research in which multi-layered and complex migration dynamics can be studied with more in-depth and richer data collection and analysis (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018:2). The complexity of the topics of migration studies necessitates profound contextual examination and it is believed that qualitative methodology provides better tools for exploring internal diversities and their consequences. Although such contextual elements as demographic and socio-economic indicators, rights accompanying citizenship, legal status, etc. can be quantitatively measured, the complexity that arises from the interaction of all the variables can be more clearly analyzed with a qualitative approach (King in Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018:36).

3.2. Research Method

Qualitative interviews constituted the main research tool of the thesis. As argued by Olean Fedyuk and Violetta Zentai (in Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018:171) "*the interview has great potential to unravel the multi-layered links of global connectivity when applied with dynamic reflection on the contextual connections constituting the very core of migration research, the role of the researcher and the interviews, and the power of knowledge production*". As a matter of fact, it is the key method especially for inquiring migrants with irregular status (Fedyuk and Zentai in Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018:176). In qualitative research, certain ideas are refined, and concepts are created during data collection and analysis (Neuman, 2014:209). After data collection, the researcher develops new concepts, formulates definitions, and reveals hidden connections while analyzing so that theoretical relationships can be established eventually (Neuman, 2014:209). Regarding the collection of data from the field for this thesis, qualitative field research was carried out by employing face-to-face in-depth interview method. After carrying out observations to determine the specific location to focus, frequent field visits were made. Open-ended and semi-structured questions were asked to interviewees after receiving their consent by

providing clear information about my identity and the aim of the thesis, building up trust relations and eliminating possible ethical concerns.

In typical manner as in semi-structured qualitative interviews, a list of questions was prepared to use during research, but a certain degree of flexibility was allowed in how and when questions were asked (Edwards and Holland, 2013:29). A more flexible outline was provided in semi-structured interviews, which were simultaneously guided by the specific topic of analysis (Fedyuk and Zentai in Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018:173). By doing so, it was aimed to give more space for interviewees to give responses on their own terms while ensuring some structure for comparing the collected data.

The in-depth interviews with Uzbek employees and their employers were conducted initially in October and November 2019, which was the period before COVID-19 pandemic had started. Some more was carried out also in March 2020 after first cases of COVID-19 were seen in Turkey but there was no curfew yet. In this period, eight Uzbek employees and five employers were interviewed in total. Afterwards, it was only possible to conduct interviews again in September and October 2020. That was the period in which restaurants were open only for home delivery or take-away services without customers sitting in. In this process, six workplaces were visited to ask questions about the situation during the pandemic and one in-depth interview with an employer was carried out. Finally, the same restaurants were visited once again in October 2021 after strict measures and curfews were removed in the "re-normalization" period and people started to go to restaurants again. This time, five employers were interviewed, whereas conducting interviews was not accepted in two restaurants¹⁶. Hence, the data collection can be divided into three specific periods, namely before the pandemic (October-November 2019 and March 2020), during the pandemic (September-October 2020) and after the pandemic (October 2021). Time periods and information on the in-depth interviews can be seen in Table 1:

¹⁶ Declining to have the interview was found meaningful showing the change in the approach in line with the new circumstances. Therefore, they will be included in the analysis which is presented in the discussion section of this thesis.

Table 1. Time periods and the interviews

COVID-19 PANDEMIC	TIME	INTERVIEWS
Before	October –November 2019 March 2020	8 Uzbek employees 5 employers
During (only home-delivery or take-away services)	September – October 2020	6 restaurants visited 1 employer
After (re-normalization period)	October 2021	5 employers 2 employers did not accept

In the first round of the in-depth interviews before COVID-19 period, the ones with the employers lasted for approximately 15-20 minutes, whereas the interviews with Uzbek employees took about 40-45 minutes. In all of them, observation notes to remember the external factors and the circumstances in which the interview took place were taken before leaving the research setting.

The interview questions that were asked to Uzbek employees and the employers are shared in the following sections:

3.2.1. Interview Questions for Uzbek Labor Migrants¹⁷

1. Sex¹⁸
2. How old are you?
3. What is your nationality?
4. What is the most recent level of education that you completed?
5. Which languages can you speak?
6. Turkish (good – average – weak)¹⁹
7. What is your current occupation? (or what do you do in this restaurant?)
8. Where do you reside? (Province, district)

¹⁷ The questions were originally prepared and asked in Turkish.

¹⁸ Observed without asking.

¹⁹ Not asked, but evaluated by observing the interviewee's responses to the questions.

9. In what kind of a place do you live?
10. How do you pay rent? Who is the guarantor? Is the rental contract signed with one person when they share the apartment?
11. What is your marital status?
12. (If married) What is your spouse's nationality?
13. (If married) Do you have child(ren)? How many? Their ages?
14. (If married) Where is your spouse and the child(ren)? Does your child(ren) go to school? Does your spouse work?
15. (If married) Why are (not) your spouse and the child(ren) here?
16. (If married) How do you communicate with your spouse and child(ren) if they are away? Can you meet? How often?
17. Where is your family (parents and siblings)? If in Uzbekistan, how do you communicate?
18. Do you send money to your family/anyone? How much do you send? For what purpose is this money being used?
19. When and how did you arrive in Turkey?
20. Did you receive support while coming to Turkey?
21. Why did you choose to come to Turkey? Why did you come to Ankara?
22. Are there relatives/acquaintances from Uzbekistan in Turkey/Ankara?
23. Are there Turkish friends/acquaintances?
24. Was it easy to learn Turkish? Do you speak Turkish with people?
25. Are you happy in Turkey/Ankara? Do you consider going to another place?
26. Do you know others who went to other countries? Where are they? What are they doing?
27. How was your life in Uzbekistan? What kind of challenges do you have there?
28. Where did you come from Uzbekistan? Village/city??
29. Were you working in Uzbekistan before migrating? What was your occupation?
30. Did your education and occupation match back then in Uzbekistan?
31. Were/are there any other persons working in the family?
32. Do you consider returning?
33. For how much longer do you plan to stay in Turkey?

34. When was the last time you went to Uzbekistan and for what reason? Do you plan to go to Uzbekistan for short term?
35. Does Uzbek government provide support when going abroad to work?
36. How did you find your current job? How long time it took to find this job?
37. For how long have you been doing this job?
38. How are the wages and working conditions? For how long and how do you work? Weekend? Nights? Do you have off-day(s)?
39. What do you do in your spare time/off-day(s)?
40. Did you ever change your job? What was your previous job? For how long did you work there?
41. What happens if you do the exact same job in Uzbekistan?
42. Do you have a work permit? (Do you have insurance?)
43. Are there differences with other employees? (wage, working hours, the amount of the job, tips)
44. Do you want to change your job? Is your job difficult?
45. What kind of difficulties and challenges do you have in your work?
46. How is your relationship with the employer? How is your relationship with other employees?
47. Are there other Uzbeks around that you know?
48. Are those Uzbeks alone or with family? Male or female?
49. Where do they live?
50. What job do they do?
51. Why did they leave Uzbekistan in your opinion?
52. Do you know someone that I can have an interview with? Where does this person work?

3.2.2. Interview Questions for Employers²⁰

1. Sex²¹
-

²⁰ The questions were originally prepared and asked in Turkish.

2. How old are you?
3. Information on the workplace²²
4. Location of the workplace²³
5. How many employees are there in total?
6. How many Uzbek employees are there?
7. Is there any other foreign employee? If yes, what is her/his nationality?
8. Where did you find the Uzbek employee? (Is there an intermediary? Or was it direct application?)
9. How long have been Uzbek employee(s) working?
10. Why is there an Uzbek employee to work? What are the advantages?
11. Are you content with the Uzbek employee?
12. Who was working in the same position before?
13. Do you consider hiring other Uzbek employee(s)?
14. Are there problems/challenges?
15. Are there inspections? Have you ever had problems on this matter?

Questions for Employers after COVID-19²⁴

1. How did the restaurant manage the COVID-19 process?
2. Did other migrant group(s) take the place of Uzbeks?
3. Instead of leaving Uzbek(s), do you prefer other migrant(s) or person(s) with Turkish nationality?
4. Are there any other migrant(s) working there at the moment? Why is that migrant preferred? What are the advantages?
5. Do you know where the previous migrant employees are who worked at that restaurant?
6. Are there still migrants who come to ask for a job? If yes, from which nationality?

²¹ Observed without asking.

²² Observed without asking.

²³ Observed without asking.

²⁴ The questions were originally prepared and asked in Turkish.

7. Do you have a plan to hire migrants such as Uzbeks again in the upcoming period?
8. Do you know other sectors in which migrants work?

3.3. Specifics of the Interviewees

Face-to-face in-depth interviews with employees and employers were conducted to better understand the demand for migrant labor as well as the situation of the migrants. Both groups of interviewees were indeed difficult to reach and to convince and gain consent for an interview because they were hesitant not to take any risks. The fact that migrants work right in front of all people at the restaurants despite being employed irregularly creates a specific situation particular to the place of the research, as will be discussed below.

In social research, the principle is to learn more by making observations from multiple perspectives (Neuman, 2014:166). Therefore, another part of the qualitative field research also included Uzbek migrants who migrated to Ankara for the sole purpose of working and earning money. In this specific case, the Uzbek migrants who were interviewed during the field research of this thesis were in fact irregular migrants who work without legal work permit. That is, regardless of continuation or expiration of their visa, none of the Uzbek migrants who were working as busboys at the restaurants had work permit, therefore, in an irregular status with serious legal consequences. Consequently, and not surprisingly, they were hesitant to participate in the interview. However, because the initial explanation and introduction were made to their employers and they were allowed by their employers to participate in the interview, it was possible to talk to them.

Cultural sensitivity is highly important in the field research for understanding and respecting the risks and sensitivities of the research subjects (Bloch and McKay, 2015:42). The field research in this thesis required even greater sensitivity considering that the research subjects – both irregularly employed migrants and their employers – are in a vulnerable situation as they are not fulfilling legal requirements. More importantly, having an irregular status for migrants puts them in a highly fragile position considering that they are open to any kind of exploitation and risks.

Therefore, the field research was carried out with utmost attention and “give-no-harm” principle.

Verbal consent was obtained from all the interviewees – both from employers and Uzbek employees – after explaining the purpose of the study and ensuring confidentiality. The notes were written by hand in front of the respondents since it was not possible to use voice recording or any other method due to vulnerabilities brought about by the irregular position of both employers and the employees. The questionnaire and the purpose of the research was explained to and approved by the Middle East Technical University Human Subjects Ethics Committee prior to conducting the field research.

It should be highlighted that being able to communicate in the same language with research subjects results in better data with richer content as it prevents possible distortions and loss of information caused by translation. By doing so, potential distortion of the collected data during interpretation (Bloch and McKay, 2015:42) is significantly prevented. With this stance, in-depth interviews were conducted with research subjects – both with employers and Uzbek employees – in Turkish without translation/interpretation.

3.3.1. Description of the Field

The restaurants in which in-depth interviews with employers and Uzbek employees were conducted take place in one of the biggest streets (boulevards) of Balgat district in Ankara. This part of the district is a highly central place with a lot of shops, restaurants, apartment buildings, schools and many other types of workplaces. It mostly has a high traffic density and is often surrounded by a high number of people in daytime who are there for various purposes, and consequently, the restaurants are generally busy with a lot of customers – except for the COVID-19 period. Additionally, what is interesting about the area is that many restaurants in this district have migrant employees as it was understood from the field visits.

As a matter of fact, Balgat district of Ankara has certain unique features that are worth mentioning to better explain the Uzbek labor migrant concentration in its restaurants. The district can be described as a middle and lower-middle income

neighborhood considering its residents as well as visitors. Moreover, in addition to the police station located on the main boulevard of the district, Balgat is also surrounded by many public offices and ministries from which state officials often visit the neighborhood, for example, to have their lunch. In line with the tastes and consumption habits of middle and lower-middle class people with more conservative lifestyles, the neighborhood hosts a significant number of restaurants which mainly serve more traditional food such as kebab or künefe²⁵. Regarding the signs of conservative lifestyle, the restaurants in Balgat commonly have, for instance, alcohol-free menus and an additional room for praying (Akçaoğlu, 2017:102). Also, foreign migrant entrepreneurship can be observed in Ankara, most importantly among the Syrian population. However, they hold a different legal status from the irregular Uzbek migrants who arrive as tourists and work informally. An interesting observation is that there are no Syrian-owned restaurants in Balgat. Furthermore, such places as clubs, bars, sushi restaurants or places targeting the population with “hipster” lifestyles which might be more seen in high-income neighborhoods or neighborhoods hosting residents with different cultural backgrounds are not present in the district. Lastly, the restaurants on the main boulevard of Balgat which were visited during the field research showed a salient difference in day and night times. Despite being highly crowded during the day, the streets are quite empty at night. To cut it short, the main boulevard of Balgat is characterized by restaurants serving traditional food, the design of the restaurants is made to serve large numbers of customers in a short period of time, most importantly, during the rush hours of lunchtime and in the evening hours. The tables are relatively large, disposable table clothes (sets) are used. Typically, no alcohol is served, and separate sections for families are offered. From the observations made, the restaurant decorations as well fit to a conservative Turkish lifestyle.

After initial talks with the restaurant owners (employer) in which I introduced myself and shared the purpose of the study to ask for consent, in-depth interviews both with the employers and the Uzbek waiters were conducted inside the restaurants by taking a seat at one of the tables together. In all cases, the employers showed the spot to

²⁵ A traditional sweet dish in Turkey.

conduct the interview and chose a table that was not close to the customers present in the restaurant. In other words, the tables to sit during the interviews were selected so that the interviews could be done in private without anyone else hearing. Nevertheless, since they are busy places, there were interruptions during both interviews for work-related questions and issues.

It is found out from the interviews that on average, one out of five employees in the restaurants was migrant, with either Uzbek or Afghan nationality. Statistical information which was collected in the first round of interviews carried out before the pandemic on the total number of employees and the number of migrants can be seen in the Table 2:

Table 2. Number of employees and migrants in restaurants

Restaurants	Total number of employees	Number of migrant employees
Restaurant A	26	5 Uzbeks
Restaurant B	10	2 Uzbeks
Restaurant C	35	1 Uzbek 3 Afghans
Restaurant D	42	8 Uzbeks 6 Afghans
Restaurant E	18	2 Uzbeks
Restaurant F	10	1 Uzbek 1 Afghan

3.3.2. Uzbek Labor Migrants

A total of eight Uzbek migrants were interviewed during the period before COVID-19 pandemic. Similar to the observation in a number of restaurants in different parts of Ankara, all of the Uzbek migrants interviewed for this thesis were males. The majority of them were in their early twenties, whereas two of them were over their

thirties (32 and 40 years old). Thus, it is understood that the age range among the Uzbek labor migrants is relatively narrow. Moreover, most of them (six out of eight) were not married. Thus, mostly young, male and unmarried Uzbek population constitutes the target of the research in this thesis.

Another common trait of all the interviewed Uzbek migrants was their education level. Except one of them, all Uzbeks stated that they are graduated from "Kollec" which is a Technical College – similar to technical high schools in Turkey. It is learnt that *"graduates of kollec or Tehnikums receive a Junior Specialist Diploma equal to a Certificate of Complete Secondary Education. Tehnikums educate and train blue-collar workers of middle and higher qualification levels, as well as some white-collar professions who can be first level supervisors in the technical fields. Young people can enter Tehnikum after the ninth or eleventh grade, and depending on the profession, the program duration varies from one and a half to four years"*²⁶.

All the Uzbek interviewees said that they learned Turkish after they had arrived in Turkey. At first, as they informed, their friends help them with translation. Actually, one interviewee told that he immediately started working in the restaurant without knowing Turkish but his close friend who was working at the same place was with him and made translations for him. They all stated that they could learn Turkish in 2-3 months due to the resemblance between Uzbek and Turkish languages, but their level of Turkish differed from one to another as observed during the interviews. Whereas three of the interviewees could speak Turkish sufficiently well, Turkish speaking skills of three others were average and the level of the remaining two was rather weak. Surely, this evaluation refers to the spoken language, but not to more general comprehension or writing skills. Moreover, all of them stated that they know Russian a little bit, they were taught in school, and they can understand some but cannot speak. As one interviewee informed, students take Russian language courses in schools until the ninth grade. However, all interviewees said that they know Russian just a little.

²⁶ Retrieved from <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1652/Uzbekistan-SECONDARY-EDUCATION.html>

Six out of eight interviewed Uzbek migrants expressed that they are from Kashkadarya region of Uzbekistan, which is in the southern part of the country in the border of Turkmenistan. One of the remaining two was from Samarkand – the neighboring region of Kashkadarya – and the other was from Andijan region which is the most east part of Uzbekistan in the border of Kyrgyzstan. In this context, it can be said that they are mostly from the very similar parts of Uzbekistan. Additionally, half of them shared that they live in a village, whereas the other half was living in cities in Uzbekistan. It is also understood that the interviewed Uzbek migrants arrived in Turkey less than two years ago on average. The longest time period that one of the interviewees stated to have spent in Turkey was four years and the shortest was six months. Moreover, they plan to return to Uzbekistan after working for one more year on average. Their return decision is usually fixed to a specific purpose, e.g. family expenses at home.

Regarding their place of residence in Ankara, it is found that all of them live in rented apartments which they share with other male Uzbek labor migrants. They share their flat on average with four or five others. Three interviewees live far from their workplaces in Balgat (in Cebeçi, Kurtuluş, Dikmen), whereas the other five live in the same neighborhood or very close (Çukurambar, Yüzüncü Yıl). It is understood that they were generally living in a rented and shared apartment regardless of the location and depending on the price of rent.

When they were asked about the jobs that they carried out back in Uzbekistan before coming to Ankara, three out of eight stated that they had worked in the construction sector in Uzbekistan. The remaining interviewees had been working in watermelon farms, restaurants, warehouse of car factory, market/bazaar, and helping family business in bran trade before coming to Ankara. Thus, it is found out that they all were employed in low-skilled jobs prior to migration. Additionally, none of the interviewees mentioned whether they remained unemployed for some time or not.

3.3.3. Restaurant Owners: The Employers

As explained above, in-depth interviews were carried out with the restaurant owners who are employers of the Uzbek migrants. Five employers were interviewed before the COVID-19 pandemic, and one was interviewed during the pandemic when

restaurants were closed for serving inside them. The same tool with semi-structured questions was used for those 6 interviews. Afterwards, during the re-normalization period, interviews with five employers were carried out, but this time with a different and shorter set of questions inquiring about the impacts of the pandemic. In this round, one of the initially interviewed six employers did not accept the interview, whereas one of the restaurants was completely closed. Instead of them, two more restaurants were visited within the observation that there were migrant employees with possibly Uzbek nationality; however, interviewing for pandemic-related consequences was consented only by one of the employers. Such changes in employers' attitude and consent compared to the first round of interviews which was conducted before the pandemic are perceived as the consequences of negative experiences and economic pressures cause by the pandemic and all the containment measures implemented in that process.

All the restaurant owners were males who were native speakers of Turkish. The average age of the interviewed employers was 43. Regarding the general attitude, they easily gave consent for carrying out interviews with themselves and their Uzbek employees, and even ordered tea or food as a sign of hospitality and support for a student. Moreover, another observation which was common for all employers was that they were quite confident and open in talking about their employees with different origins (Uzbek or Afghan. Yet, it remains questionable how much was omitted in certain answers. In fact, one employer expressed that he has only one Uzbek employee although it was possible to see the presence of at least three. Moreover, the same employer said that his Uzbek employee has arrived in Ankara a couple of months ago, whereas it is learnt in the interview with the mentioned Uzbek employee that it has been 14 months since he came.

3.4. Strengths and Limitations

First and foremost, due to the nature of the employed research method, it is inherently not possible to repeat qualitative interviews since they are conducted in a highly specific context, time and location (Edwards and Holland, 2013:92). Moreover, possible impact of power relations at social and individual levels must be taken into consideration to some degree (Edwards and Holland, 2013:92).

Furthermore, although conducting the interviews inside the restaurants allowed for additional observation on the circumstances and dynamics of the workplaces, it also brought about one of the biggest limitations due to frequent interruptions during the interviews. The interviews with employers were stopped a couple of times by work-related issues or questions coming from other employees.

On the other hand, the interruptions during the interviews with Uzbek waiters happened not only because of the questions on how much time was still needed to finish the interview and when they will return back to work, but also because of the employers' presence and comments in some interviews. In other words, in some interviews with the Uzbek employees, the employer was around to rush the interview and intervene if necessary. In one of the interviews, furthermore, the employer sat together and never left until the end of the interview with the Uzbek waiter. In such cases, the quality and the validity of the responses might be decreased. As a solution, the order of the questions was changed and certain questions which Uzbek migrants might be hesitant to answer in the presence of their employer were not asked until there is an appropriate environment. More importantly, it was taken care not to offend the interviewees or put them in an uncomfortable situation as well as to prevent that the interview would not result in negative consequences.

In addition, although carrying out field research over a relatively long time span covering almost 3 years was advantageous in understanding the changes and persistent patterns in the field, there were two major factors that brought about significant external impacts on the research. First of these was the break-out of the COVID-19 pandemic which was a unique event that abruptly changed the research process and the design of this thesis. As an unexpected outcome, the need to include in the analysis the effects of COVID-19 on the sector emerged. In addition to this, various measures taken against the pandemic by the government, including curfews, posed an obstacle to reaching out to more interviewees.

Secondly, the economy of Turkey has changed substantially in this process and the exchange rate between Turkish Lira and Dollar has dramatically differed²⁷. The extreme increase in the exchange rate is indeed an important factor that must be taken into consideration because of the fact that Uzbek migrants do exchange their earnings given in Turkish Liras into US Dollars before sending their remittance back to their relatives/acquaintances in Uzbekistan. In this sense, the change in the exchange rate might have had some consequences such as turning the direction of Uzbek labor migration from Turkey to other countries. Thus, both the pandemic and the sharp increase in the exchange rate should be considered as factors impacting Uzbek labor migration to and from Turkey.

Still, the originality of this fieldwork lies in the fact that it is contributing to a better understanding of irregular Uzbek labor migration in a specific sector of the economy. A further contribution has to be seen in the fact that it provides a detailed analysis of place-specific data. Local specificities often get lost in structural perspectives, though the agency dimension is stressed in this study, but also the social construction of the places the migrants work and the social networks in which they engage are considered to be important for a better comprehension on how a segmented labor market is lived and experienced in a neighborhood in Ankara. Therefore, the data obtained from the field research contains valuable details and can provide important insights to understand the dynamics of a branch of service sector which irregularly benefits from migrant labor.

²⁷ US Dollar and Turkish Lira exchange rate was approximately 5.76 in the end of October 2019; 7.56 in March 2020; 7.68 in the end of September 2020; and 9.53 in October 2021.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE FIELDWORK FINDINGS

Within the aim to analyze the dynamics in the restaurants of Balgat district in Ankara which benefit from labor power of the irregularly employed Uzbek migrants, this thesis questions the reasons for preference of Uzbek migrants in those restaurants and the reasons for Uzbek migrants to work in restaurants, and the impacts of COVID-19 in all these processes. Moreover, how Uzbek migrants decide and migrate to Turkey and the role of the migrant networks are also questioned in this thesis. In line with the arguments of Dual Labor Market Theory by Michael Piore (1979), it is believed that the demand for migrant labor in the sector and the existing structure of job opportunities are the main determinants for the migration decisions and irregular employment of Uzbeks in restaurants. This will be discussed together with the restrictions and flexibilities defined by the state in relation to foreign labor and the existing residence, work permit and visa regime in Turkey. As Piore (1979) further posits, the employers benefit from the irregular statuses of migrants who provide a vulnerable, exploitable, and enduring work force, and this leads to over-representation of certain migrant groups in specific labor market segments similar to the case of Uzbek busboys working in restaurants. Thus, the data collected from the field research from Uzbek migrants and the restaurant owners before, during and after the pandemic is discussed in the following sections within the framework of Dual Labor Market Theory (Piore, 1979) and in the light of Migration Network Theory (Massey et al., 1993), Migration Systems Theory (Mabogunje, 1970) and NELM Theory (Stark, 1991):

4.1. Before COVID-19 Pandemic

4.1.1. Uzbek Migrants: Working in Restaurants in Balgat

As explained in the methodology section, a total of eight male migrants with Uzbek nationality who work in restaurants in Ankara were interviewed in October-November 2019 and March 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic. The collected data showed that all are young adult males mostly in their early twenties who graduated from *kollec* which is equivalent of technical intermediate or high school. Despite differences in their Turkish speaking skills, all were capable to provide answers to the questions asked during the interviews which lasted on average for 40 minutes. On average, the interviewed Uzbeks have arrived in Ankara less than two years ago with the aim to work for one more year before going back to Uzbekistan. In Ankara, they reside in rented apartments which they share with 4-5 other labor migrants with Uzbek nationality.

As a matter of fact, it is understood from the field research that they were all working as “*busboy*”²⁸ – the persons who work in a restaurant for removing dirty dishes, bringing clean ones, filling water glasses, etc²⁹. That means, they were all employed in a lower position than waiters to do the spadework.

4.1.1.1. The Interviewed Uzbek Busboys: “In Turkey it is restaurants, in Russia construction”

- **The Uzbek Busboy-1:**

The first of the interviewed busboys with Uzbek nationality was working in a kebab restaurant in Balgat and answered the questions for more than 30 minutes until he was insistently called back to work. The respondent was a 23-year-old male who graduated from high school in which he studied preschool education. As he stated, he has arrived in Ankara 2 years ago and did not know Turkish language prior to coming. He has learnt Turkish in his first workplace where he received his friend’s translation support. In other words, he came to Ankara, started to work in a restaurant without knowing Turkish and he was supported by a friend who made translation for him. After a while, as he expressed, he quickly got used to the

²⁸ In Turkish: "komi".

²⁹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/tr/s%C3%B6zl%C3%BCk/ingilizce/busboy>

language because Uzbek language and Turkish are quite similar in his opinion. When his Russian language skills were asked, he shared that he received Russian language education in school until the 9th grade; however, he is not able to speak Russian, but he can understand. He also added that English language classes are provided at school, but he said that he forgot all of it.

The interviewee stated that he is from a small village in Kashkadarya province of Uzbekistan and described his hometown in these words: “*It is a small village, a place like Çorum*”³⁰. His family deals with stockbreeding and farming. More specifically, his parents breed cows and plant potatoes in their field. When he graduated from high school, as he shared, he worked in the construction sector for a period, and then came to Turkey on a call from his friend. As he expressed, “*There were friends here (in Ankara), I came because I will quickly get used to here*”³¹.

The respondent Uzbek migrant said that he was living in an apartment building in Cebeci – which is relatively far from Balgat where his workplace is located – and he shared this place with four other Uzbeks. As he added, the rents in Cebeci are cheaper, and 4 or 5 people are living together in the same apartment but his flatmates change from time to time because they give their place to the newcomers most importantly if the newcomer person cannot speak Turkish. In his terms, “*We leave our home to them if they do not have Turkish*”³². He was also given a place like that when he first arrived. Furthermore, he also stressed that it is very difficult to find a new flat because house-owners ask for a guarantor. Thus, it is understood that the network of Uzbek migrants provides a highly significant support most importantly to the newly arriving Uzbeks. Early-migrants provide translation support, shelter, and also help newcomers find a job. They even give their own place to live despite the difficulties in finding a new one. As the interviewed busboy added, he was searching in Internet for a new apartment which would be closer to his workplace, but he could not find one yet.

³⁰ Original sentence in Turkish: “*Küçük bir köy, Çorum gibi bir yer*”.

³¹ Original sentence in Turkish: “*Burada (Ankara’da) arkadaşlar vardı, hızla alışacağız diye geldim*”.

³² Original sentence in Turkish: “*Türkçesi yoksa evimizi onlara bırakıyoruz*”.

When he was asked about his family, the respondent shared that he is not married, and he communicated with his family 2-3 times a month via telephone when he uploads prepaid minutes. As expressed, it is cheaper to call his family in Uzbekistan from Turkey. He stated that he has three older brothers all of whom are married, and he is the youngest, but he is also the one who is sending money to his parents. When he was asked, he asserted that he does not want his parents to come and visit because, in his terms, *“I work daylong, so I do not want them to come”*³³. He also added that he does not want his older brother who was 34-years old to come and work in Turkey because, as he said, the exchange rate of dollar increased, and it became less profitable. He also added that it is more difficult to learn language as a person gets older. Hence, as understood, he did not want his family members to come, which points out the fact that he did not consider his stay as permanent. Moreover, he expressed that he did not go to Uzbekistan for two years, but when he goes, there will be the sanction of 5-year entry ban for his overstay with expired visa. That is, he was aware of the legal consequences of his irregular stay defined under LFIP³⁴, and even stated that *“There will be a deport stamp for 5 years if we do not pay the fine, and coming is prohibited”*³⁵.

Regarding his job at the restaurant, he stated that he is working as a waiter but added that *“Here (the restaurant) is crowded, we do every kind of work”*³⁶. Moreover, he believed that the money in Uzbekistan is *“different”* because one month of working here in Turkey equals to one and a half months of working in Uzbekistan. That is, he was able to earn the same amount of money by working for a shorter period of time in Turkey. In fact, he pointed out that this is the main reason why he decided to come. In terms of working conditions, it was learnt that he is working from 10:00 to 22:00 for twelve hours six days a week with one day off on Fridays. As he stated, they start with preparations at 10 am although the opening hour of the restaurant was 12:00. The respondent described his day as working until 10 pm, travelling home for one hour and then directly going to sleep. He also mentioned that he tries not to

³³ Original sentence in Turkish: *“Sabahtan akşama kadar çalışıyorum, gelsinler istemiyorum”*.

³⁴ See page 9, Section 1.3 of the thesis.

³⁵ Original sentence in Turkish: *“Ceza ödemezsek 5 sene deport basılıyor, gelmek yasak”*.

³⁶ Original sentence in Turkish: *“Burası (restoran) kalabalık, her işi yapıyoruz”*.

spend much on his off day. For that, he sleeps until 14:00 and then has a meal in the afternoon. As he said, he and his friends sometime go for a walk in the parks. By trying not to spend even on food more than one time a day, he tried to save as much money as he could.

Despite such long hours of working, the interviewed Uzbek busboy said that he did not want to go to Russia because he did not want to work in construction sites. Russia and Kazakhstan are stated to be the destination countries for Uzbeks other than Turkey. In his words, “*Here (in Turkey), it is restaurants, but there (in Russia) it is all construction*”³⁷. He also believed that the migrants earn more money by working in the construction sites in Russia. Yet, he also added that the jobs in construction are more tiring, thus implied his preference for working in restaurants of Ankara.

The interviewed Uzbek busboy claimed that Uzbeks do not come to Ankara as often as before. As he stated, “*They no longer come from hometown. 2-3 children used to come monthly, but now only one child comes in 2-3 months*”³⁸. The interviewee explained that the persons in Uzbekistan ask if there is a job for him. When they come, the previously arrived Uzbeks look after them until the new migrant adapts. In the respondents’ words, “*The comers ask whether there is a job, and he should come. When he comes, he does not have Turkish, so we take care of him for a while*”³⁹. Moreover, the interviewee also stated that he calls his acquaintances to invite them when there is a vacant position. In addition, it was learnt that he asks his friends if he does not have a job. As he said, there were times when he stayed unemployed for 15-20 days. Furthermore, he informed that he came to Ankara 2 years ago with a visa by plane for which he paid himself, and he applied to an intermediate company which only helps people get visa but does not have a role in arranging jobs. Rather, he insisted that the work is always arranged by friends. Regarding his friends, the interviewee told that all the Uzbek people he knows are males.

³⁷ Original sentence in Turkish: “*Burası (Türkiye) lokanta, orası (Rusya) hep inşaat*”.

³⁸ Original sentences in Turkish: “*Artık memleketten gelmiyorlar. 2-3 ayda bir çocuk geliyor, eskiden ayda 2-3 gelen oluyordu*”.

³⁹ Original sentences in Turkish: “*Gelen kişiler soruyor iş var mı, geleyim mi diye. Gelince Türkçesi yok, biz bakıyoruz bir süre*”.

The interviewee was planning to work for one more year and then go back to his country during the time of the interview. Moreover, he did not think of going to another city in Turkey because he was happy in Ankara. He said that he saved enough money and would like to go back to be with his parents and provide support to them until he gets married. As he denoted, he has a plan to get married but not in Turkey. Also, as he shared, he wishes to work as a kindergarten teacher when he returns. Lastly, he stated that he wants to go to Antalya and swim before going back.

- **The Uzbek Busboy-2**

The second person interviewed was a 21-year-old male who came from Uzbekistan two and a half years ago. He was working at a steakhouse in Balgat as busboy. Similarly to the first interviewee, he learnt Turkish language after his arrival in Turkey; however, he had difficulties in speaking. That is why the interview ended faster with shorter answers provided by the respondent although he understood the questions and gave relevant answers. He graduated from intermediate school, and he knows Russian just a little.

He said that he came to Ankara because he had relatives in the city who invited him. As told by the interviewee, he lives in an apartment building in Balgat with five other male Uzbeks. The first job when he arrived was also working as busboy and he received support of his friends for translation while working. He expressed that he has a couple of friends in Ankara which he meets from time to time in his free time. In fact, he said that he came to Ankara because he has friends here, and moreover, he explained his reason for not going to Russia as the cold weather. Thus, it was understood one more time that the presence of a previously arrived acquaintance is quite deterministic for the decision making of the subsequent person despite other factors.

The respondent Uzbek busboy was also from Kashkadarya province and told that the reason for him to come was scarcity of jobs in his hometown. However, he then added that the people in Uzbekistan also work and there is no unemployment, but he would have earned less money for doing the same job. In his terms, “*if I get 2000*

here (in Turkey), it is 1200 Turkish Liras there (in Uzbekistan)”⁴⁰. He stated that he worked in a watermelon farm in Uzbekistan before migrating. Moreover, he stated that he wants to stay for one more year in Ankara as he was in need of money. As he explained, his parents live in the city but do not work and therefore, he supports them. He said that he sends money via bank once in every couple of months depending on the needs of his parents. After earning money for one more year, however, he wants to return to his country. So far, he went to Uzbekistan once for 10 days to visit his family.

Regarding his job in the time of the interview, the Uzbek busboy said that he is content. He had been working for 14-15 months in that restaurant where he had one day off. On his off day, he stated that he cooks at home.

It should be noted that the restaurant owner – i.e. the interviewee’s boss – was present during the interview and he did not leave until the abovementioned answers were given. For that reason, it was not possible to ask further questions about the working conditions. The employer stated that the interviewed Uzbek busboy has been working in the restaurant for a couple of months, whereas it has been 14-15 months as the interviewee stated. Furthermore, the employer said that he had only one Uzbek employee, whereas it was possible to see at least three of them. Thus, the time for the interview as well as the quality of the responses decreased with shorter and more hesitant answers of the interviewee whose Turkish was also not advanced. Nevertheless, it was possible to understand the efficiency of an Uzbek network in providing support for the newcomer migrants who are not able to speak Turkish, the importance of household’s financial needs and remittance in migration decision, and the employer’s fear of receiving sanction despite making the Uzbek busboy work in the front line of the restaurant and allowing him to participate in the interview.

- **The Uzbek Busboy-3**

The third interviewed Uzbek busboy was a 21-year-old male who graduated from school after 9-years of studying. He stated that he studied in *kollec* for three years

⁴⁰ Original sentence in Turkish: “Burada (Türkiye’de) 2000 alsam, orada (Özbekistan’da) 1200 TL”.

after finishing intermediate school. He can understand Russian language but cannot speak. On the other hand, as he said, he could learn Turkish in 1-2 months after his arrival due to the familiarity between Uzbek and Turkish languages. He was in Ankara for two years and one month at the time of the interview, and it should be noted that his Turkish language skills were moderate but he gave answers to all questions.

He stated that he lives in an apartment in Balgat with four other Uzbeks among which the oldest is 33 years old. He shared that there are married men among his flatmates, however their wives are in Uzbekistan. The interviewee was not married. As he explained, he came to Turkey by plane together with friends, arrived in Istanbul first, and then travelled to Ankara by bus. He stated that his nephews were in Ankara and added that "*People in our village come to Ankara. We are used to here*"⁴¹. He also mentioned later that "*Friend came (to Ankara) and said that there is job, so I came for it*"⁴². Thus, similar to the cases in other interviewed Uzbek busboys, his reason for coming to Ankara was the presence of previously arrived acquaintances.

The respondent shared that his parents and five siblings live in a village in Karshi district of the Kashkadarya province in Uzbekistan. As he said, his father deals with bran trade for which he provided help before migrating. The respondent was sending money to help his family and to support his studying sister. He asserted that his brothers do not want to come to Turkey due to the increased exchanged rate as they believe that it is not profitable anymore. As the interviewed Uzbek busboy expressed, gas and food are not expensive in Uzbekistan, but the dollar exchange rate is so high, and that is the reason for earning higher in Turkey. Considering that they exchange their earnings to dollars before sending to their homeland, they could earn higher in Turkey by doing any job than they would in Uzbekistan.

Furthermore, he told that he wants to work for 6 months more, and then might go to Switzerland because, as he said, he knew people who went to Switzerland to work.

⁴¹ Original sentences in Turkish: "*Bizim köydekiler Ankara'ya geliyor. Buraya alışmışız.*"

⁴² Original sentence in Turkish: "*Arkadaş (Ankara'ya) geldi, gel iş var dedi ona geldim.*"

In his words, “*I heard that there are Turkish restaurants there (in Switzerland) in which Turkish is needed*”⁴³. He also added that he knows people who went to Russia to work in construction and heard that the conditions are worse. Additionally, he mentioned his plan of establishing his own business when he returns after saving enough money. As he later explained, this plan was to open a small restaurant. He stated that he had never been to Uzbekistan since he came to Turkey more than two years ago and said that the deportation sanction for overstaying makes it difficult to turn back considering the amount of fine that he will pay. He believed that the fine is around 2000-2500 Turkish Liras.

As he explained, he works for 12 hours a day in the kebab restaurant where he has been employed for three months during the time of the interview. He said that he daily earns 90 Turkish Liras and has one day off. On his off day, he rests and prepares meals with his friends. As he added, he would have earned 60 Turkish Liras in Uzbekistan. Lastly, he stated that he saves his earnings until they amount to 300-400 dollars and then sends them to his parents through an intermediate company in Kızılay (central district of Ankara). However, as the interviewee was called back to work, he could not provide further information.

- **The Uzbek Busboy-4**

The fourth interview was carried out with a 25-year-old male Uzbek busboy who was working in another kebab restaurant in Balgat. The respondent stated that he graduated from high school and studied for 12 years in total, in four of which he studied a technical department in *kollec*. As he said, his level of Russian language was low, and also, his Turkish was poor. Differently from other interviewed migrants, he stated that he has arrived in Turkey a year ago but had learnt Turkish only in the last one month.

The respondent was living in Balgat in a rented apartment with four other Uzbek friends who, as he explained, are at the same age and working in the places around just like the interviewee. He stated that he travelled alone and bought the flight ticket

⁴³ Original sentence in Turkish: “*Orda (İsviçre’de) Türk lokantaları varmış, Türkçe lazımmış.*”

himself, and he preferred Ankara because he was told by his friends that it is a good place.

As he stated, his parents who live in the Karshi district of Kashkadarya province in Uzbekistan are not working and he has a younger brother who studies. Therefore, as he expressed, he exchanges his earnings to dollars and sends to his parents through bank transfer once a month. Also, he said that he makes video or audio calls with his parents once a week.

Regarding his position in the restaurant, the interviewed Uzbek migrant mentioned that his friends let him know about his current job in which he has been working for one month. With one day off, he works for 10 hours a day. In his off day, as he explained, he lies down at home or walks around in Balgat with his friends. As understood, he does not go to any place further for which he must spend money and use transportation.

It must be noted that the interview was interrupted a couple of times by work-related questions and the respondent had to go for food delivery. Also, his colleagues came and asked many times whether we had completed the interview. After a while, when the numbers of customers increased, we had to quickly finish the interview. Therefore, and because of his poor Turkish, it was rather a short interview in which answers were provided without going into detail.

- **The Uzbek Busboy-5**

A 21-year-old Uzbek busboy who was working in yet another kebab restaurant in Balgat was the fifth interviewee. As he stated, he graduated from *kollec* where he studied automobile repairing. In addition, he stated to have intermediate level of Russian which he learnt at school. His Turkish speaking skills were also quite advanced compared to the other respondents. He stated that he learnt Turkish in seven months and found it not difficult because Uzbek and Turkish are quite similar, however, as he added, in times when he uses “*difficult words*”, the customers do not understand.

Although working in Balgat, the respondent was living in Kurtuluş – which is a district relatively far from Balgat – in a rented apartment together with his family.

Thus, differently than other interviewed Uzbeks, the fifth respondent was living with his mother, older sister, nephew and another relative. Moreover, he added that they have an Uzbek neighbor living in the same building. In fact, as he told, the mentioned Uzbek neighbor who came to Ankara 10 years ago was the one who found a job for the respondent's mother. Hence, his mother came to Ankara two years ago and works as a cleaner for a person who works in a bank. The interviewee arrived one and a half years ago by plane after his mother. His father, on the other hand, lives in Uzbekistan with his grandparents. As he shared, his father is retired and taking care of their field. Lastly, his sister who lives with him works as a cleaner in a restaurant in Çukurambar. Considering that both the respondents' mother and sister work as cleaners, this data pointed out to the gender differences in employment practices of Uzbek labor migrants.

He explained that he first went to Istanbul by plane, and then travelled to Ankara by bus, and stated that he obtained visa and bought the tickets by himself for his journey. He expressed that he would not like to go to another city in Turkey because, in his terms, "*It would be difficult to find a job in another city. It would be starting from scratch*"⁴⁴. He also added that he is very happy in Ankara. When he was asked about his friends going to other countries, he shared that many of his friends went to Russia because their parents also went there to work in the past. However, he had the chance to stay with his uncle for 2 years in Russia when he was younger, but he did not like Russia.

The interviewee also shared his plan and said that he wants to work for 2-3 more years and go back to Uzbekistan to study engineering in the university with the aim to work in the factory. By factory, he meant the Korean car factory for which he worked in the warehouse prior to migrating. As he explained, he went to work in this position right after graduating from *kollec* in which he studied automobile repairing – a relevant topic to the workplace.

Regarding his job as busboy, he stated that his friend who was working in the same restaurant helped him get the job. He first worked in another but smaller restaurant

⁴⁴ Original sentences in Turkish: "*Başka şehirde iş bulmak zor olur. Sıfırdan başlamak*".

and found that position two weeks after his arrival, also with the help of a friend. He was working from 10:00 to 22:00 with one day off on Wednesdays and expressed that he is happy with his job. He also told that he would have earned half the wage if he had worked in the same position in Uzbekistan and added that the number of customers in restaurants in Uzbekistan is also much lower compared to ones in Turkey.

Thus, the responses of the Uzbek Busboy-5 showed repetitive patterns with regards to friendship and family networks which are determinant in migration decisions. In this case, however, mother and sister also live in Turkey, away from the father who remained in Uzbekistan. This finding sets an example to the arguments of the NELM Theory (Stark, 1991) which asserts that role of the family is important in migration decisions, and that some family members migrate to support others staying in the country of origin.

- **The Uzbek Busboy-6**

The sixth interviewed Uzbek migrant was a 24-year-old male again who was working in a restaurant in Balgat. As he shared, he graduated from *kollec*, and knows good level of Kyrgyz and Russian in addition to his Turkish which was quite advanced. He stated that he learnt Turkish easily in three months. After coming to Turkey four years ago, to Istanbul by plane and then to Ankara, he worked in various places including a confectionary. He expressed that he came to Ankara because there were his relatives, and he evaluated Ankara to be a good place to work. In fact, as he told, the respondent primarily went to Russia and worked in a supermarket; however, did not like it there due to the cold weather although he earned the same amount of money as he earns in Turkey. In his words, “*I found it there (Russia) cold, I did not like it*”⁴⁵.

As he informed, he lives in a rented apartment in Çukurambar (a district close to Balgat) with three other males who are indeed his relatives. The interviewed Uzbek stated that he is not married, and all his family are in Uzbekistan whom he had not

⁴⁵ Original sentence in Turkish: “*Orası (Rusya) soğuk geldi, sevmedim*”.

seen for four years. He said that he talks with his family – parents and siblings – via telephone. Similar to other interviewed Uzbeks, he is from Karshi district of Kashkadarya province in Uzbekistan. As he mentioned, he worked in markets and bazaar as well as a taxi driver before migrating. He explained his migration decision with the financial problems in his hometown and told that he sold his car to come to Turkey.

As he added, his older brother is still studying, and he had to come to Turkey to support his brother. To do so, he sends money monthly via private companies who help migrants transfer money like carrying cargo. That is, as he informed, he submits his collected money to the company at the GAMA WorkCentre in Kızılay (central district of Ankara), and this company transfers the remittance money to Uzbekistan just like carrying a post. Hence, it was possible to understand that such companies which transfer money in informal ways and work based on trust relationship are also frequently used by the migrants to send the remittance. That also means, covert transfers are not reflected in the banking system of the country, and thus, the actual amount of remittance money that Uzbek economy receives cannot really be known. Nevertheless, it is possible to assume that the share of remittance money sent to Uzbekistan is much higher than the amount shared through official channels.

The respondent expressed that he found his job during the time of the interview through the help of an acquaintance who then turned back to Uzbekistan. However, he also said that he found his job at the confectionary by going and asking himself. He had been working for 2 months in the current restaurant in which he gets one day off on Tuesdays in two weeks. Thus, different than the other interviewed busboys, the interviewee had one off day in 14 days. As he stated, he would earn less money and would not be able to make savings if he would be working in Uzbekistan. For his current job, he said that he receives minimum wage.

- **The Uzbek Busboy-7**

32-year-old man was the seventh interviewed Uzbek migrant who was working as a busboy in a rather big kebab restaurant in Balgat. He defined his job “*as setting up*

*the table*⁴⁶. As he shared, he graduated from *kollec* and has a moderate level of Russian. His Turkish speaking skills were also observed to be moderate although he said that he came to Turkey four years ago. The respondent also shared that he asks for help from other waiters if he does not understand the customers.

As the interviewee stated, he lives in a rented apartment in Yüzüncü Yıl (a district close to Balgat) with three other male Uzbeks who work in a cargo company. He said that they rented the apartment directly from the owner who was his previous employer. Moreover, he said that he receives 1500 Turkish Liras from each of his flatmates to collect the rent, which implies that the houseowner asks for a higher rent price from the Uzbeks. He also added that they search for a new Uzbek person to stay with them if one of the flatmates leaves.

Regarding his homeland, he defined that the life is as normal as the life in Turkey. As he said, he is coming from the Karshi district of Kashkadarya like other interviewees. He also stated that he worked in construction after he graduated from *kollec*. Moreover, he is married and has three kids, the oldest of whom was 7 years old at the time of the interview. Similar to other interviewees, he sends money to his family after exchanging his earnings into dollars via online banking system. He explained that his wife and kids are living together with his parents, and his mother is working as a cleaner in a restaurant in Uzbekistan. His family uses the money he sends to buy cows and bees, and to build a house. In addition, he had not been to his home country for four years and he communicates with his family via telephone.

As he expressed, he came to Turkey four years ago by plane and arrived in Istanbul first and then travelled to Ankara by bus. He met the expenses of his travel with the support of his family. Hence, it was understood that his migration was the decision of the whole family. For the reason of choosing Ankara, he stated that there are more job opportunities in Ankara, and that it is possible to earn more money in Ankara compared to the jobs in Russia. However, he later added that his cousin – son of his uncle – who came to Turkey 2 years before invited him.

⁴⁶ Original term in Turkish: “*servis açma*”.

Before his current position in which he was working for five months, he worked in another kebab restaurant. He was working from 10:00 to 22:00 with one off day. He evaluated his current job and working conditions as “normal”, but then added that it is difficult to work at noon when the restaurant becomes too crowded. Also, he thinks that his employer treats all workers the same and stated that “*there is no difference between us and Turks for the boss*”⁴⁷. Yet, he shared his plan to change his current workplace. Lastly, he stated that he meets with his friends and also goes to send dollars to his homeland once a month on his off days.

It should be noted that the interviewee was more relaxed and open for conversation compared to the other respondent Uzbek migrants. One reason for that could be his age as he was much older than other interviewees. In addition, the interview took place in a relatively comfortable part of the restaurant, which was far from the employer, and thus, he was able to talk more easily even about searching for a new place to work. However, although he shared his plan for changing his workplace, the interviewee did not mention or give hints to any conflicts between him and his employer or co-workers, and thus, it was not possible to understand his reason for leaving. Nevertheless, it is possible comprehend in this case that Uzbek busboys change their workplaces and easily find a new job through their efficient migrant network when there is any kind of conflict or negative situation. As they can quickly find a new place to work if there is a problem with the current one, it is not surprising that none of them mentioned any conflicts or discontent.

- **The Uzbek Busboy-8**

The last interviewed Uzbek migrant was a 40-year-old male who was working in the same big kebab restaurant as the seventh interviewee for one and a half month and defined his job as helping the waiters. As he shared, he dropped out of university in which he studied accounting. Although studying longer than the other respondents, he also assessed his Russian language skills as low. Moreover, his Turkish was moderate although he said that he knew the language before coming.

⁴⁷ Original sentence in Turkish: “*Türklerle farkımız yok patron için*”.

As he stated, he lives in a rented apartment in Dikmen – a district relatively far from Balgat – with four other male Uzbeks. He told that their houseowner is the owner of the ironmongery store where one of his flatmates work and added that one flatmate collects money from each and submits the cash to the houseowner in the end of the month, which implies that the houseowner earns rent income covertly without paying taxes.

The interviewee comes from a village in Samarkand, and is married and with five children, the youngest of which was 13 years of age at the time of the interview. He added that his eldest child is married, and his second son, who received Turkish citizenship, is together with him working in the same restaurant. He communicates with the rest of his family via telephone. As stated by the interviewee, he has a house and a car in his hometown but came to Ankara so that he could pay for constructing a house for his son. Moreover, he stated that as soon as he saves enough money to meet the expenses of the construction, he plans to go back to Uzbekistan and will never come again.

The interviewee came to Turkey one year ago – to Istanbul by plane and then to Ankara by bus – and had a plan to go back to Uzbekistan in six months. Differently than other respondents, he was not happy with his current job and stated that he could have earned the same amount by working in the construction sector in Uzbekistan. In fact, as he said, he worked in a construction site in Uzbekistan before coming to Turkey. He shared his regret for coming, however, stated that he will continue working until saving the determined amount of money for the abovementioned purpose. On the other hand, he stated that he did not go to Russia because the identity issues are more difficult, and his level of Russian is low although he heard from his friends that conditions are better in Russia. He firmly asserted that the people who go to Russia work in constructions. Moreover, he added that “*Here (in Turkey) we work illegally in any case*”⁴⁸ and told that it is also easier to learn the language. Furthermore, he had acquaintances in Turkey which helped him to find a job. In addition to all, he explained his reason to migrate to Ankara

⁴⁸ Original sentence in Turkish: “*Burda (Türkiye’de) nasılsa kaçak çalışıyoruz*”.

with the better exchange rate of dollar, but added that if exchange rate increases, their earnings decrease and therefore, everyone would return. In his words, “*Dollar is high in our country. We came (to Turkey) because the dollar is low. When the dollar increases, our earnings decrease. If it increases, everybody would go back*”⁴⁹.

Regarding his off day which are Tuesdays, the interviewee stated that he mostly lies down, and sends money via a company on the ground floor of GAMA WorkCenter which he defined as “*a private bank sending money to Turkic countries*”. As understood, he referred to the same private company mentioned above which facilitates remittance money flow from Turkey to Uzbekistan.

To put the stories and experiences of all eight interviewed Uzbeks together, the similarities and specifics in the answers of the interviewed Uzbek busboys regarding their lives in Uzbekistan, their migration to Ankara and their current job as busboys in restaurants of Ankara are presented and discussed in following sections:

4.1.1.2. Life Back in Uzbekistan

*“The life is good there (in Uzbekistan) but earnings are low, so I could not save money.”*⁵⁰

(Uzbek Busboy-5, 21 years old)

As explained in the first part of the thesis, Uzbekistan is among the biggest labor sending countries in Central Asia with a significant labor resource comprised of a young population (Maksakova, 2016:82; Aslan, 2011:3; Sadovskaya, 2006:39). After the collapse of the USSR, and especially since 2000s, the economic decline compelled many Uzbeks to resort to migration (Ilkhamov, 2013:259-260). Since then, households particularly in rural parts of the country provide their survival through the remittances sent by their family member(s) who migrated to work for the benefit of the whole family (Ilkhamov, 2013:273-275). Although Russia and

⁴⁹ Original sentences in Turkish: “*Bizim orda dolar yüksek. Burda (Türkiye’de) dolar düşük diye geldik. Burda yükseldikçe bizim kazanç azalıyor. Yükselse herkes gider*”.

⁵⁰ Original sentences in Turkish: “*Hayat iyi ama daha az kazanılıyor orada (Özbekistan’da). Biriktiremedim.*”

Kazakhstan were the main countries of destination previously, it was seen that the direction of Uzbek labor migration rotated more towards Turkey because of the reduced number of vacant positions, introduction of stricter control instruments and selective processes especially in Russia (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016:58). Consequently, more apparent migration corridors have been formed between certain parts of Uzbekistan and Turkey – as can be seen in the answers of the interviewed Uzbek busboys.



Figure 1. Administrative Map of Uzbekistan⁵¹

Six of the interviewed Uzbek busboys informed that they come from Kashkadarya (or Qashqadaryo) in Uzbekistan. It should be noted that Kashkadarya is a province in Uzbekistan which is in the south-eastern part of the country, near Samarkand, and shares border with Turkmenistan in the south and with Tajikistan in the northeast (Gafurov et al. 2018:10). The rural population of Kashkadarya is slightly more

⁵¹ Retrieved from <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/uzbekistan-administrative-map.htm>

crowded than the urban population (Gafurov et al. 2018:14-15). The province is the third most populous province in Uzbekistan and divided into thirteen administrative districts (Gafurov et al. 2018:11-12), one of which is Karshi (or Qarshi) – the most crowded district and the place from where four of the respondents come.

Half of the interviewees expressed to come from cities, whereas the other half was living in villages back in Uzbekistan. However, it was not possible to perceive major differences between the answers of the Uzbek migrants with rural or urban backgrounds. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that the provinces from which interviewed Uzbeks come are mainly rural parts of the country with greater rural population compared to urban. Importantly, as understood from the responses, working in restaurants in Ankara as busboys allows them to have better earnings than they would have earned by doing the same or different job in Uzbekistan.

*“Our money is different. Working for one and a half months in ours (Uzbekistan) is equal to working for one month here (Turkey). That is why we came here.”*⁵² (Uzbek Busboy-1, 23 years old)

*“Our money is less. If I get 2000 TL here (in Turkey), it is 1200 TL there (in Uzbekistan). The people there (in Uzbekistan) are working. There is no unemployment... There are few jobs. For that reason, I came here (to Turkey).”*⁵³ (Uzbek Busboy-2, 21 years old)

Moreover, it was often mentioned during various interviews that food and gas are actually not expensive in Uzbekistan, but they come to Turkey because it is possible for them to earn significantly more money by doing the same job. Likewise, one interviewee was in Ankara to work so that he could pay for the construction of a house for his son. As it was stated:

⁵² Original sentences in Turkish: *“Paramız değişik. Bizde (Özbekistan’da) bir buçuk ay çalışmak burada (Türkiye’de) bir ay çalışmaya eşdeğer. O yüzden buraya (Türkiye’ye) geldik.”*

⁵³ Original sentences in Turkish: *“Paramız az. Burada (Türkiye’de) 2000 TL alsam, orada (Özbekistan’da) 1200 TL. Oradakiler (Özbekistan’dakiler) çalışıyor. İşsizlik yok... İş az. O yüzden buraya geldim.”*

*“The life is good there (in Uzbekistan), but earnings are low, so I could not save money... We do not have as many customers. I would have earned half amount there (in Uzbekistan)”*⁵⁴. (Uzbek Busboy-5, 21 years old)

Based on these, the field research indeed confirms the assumption on that Uzbek busboys are labor migrants who move clearly with economic purposes. In that sense, the interviewees also correspond to the migrant typology depicted by Piore (1979; 1986:24-25), which asserted that migrants move temporarily within the aim of earning money to spend for pre-determined purposes such as house construction or purchasing a land. As stated by Piore (1986:25) *“They frequently come from areas where wages, and the general price level, are so low relative to those of the immigrant-receiving industrial country that the work seems much better paying than it does to national workers”*. Similarly, the interviewed Uzbeks confirmed that working as a busboy in the restaurants was financially more profitable than doing any job in Uzbekistan.

Regarding their education levels, one respondent informed that he studied pre-school education and thus, is qualified to work as kindergarten teacher, but he worked in construction sites for 2-3 months after finishing school. Although he has never worked in his profession until now, he expressed that he wants to be a kindergarten teacher when he returns to his country. Working in watermelon farms, warehouse of car factory, construction site and restaurants before coming to Ankara were mentioned in other interviews. It is understood that the period for which interviewees studied changes from 9 to 12 years in total, and yet, they all worked in jobs requiring low skills prior to migrating.

One of the interviewees said that he has a younger brother who is of school age and his parents do not work. The other stated that his family carries out stockbreeding and farming. Another respondent expressed that his parents are dairy farmers, but he nevertheless must financially support them. In yet another interview, it was shared

⁵⁴ Original sentences in Turkish: *"Hayat iyi ama daha az kazanılıyor orada (Özbekistan'da). Biriktiremedim... Bizde bu kadar müşteri yok. Orda (Özbekistan'da) yarısı kadar kazanırdım."*

that the interviewee's parents do not work, and thus they need the money sent by him. This respondent also expressed that there are a few jobs in his hometown, and that was the reason why he came. The Uzbek migrant who came from a village near Kashkadarya stated that his father deals with bran trade and obtains bran himself from wheat. His three-year younger brother works with his father, and his older sister still studies. Although in this case there is a certain form of family business, it is understood that the respondent still financially helps his father. On the other hand, in one of the interviews, it was stated that the Uzbek migrant was working in the warehouse of car factory at the same time when his mother was working in Russia. Thus, as understood, they all support their families with the money they receive from working in restaurants as busboys. Also, the amount they earn in this sector is obviously significant for them to increase the well-being of their families in Uzbekistan. Therefore, it is possible to conceive the importance of remittances in the case of Uzbek labor migrants and their family members in their homeland. Furthermore, the cases of interviewed Uzbeks confirm the propositions of New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) Theory (Stark, 1991). As NELM Theory asserts, migration of individuals is indeed the decision of the household as a risk-reducing strategy to protect the family income against all kinds of market failures (Stark, 1991; Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:38; Kurekova, 2011:8; Stark and Bloom, 1985:175). NELM Theory argues that the migrating family member sends remittances to be used for the well-being of all household (Massey, 2012:16; Hagen-Zanker, 2008:12) which is similar to what Uzbek labor migrants do.

In addition to all, two of the Uzbek busboys had the information that the Government of Uzbekistan provides support for labor migration especially of students for a period of six months. However, the majority of the respondents did not have such information and expressed that the Uzbek Government does not provide any support for the people who migrate with the aim to work. In any case, based on their responses, none of the Uzbek busboys who were interviewed benefitted from such government assistance.

4.1.1.3. Migration to Ankara

“People in our village come to Ankara.

*We are used to here.”*⁵⁵

(Uzbek Busboy-3, 21 years old)

The data obtained from the interviews indicates that the average time period in which Uzbek labor migrants had been in Ankara was less than two years. One interviewee stated that he had friends in Ankara, and he came to Ankara with the belief that it will be easier for him to adapt. Another respondent said that he migrated to Ankara upon his friends' invitation. This person has come with the aim to work for 1-2 years and turn back to Uzbekistan. Overall, the answers for the question asking about why they come to Ankara indicate that they all shared similar opinions. As expressed, they did not think of going to another city, but wanted to stay in Ankara because all their friends are here, the people in this city are good, their fellow townsmen come to Ankara, and it is the city they know and got used to. It is understood that getting used to the life in Ankara was much easier as their Uzbek friends or relatives who arrived before them and together with them provided great support.

*“It has been one year since I came. I came by myself. I have friends here (in Ankara) ... Ankara is good. We came here (to Ankara) because we know it. I know it (Ankara) from my friends... I only have friends here (in Ankara), there is no relative. My friends said that it (Ankara) is good, so I decided to come by myself.”*⁵⁶ (Uzbek Busboy-4, 25 years old)

It should be emphasized that such phrases as “*people from our village come to Ankara*” or already having friends/acquaintances who invite to and provide support in Ankara actually imply that migrant networking is highly important and effective in the case of Uzbek migration to the city. According to the Migration Network Theory, pioneer migrants determine the newcomer migrants' choices of destination by providing information and various kinds of support as well as by reducing the costs and risks (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:40; Hagen-Zanker, 2008:17). This way,

⁵⁵ Original sentences in Turkish: “*Bizim köydekiler Ankara'ya geliyor. Buraya alıştık.*”

⁵⁶ Original sentences in Turkish: “*Geleli bir yıl oldu. Kendim geldim. Burada (Ankara'da) arkadaşlarım var... Ankara iyi. (Ankara'yı) Bildiğimiz için geldik. Arkadaşlarımdan biliyorum... Burada (Ankara'da) sadece arkadaşlarım var, akraba yok. Arkadaşlarım Ankara iyi dedi, gelmeye kendim karar verdim.*”

as Ünver (2015:250) states, the migrant networks established between the early-arriving and subsequent migrants indeed contribute to the perpetuation of the migration processes, which is also the case in Uzbek labor migration flows towards Ankara. Furthermore, the flow of information from early migrants to the subsequent ones encourages more migration to happen in an organized way along specific pathways, and thus, contributes again to the perpetuation of migration movement as Mabogunje (1970) asserts (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:43). In his analysis, Mabogunje (1970:12-13) points out a new spatial arrangement over which families and communities are connected when migration systems have been formed. Similar to his assertion, the findings of interviews also indicate the presence of a migration system between Ankara, and certain parts/regions of Uzbekistan considering that a number of persons from similar hometown and belonging to the same social networks migrate with the same purpose to the same location. So much that, the existence of a migration system between certain parts of Uzbekistan and Ankara appears to be both the reason and consequence of the labor migration of Uzbeks to Ankara.

As expressed in the introduction, geographical distances or proximities between home and host countries have lost their importance in today's world due to the technological developments in communication and transportation technologies brought within globalization processes. Nevertheless, the specifics, dynamics, impacts, outcomes, motives in individual and societal levels make certain migratory corridors still noteworthy. In this sense, it can be stated that the migratory route between some regions of Uzbekistan and Ankara is an active corridor and evidently a sign of an established and self-perpetuating migration system. Likewise, it is evaluated in the report on Uzbekistan by International Organization of Migration that the migration corridor between Turkey and Uzbekistan is an important labor corridor which is worth analyzing (IOM, 2023:8).

Another dimension of the case of Uzbek busboys in Ankara is that the migration decision is a familial matter rather than a personal choice similar to the discussions of the NELM Theory (Stark and Bloom, 1985:174; Stark, 1991). The person who migrates to work and send remittance to the remaining family members at the home country is indeed selected by the family for the sake of other members. As shared in

the previous section, all of the interviewed Uzbek busboys send their earnings back to Uzbekistan either to financially support subsistence of their family members or to solve a familial issue such as building a house or organizing a wedding ceremony.

*“I will not go to another city. I want to stay in Ankara. I have to work. I need money. I support my family. My mother and father do not work.”*⁵⁷ (Uzbek Busboy-2, 21 years old)

*“There is money shortage there (in Uzbekistan), that is why I came. I sold the car and came here (to Ankara) to help my brother... My brother is studying. I have to work by myself.”*⁵⁸ (Uzbek Busboy-6, 24 years old)

*“I bought the ticket (for plane) with the support of my family... I send money. They (his family) buy cow, bee and are building a house.”*⁵⁹ (Uzbek Busboy-7, 32 years old)

Hence, it is the family altogether that takes the migration decision. For instance, it was stated in one interview that the respondent decided to come to Ankara himself after his friends praised this city. However, the same person also expressed that his parents and younger sister do not work and therefore, he needs to send his earnings that he gains from his job at the restaurant. As can be understood also in this case, the claims of NELM Theory are supported by the data obtained in the field research. Nevertheless, it was noticed that the interviewed Uzbeks mentioned it as their own decision to come and work in Turkey. That is, the respondents perceived their labor migration as their individual choice.

However, at this point, it is necessary to underline that considering the migration of Uzbeks as a personal or family decision should not omit or contradict with the fact that it is actually the existing economic circumstances which shape persons' choices

⁵⁷ Original sentences in Turkish: “Başka şehre gitmeyeceğim. Ankara’da kalmak istiyorum. Çalışmam lazım. Paraya ihtiyacım var. Aileme destek oluyorum. Annem babam çalışmıyor.”

⁵⁸ Original sentences in Turkish: “Orada (Özbekistan’da) para sıkıntısı var, ondan geldim. Arabayı sattım buraya geldim abime yardımcı olmak için... Abim okuyor. Kendimin çalışması lazım.”

⁵⁹ Original sentences in Turkish: “Aile desteğiyle bilet aldım (uçak için)... Para gönderiyorum. İnek, arı alıyorlar ve ev yaptırıyorlar (ailem).”

as well as capabilities. Examining the case of Uzbek busboys only through a perspective of migrant agency or collective decision of family would fall short due to the very fact that macro level factors play much significant role in determining the terms and conditions throughout the whole migration process. In fact, structural forces are decisive reasons why labor migration happens. People are compelled to migrate due to the permeation of global capitalist system through national economies (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:32) and the consequent economic problems they encounter in their countries of origin. The direction of movement is primarily determined by the structure of job opportunities and available demand for migrant labor in the destination country as discussed by the Dual Labor Market Theory (Piore, 1979). Starting from Uzbekistan, where economic conditions compel some family members to migrate and send remittance for the sake of others, to the destination city Ankara, in which an already existing segmented labor market, an effective visa regime, the legal structure with deliberate gaps to serve the demands of labor market and the gaps in the sector altogether encourage the employment of Uzbek migrants as busboys in restaurants.

Therefore, the analysis must mainly rely on the macro level indicators – in particular, on those suggested by the Dual Labor Market Theory of Piore (1979) – because what makes migrants in need and capable of migrating and able to find a job in another country is actually contextual variables including the influences of globalization on the economies of countries, the dual structure of job opportunities and the demand for low-skilled labor especially in expanding service sector of neoliberal economies.

On the other hand, all respondents expressed that they come from Uzbekistan to Turkey by plane and they bought the tickets by themselves. As mentioned, it was stated in one interview that the respondent bought the plane ticket with the financial support of his family. Commonly, the interviewed Uzbek migrants arranged their trip themselves and did not use any intermediate agency for their travels. One of them told that he applied to an intermediate company only for visa, but this company does not find jobs. He even said that employment opportunities are arranged only by friends, and he never heard of intermediate employment agencies. Majority of the interviewees expressed that they travelled by plane from Uzbekistan to Istanbul, and then used transit flights or bus to go from Istanbul to Ankara. Some of them travelled

with either their friends or relatives. One interviewee, on the other hand, came to Antalya at first and worked there for two months similarly as a busboy in a restaurant. Afterwards, he and his friends went from Antalya to Ankara together because, as he stated, his friends who were already in Ankara described the city as a better place.

In addition, the respondents who have been in Turkey more than two years on average said that they entered Turkey regularly with visa, and then their visa expired. Thus, the interviewed migrants benefitted from the visa exemption granted to Uzbek nationals by the Turkish state, but then over-stayed and even worked without permission⁶⁰, which indicates the simple transition between regular and irregular status in migration. Consequently, they had the risk of being deported as well as getting five-year entry ban. They were aware that their entrance would be banned for five years, and they need to pay the fine and wait for three months to re-enter. Moreover, they were informed that all this process happens in the airports, and they can pay the fine there. One interviewee said that the fine is around 2500 Turkish liras for two years of irregular stay. The same person addressed deportation as the reason why he did not go to Uzbekistan to see his family for the past two years.

For the question regarding the places they reside, it was mentioned that they walk around to see adverts put on windows of apartments in order to rent a place. Also, it was shared that they use internet to search for apartments for rent. However, renting a flat is very difficult for them as house owners often ask for a guarantor. Interestingly, one of the respondents stated that his flatmates or even his flat change from time to time when there is a new-comer friend from Uzbekistan who does not know Turkish. That is, the Uzbeks who live and work in Turkey for a while might give their place in the accommodation to the newcomer so that this person can get used to his new environment more easily. As expressed in the interviews, they might even provide some financial help to the newcomer until he starts working and earning money. Considering these, it is possible to understand that migrant networks

⁶⁰ See page 9, section 1.3 of the thesis.

indeed reduce the economic, social, and psychological costs of migration as denoted by the Migration Network Theory (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:40).

“I live in an apartment. Five of us stay together. It changes from time to time. If four or five people come together (from Uzbekistan), we leave our home to them if they do not have Turkish. We move to a new home. We find new home on the internet. It is very difficult to find a new home. They (houseowners) ask for a guarantor. We cannot find (a home) currently. We want a home close to here (to the workplace), but we cannot find... The comers ask if there is job and if they should come. When they come, they do not have Turkish, so we take care of them for a while. We provide for them. They become our friends.”⁶¹ (Uzbek Busboy-1, 23 years old)

It was also shared that the respondents’ families – parents and siblings – live in Uzbekistan. Upon the question asking how they communicate, they all stated that they use their mobile phones to call them through direct calls or internet at least once a week. As expressed, it is cheaper when they call from Turkey to Uzbekistan; therefore, they call their families instead of visa versa. Only one interviewee who came to Turkey two and a half years ago told that he went to Uzbekistan to visit his family once for ten days. Thus, it can be understood that technological developments such as smart phones enable the connection between the migrants, families and communities over space, and this way, contribute to the formation of migration systems as well as to the perpetuation of migration.

Additionally, all of the interviewees mentioned their will to turn back as soon as they save sufficient amount of money. As understood, that sufficient amount of money is defined by each interviewee with a pre-set limit to the amount that they want to earn.

⁶¹ Original sentences in Turkish: “Apartman dairesinde kalıyorum. Beş kişi kalıyoruz. Zaman zaman değişiyor. 4-5 kişi beraber gelirse, Türkçesi yoksa evimizi onlara bırakıyoruz. Yeni eve geçiyoruz. Yeni evi internetten buluyoruz. Yeni ev bulmak çok zor oluyor. Kefil istiyorlar (ev sahipleri). Şu an bulamıyoruz. Buraya (iş yerine) yakın ev istiyoruz ama bulamıyoruz... Gelen kişiler soruyor iş var mı geliyim mi diye. Geline Türkçesi yok, biz bakıyoruz bir süre. Biz geçindiriyoruz. Arkadaşımız oluyor.”

Interestingly, they all mentioned their plan to go back to their country after working for – more or less – one more year despite having different times of arrival. As such, one of them stated that he initially came to Turkey with the plan to work for a total of one or two years and turn back. It was seen that their responses were in line with the analysis of Toksöz et al. (2012:22) which asserts that a common trait of the migrants who come to Turkey to work by benefitting from flexible visa regime is immigrating temporarily and going back to their countries after saving enough money. Toksöz et al. (2012:22) further mentions the circular migration of those who come back when they need again; however, the interviewed Uzbek migrants did not speak of possibility of coming once again in the future. On the contrary, in their responses, they were determined to reach the pre-determined amount of money and then return to Uzbekistan.

“I will return to Uzbekistan and never come back again. I am building a house for my son there (in Uzbekistan). I am waiting for six more months to pay for it. Otherwise, I would have returned right now.”⁶² (Uzbek Busboy-8, 40 years old)

Moreover, all of the unmarried interviewees expressed that they want to get married when they return to their hometowns. For the question on whether they want to marry to a Turkish girl in Ankara, they similarly said no with smiling and blushing faces. One respondent shared that he wants to open a small restaurant of his own when he goes back. Considering these, it can be concluded that they were not here for a long period of time, they initially came to Ankara to work for a limited period of time, and they planned to go back in the near future. Furthermore, they did not want to start a family here, and also, none of them would invite his family to Turkey for work – all of which imply that they were not permanent in Turkey.

When they were asked whether they have Turkish friends here, two of them similarly answered no at first, but then thought about their friends from work. Some of them expressed that they have Turkish friends. One even said that he and his Turkish

⁶² Original sentences in Turkish: “Özbekistan’a dönüp bir daha gelmeyeceğim. Orada (Özbekistan’da) oğluma ev inşa ettiriyorum. Onu ödemek için bekliyorum altı ay daha. Yoksa hemen dönerdim.”

friends meet outside the work. Another's Turkish friend helped him get a wi-fi connection to his flat. As understood, they might have established a certain kind of friendship with Turkish co-workers from their workplace, but those were not as close as their Uzbek friends. On the other hand, one of the respondents answered the same question by reminding that he does not have time for social life because of his long working hours. He added that he goes directly to bed when he returns from work.

Another common answer given by all interviewees was to the question asking whether they have friends or acquaintances who went to other countries for work. Some respondents stated that some of their friends or people they know went to Russia to work in the construction sector, but they preferred Turkey because the job – working in restaurants – is better. One of the Uzbek migrants expressed that he did not want to go to Russia because, as he stated, the job option in Russia is working in construction sites whereas here in Ankara, it is restaurants. He claimed that there are no other jobs that he can find in Russia, and even if there are, Uzbeks are not preferred. In fact, they similarly expressed that the people who go to Russia work in construction sites and the people who come to Turkey work in restaurants just like them. Furthermore, another respondent said that his level of Russian language is low, and he believed that “*identity issues*”⁶³ are difficult in Russia, but here in Turkey, in his words, “*we work illegally in any case*”⁶⁴. It was commonly believed by the interviewees that the conditions in the construction sector in Russia are worse compared to their job as busboy. In addition, it was stated by one respondent that he has friends who went to Ukraine and Kazakhstan for studying, but as he stressed, the ones who migrated for the purpose of working only went to Russia.

*“There are people who went to Russia. They work in construction. I came here (to Ankara). I did not want (to go to Russia). The conditions are worse.”*⁶⁵ (Uzbek Busboy-4, 25 years old)

⁶³ By identity issues, as learnt during the interviews, they were referring to the residence permit system of Russia.

⁶⁴ Original sentence in Turkish: “*Burda nasılsa kaçak çalışıyoruz*”

⁶⁵ Original sentences in Turkish: “*Rusya’ya gidenler var. İnşaatte çalışıyorlar. Ben buraya (Ankara’ya) geldim. (Rusya’yı) İstemedim. Koşullar daha kötü.*”

*“I did not want to go to Russia. Here (in Turkey), it is restaurants, but there (in Russia) it is all construction. I did not want to work at construction. There are very few restaurants there (in Russia). Other jobs are scarce. They (Russians) employ their own men.”*⁶⁶ (Uzbek Busboy-1, 23 years old)

They matched the countries and jobs so naturally and with certainty. Thus, it is understood that there is explicit networking among Uzbek people who gather in the construction sector in Russia and in restaurants in Turkey. At the same time, it is possible to comprehend that Russia and Turkey are the countries preferred for labor migration with economic purposes, whereas other neighboring countries are opted for studying. Migrants’ certainty in matching the sectors and locations indicates the existence of a migration system between Uzbekistan and Turkey, and between Uzbekistan and Russia because, as Mabogunje (1970:12-13) stated, the stable exchanges of information and people form a new spatial arrangement – a migration system – in which organized migratory movements from particular places to others are seen. Similar to his analysis on the North-African cities where a craft occupation is dominated by migrants from certain villages (Mabogunje, 1970), the restaurant sector in Ankara, Turkey is dominantly occupied by Uzbek migrants from certain parts of Uzbekistan. In the interviews carried out with Uzbek migrants for this thesis, this certain part mostly was Kashkadarya province. Moreover, since finding job at the destination is carried out through friends, relatives, or acquaintances from the same community in the cases of interviewed Uzbeks, it is possible to understand one more time that migrant networks have a significant influence on migration aspirations as well as on facilitation of more migration (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:40; Kurekova, 2011:10).

Additionally, the answers of the Uzbek busboys also confirm that many Uzbeks prefer Turkey over Russia in recent years although Russia has been the main destination country for the majority of migrants from all CIS member states for the

⁶⁶ Original sentences in Turkish: *“Rusya’ya gitmek istemedim. Burası (Türkiye’de) restoranlar, orası (Rusya’da) hep inşaat. İnşaatte çalışmak istemedim. Orda (Rusya’da) lokantalar çok az. Başka iş az. Kendi adamlarını çalıştırıyorlar (Ruslar).”*

past decades (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:54). On the one hand, such statements as “*They (Russians) employ their own men*” actually indicate that exclusion and discrimination are parts of Uzbek labor migrants’ experiences in Russia. As mentioned previously⁶⁷, this issue was discussed in various studies which assert that Central Asian migrants face with anti-migrant sentiments, structural constraints, widespread xenophobia, and discriminatory attitudes in Russia (Urinboyev, 2021; 2018; 2016; Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016; Alexseev, 2011). In contrast, they are tolerated well by the society in Turkey as claimed in this thesis on the grounds of shared ancestry, religion, history, and culture. The responses of the Uzbek interviewees actually confirm that they do not experience any conflicts with their employers, co-workers or customers in the restaurants in Balgat.

On the other hand, what is termed as “*identity issues*” in the interviews implies the legal requirements and obligations that migrants have to comply with in Russia. Thus, besides such a negative social environment, migrants are also provided with a highly restrictive legal environment (Urinboyev, 2018:33). These strict laws cause many migrants to have an irregular status as soon as they cannot get work or residence permit (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:116). According to Bashirov (2018), strict immigration rules and extreme measures implemented in Russia are based on the strong securitization efforts, whereas Turkey offers a much more welcoming environment in which Uzbek nationals are even granted with a visa-free entry for ninety days. Moreover, lack of official audits in the restaurant sector in which significant number of migrants irregularly work in the front line also tells that there is a sharp difference between Russian and Turkish migration management systems with regards to Uzbek labor migrants.

In light of all, it can be concluded that there is a specific migration system and a solid and informal migrant network in the case of Uzbek busboys in Ankara. In addition, although they similarly shared the idea that there are also Uzbek women who came to Ankara to work, none of them had any female relative, friend, or acquaintance. Moreover, all said that they do not know any Uzbeks who came to Turkey as a

⁶⁷ See page 12, section 1.4 of the thesis.

family, but the people they knew were all alone. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that network of Uzbek labor migrants in the service sector who work in restaurants in Balgat district of Ankara is constituted mainly – and may be only – by males.

4.1.1.4. Current Job as Busboy

*“My friend came (to Ankara), said that
there is job, so I came for it.”⁶⁸
(Uzbek Busboy-1, 23 years old)*

As specified in former sections, it was found out that the interviewed migrants with Uzbek nationality actually work as busboys for supporting the service in the restaurants, which is a lower position than waiters. Furthermore, the only reason for them to come to Turkey was just to earn money. They could earn more money in a shorter time period and that was presented as the reason for migrating to Turkey to work.

Working as a busboy in the restaurant sector in Ankara – or working in the construction sector in Russia which was mentioned as the alternative option by the interviewed Uzbeks – are actually jobs which belong to the secondary labor market. As described in the Dual Labor Market Theory, the jobs in the secondary market offer low wages, inferior social status, instable employment, limited opportunities for skill acquisition and lack of upward occupational mobility, all of which are accepted only by those with marginal commitments (Piore 1979; 1986:24; Gurieva and Dzhioev, 2015:104; McCollum and Findlay, 2015:429). As Piore (1979) claims, these are the positions in which national workers refuse to take part unless they have marginal commitment for some reason. However, migrants who arrive within the aim of saving some money and then returning accept all these negative conditions because, as explained in the Dual Labor Market Theory (Piore, 1979) they only see those jobs as a means of earning money for temporary period and do not evaluate in terms of status or prestige (Gurieva and Dzhioev, 2015:104). Moreover, those jobs are better paying compared to the ones in migrants’ homelands – which is clearly

⁶⁸ Original sentence in Turkish: "Arkadaş (Ankara'ya) geldi, gel iş var dedi, ona geldim."

confirmed during the interviews with Uzbek busboys – and thus, migrants are willing to accept them. In this evaluation, Piore (1979) believes that migrants use a “*dual frame of reference*” as they compare the conditions in the destination with the ones in their origin countries (Wright and Clibborn, 2019:7).

The interviewed Uzbeks were asked about the way they find job as busboy and their answers indeed indicated how the network between Uzbek labor migrants operates. All respondents similarly shared that they had a friend, acquaintance or relative working in the same restaurant and helped them get the job. One interviewee stated that “*My friend came (to Ankara), said that there is job, so I came for it*”. Likewise, as expressed, their friends, relatives or acquaintances call them and ask whether there is a vacant position before migrating. Also, sometimes the interviewees call their friends, relatives, or acquaintances to invite them when there is a vacancy they know. Moreover, when they become unemployed, they call their friends to ask whether there is a job for them. Hence, it can be understood one more time that migrant network is highly significant for finding or changing their jobs.

*“A friend of mine was working in this restaurant. Now he went to the homeland. He helped me. I was working in another place previously. It was a small restaurant. Then to this one (to this restaurant). I found my first job in two weeks with the help of a friend.”*⁶⁹ (Uzbeks Busboy-5, 21 years old)

*“An acquaintance from school was here (in Ankara). It has been two years since he came. He invited... My cousin was working here (at this restaurant) and he called. Before this one, I worked in ... (another kebab restaurant).”*⁷⁰ (Uzbek Busboy-6, 24 years old)

⁶⁹ Original sentences in Turkish: “*Bir arkadaşım çalışıyordu bu restoranda. Şimdi memlekete gitti. O yardımcı oldu. Önce başka yerde çalışıyordum. Küçük bir restorandı. Sonra buraya (bu restorana). İlk işimi iki haftada buldum arkadaş yardımıyla.*”

⁷⁰ Original sentences in Turkish: “*Bir tane tanıdık vardı okuldan (Ankara’da). İki senedir gelmişti. O çağırırdı... Amcaoğlu burada (bu restoranda) çalışıyordu, o çağırırdı. Burdan önce ...’de çalıştım (başka kebabçı).*”

One interviewee told that it is his second job in two years in Turkey, and his first job was the same in another restaurant. Since he was experienced for this job, his current employer accepted him immediately. Another respondent said that before his current job, he worked as a busboy in a cafe-bar in Bahçeli, and after a while he became the head of busboys and then he started working at the bar, all of which shows he was promoted in his work. However, he quit that job due to long working hours which were between 7 in the morning and 1-2 a.m. the other day. On the other hand, it was learnt both from the Uzbek busboys and their employers that none of the respondents has work permit. An interviewee stated that he does not need to have a work permit as he will turn back soon. Thus, they were all employed without a work permit and consequently without insurance. Moreover, the visa of the majority had already expired. According to the Turkish LFIP⁷¹, they fell into the irregular status because of staying with an expired visa and working without official permits. Thus, the field research confirmed that they entered Turkey with visa but stayed and worked irregularly.

Despite working without legal documents, the Uzbek busboys in restaurants of Balgat nevertheless work in front of the customers. In other words, they work in a position in which they are in constant communication with the customers. Considering the specifics of Balgat district which is especially the lunch area for the state officials working in the public offices around, it is likely that Uzbek busboys come across with those customers who are well aware of their irregular status. Even more, there is a police station on the main boulevard of Balgat near the interviewed restaurants. Although their foreign identity is physically visible and customers might be aware their irregular employment, Uzbeks are still allowed to work as busboys. Unlike other groups of migrants, Uzbek migrants are not seen or perceived as foreigners, and the local people as well as the public officials turn a blind eye on them. As the presence of Uzbeks in restaurants is not paid official or societal attention, their contribution is also regarded as an invisible phenomenon. Moreover, these Uzbek migrants are rendered invisible by the state as they are not counted in official statistics or considered in labor policies (Agarwala, 2009:319). Thus, they are

⁷¹ See page 9, section 1.3 of the thesis.

“invisible” in their position in the sense that they do not draw attention, and both the state and the society turn a blind eye on Uzbek busboys. One reason for their invisibility is that they are also more “tolerable” in the perception of society due to having common ancestry, closer culture, similar religious belief, shared history and ability to adapt more easily. Thanks to the proximity between Uzbek and Turkish languages, the Uzbeks are able to learn Turkish faster than other migrant populations, which is also seen in the interviews. Additionally, Uzbek community in Turkey is smaller than some other groups and they are not considered as permanent stayers, and consequently, they are not perceived as a threat by the society. On top of all, Uzbeks are more “tolerable” in restaurants also because they are more docile due to their irregular status and economic needs, which will be discussed in following sections.

At this point, it must also be highlighted that the restaurants in which Uzbek labor migrants are employed do serve particular types of more traditional food, and this way, target a specific group of customers. That is, as seen in the field research, Uzbek busboys were employed mostly in “kebab restaurants” which are preferred more by middle and lower-middle class customers with conservative lifestyles, and it is not a coincidence that Balgat district hosts this type of restaurants rather than, for instance, clubs or sushi bars. The indicators for mostly targeting conservative customers include, for example, alcohol-free menus or an additional room for praying in the restaurants (Akçaoğlu, 2017:102). Moreover, those restaurants in which Uzbeks were working mainly offer traditional food with such dishes as kebab, lahmacun or künefe, which indicates certain cultural signs. Thus, in addition to the specifics of Balgat, the cultural disposition of “kebab restaurants” also contributes to the “tolerability” and “invisibility” of Uzbeks. In fact, the cultural codes prevailing in those restaurants and the ones brought by Uzbeks are highly matching. According to Bourdieu (1990; cited in Lofton and Davis, 2015:216), the tastes, perceptions and acts of persons are constituted through their encounters with outer constraints and through cognitive processes in which they grasp their social world in a process which is called “*habitus*”. Thus, *habitus* is the instillation of certain perception and appreciation categories through which persons recognize, value and act (Kim, 2018:276). This way, *habitus* implies people’s different ways of thinking and acting because of having varying life experiences in distinct social structures (Bourdieu,

1990; cited in Lofton and Davis, 2015:216). Considering that Uzbek and Turkish people have a shared ancestry, history, culture, and religion – all of which increases the societal toleration for Uzbeks in Turkey as discussed, the *habitus* of Uzbek migrants shows certain commonalities with the tastes, perceptions and actions of the targeted customers of kebab restaurants. Starting from physical postures to the ways of talking, all the signs denoting the *habitus* of Uzbeks are highly concerted with the cultural codes embedded in the context of kebab restaurants. Hence, in Bourdieusian sense, it is possible to comprehend that the *habitus* of Uzbek labor migrants and the expected behaviors in “kebab restaurants” are quite compatible with each other.

It was learned that all the Uzbek busboys work for twelve hours a day, starting at 10:00 in the morning until 22:00. They said that it is a tiring job with long working hours, but then added such comments as that all the jobs are tiring and they can handle it. As a matter of fact, they all stated that they are content with their jobs. Moreover, except for one interviewee, the rest of the respondents did not want to change their current jobs. These comments tell that they are not maltreated or abused by their employers or co-workers while working as busboys. As such, none of the interviewed Uzbeks mentioned about delays or cuts in their payments, feeling of discrimination or disturbance, or open abuse and threats due to their irregular status, which seems to be contrary to what is experienced by the Uzbek labor migrants in Russia. As Urinboyev and Eraliev (2022:64) state, “*Uzbek migrants, like other Central Asian migrants, experience difficult living and working conditions in Moscow, including discrimination, hazardous working conditions and physical violence*”. They deal with such challenges as “*nonpayment of salaries, police corruption, exploitation and forced labor*” in Russia (Urinboyev and Eraliev, 2022:60). Therefore, such smoother and relatively more secure working environment offered to Uzbek busboys in the kebab restaurants of Ankara appears as another pull-factor which contributes to the concentration of Uzbeks in the sector.

Also, the interviewees similarly told that they have only one day off, and the off day of the week differed from one another. Furthermore, they all similarly expressed that they try not to spend money on their off day and this way, their wage is sufficient in their opinion. Although it was not possible to ask to all interviewees about the amount they earn from their job, it is around 70-90 Turkish Liras per Diem based on

answers of two respondents. In addition, they also obtain some money from the tips. An interviewee stated that he earns less compared to his Turkish colleagues; however, he was not aware of the amount they obtain. Another respondent expressed that his Turkish colleagues get their wages monthly, but they earn daily and that creates a difference in the amount they receive. There were also some interviewees who believed that they earn the same amount of wage as their Turkish colleagues. It is not possible to infer whether there is a wage difference between Uzbek migrants and their Turkish co-workers.

When they were asked whether they want to change their current jobs and find another one, they all similarly answered negatively, and stated that they want to continue working at their current workplaces and then turn back to their countries. None of them had problems with their current employers, although the presence of the employer during one of the interviews must be reminded. One interviewee told that he has been working there for 14-15 months, whereas there were others who have been employed in the same place for 3 months and for 1 month. It must be added that during some interviews, the Uzbek migrants were so confident in saying that they would have left their job if they had had a problem with their employers or working conditions. It can be assumed that these respondents have this opinion on the basis of effectiveness of their networks in finding job. In other words, they were capable of swiftly finding the same position in another restaurant thanks to their networks, and that is why they could change their job if they were not content with it.

Similarly in all interviews, respondents expressed that they do not want their siblings to come to Turkey to work like themselves. One interviewee said that he does not want her parents to come even for touristic purposes because he works all day long. Those answers indeed imply that they actually might not be that content with their jobs, especially because of the long working hours. On the other hand, not wanting to any family members to come also implies their temporary presence in Turkey.

It was learned that the siblings of respondents are either older than them, married and taking care of their own families, or younger and going to school instead of working. That is why they all stated that they send money to their parents on a regular basis. When the interviewees were asked about how they send money to their families, they

explained that they send most part of their earnings by changing them to US dollars first. As expressed, some of them send money monthly; the others do it once every couple of months depending on the need. Common for all, they save their earnings throughout the month, change them to dollars and then send them to their families in Uzbekistan. Four of the interviewees informed that they use banks to send money; but one told that he saves money until he has 300-400 dollars and then sends it through an intermediate company in Kızılay. Also, it was stated by two respondents that there is a private bank in Kızılay which is operational in money transfers between Turkic countries. As mentioned previously, it is comprehended that these respondents referred to an intermediary company which covertly facilitates remittance transaction from Turkey to Uzbekistan.

Looking at all the information obtained from the Uzbek busboys during the field research, it is understood that employment of Uzbek labor migrants in restaurants of Ankara happens through migrant networks rather than – legal or illegal – intermediary companies or persons. That is, Uzbek busboys participate in the sector mainly through their friends, acquaintances, relatives, or fellow townsmen, which seems like a system operating with solidarity and mutual trust instead of financial gains and profits. Moreover, none of the interviewed Uzbeks mentioned or give hints to other kinds of facilitators in their employment, and therefore, it can be assumed that illicit networks or profit-seeking intermediaries do not have a role in the employment process of Uzbeks in restaurant sector. On the other hand, two respondents similarly mentioned a bank-like company located in Kızılay (central district of Ankara) which facilitates money transfer from Turkey to Uzbekistan. As understood, although there is no intermediary in their employment process, this private firm works as an intermediary in the flow of remittances. Such descriptions for this firm as bank-like or courier-like might indicate the clandestine nature of the business in which money transaction from Turkey to Uzbekistan is not reflected in the official system. This means, part of the remittance money that Uzbekistan receives from Uzbek labor migrants is actually not visible in the economy. Thus, it is very likely that the amount of remittances that Uzbekistan receives is greater than it is officially known.

Additionally, these companies facilitating remittance transaction or visa acquisition which were resorted to by some of the interviewed Uzbeks also point out the presence of a migration industry which contains various actors acquiring financial benefit by providing different kinds of services throughout the migration process. According to Sorensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen (2012:2), emergence of migration industry is indeed inevitable since there is an organized migration movement with social networks and transnational connections. It is discussed in many studies – most of which focuses on irregular migration – that migration industry is constituted by migration facilitators such as recruitment agencies, contractors, visa facilitation companies, money providers, travel agents, transportation companies, false document producers, smugglers, remittance-carrying courier firms, and experts providing counselling services (Debonneville, 2021:2; Sorensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2012:1-2). These actors in the migration industry play an important role in management and facilitation of migration as well as in shaping the movement patterns and migrant identities (Debonneville, 2021:4). Though their impact is not that notable in the case of interviewed Uzbek migrants, it can nevertheless be perceived that a migration industry with such actors as remittance carrying or visa facilitating firms has unsurprisingly begun to appear in the *migration system* (Mabogunje, 1970) formed between Ankara, Turkey and certain parts of Uzbekistan.

It was commonly stressed during interviews that, on their off days, they sleep more, spend time with friends, and go out but stay in the near circle. It was mentioned that they sleep until afternoon so that they rest well and that they skip one meal and save more money. As stated, they sometimes cook at home and prepare a dinner table together with their friends on their off day. Also, they all said that they spend time in parks or walk around the streets when they go out. As understood, even when they go out, they choose places in which they do not have to spend money. Living with minimum expenditure and saving as much of their earnings as possible, these Uzbeks postpone “good days” to a later period of time. In other words, with a sojourner mentality, they expect to have better life experiences when they return to their homelands. Thus, they might suffer during their sojourn in Ankara, but they endure these conditions patiently to create a better life for them and their household members in Uzbekistan.

Despite all the mentioned dynamics, the field research indicated that labor migration flow from Uzbekistan to Ankara has slowed down compared to previous years due to devaluation of Turkish Lira against US Dollar even in the pre-pandemic period. In fact, one interviewee said that *“they no longer come from hometown. 2-3 children used to come monthly, but now only one child comes in 2-3 months.”* Another respondent stated that he told his older brothers not to come as the dollar is more expensive. Instead, the interviewed Uzbek migrants claimed that Uzbek people again prefer Kazakhstan or Russia to work or stay in Uzbekistan.

4.1.2. The Demand Side: Employers Taking Advantage of Uzbeks’ Irregular Employment

*“One (Uzbek) person does the job of two men.”*⁷²

As mentioned above, face-to-face interviews with owners of the restaurants who are the employers of Uzbek busboys were conducted before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Employing migrants irregularly without fulfilling legal requirements, the restaurant owners are in fact difficult-to-reach research subjects as explained in the methodology section. However, considering all the specifics in the case of restaurants, the employers gave consent to conduct interviews, which significantly contributed to the novelty of this thesis. Before the pandemic, five employers were interviewed inside their restaurants. Once the pandemic started, it was possible to carry out an interview with the same set of questions with only one employer. All six employers were males, at the average age of 43, owners of restaurants in Balgat district of Ankara. The type of food served in the restaurants as well as the number of total employees differed from one another. However, it was possible to understand that on average, one out of five employees in visited restaurants were of foreign origin – mostly from Uzbekistan, but also some from Afghanistan.

It should initially be mentioned that general opinion of the employers with whom I interviewed was that it is a risk having Uzbeks to work in their workplace and they

⁷² Original sentence in Turkish: *"Bir kişi (Özbek) iki adamın işini yapıyor"*

were well aware of the consequences of this risk. This was the very first thing they expressed in similar terms when we started interviewing, and by risk, they meant the risk of facing legal sanctions. In addition, they were aware that many other restaurants and cafes in Ankara have Uzbek waiters. As a matter of fact, during their explanations, they were pointing out the presence of Uzbek employees in other workplaces all around, and as conceived, it was one of the factors which encouraged them to employ persons irregularly to work in front of customers.

“There is an Uzbek employee in ninety-five out of hundred workplaces on this street. I do not think that there will be problems with the customers. If problem happens, it will be with the state due to audit”⁷³ (Restaurant owner, 35 years old).

“Actually, we are taking risks. You cannot just say there are (Uzbeks) everywhere. There might be a thousand of them on this street”⁷⁴ (Restaurant owner, 38 years old).

In a similar vein, due to the fact that it was a common practice in a significant number of workplaces, the employers were confident and open to having employees without work. For the same reason, they also gave consent to conduct interviews with them and their Uzbek employees. More importantly, the fact that irregularly employed Uzbek migrants were highly common in many restaurants – especially in the main boulevard of Balgat where the field research of this thesis took place – also implied the lack of official auditing practices of the state. Therefore, it can be understood that it is an issue which is deliberately overlooked by the Turkish authorities. Such loose auditing practices are indeed the outcome of immigration policies which are determined in line with the demands of the market. To clarify, regardless of how strict immigration legislation is, states might intentionally turn a blind eye to particular sectors or groups to satisfy the needs of the market for the sake of economy especially when there is indigenous labor shortage.

⁷³ Original sentences in Turkish: "Bu caddede yüz işyerinin doksanbeşinde Özbek çalışan var. Müşterilerle sıkıntı olacağını düşünmüyorum. Olursa devletle denetimden olur."

⁷⁴ Original sentences in Turkish: "Aslında risk taşıyoruz. Her yerde var diyemezsiniz. Bu caddede belki bin tane çıkar."

Secondly, all the restaurant owners complained about being not able to find a Turkish person to hire as busboy and about unsteady work attendance of the Turks. Moreover, they all agreed on that Turkish youth are not as hardworking and attentive as Uzbeks. Thus, the interviewed employers were very pessimistic about the Turkish youth who would have worked instead of Uzbeks, and they highly appreciated the work ethic of Uzbeks. One employer even told that he applied to İŞKUR⁷⁵ to find busboys but received no applications from Turks. Since they could not find a Turkish person to employ regularly, they had to hire Uzbeks to fill the position. Also, it was even stated that they – as restaurant owners – would have been in a very difficult position if Uzbeks had not been here. While having such opinions, one of the interviewed employers admitted that working as busboy means carrying out a heavier workload, and yet, the same person continued to blame Turkish people for leaving their job in a short period of time.

“We cannot find a Turkish employee. If we can, it does not last long. They do not want to work for 12 hours and receive 80 Turkish Liras daily. Uzbeks persevere; they are honest. We are very content with their work. One person does the job of two men. They do what they are told like an orderly. They do not loaf... We cannot find a Turkish employee to work as a busboy. Busboy has a heavier job. Turkish employee works for one or two weeks, and leaves without noticing. He does not work like Uzbek, he loafs around. Uzbeks are very good. They think that they must deserve every last penny. They never complain. Twelve-hour (work) is not easy”⁷⁶ (Restaurant owner, 38 years old).

Similar to the assertions of Piore (1979), Turkish people refuse to participate in restaurant sector due to the unpleasant terms and conditions it offers. As he explains,

⁷⁵ Turkish Employment Agency.

⁷⁶ Original sentences in Turkish: “Türk çalışan bulamıyoruz. Bulursak uzun ömürlü olmuyor. 12 saat çalışıp günlük 80 TL almak istemiyor. Özbekler sebat ediyorlar, dürüstler. Çalışmalarından çok memnunuz. Bir kişi iki adamın işini yapıyor. Söyleneni emir eri gibi yapıyorlar. Kaytarmaları yok... Türk çalışan komi olarak bulamıyoruz. Kominin işi biraz daha ağır. Türk çalışan 1-2 hafta çalışıyor, haber vermeden gidiyor. Özbek gibi çalışmıyor, kaytarıyor. Özbekler çok iyi. Son kuruşuna kadar hak etmeliyim diye düşünüyor Özbekler. Hiç yakınmaları yok. 12 saat (çalışmak) kolay değil.”

the low wages, inferior social status and lack of opportunities for upward mobility are among the characteristic features of the jobs in the secondary labor market, and the nationals do not accept unless they have a marginal commitment (Piore, 1979; 1986:24; Gurieva and Dzhioev, 2015:104; McCollum and Findlay, 2015:429). As a result of decreasing supply of national workforce, low-skilled migrant labor is increasingly relied on by the employers (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:36), which was indeed the case in the interviewed restaurants. When migrant labor is needed to fill the vacant positions, policies are determined accordingly (Kurekova, 2011:9), and this explains why the restaurants in Balgat do not receive official audits or sanctions for having undocumented employees.

When employers were asked whether there were other employees with different foreign nationalities, three of the respondents stated that they have employees with Afghan nationality. As understood, Uzbeks were working as busboys in the foreground in those restaurants, whereas Afghans were employed in the kitchen, thus not easily seen. Interestingly, many of the interviewed employers more or less similarly answered this question by referring to their opinion on that Uzbeks are cleaner than Syrians and therefore, they would never hire a Syrian in their restaurant. It should be noted that Syrians compose the largest foreign population in Turkey since the conflict their country which began in 2011 and forced millions to seek refuge mostly in neighbouring countries in following years. For the Syrians escaping to Turkey, the government has granted a temporary protection status under LFIP⁷⁷ which entails very different rights and obligations. The comparison of the interviewed employers, therefore, comes from that Syrians are subject to many discussions in economic, social and political spheres due to their crowded population in Turkey. Such statements as “*Uzbeks are cleaner than Syrians*”, on the other hand, points out micro racist attitudes. As Solorzano, Ceja and Yosso (2000:61-62) discusses, racism appears in subtle and covert actions such as private conversations, and such harmless signs of racism created through racial stereotypes constitute racial microaggressions. As the authors claim, such assaults as “*unclean Syrians*” are justified by racial microaggressions and might have important cumulative effects in

⁷⁷ See page 9, section 1.3 of the thesis.

time (Solorzano, Ceja and Yosso, 2000:72). In the case of restaurants, the effect of employers' racial microaggressions against Syrians is actually manifested in their not-preference of Syrian employees even in the absence of labor power supply.

Regarding the employment of Uzbeks, all the employers mentioned that it was the Uzbek persons who came and applied to the job by seeing the advert on the window of restaurant or with the help of their friends who already works there. None of them mentioned the existence of an intermediate company who played a role in the employment of Uzbeks. Instead, they were relying on the network of Uzbeks for hiring new employees when needed. Hence, it is understood that employment of Uzbeks occurs through already existing friend networks and this way, employers could easily find an Uzbek person to hire. Additionally, one interviewee stated that there is a person in one of the workplaces in Balgat who arranges the employment of Uzbeks like an intermediary and places them in jobs in return of some money. However, as this employer told, he did not want to accept this person's offer so that Uzbek boys would not have to give some money to him, but he employed Uzbeks who directly applies to him in order to help them save their money. Nevertheless, this information hints to the possibility that the migration industry – which exists in the migration system between Ankara and Uzbekistan as mentioned above – also include recruitment facilitators which provide employment services to some Uzbeks in likely illicit ways.

“There is a man in ... He gathers them (Uzbeks) and places them in jobs. But he takes money. I did not want the kids' money to be cut off”⁷⁸ (Restaurant owner, 38 years old).

The owner of the first restaurant said that the Uzbek busboy in question works for a couple of months; however, it was found out later while speaking to that Uzbek busboy that it has been 14 months. As understood, the employer preferred to give ambiguous answers due to his hesitations mentioned above. On the other hand, the employer of the restaurant where 5 Uzbek waiters work stated that the longest time

⁷⁸ Original sentences in Turkish: “...’de bir adam var. Bunları (Özbekleri) topluyor, işlere yerleştiriyor. Ama para alıyor. Ben çocukların parası kesilsin istemedim.”

period his Uzbek employees have been there is three months. That is, the longest-serving Uzbek busboy has been working for 3 months in that restaurant. Interestingly, the same interviewee told that he had three female Uzbek employees before, and two of them worked in scullery and the other took care of cleaning. Another interviewed employer stated that his Uzbek worker with whom I interviewed has been there for 1 month, but he did not mention the other Uzbek busboy who was present at the restaurant. This respondent also said that he had other Uzbek employees in the past. Considering all, it was possible to obtain the information that the restaurant owners employ Uzbek migrants very frequently, yet they were ambiguous in their answers on total number of their migrant employees due to their hesitation from legal consequences. Additionally, it is perceived that there is a high turnover rate of migrant employees in the restaurants and migrant networks seem to contribute to this situation significantly. That is, not only Uzbeks utilize their networks to change their jobs, but also employers who are not content with their Uzbek busboys might apply to Uzbek migrants' networks to search for new employees. Regarding this point, the possible side-effect of migrant networks on the disposability of migrant employees might be questioned.

“We try him a couple of days and change him if we are not happy. He (busboy) must be clean, respectful, fast... If one (Uzbek) leaves, we hire any person applying. As long as he is presentable and has morals”⁷⁹ (Restaurant owner, 65 years old).

On the other hand, when the respondents were asked about the advantages of employing persons with Uzbek origin, they commonly expressed that Uzbeks work much better than Turks. One employer stated that his Uzbek employee was more attentive and more loyal. In fact, Uzbek person's loyalty was intentionally highlighted a couple of times in this interview. It was even stated that *“the Uzbeks are born to be waiters”⁸⁰*. At the same time, it was told that Uzbeks were employed

⁷⁹ Original sentences in Turkish: *“Birkaç gün bakıp deniyoruz, memnun olmasak zaten değiştiriyoruz. (Kominin) Temiz olması, saygılı, hızlı olması lazım. Birisi ayrılırsa kim başvurursa alıyoruz. Eli yüzü düzgün ve ahlaklı olması yeterli.”*

⁸⁰ Original sentence in Turkish: *“Özbekler garsonluk için yaratılmış.”*

because it was not possible to find a Turkish person to employ for the same position. Another respondent emphasized that Uzbeks persevere and are honest. As such, the employer stated that “One (Uzbek) person does the job of two men”⁸¹. This employer was also aware of how difficult it is to work as a busboy for ten or twelve hours a day. Furthermore, the same respondent was also happy with the fact that Uzbeks call their friends to inform about the vacancy when they will leave their job, and this way, the vacant position could be filled quickly without employer's effort.

*“There is no one who wants to work as busboy. Turkish people do not like (the job). It is due to the cultural structure. Everybody will be doctors... Uzbeks have continuity. If one leaves, at least he calls and someone comes for his place”*⁸² (Restaurant owner, 38 years old).

According to Dual Labor Market Theory (Piore, 1979), the actual reason behind the preference of migrants by the employers is migrants with irregular status provide vulnerable, exploitable, and docile workforce, which serves the benefits of the employers (Wright and Clibborn, 2019:8; Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:36). As such, the employers even depict migrants as having a better work ethic and make selections based on their opinions about nationalities of migrants (McCollum and Findlay, 2015:431). It is possible to understand with these explanations why certain migrant groups are over-represented in particular labor market segments. As a matter of fact, the employers control their migrant workers better when they have irregular status, and thus, reduce labor costs as those migrants cannot have many alternative employment opportunities (Wright and Clibborn, 2019:8) and cannot ask for their rights through official channels. Moreover, the migrant employees have lower expectations because of their dual frame of reference as explained above (Piore, 1979). Furthermore, by not being able to find a Turkish person to work, those employers admit their dependency on migrant labor to fill the gap in their “secondary

⁸¹ Original sentence in Turkish: “Bir kişi (Özbek) iki adamın işini yapıyor”

⁸² Original sentences in Turkish: “Komi olarak çalışmak isteyen yok. Türk insanı beğenmiyor. Kültürel yapıdan kaynaklanıyor. Herkes doktor olacak... Özbeklerde süreklilik var. Biri giderse haber ediyor, yerine biri geliyor en azından.”

labor market” positions (Piore, 1979), and also, they blamed “reluctant” Turkish workers for this dependence while praising the Uzbek migrants. Therefore, considering the vulnerabilities attached to the irregular status as well as their financial needs to be met in a temporary period in the case of Uzbek busboys, it is not surprising to hear that they are more hardworking, more loyal, more attentive, and better persevering. On the other hand, considering the benefits that employers gain by having a migrant without work permit whose labor costs much cheaper, it is also not surprising that the restaurant owners prefer Uzbek busboys.

In a similar vein, the interviewees expressed that they would hire an Uzbek person again if there was a vacant position. Currently, majority of the restaurant owners did not have any vacant position, but one said that he will employ another Uzbek busboy soon. Moreover, all the employers similarly told that they did not witness any problem between the customers and their Uzbek employees. They thought that Uzbek migrants have sufficient Turkish to communicate with the customers. One employer stated that he would pay attention to Turkish speaking skills when hiring a new migrant. As was expressed by the respondents, the only problem they might have had was with the state. Regarding the legal sanctions of employing a foreigner without work permit and insurance, it was learnt that five out of six employers have not received a fine until then, but one told that he previously paid the fine which was around 20.000 Turkish Liras. This employer continued to hire Uzbeks nevertheless, because, as he claimed, he could not find Turkish workers to fill the position. Another respondent stated that his Uzbek worker who has been working in that restaurant for 14 months was not there when the last audit was done. Once again, these comments proved that the state officials carry out audits very rarely and instead, they turn a blind eye to these restaurants with Uzbek busboys.

“Turkish Republic accepts (Uzbeks), they (officials) have to provide jobs. There are (Uzbek) employees everywhere. They (state officials) do not create problems particularly for Uzbeks. We experienced problems (with officials) for Syrians. Being Uzbek is the reason for preference among the foreigners... We have blood

ties with Uzbeks. We can understand each other”⁸³ (Restaurant owner, 42 years old).

The employers also shared their opinion on the employment conditions of their Uzbek workers in Uzbekistan. One said that his Uzbek employee was earning 500 TL per month in Uzbekistan and now this Uzbek person earns minimum wage⁸⁴ in his restaurant. Moreover, the employers commonly had the impression that all Uzbeks in Ankara know each other, and they are acquaintances of each other from Uzbekistan. Additionally, some employers were aware that their Uzbek employee shares their apartments with many others and added that landlords accept to have Uzbeks as tenants because they can ask for higher rent due to the fact that 5-6 of them will share.

“The previously arrived one among them (Uzbeks) rents a flat and takes money from others who come to live with him. The houseowners accept because they rent their flats for higher prices”⁸⁵ (Restaurant owner, 38 years old).

Overall, the data collected during the interviews with employers confirmed the assumptions on that the foreigners with Uzbek nationality are labor migrants who migrate with economic motivations and who seem to be more “tolerable” and “invisible” due to such reasons as their smaller number as a group, their ability to learn Turkish faster and the belief on that they have Turkish origin with common ancestors, culture, and religion. However, it must be highlighted that there are two main subtexts behind the employers’ opinions on why Uzbeks are more preferred. First of all, having admitted the long and exhausting working hours of busboys, all of the interviewed employers similarly criticized Turkish nationals for leaving the job or avoiding from working in that position. In contrast, they praised Uzbeks for their

⁸³ The original sentences in Turkish: “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti kabul ediyor, iş vermek zorunda. Her yerde (Özbek) çalışan var. Özellikle (devlet görevlileri) Özbekler için sıkıntı yaratmıyorlar. Suriyeliler için sıkıntı yaşadığımız oldu. Yabancılar içinde Özbeklik tercih sebebi... Özbeklerle kan bağımız var. Birbirimizi anlayabiliyoruz.”

⁸⁴ The official net minimum wage was 2.020 Turkish Liras in October 2019 when this information was obtained.

⁸⁵ The original sentences in Turkish: “(Özbeklerin) İçlerinden eskiden gelen gidip ev tutuyor, yanına gelenlerden para alıyor. Ev sahipleri daha pahalıdan verdikleri için kabul ediyor.”

endurance and patience in carrying out this difficult task. Rather than different work ethics of Turks and Uzbeks, what makes Uzbeks more docile is the very fact that they are in irregular status. That means, lack of work permit, possibly expired visa, risk of deportation and its consequent fines and entry ban for a period due to the irregularity of their status as migrant, and their economic needs on the top of all, make Uzbeks more patient, hardworking, loyal and docile. Because they are irregular migrants who are in need of earning money and sending to their families while being unprotected by the laws and open for any kind of exploitation and risks, they work for long hours without complaining or having the freedom to easily leave their job. Secondly, as frankly mentioned during the interviews, Uzbeks are preferred instead of Syrians – another migrant group present in Turkey in significant numbers and in need of working. Such opinion is indeed a consequence not only of cultural, ancestral, and linguistic similarity between Turks and Uzbeks, but also of prevailing negative opinions about Syrians in the country⁸⁶. Thus, similar to Piore's (1979) analysis, all of these explain the over-representation of Uzbeks in the restaurant sector.

4.2. During COVID-19: Measures Impacting the Service Sector

4.2.1. Restaurant Visits

As explained above, many measures were introduced within the aim to combat COVID-19 and they were indeed implemented all around the world. It is analyzed by ILO (2021:87) that the employment in the accommodation and food services sectors was the worst affected, which decreased by almost 13%, representing 18 million people worldwide. Among all, closing of borders, lockdowns, curfews and restrictive working hours and methods for restaurants impacted the Uzbek migrants the most. As a result of those measures, many restaurants had to lay off many of their employees in order to get over the economic pressure. According to ILO (2021:77), COVID-19 crisis negatively impacted both the sending and receiving countries. In the receiving end, the sectors which rely on migrant labor had difficulties in

⁸⁶ See Doğan, Fatma and Serdar Ünal. 2021. Suriyeli Göçmenlere Yönelik Ayrımcı, Dışlayıcı Söylem ve Eylemlerin Meşrulaştırıcı Kaynakları: Mardin İli Örneği. *Sosyolojik Bağlam Dergisi*, 2(3):14-40. doi:10.52108/2757-5942.2.3.2

maintaining their workforce, and many migrant workers became unable to send remittance as they lost their income (ILO, 2021:77), which defines the experiences of many Uzbek busboys.

Despite losing their jobs, however, many Uzbek migrants had to stand still because of the strict quarantine practices. Not only they could not find a new place to work, but they also could not go back to their homelands due to travel bans or reduced flight operations. According to IOM (2021:165), the migrant workers – especially low-paid ones working in the informal economy – who stayed in the host country experienced significant financial difficulties during the lockdown measures, and they were excluded from health or unemployment insurances as well as from the health services. The migrants in irregular status also hesitated to approach health institutions for fear of being detained or deported (ibid). As Urinboyev and Eraliev (2022:74) discuss, the lockdown measures implemented for several months made Uzbek migrants remain indoors. The change in the employment and earnings of the Uzbek migrants during the COVID-19 period can also be understood by looking at the remittances sent to Uzbekistan through official channels. As shown in the report of ILO (2021:76-77), remittance inflow to Uzbekistan decreased by 18.2% in 2020 compared to the previous year and made up only 12.1% of the gross domestic product (GDP).

In September and October 2020, which was the time of COVID-19 pandemic and all the restrictions brought with it, six restaurants were visited to observe their situation and to understand whether the sector still benefits from the irregular migrant labor. Rather than asking a set of questions, the interviews were much shorter and in the form of unstructured small talks with the employers of the restaurants. It was aimed to visit the same restaurants in which interviews were carried out with Uzbek migrants and their employers; however, one restaurant was completely closed, and the employer in one other did not give consent, which shows the attitude change because of the economic pressures caused by the pandemic.

It was generally expressed by the employers that most of the Uzbek employees returned to Uzbekistan before countries closed their borders and put strict restrictions on people's mobility. Moreover, all of the restaurants had to reduce the number of

their employees both because of the economic consequences of the pandemic and because of the new operating style in which only take-away or home-delivery services were allowed in line with the officially imposed measures against the pandemic. In other words, the restaurants were allowed only to provide take-away or home-delivery services, which could be carried out with less staff. It was also unanimously stated by the employers that –migrant or not – they were not planning to hire a new employee in the near future.

In one of the restaurants, the employer stated that there was a total of 42 employees of which 7-8 were Uzbeks in the pre-pandemic period, but then the number of employees was reduced to 15. As he informed, out of 15 employees, there were two Uzbeks working in the kitchen to clean the dishes and two Afghans working by the stove. Another employer expressed that their Uzbek employees left themselves when they had to reduce their wages.

On the other hand, two of the interviewed employers claimed that Uzbeks do not come anymore, but Afghans took their places. Nevertheless, the common idea of many employers was that there were still Uzbek employees prevailing in the sector. Furthermore, it was again stated by many employers that they would not prefer to hire Syrians even in the absence of Uzbeks.

Considering all, the collected data from short interviews during the observation visits was not sufficient to draw certain conclusions. Even so, it was understood that despite the shrinking number of employees, Uzbek migrants – and also Afghans in some restaurants – were still employed in the sector and preferred against foreigners with Syrian nationality. As a matter of fact, considering their lower cost for the workplace, Uzbek migrants might even be more preferred while struggling with the economic consequences of the pandemic.

4.3. After COVID-19: Removal of the Measures and the “Re-Normalization” Process

4.3.1. Employers: Still Preferring Uzbeks

As explained in the methodology section, the employers of the same restaurants were interviewed once again in October 2021 with a different set of semi-structured

questions to understand the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the restaurant sector which benefits from migrant labor. Also, it was aimed to see whether there is a change in the situation of Uzbeks in the sector. A total of five interviews were conducted in this round of research. During these interviews, the strict measures taken against the pandemic were removed by the government in the process that was called "re-normalization". In this process, the restaurants were allowed to have the customers once again.

One of the employers stated that he still has three migrant employees. He expressed that they are Uzbeks and Afghans but did not specify their numbers. According to this interviewee, sharp increase in the exchange rate between Turkish Lira and US dollar is the main determinant in Uzbek migration for employment in restaurants. It must be noted that, differently from the first round of interviews conducted before the pandemic, the employer was rather reluctant to give information, and provided only short answers to the questions. Thus, the observed change in his attitude is worth mentioning.

In another interview, on the other hand, the employer was highly honest to admit that the two Uzbek employees in his restaurant were especially preferred due to their lower cost despite reducing the number of other employees during the pandemic. That is, although some of the staff was dismissed, Uzbek migrants were kept during and after the pandemic period. Moreover, he expressed that the number of employees was increased once again, and Uzbeks and Afghans were more preferred, in his terms, "*because they are cheaper*". Additionally, it was stated that Uzbeks continue to call their friends for the vacant positions. This employer also stressed the high turnover rate in the sector not only among Uzbeks, but also among their Turkish employees regardless of the impacts of COVID-19. In his words:

“The staff was changed according to their job position. Two Uzbeks working at the grill was preferred as they cost cheaper. Dismissals were made in line with the needs... Number of staff was increased after the opening. We considered Uzbeks and Afghans because they are cheaper. They work for minimum wage without insurance... Staff change happens a lot apart from the corona

*effect. Both in Turks and in Uzbeks.*⁸⁷ (Restaurant owner, 38 years old)

In yet another restaurant, the employer said that he would not prefer Afghans because, as he stated, they are more ignorant, whereas he believed that Uzbeks adjust better and more open for learning. The same employer also added that Turks ask for high wages and cost significantly more than the Uzbeks. Moreover, he stated that his Uzbek employees receive daily wages in this restaurant, and that is the reason why Uzbeks prefer working in restaurants according to him. This way, he pointed out to the further segmentation of the labor market in which the segments for Turks, Uzbeks and Afghans differ. In his words:

*“Afghans are more ignorant compared to Uzbeks. Uzbeks adjust better due to the Russian influence, but Afghans cannot be in service sector. They can be in rough jobs such as construction. Uzbeks are open for learning... Turks ask for very high prices. A cook costs to the business not less than ten thousand. The costs of Turks are very high... Uzbeks prefer this sector because they receive daily payments. They do not go to other sectors because they might not get the salary.”*⁸⁸ (Restaurant owner, 38 years old)

It was expressed by another employer that they tried to financially support the Uzbek employees in that restaurant, but some of them returned to their countries on their own accord. Although there was higher number of Uzbeks compared to Afghans in this restaurant in the pre-pandemic period, the employer informed that the number of Afghan employees is higher in the recent situation. He stated that:

⁸⁷ Original sentences in Turkish: “Görev alanına göre değişti çalışanlar. İki tane Özbek ızgaracı ucuz oldukları için tercih sebebi oldu. İşten çıkarmalar ihtiyaca göre yapıldı... Açılma sonrası tekrar çalışan sayısı arttırıldı. Özbek ve Afganları değerlendirdik daha ucuz oldukları için. Asgari ücretle sigortasız çalışıyorlar... Korona etkisi dışında da çalışan değişimi çok oluyor. Türkte de, Özbekte de.”

⁸⁸ Original sentences in Turkish: “Afganlar Özbeklere göre daha cahil. Özbekler Rus etkisiyle daha çok uyum sağlıyor ama Afganlar hizmet sektöründe olmaz. İnşaat gibi kaba işlerde çalışabilirler. Özbekler öğrenmeye açık... Türkler çok yüksek fiyatlar istiyor. Aşçı gelse 10 binden aşağı gideri olmuyor işletmeye. Türklerin maliyeti çok yüksek... Özbekler günlük ödeme aldıkları için bu sektörü tercih ediyorlar. Başka sektörde maaşı alamaz diye gitmiyorlar.”

*“We made an agreement with a market, they bought their needs, and we paid their rents. We supported them so that they would not starve and would sustain. We did not dismiss the foreigners, they left themselves. It was their own decision.”*⁸⁹ (Restaurant owner, 42 years old)

The lastly interviewed employer, on the other hand, claimed that Uzbeks stopped coming and asking for job, and told that he does not have migrant employee anymore.

In general, it was observed that the employers were more reluctant in their answers, and they did not have a consensus on the employment of migrants. Nevertheless, it was inferred that there were still Uzbek migrants occupying positions in the restaurant sector along with the Afghans who were mentioned more frequently. That is, the Afghans' presence in the sector has become more conspicuous. Also, it was possible to understand that irregularly employing migrant labor was still preferred during and after the pandemic process as a solution for the economic pressures due to their lower cost for the employers.

⁸⁹ Original sentences in Turkish: *“Bir marketle anlaştık, ihtiyaçlarını aldılar, ev kiralarnı ödedik. Aç kalmaları devam edebilsinler diye destek olduk. Yabancılardan kendi isteyen ayrıldı, yoksa biz çıkarmadık. Kendileri karar verdi.”*

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1. General Overview of the Thesis

Looking at the thesis structure, first of all, introduction chapter consist of the discussions and explanations on the consequences of globalization with regards to international migration movements, labor migration, informal labor market of Turkey, labor migration flows from Uzbekistan and the impacts of COVID-19. After these, the aim, research questions, originality and structure of the thesis are also presented in the first chapter. The second chapter includes the theoretical framework used in the thesis and presents theories focusing on macro (structural), mezzo (relational) and micro (agency) levels in analyzing labor migration. The theories introduced in the second chapter are Dual Labor Market Theory by Piore (1979), Migration Network Theory (Massey et al., 1993), Migration Systems Theory (Mabogunje, 1970) and New Economics of Labor Migration Theory (Stark, 1991). In the third chapter, methodology and the methods employed in the thesis are explained together with the introduction of the interviewees, the field and research tool. Moreover, the strengths and limitations of the employed methods are elucidated. The fourth chapter includes the discussions on the findings together with the theory. The discussion is presented in three parts as before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. A general overview of the thesis, conclusive remarks and the recommendations for future research constitute the last and fifth chapter.

The discussion in this thesis endeavored to account for the dynamics and perpetuation of a migration movement with specific features between Turkey and Uzbekistan. In particular, the main purpose of the thesis was to examine the restaurant sector in Balgat district of Ankara which operates within the irregular

employment of Uzbek migrants. To do so, field research was conducted in a three-year time span which coincides with the period in which COVID-19 pandemic was effective worldwide. The discussion was carried out to reflect both the demand side by analyzing the findings obtained from interviews with the employers, and the migrants-side by analyzing the findings from the interviews with Uzbek busboys. That means, the research was carried out in the field of irregular migration in which it is very difficult to establish communication and ask for consent to take part in the research. Both irregularly employed Uzbeks and their employers are difficult-to-reach subjects considering the legal consequences; however, the specific context of restaurants where Uzbeks work in communication with customers made this thesis quite unique. Moreover, the novelty of the thesis comes especially from the data obtained during the interviews with employers who usually are not expected to give consent. Thus, with a novel field research and a solid theoretical background, it is aimed in this thesis to focus on a recent phenomenon and make an original contribution to the literature.

Theories with different levels of analysis were utilized to better interpret the data and establish connections between them. The main theoretical framework of the thesis was based on the assertions of the Dual Labor Market Theory by Michael Piore (1979), which provided structural level explanations to discuss the thesis topic. On the other hand, Migrant Network Theory (Massey et al., 1993), Migrant Systems Theory (Mabogunje, 1970) and New Economics of Labor Migration Theory (Stark, 1991) were used to analyze the data obtained from the field research. By doing so, it is intended to show the structural determinants both at the sending and receiving ends of the movement as well as migrants' motives, experiences, relations and decision-making processes before and after migration, all of which gave significant hints for the initiation and perpetuation of the labor migration movement in question. Furthermore, by combining the field research with theoretical analysis in a relatively long time span and under the influence of a unique globally-impacting event (the COVID-19 pandemic), the assumptions of the mentioned theories are tested, and the continuation of migration processes over time and through particular corridors is explained.

It is estimated, and then confirmed by the field research, that migrants with Uzbek nationality come to Turkey with economic motivations to work for a specific period of time and then return to their countries. It is claimed that Uzbeks are more “tolerable” and “invisible” thanks to the shared ancestry, culture and religion, their smaller population size, and their ability to learn Turkish faster. Consequently, they are not perceived as aliens or a threat, and thus, they are more tolerated by society. They are defined as “invisible” because local people as well as state authorities do not pay attention although they have a physically visible foreign identity and work in front of the customers in restaurants. Moreover, their undocumented participation in the Turkish labor market and contribution especially to the service sector are regarded as invisible phenomenon which are not targeted in policies. This way, their foreign identity remains invisible as both the society and the authorities turn a blind eye on Uzbeks.

With these estimations and the theoretical foundation, the thesis asked the following research questions and made the conclusions presented below: Why are Uzbek nationals preferred in restaurants? How do they decide and migrate to Turkey/Ankara? What is the role of the family-kin-friendship networks? Why do Uzbek labor migrants prefer to work in restaurants in the Balgat District of Ankara? How did COVID-19 pandemic affect the employment of Uzbek migrants in restaurants?

5.2. Conclusions on the Findings

Considering the theories and the findings of the field research, it is possible to make conclusions from two angles.

Firstly, it is understood that there are several reasons why Uzbek labor migrants come to Ankara to work in restaurants as busboys. As supported with the findings of the field research, the Uzbek migrants who work in restaurants as busboys are labor migrants who migrate for a certain period for the sole purpose of earning money and supporting their lives back in Uzbekistan. In that sense, they do not aim to settle permanently, but rather, they plan to return after they earn a pre-determined amount of money. The interviewed Uzbeks were all sending remittances to their families in Uzbekistan by exchanging their earnings from Turkish Lira to US Dollars. Since

they could earn more money by working in Ankara as busboy than doing any job in Uzbekistan, they prefer to come. Moreover, the fact that they can benefit from the flexible visa regime that allows the foreigners with Uzbek nationality to enter Turkey with visa exemption for 90 days in each 180 days must not be disregarded.

Another reason that perpetuates the Uzbek labor migration flow to Ankara is that they have an active and efficient network. As seen in the field research, the Uzbeks utilize the migrant network prevailing in Ankara particularly to find jobs in restaurants. Such networks not only support newly arriving Uzbeks in finding job and housing, but it is also advantageous for the employers who benefit from the migrant network when to replace their employees or find a new person to hire. Hence, it is possible to conclude that existing migrant networks can be a pull factor, influence the aspirations for and the direction of the migration (Massey et al., 1993) and play a significant role in the formation of *migrant systems* (Mabogunje, 1970) as much as they might contribute to the expendability of migrants.

Additionally, the field research also showed that the interviewed Uzbek labor migrants were informed about the sanctions for working without work permits; however, they were also aware of the lack of audits in the restaurant sector. In other words, with the forecast that the audits are rarely carried out, Uzbek migrants continue to migrate to Ankara for working purposes despite the legal consequences of irregular employment such as apprehension, confinement in removal centers, deportation, fines and entry bans.

Furthermore, they believe that the residence permit system in Russia – which is claimed to be the other main option for those Uzbeks searching for job abroad – is much harder to deal with compared to flexible visa regulation and loose audit system in Turkey. They utilize the visa exemption of 90 days for Uzbekistan's regular passport holders while entering to Turkey, and then work without legal permit as state authorities tacitly allow by turning a blind eye. Also, although the working conditions as busboy are notably difficult considering the long working hours and little leisure time in return for minimum wage, the interviewed Uzbeks still thought that they are better than the ones in the construction sector in Russia. In addition to all, the interviewees found it easier to adapt to the social and work life in Turkey

because, as they stated, it is faster for them to learn the language as well as there is culturally more resemblance between Uzbeks and Turks. This finding also proves that Uzbek migrants are more tolerated in Turkey due to such reasons as common ancestry, and cultural and linguistic proximity. Many of the interviewed Uzbek migrants confirmed that they learned Turkish fast and that they are not competent in Russian despite studying it at school.

For all these reasons, as understood, they preferred to come to Turkey to work instead of going to Russia to find a job. However, it should be reminded at this point that the visa policy of Turkey and the exchange rate between Turkish Lira and US Dollar⁹⁰ have a significant impact on the flow of Uzbek labor migrants towards Turkey. Therefore, the findings obtained from the field research carried out for this thesis in the mentioned timeframe may or may not be relevant for the future research depending on the fluctuation of the exchange rate or on the possible changes in the visa regime.

The second angle to make conclusions is on the reasons for employers to prefer Uzbeks. To do so, qualitative interviews in different formats were conducted with employers before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. As discussed, the restaurant owners take certain risks by employing migrants irregularly considering the legal sanctions, but they also have a high benefit. It is understood from the field research that the Uzbek labor migrants are indeed in a vulnerable situation since they need supporting their families by working irregularly without the protection of any kind. They are – as stated by the employers – more obedient, hardworking, and enduring indeed because of their vulnerability. In other words, their vulnerable status renders Uzbek busboys more docile and exploitable, which is highly appreciated by their employers. Moreover, since they are employed irregularly, they cost less. Furthermore, Uzbek migrants constitute an easily replaceable workforce thanks to their well-operating migrant network. In addition to all, they can learn Turkish faster

⁹⁰ US Dollar and Turkish Lira exchange rate was approximately 5.76 at the end of October 2019; 7.56 in March 2020; 7.68 at the end of September 2020; and 9.53 in October 2021, when the field research for this thesis was carried out.

than other groups of migrants as well as they are more tolerated by the locals with whom they are in constant contact in the restaurants. Therefore, as shown in the field research, migrants with Uzbek nationality are particularly preferred by the employers who take the advantage of invisible and tolerable Uzbeks' cheap labor power and efficient networks.

Such preference was implied by the employers also in their negative comments for Syrians as shared in the discussion section. The interviewed restaurant owners shared their views on their reluctance to employ Syrians. However, in their comparison, the Uzbeks are evaluated much more positively, which confirms one more time that the migrants with Uzbek origins are indeed tolerable. On the other hand, the fact that hiring Uzbeks as busboys is a common practice frequently seen in restaurants of Ankara, especially in particular locations, highly contributes to the perpetuation of the practice itself. That is, irregular employment of Uzbek migrants is encouraged by that it is a common practice which can be seen in many restaurants around. Moreover, tacit and deliberate allowance of the state officials who carry out audits very rarely is another factor for its continuation. Considering that the majority of the employers were not subject to audits except one interviewed employer, it can be concluded that frequency of irregular employment practice is also supported by lack of audits. Moreover, it also proves that state policies are openly or tacitly designed in line with the demands of the labor market. As long as migrant labor is demanded to fill the gap in a sector, as is the case in restaurants, state intervention may remain minimal also in the future.

An additional contributing factor for the concentration of Uzbek busboys in Balgat, Ankara is the specific type of restaurants. As explained, Balgat district of Ankara has distinctive features, which is a middle and lower-middle income neighborhood surrounded by public offices. The workplaces in the district are targeting the taste and habits of middle or lower-middle class people with more conservative lifestyles, and thus, the restaurants majorly serve more traditional food such as kebabs, and they have alcohol-free menus and rooms for praying. Moreover, the main boulevard of Balgat in which visited restaurants take place has a salient difference in day and night times. Hence, all these specifics of Balgat as well as "kebab restaurants" contribute to the concentration of Uzbek labor migrants in its restaurants as well as to

the “tolerability” of Uzbek busboys in the neighborhood. As discussed, the compatibility between the *habitus* brought by Uzbek labor migrants and the cultural codes preserved in kebab restaurants appears as an important factor to explain the prevalence and dominance of Uzbeks in the sector. This, moreover, indicates the importance of examining the place and locality when analyzing informal labor.

Lastly, another interesting finding from the field research is the presence of Uzbek employees even during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In those periods, the restaurants were either allowed to work only for home-delivery or take-away services, or to accept customers only in limited numbers after ensuring certain amount of physical distance between the tables, and the number of employees shrank considerably. However, as understood from the interviews, Uzbek migrants were employed irregularly as the cheap labor force to handle the economic pressure brought by the pandemic – during and after. In other words, the restaurant owners benefitted from the cheap labor of Uzbeks as a measure against economic difficulties.

Considering all, the intersection of already existing informal labor practices and flexible visa regime in Turkey attracts irregular migration flows, and together with the demand of employers for cheap, exploitable, and enduring migrant labor, it is possible to see concentration of Uzbek migrants in the restaurant sector who migrate due to poor economic conditions in their homelands and consequent need for remittances to be used for familial matters. Serving the interest of the employers by having an irregular status, Uzbek migrants fill the busboy position in restaurants which is not accepted by the nationals due to the low prospects offered. However, using a “dual frame of reference” as Piore (1979) discusses, Uzbek migrants can nevertheless earn more money by working as busboy than doing any job in their country of origin. Therefore, they accept the inferior conditions for a determined period of time to save money and send as remittances to be used for their immediate needs. Together with the restrictions and flexibilities defined by the state, the existing dual structure of job opportunities in Turkey and the demand for migrant labor in the restaurant sector are the main determinants for migration decisions and irregular employment of Uzbeks in restaurants in line with Piore’s (1979) analysis. Thus, the data obtained from the field research of this thesis confirms all the

assertions made in the Dual Labor Market Theory by Piore (1979). After migration movement begins due to these determinants, it is then perpetuated through migrant networks (Massey et al., 1993) and established migration systems (Mabogunje, 1970), as seen in the case of Uzbek busboys. Shown by the field research that Uzbek migrants seem to fill the gap in the sector in a very unique way and were preferred by the employers even during the pandemic when many workplaces downsized and high number of people lost their jobs, it is possible to predict that their presence will be frequent in this sector and in different sectors also in the future.

5.3. Recommendations for the Future Research

Though it is aimed to make a comprehensive analysis on the data collected from the interviews with Uzbek migrants and with employers, there is still space for further research. The topics recommended for the future research are as follows:

Firstly, migrant networks' role in expendability of migrants can be questioned and would be an interesting topic to analyze. As seen in the field research carried out for this thesis, there is a high turnover rate among Uzbek busboys in the restaurants because of their will to change the job or because of their employers' discontent with their work. On the one hand, Uzbeks benefit from their highly efficient networks to search for a new job, and on the other hand, employers shared their trust on migrant network of Uzbeks to find a new employee when they are not satisfied with the current ones. Thus, increasing disposability of migrants might be a side-effect of migrant networks, which would be very interesting to examine.

Secondly, this thesis focuses on a branch of the service sector in a distinctive location. Namely, the analysis is made on the Uzbek migrants' presence in restaurant sector located in Balgat district of Ankara. Not only the targeted sector, but also the field of research have an impact to come up with above-mentioned conclusions. However, Uzbek labor migrants' presence and situation in different sectors and in different places might be remarkably distinct. Therefore, rather than generalizing the findings of this thesis to the experiences of all Uzbek labor migrants, new studies would make a significant addition to understand the similarities and differences in the situation of the same group in different sectors.

Thirdly, as mentioned previously, the sharp increase in the exchange rate between US Dollar and Turkish Lira had an impact on the findings even in this thesis process. Yet, the rate continued to change, and might further increase in the future. As it is one of the determinants for the direction of Uzbek labor migration in which remittances are sent after exchanging dollars, the situation after the recent exchange rate between TL and USD might be completely different and is worth studying.

Fourthly, it can be recommended to the future researchers to focus on masculinity discussions in the case of Uzbek labor migrants. Due to the fact that majority of respondents were young and unmarried Uzbeks in this thesis, their masculinity-fatherhood relation cannot be questioned although they are far away from their families for certain periods of time (see Kalaycıoğlu, Çelik and Beşpınar, 2010). On the other hand, how migrant masculinities are entangled with other concepts such as ethnicity and relations of power and constructed in different practices in destination and sending countries (see Wojnicka and Nowicka, 2022) in the case of Uzbek labor migrants would also be an important point of discussion and a very intriguing topic for the future research.

Lastly, the theories as well as research on migration generally focus on mobility, whereas they ignore the cases in which migration does not happen. In other words, among all these processes, there is also lack of migration in certain situations which is generally overlooked until today. Therefore, it is recommended to future researchers to analyze the factors lying behind the immobility in various settings. Specifically, the immobility of young, male and Uzbek persons might be an interesting and enlightening topic to study.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARASTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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Sayı: 28620816 /

02 KASIM 2020

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu


Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Prof.Dr. Helga Rittersberger Tılıç

Danışmanlığımızı yaptığımız Gizem SÖNMEZ'in "Tolerable and Invisible: Uzbek Migrants in the Turkish Labour Market" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 315-ODTU-2020 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.


Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkanı

B. CURRICULUM VITAE

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1. **Family name, first name:** SÖNMEZ AKPINAR, GİZEM
2. **Date of birth:** 14/04/1990
3. **Nationality:** Turkish
4. **Civil status:** Married
5. **Education:**

Institution (Date from – Date to)	Degree(s) or Diploma(s) obtained:
Middle East Technical University (METU) Department of Sociology (Oct 2016 – March 2024)	Ph.D. in Sociology
Free University Berlin (FU) M.A. Sociology – European Societies (Oct 2013 – Jan 2016)	Master of Arts in Sociology (with thesis)
Middle East Technical University (METU) Department of Sociology (Sept 2008 – June 2013)	Bachelor of Arts in Sociology
Humboldt University of Berlin (HU) Department of Social Sciences (March 2012 – Sept 2012)	Attended to sociology and political science courses with Erasmus scholarship
Karşıyaka Atakent Anatolian High School	High school diploma for secondary level education on natural and social sciences

6. **Language skills:** (1 – excellent; 5 – basic)

Language	Reading	Speaking	Writing
English	1	1	1
German	3	3	3
Turkish	mother tongue		

7. Honours and Awards:

- *100/2000 PhD Scholarship of YÖK* with study focus on **migration**
- *TEV-DAAD Scholarship for Master's Education* (Gemeinsames Stipendienprogramm für türkische Graduierte - DAAD/TEV), 10/2013-11/2015
- *High Honour Degree* on diploma (BA Sociology)

8. Computer skills:

- MS Office (Word, Excel, Power Point etc.)
- SPSS (software for statistical analysis)

9. Publications:

- Master's Thesis. "Do the Benefits of Higher Education Vary by Gender? A Comparative Analysis of European Labour Markets." Free University Berlin. 01/2016
Conducted quantitative research to analyse European Social Survey (ESS) data in SPSS by using multilevel multiple regression method

10. Professional Experience

Date from – Date to	Location	Company	Position
03/2023 - ongoing	Ankara	The UN Migration Agency (IOM)	Senior Programme Associate
02/2019 – 03/2023	Ankara	The UN Migration Agency (IOM)	Project Assistant
03/2018 – 05/2018	Ankara	METU	Research assistant with YÖK 100/2000 Scholarship
03/2016 – 04/2017	Ankara	UDA Consulting	Project Asistant / Research expert

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Başlangıcından beri kapitalist sistem, farklı sebeplerle hareket halinde olan kitleler yaratmaktadır (Akpınar, 2010:5). Ancak, politik, ekonomik ve teknolojik gelişmelerin son elli yılda uluslararası göç hareketini hızlandırdığı ve bu hareketin artık daha karmaşık örüntülere, gittikçe artan çeşitlilikte gruplara ve çok daha büyük hacme sahip olduğu düşüncesi yaygındır (IOM 2019:19; De Haas ve Czaika, 2014:283-284; Kurekova, 2011:4; Ritzer, 2010:298-299).

Uluslararası göç hareketindeki tüm bu değişiklikler, ulaşım ve iletişim teknolojilerindeki gelişmelere bağlı olarak ortaya çıkan küreselleşme süreçlerinin sonuçlarıdır (Sert, 2018:29; De Haas ve Czaika, 2014:284-293; Kurekova, 2011:4; Harvey, 2001:59). Teknolojik gelişmeler, seyahat etme ve bilgiye erişimi kolaylaştırarak, kişilerin dünyanın farklı yerlerindeki fırsatlar hakkında farkında olmalarını sağlamış, ulusötesi bağları güçlendirmiş ve böylece göç etme imkânlarının ve isteğinin artmasına neden olmuştur (Ayhan ve Erdoğan, 2015:6; De Haas ve Czaika, 2014:284; Ritzer, 2010:303). Bunun sonucunda, coğrafi mesafelerden bağımsız bir şekilde, çok farklı ülkelerden hareket eden göçmenlerin çeşitli hedef ülkelere vardığı görülmektedir. Uluslararası Göç Örgütü'nün (IOM) hazırladığı Dünya Göç Raporları'na göre, 2019 yılında uluslararası göçmenlerin tahmini sayısı 272 milyon civarında ve küresel nüfusun yüzde üç buçuğuna tekabül ediyorken, 2020 yılında COVID-19 pandemisine rağmen 281 milyona ulaşmıştır (IOM 2019:19; 2021:21).

Öte yandan, küreselleşme liberal ekonomi politikalarına yönelten bir politik ve ideolojik değişime de eşlik etmiş ve sermaye, fikirler, bilgi, kültür ve kısmen de insanların dolaşımı önündeki bariyerlerin kaldırılmasına neden olmuştur (Castles, De Haas ve Miller, 2014:33). Harvey'e göre (2001:57) küreselleşme, özünde kapitalizmin coğrafik düzenlemesidir. Bu düzenlemede ekonomi politikalarının liberalleşmesi ve gelişen teknoloji, küresel bir iş bölümüyle çalılan çokuluslu şirketlerin yer aldığı ulusötesi ekonomik yapıdan oluşan küresel bir ekonomiye gittikçe artan sayıda ülkenin katılımını sağlamaktadır (De Haas ve Czaika, 2014:316;

Kurekova, 2011:16; Ritzer, 2010:35). Massey'e (2009:26-34) göre küresel kapitalizm, az gelişmiş ya da gelişmekte olan ülkelerde uluslararası göçe yol açan sosyal, finansal ve politik değişimlere neden olmaktadır. Benzer bir süreç, Özbekistan'ın da aralarında bulunduğu eski komunist ülkelerde, göç ve göçmen dövizinin ekonomik büyüme için önemli kaynaklar haline gelmesiyle görülmektedir (De Haas ve Czaika, 2014:315). Tüm bu tartışmaları düşünerek küreselleşmenin, göç hareketini dünyanın çeşitli coğrafi bölgeleri arasında arttırdığını söylemek mümkündür. Ancak bu noktada, küresel göç örüntülerindeki değişimleri gerçekten anlamak için göçün coğrafi kapsamı, çeşitliliği ve yönünün incelenmesi gerektiği hatırlatılmalıdır. Belirli coğrafyalar arasındaki ikili koridorlar pek çok nedenle önemlidir. Bu bağlamda, bu tezde Özbekistan'ın belirli bölgeleri ve Türkiye arasındaki göç rotasının incelemeye değer bir koridor olduğu iddia edilmektedir.

Artan göç hareketliliğine bakıldığında, iş gücü göçünü tetikleyen faktörler arasında toplum içi ve toplumlar arası eşitsizliğin artışı, yüksek ve düşük nitelikli işgücüne katmanlı iş gücü piyasalarındaki devamlı talep, nüfus artışı, fırsat eksikliği ve gelişen ülkelerdeki baskı ve şiddet yer almaktadır (Massey, 2012:15). Piyasaların liberalleşmesi ve deregülasyonu ile hız kazanan ekonomik küreselleşme, iş gücü piyasasının katmanlılaşmasına ve toplumsal eşitsizliklere neden olmaktadır (De Haas and Czaika, 2014:286). Yani, uluslararası göçün sürdürülmesinde piyasalar hayati bir role sahiptir (Massey, 2012:22). Piore'nin (1986:24) belirttiği gibi, gelişmiş ve az gelişmiş bölgeler arasında gerçekleşen geniş çapta göç hareketini, gelişmiş ülkelerdeki iş fırsatlarının yapısı ve göçmen işçilerin olağandışı motivasyonu açılarından anlamak gerekir. Gerçek şudur ki, göçmenlerin ihtiyaçları ve motivasyonlarından ziyade, iş gücü göçünün şartları ve koşulları çoğunlukla talep tarafından belirlenmektedir. İş gücü piyasalarında göçmen iş gücüne talep olduğu sürece, ya belirli grupların yasal istihdamını kolaylaştırmaya yönelik, ya da diğerlerinin yasadışı istihdamını tolere etmeye ve göz ardı etmeye yönelik yasal düzenlemeler yürürlüğe konulacaktır. Yani, göçmenler devlet politikaları tarafından filtrelenmektedir (Massey, 2012:18). Sermayenin ihtiyaçlarına yönelik hareket eden ve belirli göçmen gruplarını kasti olarak yalnızca izinsiz olarak çalışabilecekleri iş fırsatlarına yönlendirenin, mevcut yasal yapının kendisi olması sebebiyle, göçmenlerin izinsiz istihdamına yasadışı yerine "düzensiz istihdam" denmelidir ve

bu nedenle, bu tezde göçmenlerin yasal gereklilikleri yerine getirmeden ve çalışma izni olmaksızın çalıştıkları durumlar düzensiz çalışma olarak bahsedilecektir.

Düzenli ya da düzensiz, gittikçe artan sayıda kişi daha gelişmiş ülkelere çalışmak amacıyla göç etmektedir. Gittikleri yerde iş bulabilenler sıklıkla kazançlarını, geride kalan aile üyelerini desteklemek amacıyla menşe ülkelerine göndermektedir (Ritzer, 2010:316). Göçmenler, çalışma koşullarının zorluğuna ve düşük maaşlara rağmen yine de çalışmaya devam ederler, çünkü kazandıkları para kendilerinin ve ailelerinin yaşam standartlarını arttırmaktadır. IOM (2021:239) göçmen dövizini, göçmenlerin menşe ülkelerindeki aileleri ve topluluklarına direkt olarak gönderdikleri nakdi ve aynı havaleleri olarak tanımlar. Çoğu zaman göçmen dövizini, göçmenlerin ailelerinin temel ihtiyaçları için kullanılsa da, gönderen ülkelerin ekonomilerinde ciddi bir oran teşkil etmektedir. Bu sebeple göçmen dövizini, iş gücü göçünü analiz ederken göz ardı edilmemesi gereken bir kavramdır ve bu tezdeki incelemenin de parçası olmuştur.

Resmi giriş, ikamet ve çalışma izni olmayan göçmenler düzensiz olarak tanımlanır ve hassas konumdaki düzensiz göçmen işçiler çoğunlukla enformel sektöre katılmaktadır (Öner, 2018:16; Bloch ve McKay, 2015:40; İçduygu, 2015:282; Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:83). Esasen, katı kontroller ve seçim kriterleri uygulamak amacıyla, göç hareketini düzenli ya da düzensiz olarak tanımlayan ulus devletlerdir (Öner, 2018:14; Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:85). Bu nedenle düzensiz göçü, sosyal, politik ve yasal inşasına bakılmadan incelemek mümkün değildir (Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:86; Düvell, 2011). Her halükarda, düzensiz göç de düzenli göç kadar ekonominin bir parçasıdır ve her iki göç türü de iş gücü piyasası talebine karşılık olarak meydana gelmektedir. Bu esnada devletler, iş gücü piyasasındaki açığı kapattığı için düzensiz iş gücü göçüne müsamaha göstermektedir. Özellikle ulusal iş gücü tarafından doldurulmayan bazı sektörlerin işleyişi düzensiz göçmen işçiler sayesinde sağlanmaktadır. Ancak, ulusal iş gücünün bu sektörleri veya pozisyonları tercih etmemesi aslında, istenmeyen çalışma koşulları, düşük beklentiler ve güvencesizlik gibi olumsuz koşullara işaret eder. Özellikle, düzensiz konumda olan göçmenler çoğunlukla az kazanç ve kötü koşullar sağlayan düşük nitelikli işlerde çalışmakta ve bir hayli dezavantajlı durumda bulunmaktadır (Bloch ve McKay, 2015:38-39; Castles, De Haas ve Miller, 2014:244, Toksöz ve diğerleri, 2012:12).

Türkiye 1980'lerden beri özellikle düzensiz göçmen akınlarının kaynak, hedef ve geçiş ülkesi olmuştur (Atasü-Topçuoğlu, 2018:512; Akpınar, 2010:2; Kaşka, 2006:23). Ülke, Asya, Afrika ve Doğu Avrupa'da yer alan ülkelere farklı motivasyonlarla hareket eden göçmenlere ev sahipliği yapmaktadır (Ayhan ve Erdoğan, 2015:12; İçduygu, 2015:280; Akpınar, 2010:2). Türkiye'ye yönelik düzensiz göç, çoğunlukla menşe ülkelere olan coğrafi yakınlık, mevcut enformel iş gücü sektörü, menşe ülkelerle Türkiye arasındaki ticari bağlantılar ve vize rejiminde belli ülkelere sağlanan esnekliklerle açıklanmıştır (Ayhan ve Erdoğan, 2015:13; Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015:96; Kaşka, 2006:24, Toksöz ve diğerleri, 2012:21). Ancak Akpınar (2010:4-5) bu akınların asıl nedenlerinin ülkede 1980 sonrası dönemde uygulanan ekonomik liberalleşme ve vize politikaları olduğunu savunmaktadır. Bu şekilde, düzensiz iş gücü göçü akınlarındaki artışın, Türkiye'de bazı sektörlerdeki göçmen işçi talebinden kaynaklandığını söylemek mümkündür. Benzer şekilde Toksöz (2012:21) de ülkeye yönelik düzensiz iş gücü göçünde esnek vize sistemi ve enformel piyasada iş bulma ihtimalinin büyük rol oynadığını söylemektedir. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'ye turist vizesiyle giriş yapanların vize süresi içinde ya da vize süresini aşmasına rağmen izinsiz şekilde çalışması, düzensiz göç hareketinin temelini oluşturmaktadır (Kaşka, 2006:24). Yani, bazı ülkelere tanınan vize muafiyetleri ve işverenlerin daha ucuz ve esnek iş gücü talebinin kesişimi, Türkiye'ye yönelik düzensiz iş gücü göçünün ana belirleyicisidir. Böylece, 1980'lerden beri artan Türkiye'ye yönelik iş gücü göçünün sebebinin artan iş fırsatları değil, enformelleşme ve değişen vize düzenlemeleri olduğunu söylemek mümkündür (Ünver, 2015:251; Akpınar, 2010:8).

Son yıllarda, Türkiye'de yabancılar ve yabancı iş gücüne yönelik politikalar açısından temel değişiklikler yapılmıştır. Bu değişiklikler, özellikle 2011 yılından bu yana devam eden ve Türkiye'yi kitlesel akınlar sonucunda ciddi şekilde etkileyen Suriye krizinden beri hızlandırılmıştır. Geline nokta, Türkiye'nin göç anlamında değişime uğradığını ve net göç rakamlarına bakarak, göç alan bir ülke konumuna geldiğini ileri sürmek mümkündür (Ayhan ve Erdoğan, 2015:11). Artan ihtiyaçların sonucunda, 2013 yılında 4658 sayılı Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu⁹¹

⁹¹ Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gigm-mevzuati>

(YUKK) yürürlüğe konmuş ve takip eden sene, Ekim 2021 tarihinden beri Başkanlık statüsü verilmiş olan Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü kurulmuştur. YUKK, yabancılar, uluslararası koruma ve kurumsal yapı olarak üç ana başlıktan oluşmaktadır ve vize ve ikamet izni süreçlerine etkin ve sistematik bir çerçeve tanımlamaktadır⁹². Ayrıca 2016 yılında yürürlüğe giren 6735 sayılı Uluslararası İş Gücü Kanunu⁹³ ile yabancılar için çalışma izinleri ve muafiyetler tanımlanmıştır. Yabancıların bu yasaları ihlal etmesi sonucunda karşı karşıya kalacakları idari gözetim, sınır dışı edilme, para cezaları ve giriş yasağı gibi yasal sonuçlar ise yine YUKK kapsamında tanımlanmıştır.

Bu tez için saha araştırmasının gerçekleştirildiği yıllardaki resmi düzensiz göç istatistiklerine⁹⁴ bakıldığında, 2019 yılında şimdiye kadarki en yüksek yakalamanın gerçekleştiğini, ancak 2020 ve 2021 yıllarında COVID-19 pandemisi ile yakalama sayılarında düşüş yaşandığını görmek mümkündür. Yakalanan düzensiz göçmenler arasında Özbek uyruklu olanlara bakıldığında, 2019 yılında 7.478, 2020 yılında 3.030 ve 2021 yılında 4.819 kişi olduğu görülmektedir⁹⁵. Tüm bu yıllarda, yakalama istatistiklerinde Özbek uyruklu yabancılar ilk on uyruk arasında yer almaktadır. Ek olarak, 2007 yılından beri umumi pasaport hamili Özbekistan vatandaşlarına Türkiye Devleti tarafından her 180 günde 90 gün vize muafiyeti tanınmıştır⁹⁶.

Demografik ve ekonomik faktörler nedeniyle Özbekistan, Orta Asya bölgesindeki iş gücü gönderen ana ülkelerden bir tanesidir (Aslan, 2011:3). Bu göç hareketliliğinin sebebi, kötüleşen ekonomi ile yaşam koşullarındaki düşüş olarak açıklanmakta ve bu koşullara genç popülasyonun oluşturduğu fazla iş gücü kaynağı eklenmektedir (Urinbojev and Eraliev, 2022:53-54; Maksakova, 2016:82; Ilkhamov, 2013:259-260). Özbek göçmenler tarafından en çok tercih edilen hedef ülkeler olarak Rusya ve Kazakistan ön plana çıkmaktadır (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016; Maksakova, 2016; Ilkhamov, 2013:260; Sadovskaya, 2006:39). Bu ülkelere göçen Özbek işçilerin daha çok ulaşım, inşaat, tarım, ticaret, bakım ve hizmet sektörlerinde çalıştıkları

⁹² Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/yabancilar-ve-uluslararasi-koruma-kanununda-gecici-koruma>

⁹³ Resmi Gazete, <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuatmetin/1.5.6735.pdf>

⁹⁴ Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/duzensiz-goc-istatistikler>

⁹⁵ Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/duzensiz-goc-istatistikler>

⁹⁶ Dışişleri Bakanlığı, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/yabancilarin-tabi-oldugu-vize-rejimi.tr.mfa>

bilinmektedir (Maksakova, 2016). Göç eden Özbek işçilerin gönderdiği göçmen dövizinin, özellikle daha yoksul kırsal kesimdeki ailelerin yaşadığı yeri terk etmeden geçinebilmesine büyük katkı sağladığı anlaşılmaktadır (Ilkhamov, 2013:273).

Göç eden Özbek işçilerin büyük çoğunluğunun uzun yıllardır hedef ülkesi Rusya olmasına rağmen pek çok çalışmada, Özbek göçmenlerin Rusya’da göçmen karşıtı söylemler, yapısal kısıtlamalar, yaygın yabancı karşıtlığı ve dışlayıcı tutumlar ile karşılaştığı söylenmektedir (Urinboyev, 2021; 2018; 2016; Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016; Alexseev, 2011). Kısıtlayıcı yasal düzenlemeler ve toplumda yaygın olan yabancı karşıtlığı gibi sorunlar nedeniyle Özbek göçmen işçilerin Rusya’da yalnızca enformel sektörde çalışabildikleri gözlenmiştir (Urinboyev ve Eraliev, 2022:54; Kaźmierkiewicz; 2016:60; Urinboyev, 2018:32; 2016:72). Rusça bilme konusunda da sorun yaşadıkları anlaşılan Özbek göçmen işçilerin yoğunlukla çalıştığı inşaat sektöründe, istihdamın enformel şekilde ve sözlü anlaşmalar üzerinden gerçekleştirildiği öğrenilmiştir (Urinboyev, 2016:71-72). Ayrıca Kaźmierkiewicz (2016), 2013 yılından beri etkili olan ekonomik kriz sebebiyle azalan boş kadroların, Rusya ve Kazakistan’a yönelik iş gücü göçünde azalmaya sebep olduğunu ifade etmiştir. Bu ülkelerde seçici bir göç yönetimi uygulamak ve bazı göç hareketlerini yaptırımlar ile azaltmak amacıyla uygulamaya konan kontrol araçları, son yıllarda Türkiye’ye daha çok yöneldiği düşünülen Özbek iş gücü göçündeki yön değişikliğinin temel faktörleri arasında olabilir (Urinboyev ve Eraliev, 2022:56). Bir başka sebep ise, Türkiye ve Rusya arasındaki vize yönetimi ve güvenleştirme politikaları arasındaki farklılıktır. Bu hususta Bashirov (2018:18), yasal düzenlemeleri ve Orta Asya göçmenlerine sağlanan vize kolaylığı gibi uygulamaları ile Türkiye’nin zayıf güvenleştirme politikası izlediğini, ancak Rusya’nın kurumsal ve uygulama pratiklerinde görülebileceği gibi, göçmen işçilere koyduğu kotalar ve kısıtlayıcı mevzuatı ile güçlü bir güvenleştirme politikası uyguladığını değerlendirir.

Özbek göçmen işçilerin Rusya ve Kazakistan’a yönelik akınları hakkında farklı araştırmalar bulunmakta iken, belirtilen sebepler sonucu Türkiye’ye yönelen göç hareketi henüz yeterince araştırılmamıştır (Nurdinova, 2018:119). Ancak, bahsi geçen vize serbestisinden faydalanarak Türkiye’ye giriş yapan Özbek işçilerin iş gücü piyasasına katıldığını görmek mümkündür (a.e.). Mevut durumda Türkiye’de bulunan Özbek iş gücü göçmenlerinin tam sayısını bilmek mümkün olmasa da, resmi

kanallarla Türkiye'den Özbekistan'a gönderilen göçmen döviz miktarına bakarak, büyük bir Özbek göçmen nüfusunun ülkede mevcut olduğunu söylemek mümkündür (Urinbojev ve Eraliev, 2022:55). Türkiye, Kazakistan ve Rusya hedef ülkelerini düşünerek, Özbek iş gücü göçünün ekonomik faktörlerin yanı sıra ortak etnik ve kültürel kökenler üzerinden belirlendiği anlaşılmaktadır (Ünver, 2015:245-249). Bu tezde, Türkiye'ye daha fazla yönelen Özbek göç hareketinin farklı örüntüler göstermesi sebebiyle araştırmaya değer olduğu tartışılmaktadır.

Tüm bu hareketlilik sürerken 2019 yılı sonu ve 2020 yılı başlarına doğru, COVID-19 adı verilen ve yüksek derece bulaşıcılığı olan bir hastalık ilk olarak Çin'de tespit edilmiş ve daha sonra tüm ülkelere yayılmıştır. Dünya Sağlık Örgütü'nün 11 Mart 2020 tarihinde pandemi olarak ilan ettiği COVID-19 hastalığı⁹⁷, küresel ve ulusal ekonomilerin yanı sıra kişilerin günlük hayatlarını da ciddi ölçüde etkilemiştir. Sonraki süreçte pandemiyle mücadelede, ulusal ve küresel düzeyde katı tedbirler alınmış ve tüm hükümetler tarafından acil tıbbi yardım önlemleri yürürlüğe konulmasının yanında, pandeminin sosyal ve ekonomik etkilerini azaltacak çabalar da gösterilmiştir. Türkiye'de ise 11 Mart 2020 tarihinde ilk tespit edilen COVID-19 vakası açıklanmış ve bu tarihten itibaren kademeli olarak arttırılan önlemler serisi ile, hastalığın yayılmasının önüne geçmek amacıyla tedbirler uygulanmaya başlanmıştır (Sülkü ve diğerleri, 2021:346). Uluslararası uçuşların durdurulması, eğitimin çevrimiçi olarak uygulanmaya başlanması, sokağa çıkma yasakları ve kontrollü sosyal hayat adı verilen uygulamaların hayata geçirilmesi, ekonomik ve sosyal hayatta pek çok yeni düzenleme yapılmasını gerektirmiştir. Esnek ya da evden çalışma uygulamaları ve belirli saatlerde hizmet verme gibi düzenlemeler restoranların da aralarında bulunduğu pek çok iş yeri ve sektörde operasyonun kesilmesine ya da durmasına sebep olmuştur (Can, 2021:834). Restoranların ve uluslararası havayolu taşımacılığının aralarında bulunduğu hizmet sektörü, pandemi tedbirlerinden olumsuz anlamda en fazla etkilenen sektör olmuştur (Can, 2021:838-849). Türkiye'deki pandemi sürecinin bir benzeri de, tüm ülkelerde olduğu gibi Özbekistan'da yaşanmıştır.

⁹⁷ Dünya Sağlık Örgütü, [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/coronavirus-2019-ncov)

Bu tezdeki ana amaç, göçmen işçilerin düzensiz şekilde istihdam edilmesiyle işleyen ve Ankara'nın belli bir bölgesinde yer alan restoran sektörünü detaylı olarak analiz etmektir. Ek olarak bu tezde, saha araştırma sürecine denk gelmesi sebebiyle, nadir görülen bir olay olan pandeminin de etkileri incelenecektir. Böylece bu tezde, pandeminin beklenmeyen ve önemli etkisi altında, Ankara'nın Balgat semtinde bulunan ve Özbek göçmen işçilerin çalıştığı restoran sektörünün incelenmesi hedeflenmektedir. Bu lokasyonda bulunan Özbek göçmenlerin ekonomik motivasyonlarla hareket eden iş gücü göçmenleri olduğu ve kültürel, dini ve dil yakınlıkları sebebiyle daha tolere edilen bir grup olduğu tartışılmaktadır. Bu göçmenler, kültürel olduğu kadar ekonomik sebeplerle de "göze görünmeyen" ve "tolere edilen" bir şekilde yerel enformel ekonomide boşluk doldurmaktadır. Bu varsayımlarla beraber tezde şu araştırma soruları cevaplanmaya çalışılmıştır: Özbek göçmenler restoranlarda neden tercih edilmektedir? Özbek göçmenler Balgat/Ankara'ya gelmeye nasıl karar vermiş ve nasıl göç etmiştir? Aile-yakın-arkadaş ağlarının bu göçte rolü nedir? Özbek göçmenler neden Ankara'nın Balgat semtindeki restoranlarda çalışmayı tercih etmektedir? COVID-19 pandemisi Özbek göçmenlerin restoranlardaki istihdamını nasıl etkilemiştir?

Bu araştırma sorularını cevaplamak hedefiyle, saha araştırması bulguları ilgili teorilerle beraber tartışılmış ve böylece mevcut literatüre katkıda bulunmaya çalışılmıştır. Öncelikle, saha araştırmasında düzensiz olarak çalışan Özbek göçmenler ve onları düzensiz olarak istihdam eden işverenleri ile derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiş ve çoğu zaman görüşme yapılması çok zor olan bu iki gruptan elde edilen veriler, teze çok önemli bir katkı sunmuştur. Özellikle izinsiz olarak göçmen çalıştıran işverenler ile bu şekilde araştırma gerçekleştirmenin ne kadar nadir olduğu dikkat çekmektedir. Ancak, restoranların kendine has düzeni sayesinde tüm müşterilerin gözü önünde gerçekleştirilen düzensiz istihdam, her iki gruba erişim ve rıza alınmasını sağlamıştır. İkinci olarak, bu tez için yürütülen saha araştırması üç yıllık bir sürede gerçekleştirilmiş ve bu süreç pandemi öncesi, esnası ve sonrasına denk gelmiştir. Böylece, hem uzun sayılabilecek bir zamandaki değişim gözlenebilmiş, hem de pandeminin etkileri araştırmanın konusu haline gelerek tezin özgünlüğünü arttırmıştır. Üçüncü olarak, Özbek iş gücü göçmenleri üzerine, özellikle Ankara'yı inceleyen kapsamlı akademik çalışmalar bulunmadığı için, tezde yapılan çalışma ile literatürdeki boşluğu doldurmak hedeflenmiştir. Son olarak, Özbek

göçmenlere ve restoranlara özgü nitelikler, benzeri görülmeyen örüntülere sahip olarak özgün bir çalışmanın ortaya çıkmasına katkı sağlamıştır. Restoranlarda müşterilerin gözü önünde ve iletişim kuracak şekilde ama izinsiz olarak çalışan ve bu nedenle düzensiz statüde çalışan Özbek göçmenlere has özelliklerin, bu grubun restoran sektöründe “göze görünmeyen” ve “tolere edilebilir” bir şekilde yer almasına neden olduğu, tezin temel tartışmalarından bir tanesidir.

Hedeflenen analizin gerçekleştirilmesi amacıyla sahadan elde edilen bulgular, iş gücü göçü üzerine odaklanan ilgili teoriler ışığında tartışılacaktır. Göçün, hareketin farklı aşamalarında farklı değişkenlerin etkileştiği çok yönlü ve karmaşık bir olgu olması nedeniyle, kavramsal ve ampirik olarak çalışılması hiç kolay değildir. Bu zorluğu aşmak için, göç olgusunu farklı düzeylerde inceleyen teorilerin tartışmalarını birbirini tamamlar şekilde kullanmak gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle, tezin konusu makro düzeyde (yapısal), orta düzeyde (ilişkisel) ve mikro düzeyde (aktör) analiz eden teoriler ile tartışılacaktır.

Göç olgusunu makro düzeyde tarihi-yapısal değişkenlere bakarak analiz eden teorilerden bir tanesi olan İkili İş Piyasası Teorisi (Piore, 1979), bu tezde hedeflenen tartışmanın ana çerçevesini oluşturmuştur. İkili İş Piyasası Teorisi’nde Piore (1979) göç olgusunu, ekonomideki yapısal değişiklikler ve vasıflı ve vasıfsız göçmen iş gücüne olan talep ile açıklar. Bu teoride, göçmen iş gücüne duyulan talebin gelişmiş ekonomilerin özünde olduğu ve vasıflı işgücünün yanı sıra vasıfsız işgücünün de üretim ve hizmet sektöründeki işlerde çalışmak üzere talep edildiği belirtilmektedir. Piore’ye (1979) göre uluslararası göç, gelişmiş ekonomilerdeki bu kalıcı talep sayesinde gerçekleşmektedir. İkili İş Piyasası Teorisi, bu süreçler esnasında ortaya çıkan ve birincil ve ikincil piyasa arasındaki ekonomik kutuplaşma ile oluşan iki katmanlı bir iş piyasasına vurgu yapar. Bu ikili yapıda, birincil iş gücü piyasasının sundukları arasında yüksek ücret, iyi çalışma koşulları, istihdam sürekliliği ve iş güvenliği bulunurken, ikincil piyasada ise düşük ücret, düşük statü, zorlu çalışma koşulları ve yükselme şansının olmaması bulunmaktadır (Piore, 1979). Birincil iş gücü piyasasındaki işçiler beşeri sermayesi ve etnisite, cinsiyet, yasal durum veya eğitim gibi özelliklerin belirlediği dominant gruba üye olmaları sayesinde seçilir. Öte yandan, ikincil iş gücü piyasası ise eğitim eksikliği sebebiyle dezavantajlı durumda olan, cinsiyeti, ırkı veya düzensiz yasal statüsü sebebiyle ayrımcılığa maruz kalan kişiler tarafından oluşturulmaktadır (Castles, De Haas ve Miller, 2014:36). Ulusal iş

gücü birincil piyasada hâkim olurken, ikincil piyasa daha çok göçmen iş gücü ile ilişkilendirilmektedir (Piore, 1979; McCollum ve Findlay, 2015:429). Piore'nin (1986:25) analizine göre, ikincil iş gücü piyasasındaki bahsi geçen kötü koşulları ulusal iş gücü tercih etmezken, kendi ülkelerindeki daha düşük ücretlerle karşılaştırarak ve geçici süre ile çalışacağını düşünerek farklı açıdan değerlendiren göçmenler, her halükârda maddi anlamda daha kazançlı çıkacağı için kabul etmektedir. İkili İş Gücü Piyasası Teorisi ayrıca göçmenlerin düzensiz statüye sahip olmasının, kırılğan, sömürülebilir ve uysal bir iş gücü sağladıkları için işverenlerin çıkarına hizmet ettiğini, bu yüzden de işverenler tarafından tercih edildiğini anlatır (Castles, De Haas ve Miller, 2014:36).

Göçe neden olan koşullar ve sebepler İkili İş Gücü Piyasası Teorisi (Piore (1979) tarafından detaylı bir şekilde ve makro yapıların yanı sıra göçmen açısından da incelenirken, göç hareketinin sürekliliğini uluslararası bağlar ve sosyal ilişkiler üzerinden anlamak daha mümkündür. Göç Ağı Teorisi (Castles, De Haas ve Miller, 2014:40; Massey ve diğerleri, 1993), göçmenlerin birbirleri ve geride kalan aile üyeleri ve arkadaşları ile bağlar kurduğunu ve bu şekilde ortaya çıkan sosyal ağların daha fazla göçe yol açtığını iddia eder. Bu teoride, öncül göçmenlerin pek çok zorluğa katlandığı ancak geride kalanlara sağladıkları bilgi akışı ve verdikleri çeşitli destekler ile sonradan göçen kişiler için göçün paha ve risklerini önemli ölçüde azalttığı vurgulanmaktadır (Hagen-Zanker, 2008:17). Göçmenler arasındaki sosyal ağların, özellikle hedef ülke seçiminde etkili olduğu belirtilmektedir (Kurekova, 2011:10). Benzer şekilde, Mabogunje (1970) tarafından geliştirilen Göç Sistemleri Teorisi, bilgi ve fikir akışlarının göç örüntülerini şekillendirmesi ve daha fazla göçe sebep olması açısından önemine dikkat çeker. Öte yandan bu teoriye göre, göç mekansal bir süreçtir ve göç alan ve veren bölgelerde yeni mekansal düzenlemelerin oluşmasına neden olur (Mabogunje, 1970; Kurekova, 2011:10; Hagen-Zanker, 2008:8). Bu oluşan yeni yapı Göç Sistemi olarak adlandırılır ve kişiler ve toplulukların mekân üzerinden bağlantı kurduğu, belirli mekansal patikalar üzerinden daha fazla göç hareketi olmasını destekleyen yapılar olarak karşımıza çıkar (Castles, De Haas ve Miller, 2014:43).

Diğer yandan, Yapısal ve ilişkisel faktörler göç için çok belirleyici olsa da, mikro düzeydeki karar verme süreçlerinin göç olgusundaki rolü de göz ardı edilmemelidir. Bu noktada, Stark (1991) tarafından geliştirilen İş Gücü Göçünün Yeni Ekonomisi

Teorisi yepyeni bir analiz düzeyine işaret eder ve yapısal ya da bireysel etmenlerden ziyade, göç kararında aktörlerin karşılıklı bağımlılığına odaklanır. İş Gücü Göçünün Yeni Ekonomisi Teorisi'nin temel önermesi, göç kararının bireyler değil, aileler ya da hane halkı tarafından, piyasalardaki olası başarısızlıklara karşı hane gelirini korumak adına risk azaltma amacıyla yapıldığıdır (Stark, 1991; Kurekova, 2011:8; Castles, De Haas ve Miller, 2014:38). Bu bağlamda göç, hesaplanmış bir strateji olarak tüm aile ya da hane halkı tarafından ortak alınan bir karardır. Göç etmesi için belirlenen aile üyesi ya da üyeleri, kazancını göçmen dövizini olarak ailesine göndererek hane halkının risklere karşı daha az kırılgan olmasını sağlar (Castles, De Haas ve Miller, 2014:38).

Bahsedildiği üzere farklı düzeylerdeki analizleriyle bu tezdeki tartışmaya önemli katkılar sağlayan kuramlar arasından İkili İş Gücü Piyasası Teorisi (Piore, 1979), yapısal etmenleri, piyasadaki talebi ve aktif aktör olarak göçmenleri ele alan daha kapsamlı bir tartışma sunması sebebiyle, tezdeki ana çerçeveyi oluşturmuştur. Bu teorik temelde incelenecek veriler ise nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanarak yapılan saha araştırmasından elde edilmiştir. Saha araştırmasında yüz yüze derinlemesine görüşme metodu kullanılmış, görüşmecilere araştırmanın amaçları açıkça belirtildikten sonra katılım için rızaları alınarak açık uçlu ve yarı yapılandırılmış bir soru seti sorulmuştur. İlk olarak 2019 yılının Ekim ve Kasım aylarında Özbek göçmenler ve onların işverenleri olan restoran sahipleri ile derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ayrıca bazı görüşmeler 2020 yılı Mart ayında, Türkiye'de ilk COVID-19 vakasının açıklandığı ancak henüz kapanma gibi tedbirlerin uygulanmaya başlamadığı zamanda yapılmıştır. Tezde "COVID-19 öncesi" diye belirtilen bu zaman aralığında sekiz Özbek çalışan ve beş işveren ile yüz yüze derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sonraki süreçte pandemiyle mücadelede alınan tedbirler yüzünden 2020 yılı Eylül ayına kadar saha araştırmasını yürütmek mümkün olmamıştır. 2020 yılı Eylül ve Ekim aylarında, restoranların sadece eve servis ya da gel-al hizmeti verebildikleri dönemde sürdürülen araştırmada altı iş yeri, pandemiyle ilgili sorular sormak amacıyla kısaca ziyaret edilmiş, bir işverenle de derinlemesine görüşme gerçekleştirilebilmiştir. Bu süreç tezde "COVID-19 esnası" olarak belirtilmiştir. Son olarak, 2021 yılı Ekim ayında araştırmaya tekrar dönülmüş ve aynı restoranlar tekrar ziyaret edilerek, işverenlerle daha kısa bir soru seti kullanarak görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Hükümet tarafından "yeniden normalleşme" diye

adlandırılan bu süreçte, restoranlar tekrar müşteri ağırlamaya başlamış ve tedbirler esnetilmiştir. Tezde “COVID-19 sonrası” olarak ele alınan süreçte beş işverenle görüşülmüş, iki restoranda ise görüşme talebi reddedilmiş ve pandemi sürecinde yaşanan sıkıntıların yarattığı tutum değişikliği gözlenebilmiştir. Tüm araştırma boyunca, düzensiz konumda olan göçmenlerin hassas durumları ve düzensiz göçmen çalıştıran işverenlerin karşılaşılabileceği riskler göz önünde bulundurularak ses kaydı alınmamış, elle notlar tutulmuş, kimlik ya da konum bilgilerinden kaçınılmıştır. Ayrıca, araştırma mekânındaki dış etmenleri anlatmak adına gözlem notları yazılmıştır.

Görüşmelerin gerçekleştirildiği restoranlar Ankara'nın Balgat semtindeki ana bulvar üzerinde yer almaktadır. Bahsedilen lokasyon pek çok dükkân, restoran, iş yeri, apartman, okul ve devlet kurumlarının da bulunduğu merkezi ve işlek bir alandır. Gün içinde yoğun araba trafiği dikkat çeker ve restoranlar genelde bir hayli kalabalıktır. Saha ziyaretlerinde gözlemlendiği üzere, bu konumdaki pek çok restoran göçmen iş gücüne sahiptir. Balgat semtine has özelliklere bakacak olursak, semtin daha çok muhafazakâr hayat tarzına ve zevklere sahip orta ve alt-orta gelirli kişiler tarafından tercih edildiğini söylemek mümkündür. Bu gruba uygun olarak, semtte bulunan restoranlar genellikle kebab ya da künefe gibi geleneksel Türk yemekleri sunan mekânlardır. Muhafazakâr yaşam tarzının göstergeleri olarak, Balgat'taki restoranların alkolsüz menülerinden ve ibadet için ayrılan odalarından bahsedilebilir. Ayrıca, restoranlarda ailelere ayrılmış bölümler olduğu da görülmüştür. Balgat semtinde, kebab gibi geleneksel yemekler sunan restoranlar dışında, farklı yaşam tarzları ve zevklere hitap eden mekanlara rastlanmamaktadır. Ek olarak, görüşmelerden anlaşıldığı üzere bu bölgedeki restoranlarda çalışanların ortalama olarak beşte biri yabancıdır. Bu yabancılar ya Özbek ya da Afgan uyrukludur.

Görüşülen Özbek göçmenlerin tamamı erkektir ve çoğunluğu yirmili yaşlarının başındadır. Sekiz görüşmeciden altısı evli değildir. Görüşmecilerin ortak bir diğer özelliği ise eğitim düzeyleridir. Görüşülen tüm Özbek göçmenler “kollec” diye bahsettikleri teknik okullardan mezun olmuştur. Türkçeyi Türkiye'ye geldikten sonra öğrenmiş ve öğrenmeleri için geçen sürede arkadaşlarından tercüme desteği almışlardır. Farklı seviyelerde Türkçe konuşma seviyesine sahip olmalarına rağmen ortak kanı, Özbekçeye benzediği için dili çok kolay öğrendikleri yönündedir. Ayrıca okulda Rusça dersi görmelerine rağmen tüm görüşmeciler Rusçayı çok az bildiklerini

paylaşmıştır. Dikkat çeken bir diğer durum ise, sekiz görüşmeciden altısının Özbekistan'ın Kaşkadarya vilayetinden gelmiş olmalarıdır. Verilen cevaplara göre bu göçmenler ortalama olarak iki yıldan kısa bir süre önce Türkiye'ye varmış ve benzer şekilde bir yıl daha çalışıp belirledikleri miktarda parayı kazandıktan sonra ülkelerine dönme hedefi koymuşlardır. Ankara'nın farklı semtlerinde kalsalar da, kirada oturdukları ve evlerini dört ya da beş Özbek uyruklu kişiyle paylaştıkları öğrenilmiştir. Bir diğer ortak özellikleri olarak görüşmeciler, Türkiye'ye gelmeden önce vasıfsız işlerde çalışmış olduklarını belirtmiştir. Dikkat çekilmesi gereken bir husus ise bu göçmenlerin restoranlarda “komi” olarak çalıştığıdır.

Derinlemesine görüşme gerçekleştirilen restoran sahipleri ise Özbek göçmenlerin işverenleridir. Görüşülen tüm işverenler erkektir ve ortalama 43 yaşındadır. Benzer şekilde görüşmelere kolayca onay vermiş ve hatta çay ısmarlama gibi misafirperver davranışlar göstermişlerdir. Yabancı çalışanlarının sayıları ve çalıştıkları süreler hakkında çelişen ifadelerde bulunan görüşmeciler olsa da, işverenlerin tümü yabancı uyruklu çalışanları hakkında açıkça konuşmuş ve çekinmeden bilgi vermiştir. Ayrıca, bir işverenin görüşme yapılan yerden hiç ayrılmaması ve diğerinin yakınlarda durmasının yanı sıra, tüm işverenler Özbek çalışanları ile görüşme yapılmasına izin vermiştir.

COVID-19 öncesinde Özbek göçmenlerle yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelerden elde edilen bilgiler ve bu verilerin teorilerle beraber tartışılması, Özbekistan'daki hayat, Ankara'ya göç ve komi olarak çalışmaları şeklinde üç ana başlık altında sunulmuştur. Yukarıda bahsedildiği üzere Özbekistan, Orta Asya'daki en fazla işçi gönderen ülkelerden birisidir ve özellikle 2000'lerden beridir devam eden ekonomik sorunlar pek çok Özbek uyruklu kişinin göç etmesine sebep olmuştur (Maksakova, 2016:82; Ilkhamov, 2013:259-260). Görüşülen Özbek göçmenlerin çoğunun geldiği yer olan Kaşkadarya vilayeti, ülkenin güney-doğu kısmında ve Türkmenistan sınırında yer alan ve kırsal nüfusun daha kalabalık olduğu bir bölgedir. Önemli bir husus olarak tüm görüşmeciler, Ankara'da restoranlarda komi olarak çalışmanın kendilerine sağladığı kazancın, Özbekistan'da aynı işi ya da herhangi başka bir işi yaparak kazanacağından daha fazla olduğunu ifade etmiştir. Özbekistan'da yaşam koşullarının kötü olmadığı, ancak Türkiye'ye gelerek çok daha fazla para kazanabildikleri anlaşılmıştır. Böylece, görüşülen Özbeklerin ekonomik amaçla gelen iş gücü göçmeni olduğu varsayımı doğrulanmıştır. Ayrıca, kazandıkları

paranın miktarını ve bu kazancı kullanacakları amacı gelmeden önce belirlemiş oldukları görülmüştür. Öğrenim gören kardeşlerine destek olmak, anne babalarına maddi yardım etmek, oğluna ev yaptırmak, ailesine inek ve arı almak görüşmelerde bahsi geçen amaçlardan bazılarıdır. Bu cevaplara göre, Özbek göçmenlerin kazandığı miktar, ailelerinin yaşamını iyileştirmek için çok önemlidir. Böylece, göçmen dövizinin Özbek iş gücü göçünde çok önemli bir yere sahip olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Ayrıca bu bulgular, İş Gücü Göçünün Yeni Ekonomisi Teorisi'nin (Stark, 1991) önermelerini doğrular niteliktedir. Tıpkı Özbek göçmenlerin durumunda görüldüğü gibi, bu teoriye göre göç, ailenin ya da hane halkının ortak kararıdır ve göç eden aile üyesi, geride kalanlara göçmen dövizini göndererek tüm ailenin esenliğine katkıda bulunur. Ek olarak, Özbeklerin komi olarak çalışması sonucu daha fazla kazanç elde etmesi ve bu kazancı ailelerinin acil ihtiyaçları için harcaması, Piore'nin (1979) İkili İş Gücü Piyasası Teorisi'nde yaptığı analizle birebir örtüşmektedir. Piore, göçmenlerin ikincil iş gücü piyasasındaki kötü koşullar sunan işlerde çalışmayı kabul ettiğini çünkü menşe ülkelerindeki işlerden çok daha fazla maddi kazanç sağlayabildiklerini söylemiştir. Özbek göçmenlerle yapılan görüşmeler, bu önermeleri doğrulamıştır.

Ankara'ya göç süreçleri hakkında görüşmelerden elde edilen en dikkat çekici bilgi, tüm Özbek göçmenlerin onlardan önce göç etmiş ve Ankara'da bulunan bir tanıdığı/akrabası/arkadaşı olmasıdır. Ankara'da tanıdıklarının olması sebebiyle ve böylece daha kolay alışacakları düşüncesiyle, direkt Ankara'yı hedef alarak göç ettikleri anlaşılmıştır. Yani, Özbek göçmenlerin Ankara'ya göçünde göçmen ağının çok önemli ve etkili olduğu belirtilmelidir. Göç Ağı Teorisi'ne göre öncül göçmenler, bilgi ve çok çeşitli destekler sağlayarak yeni gelecek olanların hedef ülkesini seçmesinde çok önemli bir role sahiptir (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014:40). Böylece, yeni göç edecekler için her türlü riski ve göç etmenin getirdiği sosyal, psikolojik ve ekonomik maliyeti azaltan göçmen ağları, belirli bölgeler arasında daha fazla göç hareketinin yaşanmasına da katkıda bulunur. Bu şekilde, belirli bölgeler arasında yer alan patikalardan devam eden göç hareketi, Mabogunje'nin (1970) bahsetmiş olduğu göç sistemlerinin oluştuğuna da işaret eder. Göç Sistemleri Teorisi'nde belirtildiği gibi, göçmenler ve menşe ülkelerindeki aile üyeleri ve arkadaşları arasındaki bilgi akışı, belirli mekânlar arasında daha fazla göç hareketliliği yaşanmasına neden olmaktadır. Özbek komilerle yapılan görüşmelerden

anlaşıldığı üzere, Özbekistan'ın belirli bölgeleri ve Ankara arasında bu anlamda bir göç sisteminin oluştuğunu söylemek mümkündür.

Öte yandan, İş Gücü Göçünün Yeni Ekonomisi Teorisi'nde belirtildiği gibi Özbek göçmenlerin göç kararı ailenin ortak çıkarları için verilmiş olsa da, Özbekleri göçten iten asıl etmenin yapısal nedenler olduğu gerçeği unutulmamalıdır. İkili İş Gücü Piyasası Teorisi'nde anlatıldığı gibi kişiler, ulusal ekonomilerin küresel kapitalizmin etkisi altında değişmesi sonucunda göç etmek zorunda kalmakta ve göç hareketinin yönü, varış ülkesindeki iş fırsatları yapısı ve mevcut göçmen işçi talebi ile belirlenmektedir. Yani, Ankara'yı tercih edişlerinin sebebi burada bulunan sosyal ağlar olsa da, Ankara'ya Özbek göçünü mümkün kılan en temel faktörler, restoran sektöründeki boşluk ve işverenlerin ucuz iş gücü olarak gördükleri göçmen emeğine yönelik talebidir. Ayrıca bu göç hareketinde, Türkiye'nin Özbekistan vatandaşlarına sağladığı vize serbestisinin ortaya çıkardığı kolaylık ve devletin denetim yapmayarak restoran sektöründeki düzensiz göçmen iş gücüne göz yumması, çok önemli yapısal etmenlerdir ve Özbek komilerin göçünü açıklarken mutlaka düşünülmelidir.

Ülkeye gelirken uçak ile seyahat ettikleri ve vize serbestisinden faydalanarak giriş yaptıkları tüm görüşmeciler tarafından bahsedilmiş, izinsiz çalışmalarının düzensiz statüye düşürmesinin yanı sıra vize süresi dolan Özbeklerin de bulunduğu anlaşılmıştır. Tüm görüşmeciler, vize süresini aştığı halde ülkede kalmalarının ve izinsiz çalışmalarının getireceği yasal yaptırımlardan haberdar olmalarına rağmen, denetimlerin az yapılmasını fırsat bilerek Türkiye'de düzensiz konumda yaşamaya devam etmektedir. Ek olarak, tüm görüşmelerden anlaşıldığı üzere Özbek komiler, gelmeden önce belirledikleri miktarda parayı kazandıktan sonra ülkelerine geri döneceklerdir ve Türkiye'de kalıcı olma niyetleri yoktur.

Bir diğer ilgi çekici bulgu, görüşülen Özbeklerin Rusya hakkındaki ifadeleridir. Özbek iş gücü göçünün ana hedef ülkesi olan Rusya'da inşaat sektöründe çalışıldığı, bu sektörde çalışma koşullarının daha kötü olduğu ve Rusya'da yasal izinlerin çok zor alındığı, görüşülen Özbek göçmenlerin ortak görüşüdür. Görüşmeciler Ankara'daki istihdamlarının restoranlarda, Rusya'da ise inşaatlerde olduğu konusunda kesin ifadeler vermiş, böylece yine her iki ülkedeki göçmen ağı ve göç sistemlerine işaret etmiştir. Görüşmecilerin, Rusya'da karşılaştıkları yasal kısıtlar ve

sosyal zorlukların yanı sıra, Türk toplumuna sosyal ve kültürel anlamda daha kolay uyum sağlamaları sebepleriyle Ankara'ya gelmeyi tercih ettiği anlaşılmıştır.

Görüşülen Özbekler, restoranlardaki işlerini göçmen ağı üzerinden birbirlerine haber vererek bulduklarını ve işe başlama sürecinde birbirlerine destek olduklarını ifade etmiştir. Yine kendi ağları üzerinden iş değiştirme konusunda da kolaylık yaşadıkları ve bu şekilde, olumsuz durum yaşadıkları restoranlarda zaten çalışmaya devam etmedikleri öğrenilmiştir. Çalışma izni olmaksızın düzensiz şekilde çalışıyor olmalarına rağmen Özbek komilerin, aralarında devlet görevlilerinin de bulunduğu müşteriler ile direkt iletişimde olacak şekilde çalıştığı, araştırma bulgularına bakarak teyit edilmiştir. Devletin bu duruma göz yumması ve müşterilerin Özbek komileri ortak ecdad, din, kültür ve dil gibi sebeplerle daha kolay tolere etmesi, bu tezde iddia edildiği şekilde Özbek göçmenlerin “tolere edilebilir” ve “göze görünmez” olduklarını doğrulamıştır. Burada bahsedilen görünmezlik, göz ardı etme, tepki göstermeme ve resmi istatistiklerde yer vermeme gibi davranışlarla, toplum ve devlet tarafından ilgi odağı olmamalarını anlatmaktadır. Bu duruma katkı sağlayan önemli etmenlerden birisi de, Özbek komilerin çalıştığı restoranların tarzları ve hitap ettiği müşteri kitlesidir. Saha araştırmasında görüldüğü üzere, Balgat semtindeki Özbek göçmenler kebab restoranlarında çalışmakta ve muhafazakâr orta ve alt orta sınıfa ait müşterilere hizmet etmektedir. Buradaki uyumda, Özbeklerin habitusu ile kebab restoranlarındaki kültürel kodların örtüşmesi esasen büyük rol oynamaktadır. Diğer bir deyişle, Özbek göçmenler bu restoranlardaki kültürel örüntü ve beklentilere kolay uyum sağlayabildikleri için de bu sektörde yoğunlukla istihdam edilmektedir.

Komi olarak günlük 10-12 saat çalıştıkları ve haftanın bir günü dinlenebildikleri, Özbek göçmenler tarafından görüşmelerde ifade edilmiştir. Böylece çalışma koşullarının aslında çok yorucu olduğu, ancak bu iş yerlerinde işverenler ya da diğer çalışanlarla herhangi bir sorun yaşamadan çalıştıkları anlaşılmıştır. Biriktirdikleri paraları dolara çevirerek Özbekistan'daki ailelerine gönderen Özbek göçmenler, boş günlerini de en az miktarda para harcamaya çaba göstererek geçirmektedir. Bazı Özbek göçmenlerin ifadelerine göre, göçmen dövizini gönderirken kullandıkları aracı bir şirketin varlığı dikkat çekmiştir. Benzer şekilde, vize alırken yardımcı olan bir şirketten de bahsedilmiştir. Böylece, Özbek göçmenlerin istihdamı göçmen ağı üzerinden gerçekleşse de, vize ve para transferi gibi konularda aracı şirketlerin

varlığı, burada finansal çıkarlar karşılığı göç hareketini kolaylaştıran aktörlerin bulunduğu bir göç sanayisinin kurulduğuna işaret etmiştir.

Tüm bahsi geçen durumlara işverenler açısından bakıldığında ise, restoran sahipleriyle yapılan görüşmeler, Özbek uyruklu kişilerin bu sektörde özellikle tercih edildiğine işaret etmiştir. Düzensiz şekilde göçmen iş gücü istihdam eden ve yasal sonuçlarının farkında olduğu anlaşılan işverenler, görüşmeler esnasında bu istihdam pratiğinin çok yaygın olduğunu belirtmiş ve sektördeki iş gücü açığına vurgu yapmıştır. Komi olarak çalıştıracak Türk bulamadıklarından yakınan işverenler, Özbek göçmenlerin yasal statüsünden, ihtiyaç sahibi olmalarından ve toplumda tolere edilen bir grup olmalarından fayda sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca görüşmelerde anlaşıldığı üzere işverenler, iyi işleyen Özbek göçmen ağından da faydalanmakta, beğenmedikleri çalışanlarını hızla değiştirebilmekte ve boş kadro olduğunda hızla doldurabilmektedir. Özbeklerin sağladığı ucuz iş gücünü, çalışkanlık, dayanıklılık, dürüstlük gibi ifadelerle överek anlatan işverenler, düşük maaşlı ve yorucu bir iş olmasını göz ardı ederek yerel iş gücünü gönülsüz ve tembel olarak suçlamıştır. Komilik yaparak elde ettikleri ücretin, Özbekistan'da alacaklarından çok daha iyi olduğunun farkında olduğu görülen görüşmeciler, tüm risklere rağmen Özbek işçi istihdamına devam edeceğini paylaşmıştır. Görüşülen işverenler sorulmamasına rağmen ek olarak Suriyelilere yönelik olumsuz görüşlerini paylaşmış ve istihdam edecek Özbek göçmen olmaması halinde bile Suriyelileri tercih etmeyeceklerini ifade etmişlerdir.

İlginçtir ki COVID-19 esnasında yapılan restoran ziyaretleri, araştırma yapılan restoranlardaki çalışan sayısında önemli düşüşler yaşanmasına rağmen göçmen iş gücünden faydalanmaya devam edildiğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Hatta pandeminin sebep olduğu ekonomik sorunlara, ucuz göçmen iş gücünden faydalanarak çözüm bulunduğu anlaşılmıştır.

Pandemi sonrasındaki süreçte de benzer gözlemler yapılmış ve işverenlerle yapılan görüşmelerde, Özbek göçmenlerin sektördeki yoğunluğunu koruduğu ve Afgan göçmenlerle beraber, ekonomik sorunlarla başa çıkılan süreçte daha çok tercih edilir hale geldiği anlaşılmıştır. Bazı görüşmelerde işverenler tarafından açıkça belirtildiği üzere, Özbeklerin istihdamının işveren açısından daha ucuz olması, tercih sebebi olmalarını daha da arttırmıştır. Ek olarak, pandemi esnasında görülen ve sonrasında

devam eden dolar kurundaki hızlı artış şimdilik sektördeki Özbek iş gücü göçünün varlığını etkilememiş olsa da, artışın devam etmesi halinde göç hareketini etkileyebilecek niteliktedir.

Sonuç olarak, mevcut enformel iş gücü pratikleri ve esnek vize rejiminin kesişimi, Türkiye'ye düzensiz iş gücü göçü akınlarını çekmekte, işverenlerin ucuz, sömürülebilir ve dayanıklı göçmen iş gücüne yönelik talepleri de hem devlet politikalarına hem de göç hareketine yön vermektedir. Devlet tarafından sağlanan kısıt ve esneklikler, iş fırsatlarının ikili yapısı ve restoran sektöründe göçmen iş gücüne yönelik talep, Özbek işçilerin göç kararlarındaki ve restoranlarda düzensiz istihdamındaki temel belirleyiciler olarak öne çıkmıştır. Tüm bunların sonucu olarak ve yukarıda bahsedilen sektöre, mekâna ve aktörlere özgü nitelikler sebebiyle, Ankara'nın Balgat semtindeki kebab restoranlarında Özbek komilerin yoğun olarak çalıştığını görmek mümkündür. Ayrıca, pandeminin etkilerinin de Özbek istihdamını azaltmadığı, tam tersi daha tercih edilir hale getirdiği anlaşılmıştır. Böylece, saha araştırmasından elde edilen veriler ile bu tez, Piore'nin (1979) İkili İş Gücü Piyasası Teorisi'nde tartıştığı önermeleri doğrulamış ve göçmen ağının ve göç sistemlerinin göç akışının sürdürülmesindeki büyük etkisini göstermiştir.

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