Abstract: The economic integration of migrants has become increasingly prioritised by European governments. However, Europe’s colonial past and orientalist narratives have contributed to the inevitable othering of migrants, even in the minds of those with the best of intentions. Guided by the self-categorisation theory, we postulate that those involved in supporting migrants to integrate in European societies implicitly categorise them as an out-group, potentially leading to suboptimal integration outcomes and the (inadvertent) exclusion of the very migrants they attempt to integrate. A case study of migrant entrepreneurship support initiatives in Berlin is illustrated as a qualitative, empirical example, providing some evidence for those arguments. The paper concludes with recommendations for practitioners and suggestions for further research.

Keywords: self-categorisation theory; othering; orientalism; migrant integration; migrant entrepreneurship; sustainable entrepreneurship; ethnic minorities; refugees

1. Introduction

The question of why people help people has invoked a myriad of investigations into the nature of the motivations that lead to prosocial behaviour [1–3]. Indeed, pure altruism is unlikely to be the answer [4–7], and motives behind those behaviours often include the need for power and control [8–11], the desire to receive appreciation and recognition [12,13], and boosting one’s self-esteem and well-being [14–16]. In the case of those in a socioeconomically privileged position helping what is perceived as more vulnerable minority groups, such factors not only determine and shape the nature of support provided and achieved outcomes, but may also reflect and perpetuate common stereotypes, implicit ideologies, and systemic biases.

Efforts aimed at integrating migrants into European societies are no exception. Europe has a history of employing integration strategies that are at worst xenophobic and exclusionary and at best filled with subconscious biases [17–21]. This is perhaps unsurprising given Europe’s colonial history and the rise of anti-migrant, particularly anti-Muslim sentiment, which increased as a result of the most recent so-called refugee crisis [22–25]. This ultimately raises some questions about whether or not recent integration strategies achieve their desired outcomes, and how these are defined in the first place.

Operating under the assumption that those involved in the organisation and leadership of initiatives aimed to support migrants are likely “good-intentioned” and do not necessarily consciously discriminate against or look down upon them [26–29], we focus on the examination of potential subconscious biases on their part. These biases are assumed to be a result of migrant othering and group perceptions, which ultimately impacts the nature, priorities, and outcomes of migrant integration strategies, in this case particularly those focusing on migrant entrepreneurship. This issue is particularly important to examine given the negative contribution to social sustainable development goals (SDGs) that may result from such biases, for instance the exacerbation of inequalities (SDG 10), the mental health situation of migrants (SDG 3), and access to decent work opportunities (SDG 8).
This article therefore seeks to enlighten how experts involved in the leadership and administration of migrant integration efforts, exemplified by migrant entrepreneurship initiatives, ideologically perceive the migrants whom they support, through an empirical investigation of the ways in which they design the strategies and fulfil the goals of their initiatives. The article therefore addresses the following research questions:

1. How do migrant integration (through entrepreneurship) experts ideologically perceive supported migrants?
2. How do those ideological perceptions impact the design, implementation, and outcomes of the support programs?

The article employs perspectives from the self-categorisation theory [30–32] and orientalism [33–35] to explain the processes in which biases towards migrants emerge. It then moves on to empirically analyse the perspectives of experts from the migrant entrepreneurship support environment in Berlin on the strategic approaches, goals, and outcomes of their respective initiatives. The paper ends with a discussion on those findings, providing recommendations for practitioners and scholars alike.

2. Self-Categorisation, Social Biases and Prosocial Behaviour

The self-categorisation theory from social psychology focuses on how individuals perceive themselves and others in terms of groups [32,36]. Accordingly, categorisation of oneself and others in certain groups generally occurs in a spontaneous or subconscious manner, based on demographic characteristics, shared beliefs, common destinies, etcetera. Specifically, humans tend to differentiate between a group that contains themselves, namely the in-group, and other groups of people, namely out-groups.

This in-group/out-group classification ultimately impacts social perception and behaviour, usually associating more positive views and cognitions with and expressing more positive behaviours towards other fellow in-group members [30,31,37–39], or in-group favouritism. One important example is the exhibition of prosocial behaviour, where individuals favour engaging in supportive and helpful behaviours towards those within their own group in comparison to out-groups (e.g., [40–43]), particularly as people display higher levels of empathy towards in-group members compared to others [44–46].

Being part of an in-group is an important mechanism in which humans build communities and intimate connections and develop feelings of safety and comfort with others see [47]. However, categorisation also generates social biases and discriminatory behaviours against out-group members [30,48–50], which in the case of out-groups in a less-privileged position (e.g., migrants and ethnic minorities), could particularly lead to detrimental impacts on their health, well-being, and economic success [51–53].

In addition to favouring in-group members when it comes to exhibiting empathy and providing support, in-group members often view out-groups as more homogenous than the in-group [54–59]. As a result, out-groups could be viewed as having more similarities than differences, which leads to less differentiated behaviours, strategies, and approaches that lack nuance and personalisation when dealing with out-groups, further contributing to biased behaviour and discrimination.

3. Categorisation and Othering in Migrant Integration

This us versus them categorisation occurs in the minds of those leading and executing initiatives aiming at supporting others, which would certainly apply to migrant integration initiatives (e.g., [60,61]). In the words of Höberg et al. [60] based on the Swedish context, “one effect of the ethnicity approach in the Swedish context is that the client is categorised as a representative of an imagined collective. In this way, the strategy has homogenizing and differentiating implications in that the constructed otherness from an assumed majority is consolidated. The result of the categorisation is, similar to the categorisation into immigrantship, that the client is always different, an assumed ‘Other’ in relation to the majority population, in order to receive support”.


Though it is not expected that this categorisation is the result of a need to maintain power and control over the helped, which could be the case in prosocial behaviours that foster dependency on the helping entity [8,11] rather than entrepreneurial independence, this categorisation can have negative consequences due to subtle biases and discriminatory behaviours, such as underemployment [62–64] and health issues [65], which could ultimately negative impact social sustainability in terms of increased inequalities, access to decent work, and improved (mental) health (SDGs 3, 8, and 10).

In the case of migrants, particularly when it comes to those from Muslim-majority countries and Arab or African origins, this categorisation on part of the receiving society is potentially exacerbated by orientalist and neo-colonial ideologies [33–35,66–68]. In other words, Europe’s centuries-long regard of eastern and African countries as “other” potentially feeds into its current biases and possibly reduced empathy towards migrants, perceiving them as a homogenous out-group with inferior qualities. This means that migrants from those backgrounds are likely to be negatively stereotyped, and thus have to work harder to prove themselves as part of an in-group in the host community. This could also be associated with higher expectations from (officials in) the receiving community that those migrants have to bring in extraordinary qualities to compensate for the shortcomings associated with their otherness.

Furthermore, perception of danger additionally widens the gap between the in-group and out-groups [69–72]. Indeed, with the emergence of far-right groups (e.g., the AFD party (Alternative für Deutschland) in Germany) and governments spreading populist, racist rhetoric against aforementioned migrant groups (for e.g., in the USA, the UK, and Hungary), population majorities have developed stronger fears and worries from “the other” for the safety of their own (more privileged) positions, exacerbating the intergroup divide [72–76]. It could therefore be assumed that biases in the design and implementation of migrant integration initiatives might be further induced by fears induced by changes in the socio-political landscape.

4. Case Study: Migrant Entrepreneurship Support Initiatives in Berlin

According to the 2020 Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) [77], Germany scores highest (most favourable) in its efforts in labour market integration of migrants compared to other aspects of integration, underscoring the government’s efforts to invest in and support economic integration. Interestingly, integration efforts related to access to nationality and permanent residency scored in the “halfway favourable” category, indicating that Germany still has a long way to go in terms of including migrants as long-term, “in-group” members of the local society.

Indeed, with over 11 million non-Germans living in a country of approximately 84 million people [78,79], integration of migrants in the German society and economy has become a key priority of the German government, like in many other EU states, particularly after the large influx of refugees during the latest refugee crisis. Additionally, the importance of empowering migrants to pursue and succeed in entrepreneurship as means for labour market integration has become more evident, in realisation of the various potential benefits of migrant entrepreneurship (see Appendix A) as well as migrants’ heightened tendency to engage in self-employment in comparison to locals (see [80,81]).

Starting an own business, however, presents numerous challenges for any aspiring entrepreneur, but even more so for a migrant [82,83]. Those barriers relate to employment laws and regulations, extensive bureaucracy, access to funding, unfamiliarity with the language, lack of support networks, and understanding the new environment and competition structures, as well as social and cultural barriers such as racism and discrimination [83–90]. Consequently, many migrant entrepreneurship support initiatives have been launched as a response.
4.1. Overview of the Migrant Entrepreneurship Initiatives

Among Germany’s efforts to integrate migrants in the labour market, entrepreneurship has been receiving more attention over the past years, although its promotion is not necessarily part of a larger economic agenda and does play a role in migrant integration strategy [91,92]. However, in entrepreneurial cities like Berlin, where approximately 50% of new company founders in 2014 had an international background [93], several initiatives have been established to specifically support migrants to pursue entrepreneurship as a career path. Notably, no official centralised list or database of all these initiatives has been found, though a few efforts such as Perspektive Neustart and IQ Fachstelle Migrantenökonomie have acted as umbrella networks for those initiatives.

Generally, most of migrant entrepreneurship support initiatives have been launched by civil society organisations and financed by government funds; examples include LOK.a.Motion GmbH, SINGA Business Lab and Initiative Selbstständige Immigrantinnen. Such initiatives focus on training and coaching, assistance with bureaucratic procedures, networking events, and supporting access to funding (though not directly providing monetary support), among other approaches, to ultimately enable migrants to overcome the challenges they face throughout their entrepreneurial journey. The initiatives therefore largely focus on eliminating what they perceive as hurdles on the road to migrant entrepreneurship, rather than supporting systematic, institutional changes that enhance migrants’ opportunity structure; this agrees with [92].

4.2. Empirical Analysis: The Expert Perspective

Building on the above arguments as grounded by the self-categorisation theory, we conducted an empirical analysis of some of those migrant entrepreneurship support initiatives in Berlin, in which the strategies to support migrants in overcoming perceived challenges and how success and desired outcomes are defined were analysed. This particularly focused on analysing tendencies towards othering, out-grouping, and orientalist ideologies on behalf of key stakeholders involved in those initiatives.

Accordingly, a semi-structured interview guideline was designed based on Rashid [88]’s framework of migrant entrepreneurship challenges, which itself was built on the work of Wauter and Lambrecht [83]. The authors identify challenges in market opportunities, access to entrepreneurship, human capital, social networks, and the societal environment as being the key deterrents of migrant and refugee entrepreneurship. Rashid [88] expands that framework based on a systematic literature review of the migrant and refugee entrepreneurship literature to further detail the sub-categories which those five challenge categories entail. This aligns with the United Nations findings [82], where improvements in the regulatory environment, entrepreneurship education, technology exchange and innovation, access to finance, and social awareness and networking are emphasised as key enablers of migrant entrepreneurship.

In addition to the challenges framework, the topic of impact and success measurement methods compliments this research, acknowledging its importance not only for identifying the best practices to achieve desired outcomes, but also to analyse the long-term sustainability of the programs. Additionally, questions on the stakeholders’ definitions of and views on migrant entrepreneurship success and their own initiative’s success were incorporated.

Purposive sampling was conducted, with the underlying notion of selecting research participants that possess the desired information and expertise that enable answering the research question. The coronavirus outbreak complicated the data collection process and limited the number of experts who were willing or able to participate in the research, and among the 25 organisations that were contacted, seven experts agreed to proceed with an interview. Contacted organisations included both governmental and civil society institutions operating in Berlin. Profiles of those participants are summarised in Table 1.
The interviews were conducted by the same interviewer with a duration of 30–60 min each. All interviewees authorised the audio-recording of the interviews for data processing. The interviews were conducted between January and April 2020, and due to the pandemic, they were all conducted online via Zoom. Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding procedures were employed to analyse the transcribed interviews and detect potential biases towards migrant entrepreneurs as a result of in-group favouritism when it comes to prosocial behaviour, out-group homogeneity, orientalist ideologies, and perception of danger.

It is worth mentioning that this paper also responds to a few of the recently proposed research recommendations by some notable scholars. For instance, Dabić et al. [94] recommended employing methods other than quantitative ones in migrant entrepreneurship research and focusing on country contexts that have generally been generous to conflict-affected migrants. The paper also aligns with the recommendation of Desai et al. [95] to further identify the mechanisms and processes in which various services and programs impact migrants and refugees as they create jobs, as well as the effectiveness of the initiatives that aim at their integration. Additionally, it responds to the call of Ram et al. [96] for the consideration of historical perspectives and racial biases in the study of migrant entrepreneurship.

4.3. Findings and Discussion

4.3.1. Perceived Migrant Entrepreneurship Challenges and Respective Mitigations

Our analysis shows that the experts perceive challenges in bureaucratic hurdles, including restrictive policies on immigration and working permits as well as daunting administrative processes, in addition to access to finance (e.g., limited possibilities to obtain bank loans) to be the biggest ones facing migrant entrepreneurs. Interviewees found the preference of German institutions towards promoting integration only through dependent employment as well as loss of welfare benefits as a result of new business registration to be key factors that further limit migrants’ access to governmental and financial resources. Additionally, experts largely agree on the importance of addressing gaps in migrant knowledge and skills and enabling them to enhance their human capital.
The initiatives largely respond with trainings, workshops, and coaching sessions aimed at supporting migrants to develop the skills and gain the information they need to succeed as entrepreneurs, whether through business-specific trainings, language courses, or information sources on the navigation of bureaucratic procedures. A few also accompany the migrants on their visits to governmental or financial institutions. Networking events are also offered by some initiatives, aiming to bring (migrant) entrepreneurs together for knowledge exchange.

With regards to issues with market opportunities available to the migrants, there was no consensus among the interviewed experts on the presence of hurdles or on whether or not entrepreneurs should be supported in identifying suitable markets. For instance, some experts believe in staying out of attempting to influence migrants’ choice of market, though there was some agreement that migrants highly operate in the services sector and do not necessarily enter higher growth sectors, such as digital technology, due to lack of experience, resources, or skills.

When asked about discrimination and biases against migrants in the societal environment, mixed results were obtained as well. A few experts mentioned that refugees were highly welcomed in Berlin when they first arrived, though acknowledging that more nationalist and racist attitudes have arisen since then. Additionally, it was mentioned that the society perceives entrepreneurs as trying to improve their current situation, which induces more welcoming and accepting attitudes towards them than towards other non-entrepreneurial migrants. It was also acknowledged that having foreign names might hinder migrants from securing rent contracts for their business location. However, addressing such issues did not appear to be a priority for the interviewed initiatives.

4.3.2. Challenges for the Initiatives, Desired Outcomes and Success

To date, most entrepreneurship support programs measure entrepreneurial success almost solely through financial metrics [97–99]. Indeed, findings from the expert interviews appeared to mirror these shortcomings, with success indicators largely evolving around the number of businesses founded by the migrants and their profitability. From a governmental perspective, there is also time pressure on migrant entrepreneurs to reach profitability quickly if currently on welfare benefits (within one year).

The interviewed organisations also execute feedback and satisfaction surveys, with the purpose of obtaining information from their participants about their demographics and current needs, though not necessarily including migrant entrepreneurs in key program design and decision-making processes. Therefore, program design often follows a responsive and reactive approach.

Interviewed experts also indicated that oftentimes, the programs must be paused or terminated due to the lack of continuous and reliable financing, pushing them to opt for private funding sources when available. Finally, experts found their attempts to find coaches and mentors that possess both the professional knowledge needed by the initiative and cultural understanding of the migrants to be a challenge.

4.3.3. Implicit Categorisation, Othering and Orientalist Ideology

Hints of categorisation and othering clearly emerged from the empirical analysis, starting with findings related to the bureaucracy-related challenges facing migrant entrepreneurs. Although legal formalities may challenge any entrepreneur (see [100]), they are likely to challenge those who struggle with the local language and a new system even more intensely [83,88,101]. However, when a migrant on welfare faces losing social security benefits and is pushed to become profitable in a timeframe that is even shorter than what is generally expected of a local entrepreneur, they would not just be hurdles in their start-up process, but also be subjected to a type of treatment to which most (in-group) entrepreneurs are not; an approach that hints towards in-group favouritism and limited prosocial tendencies towards the migrant other. Indeed, measuring the success of migrant entrepreneurship almost exclusively based on financial metrics could indicate that migrants
are mostly supported so as to strengthen the local economy or to not be a financial burden, rather than support them in achieving any other sustainable benefits.

Additionally, there was a tendency among some interviewees to believe that migrants are unlikely to succeed as entrepreneurs [60]. For instance, an expert from one state institution clearly mentioned that migrant entrepreneurs are expected to fail, which could be the driver for the instability in state funding provided for migrant entrepreneurship initiatives. Moreover, experts from the civil society initiatives do not appear to actively work on influencing migrants to enter more profitable market sectors, while recognizing that migrants largely operate in low-growth sectors (e.g., services and gastronomy) [102]. This reinforces the premise that self-categorisation in migrant integration could be (implicitly) driven by orientalist ideologies, where migrants from Muslim-majority backgrounds are regarded as inferior to the European, and therefore not expected to achieve success in areas where a European can (see [103]), such as high-growth entrepreneurial venturing. Also, it is an indicator of out-group homogeneity, seeing all (welfare-dependent) migrants as a single group of unlikely victors.

Moreover, it appears that some of the strategies employed by the initiatives to support migrants carry some exclusionary tendencies as well. Namely, the fact that migrants are mainly involved as feedback providers, if at all, in the design and decision-making processes of those initiatives, rather than proactively in devising programs that directly concern them, could be problematic. In addition to the initiatives missing out on important insights from the key stakeholders [104,105], namely the beneficiaries themselves, when designing interventions, this approach reinforces the power dynamics between the European and the other; the latter being incapable of surviving or thriving without the former [60,106,107].

Additionally, some of the programs that are aimed to bring people together, and therefore reduce separation between social groups, might be (also) doing exactly the opposite. For instance, many of the offered networking events and platforms bring together different migrant entrepreneurs, but do not mix migrants with local entrepreneurs. This might prove counterproductive, as it intensifies entrepreneurial networks within the out-group, while reinforcing that those other entrepreneurs are not part of the local entrepreneurship environment.

Noteworthily, among all the challenges facing migrant entrepreneurs, discrimination and social exclusion was the one that got least mentioned by the interviewees, even dismissed as an issue that is not much relevant in the study context, hence not targeted by the initiatives.

5. Implications and Conclusions

Although self-categorisation enables individuals to develop a sense of identity, belonging and safety within in-groups, potential dangers with respect to the development of biases and selective behaviours towards out-group members are important to consider. This paper particularly deals with this perspective in the case of migrant integration, with a closer look on recently rehomed entrepreneurs.

This paper suggests the presence of European (in-group) versus migrant (out-group) categorisation within the European context, fuelled by the continent’s centuries-long colonial history, orientalist ideologies, and growing anti-Muslim sentiment as a result of the most recent refugee crisis [23,25], ultimately leading to a rise in populist political and media narratives [108–110]. It is postulated that this categorisation leads to suboptimal outcomes of migrant integration into European communities, as a result of in-group favouritism, perception of out-group homogeneity, and orientalist stereotyping and othering of migrants.

Indeed, a qualitative case study on migrant entrepreneurship initiatives in Berlin provides some evidence for those arguments. This case study could at the very least serve as a basis for further empirical exploration on the topic. However, we acknowledge that the sample size is relatively small and the study context is limited. The nature of the analysis thus limits the generalisability of the results. Therefore, the results may be
seen as indicative and exploratory, but not comprehensive or conclusive. Analyses of larger samples, quantitative nature, and additional contexts are recommended to fortify those arguments and provide further insights into the origins, nature, and implications of self-categorisation in migrant integration.

Nevertheless, realizing that those categorisations and resulting biases may exist justifies the need for mitigative approaches. One prominent approach is based on the common in-group identity model, in which cooperative interaction between the in-group and perceived out-group members is expected to aid in the formation of a common identity, aiding the move of the other to the “we” [30,111,112]. In the context of migrant integration (through entrepreneurship), this translates into the co-creation of support initiatives with the migrants, network building between different migrant groups and locals, and opportunities where locals learn from migrants as well as the other way around.

Additionally, uniting in-group and out-group members under the umbrella of a superordinate group (e.g., through focus on common threats and aspirations) can prove beneficial [113,114]. Under this approach, educating individuals on topics that concern themselves as well as perceived out-groups could help develop a common identity, aligning the groups to motivate collaborative action towards common goals. Media outlets and educational institutions can play a role in pushing common/superordinate identity narratives.

Furthermore, the induction of hypocrisy in those involved in migrant integration initiatives who publicly promote the importance of migrant inclusion yet possess a subconscious bias towards out-group migrants might prove helpful [115–117]. In other words, provoking feelings of guilt and discomfort towards past situations where those individuals themselves have had negative reactions towards out-groups is likely to reduce future discriminatory behaviours, reminding them to practice what they preach.

Those practices may be expected to increase collaboration and partnership between the in-group and out-groups, in addition to strengthening the relationships between various organisations within the host community as well, working towards SDG 16 (strong organisations) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

In addition to those practical implications, this study is one of the first to view migrant integration and entrepreneurship support systems through the lens of the self-categorisation theory while shedding light on neo-colonialist and orientalist legacies in Europe’s entrepreneurial ecosystem development, hence constituting a unique, interdisciplinary scholarly contribution. Researchers are encouraged to further investigate those theoretical concepts in entrepreneurship, sustainability, and migration studies.

Notes:
(1) The term is used due to its popularity and predominant usage in media and political discussions. However, the authors do not view the mass migration of asylum-seekers to Europe as a crisis for the host countries necessarily, agreeing with others like Poynting and Briskman [25] and Noam Chomsky, in that “the countries that are enduring a refugee crisis [are those that] had no responsibility for creating it” and those that have no capacity to accommodate the migrants [118].
(2) Both replicative and innovative types of self-employment are considered in our definition of entrepreneurship. An innovative entrepreneur is one who introduces a new/unique process or product to the market, while a replicative one founds a business regardless of the existence of many similar ones [119,120]. Both entrepreneurship types are shown to have positive, albeit differing, economics outcomes [121].

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### Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Recipients</th>
<th>Sustainable Impact</th>
<th>Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Host country</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic development and innovation</td>
<td>SDG 8; Decent Work and Economic Growth</td>
<td>Creation of new products, processes or markets; reduction in welfare expenses; increase in aggregate demand; contribution to the economy through taxes.</td>
<td>[83,85,87,122–125]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of new businesses and jobs</td>
<td>SDG 8; Decent Work and Economic Growth</td>
<td>Migrants more likely to become entrepreneurs than locals; greater risk tolerance; new job creation; reduction in future integration and resettlement costs.</td>
<td>[83,85–87,123,126]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>International trade</td>
<td>SDG 8; Decent Work and Economic Growth</td>
<td>Access to transnational networks and information about foreign markets; international trade activities.</td>
<td>[82,125,127,128]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic equality</td>
<td>SDG 5; Gender Equality</td>
<td>Reduction of exclusion and inequality; revitalizing certain neighbourhoods and sectors.</td>
<td>[89,92,123,126,129]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social cohesion and community well-being</td>
<td>SDG 16; Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</td>
<td>Building positive relationships between different (and conflicting) social groups through exchange of information, products, and services</td>
<td>[82,122,123,126]</td>
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<th>Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals</th>
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<td>Individuals</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic benefits</td>
<td>SDG 1; No Poverty</td>
<td>Route to financial security and self-reliance.</td>
<td>[82,83,86,126,130]</td>
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<th>Countries of origin</th>
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<th>Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Economic benefits</td>
<td>SDG 1; No Poverty</td>
<td>Profitable migrant entrepreneurs send money back home, supporting origin economies.</td>
<td>[82,85]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social benefits</td>
<td>SDG 4; Quality Education</td>
<td>Mentorship and knowledge facilitation for other individuals.</td>
<td>[82]</td>
<td></td>
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