

Do International Employment Opportunities Impact Individuals' Political Preferences and Behavior?

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Abstract

Millions of people migrate overseas for employment each year, and many more in sending communities evaluate the prospect of doing so. Cross-border migration opportunities open new avenues of economic advancement, particularly for members of historically marginalized groups. How do international employment opportunities affect individuals' political preferences and behavior? Partnering with local governmental and non-governmental organizations in Mizoram, India, we conducted a randomized controlled trial connecting individuals from Scheduled Tribe communities seeking overseas employment with well-paying jobs in the Persian Gulf region's hospitality sector. We surveyed subjects after a training and recruitment program but before emigration, isolating the effects of mobility-related economic prospects from the actual experience of migrating. The prospect of economic gain from migration shifted both individuals' policy preferences and their willingness to mobilize politically to achieve policy change. Those offered the opportunity to migrate became significantly less supportive of state-led redistribution and more active in local electoral politics. Our results demonstrate how migration opportunities in the global economy can shape political behavior in sending countries and empower individuals from disadvantaged communities.

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Scholarly work on the political impacts of migration has largely focused attention on receiving communities, both by analyzing political responses to migrants (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014; Dancygier, 2010; Peters, 2017) and social reactions to their presence (Choi et al., 2019; Adida et al., 2018; Marten et al., 2019). However, migration can have important economic and political effects not only in the communities in which immigrants settle, but also in the regions from where migrants originate. Migrants may shape sending community politics by developing and transferring new political norms, by lobbying from abroad, or merely by leaving in the first place (Kapur, 2014, 2010; Pérez-Armendáriz, 2014; Careja and Emmenegger, 2012; Sellars, 2019; Leblang, 2017). In this paper, we consider how the potential economic opportunities that stem from cross-border mobility shape the political behavior of an even broader set of individuals: those who gain access to new migration opportunities abroad.

As the global economy has grown more interconnected, employment opportunities abroad have reshaped the economic prospects for individuals in otherwise isolated communities. In 2019, 272 million people migrated across international borders—3.5% of the world population and nearly three times as many as in 1970 (United Nations, International Organization for Migration, 2020). This figure understates the much larger number of people who have gained access to economic opportunities overseas. In Latin America, 27% of LatinoBarómetro respondents said that their household had concretely considered moving abroad in 2018, up from 22% in 2002.¹ In Sub-Saharan Africa, 17% of AfroBarometer respondents said they had given “a lot” of consideration to moving abroad.² These “exit options” may expand economic opportunities, increase bargaining power, and bolster confidence in the future – whether individuals decide to migrate or not to do so (Hirschman, 1993; Karadja and Prawitz, 2019).

How do international labor migration opportunities impact individuals’ policy preferences and political behavior? A long line of scholarship documents how economic resources and prospects affect individuals’ political attitudes and actions (cf Almond and Verba 2015; Margalit and Shayo 2019; Benabou and Ok 2001). Applying these theoretical insights to the study of international mobility, we argue that by bolstering economic forecasts, overseas employment opportunities affect political attitudes and behavior in two main ways. First, potential migrants re-evaluate their relationship to

¹The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), Round 8 (2018), www.LapopSurveys.org.

²Afrobarometer Data, All Countries, Round 7 (2016/2017), <http://www.afrobarometer.org>.

the welfare state, becoming more fiscally conservative, opposed to high taxes and government-led redistribution, and committed to the idea that the poor can work themselves out of poverty on their own. Second, individuals that confront an expanded economic future obtain more stakes in the policy-making process and become more active politically; they increase engagement in electoral politics by participating in activities such as voting, attending political events, and debating politics.

Expanding access to economic opportunities, therefore, is a critical way in which globalization may shape political attitudes and behaviors in lower-income countries and communities. A growing body of scholarship examines how communities in the Global South have experienced unprecedented increases in international migration in recent decades (Wellman, 2021; Zhou, 2018; Schwartz, 2019; Adida, 2014).³ We explore how *access* to overseas employment opportunities in and of itself can re-shape political engagement and redistribution policies for sending communities. We note that overseas labor migration opportunities can have particularly powerful effects on historically marginalized minority groups. Members of these groups often face pervasive discrimination in domestic markets, and therefore often have more to gain by pursuing employment abroad, where their ethnic profiles do not present similar relative disadvantages (Banerjee and Knight, 1985; Osgood and Peters, 2017).

Evaluating the effects of international migration opportunities on individuals' preferences and behaviors is methodologically challenging; migrants differ systematically from non-migrants, sending communities differ consistently from non-sending communities, and opportunities to migrate abroad are not randomly distributed. This paper presents direct causal evidence from a randomized controlled trial in the Northeastern state of Mizoram, India, in which we connected members of a Scheduled Tribe (ST) community with profitable employment opportunities in the Persian Gulf region's hospitality sector. Because Mizoram has traditionally been isolated from outside labor markets, overseas job opportunities are both novel and potentially lucrative for ST individuals with curtailed domestic employment prospects. Working with local governmental and non-governmental agencies, as well as training and recruitment firms, we identified individuals interested in overseas

³While stringent immigration policy regimes in the West restrict labor opportunities for those seeking to emigrate from developing countries, migration across countries in the Global South has risen sharply in recent decades, facilitated by permissive employment-based immigration policies in destination regions facing skills shortages. In 2017, more international migrants from developing countries had resettled in other developing regions than in industrialized nations; migration within Asia and the Middle East now comprises the largest regional migration corridor in the world (United Nations and Social Affairs, 2017, 1-3).

employment and randomly selected half for a skills training and placement program for employment in carefully-vetted jobs in the Persian Gulf region’s hospitality sector. We scrutinized individuals’ economic outlooks, policy preferences regarding the size and scope of the welfare state, and levels of political engagement after they completed training and entered into the placement program but before they secured employment and moved abroad. This allows us to isolate how access to international economic opportunities shapes political preferences and behavior, separate from the effects of the experiences—and realized economic gains—of relocating abroad for employment.

Theoretical Expectations

The scholarship on immigration documents that out-migration has important political effects in sending countries. Kapur (2014) highlights four channels of influence. First, emigrants may impact sending communities by virtue of their absence. The departure of young dissatisfied citizens, for example, may depress prospects for political participation and democratic reform (Sellars, 2019). Second, diaspora communities may shape domestic politics from abroad. Diaspora lobbying can aggravate intrastate conflicts, for instance, while remittance flows can undercut demands for social welfare (Germano, 2013; Doyle, 2015; Adida and Girod, 2011; Acevedo, 2020). Third, migrants may return from abroad to become social and political leaders, bringing with them new political experiences and social norms (Pérez-Armendáriz, 2014; Clingingsmith et al., 2009).

While the absence, diaspora, and return channels influence primarily the political preferences and behavior of migrants and their close networks, Kapur (2014) also underlines a fourth channel that affects the behavior of a much broader set of individuals: prospective economic opportunity afforded to potential migrants. Foundational theories of migration hold that prospective economic gain is an important motivator of overseas migration (Massey et al., 1993). The possibility of emigration and attendant welfare enhancement is predicted to lead individuals to develop new outlooks and preferences, independent of the process of migrating abroad (McKenzie et al., 2013; Koikkalainen and Kyle, 2016). In this theoretical framework, even those who do not end up emigrating can benefit from the opportunity to migrate. Employment opportunities abroad stand to provide young, upwardly-mobile individuals with a powerful economic “exit option,” allowing them to ask more of employers and governments. Even if domestic opportunities remain unchanged for job-seekers, they

are predicted to develop a bolstered sense of economic confidence and self-determination as they confront new avenues of economic advancement in the global economy and consider the possibility of migrating abroad (Kapur, 2014).

The effects of prospective economic opportunity from cross-border migrations are particularly important for individuals who face restricted domestic employment choices. Members of marginalized ethnic or religious groups face systematic barriers to economic advancement and occupational mobility in local labor markets (Banerjee and Knight, 1985). Minorities encounter discrimination in hiring and promotion, especially in well-paying jobs, and frequently face wage differentials in identical jobs performed by members of majority groups. In ethnically segmented societies, in addition, minorities remain excluded from career opportunities structured around kinship-based professional networks. Members of these groups therefore stand to gain by pursuing employment abroad, where their ethnic profiles are less likely to offer similar relative disadvantages because foreign firms have fewer incentives to discriminate in hiring and promotion based on social hierarchies in migrant-origin regions (Osgood and Peters, 2017; Gaikwad and Suryanarayan, 2018). Opportunities for employment abroad, therefore, should be especially powerful for marginalized individuals, boosting economic confidence and reshaping political preferences and behavior.

Together, these theoretical considerations lead us to present the following claim:

***Hypothesis 1:** Individuals who receive opportunities for overseas employment should become more confident in their economic prospects compared to those who do not.*

Next, based on insights arising from the scholarship on cross-border migration, we theorize that migration-related economic opportunities will shape potential migrants' political preferences and behavior in two central ways. First, enhanced economic opportunities stand to impact individuals' economic policy preferences. Karadja and Prawitz (2019) provide evidence that weather-related emigration shocks in Sweden in the late-19th century drove young workers with new exit options to the United States to become more assertive economically and to make greater demands of domestic employers and the state. We apply these insights to the broader set of economic policies that potential migrants evaluate, arguing that migration opportunities can alter individuals' relationship with the welfare state, decreasing in turn their support for taxation and redistribution policy.

Observational and experimental studies in political economy find that individuals who experience

economic gains develop more fiscally-conservative policy stances and become more likely to attribute material success to personal effort rather than life circumstances (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2005; Meltzer and Richard, 1981; Margalit and Shayo, 2019; Ansell, 2014). These predictions dovetail with a broader set of studies that show that globalization deepens inequality and weakens support for social insurance systems (Stiglitz, 2002; Linardi and Rudra, 2020). By conceptually separating the effect of economic gain associated with migration opportunities from the experience of migration itself, we theorize the determinants of changes in the economic policy preferences not only for those who eventually migrate but also for the larger population of potential migrants. Demarcating the effects of migration-related economic opportunities from the realized economic gains of migration also allows us to contribute to a long-standing theoretical debate in political economy: whether redistribution preferences are prospective as well as retrospective. The ‘prospects of upward mobility’ (POUM) hypothesis holds that the promise of future economic gains tomorrow can shape policy preferences in the present (Benabou and Ok, 2001). This hypothesis attempts to explain a host attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, such as why poorer voters at times favor fiscally conservative policies which harm them in the short run but which stand to be advantageous if they were to be economically successful later in life.

Applying these theoretical concepts to our analysis of cross-border migration opportunities, we make the following prediction:

***Hypothesis 2:** Individuals who receive opportunities for overseas employment should become less supportive of taxation and redistribution compared to those who do not.*

Second, we expect that overseas employment opportunities should increase potential migrants’ political engagement at home. Prior observational studies have yielded mixed evidence on the impacts of migration, with some showing increased participation and others showing decreased participation in sending communities (Sellars, 2019; Germano, 2013; Karadja and Prawitz, 2019; Goodman and Hiskey, 2008; Duquette-Rury, 2014). Importantly, we note, there are strong theoretical reasons to believe that migration *opportunities* (which are available to a broader segment of the population) have a different impact on political participation than do the economic and social effects of migration itself (which are experienced primarily by migrants and their families). Individuals who proceed to migrate may be physically unable to participate in the electoral process

(see also Wellman 2021). The remittances that migrants' families receive, meanwhile, may enable them to ignore clientelistic mobilization efforts. We argue, however, that the opportunity to migrate is more likely to enhance political engagement. Individuals with more attractive "exit options" have greater leverage over local employers, brokers, and political leaders, enabling them with greater means and incentives to participate in the political arena. Wealthier and higher-income voters have long been shown to participate more in electoral politics (Brady et al., 1995; Almond and Verba, 2015). We predict that individuals who anticipate economic gain from access to overseas migration opportunities will begin to engage more in electoral politics. Here, too, examining the effect of migration opportunities before migrants have been able to actualize material benefits sheds light on an enduring debate regarding the determinants of political participation. While some argue that wealthier people participate more in politics because they have greater resources, others contend that they do so because they have greater reason to invest in shaping future policy. By evaluating the effect of prospective migration rather than present material resources, we are able to isolate the latter effect from the former. Our theoretical prediction is formulated as follows:

***Hypothesis 3:** Individuals who receive opportunities for overseas employment should participate more in electoral politics compared to those who do not.*

Research Design

Setting This study focuses on employment opportunities in the hospitality sector in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states for individuals from the Mizo community in Mizoram, in Northeast India. Like other ST groups in India, Mizos fare poorly on key welfare indicators and face substantial obstacles in domestic labor markets. In Mizoram, private sector employment is anemic and government employment is highly politicized. Meanwhile, even educated and English-speaking Mizos often have difficulty finding work in mainland India, where they face discrimination as conspicuous racial and religious minorities (McDuie-Ra, 2012). Mizos are generally identified as racially Southeast Asian and the vast majority are Christians. For additional information on our study setting, see *Appendix 1.1*.

Employment opportunities in the Gulf region, meanwhile, are part of a large and growing corridor from India to other countries in Asia. According to the United Nations Migration report, more than

40 percent of the world’s migrant population comes from countries in Asia, and more than 60 percent of these emigrate to other Asian countries (United Nations and Social Affairs, 2017). India is the world’s largest source of emigrants (16.6 million per year), and the India-UAE corridor is the world’s second largest after USA-Mexico (United Nations and Social Affairs, 2016).⁴

The UAE and other GCC countries have a large and growing demand for foreign English-speaking workers to serve in the hospitality sector. As a result, many Mizos view international employment opportunities, especially in the Persian Gulf region, as a much more promising pathway to upward mobility than domestic work. Labor migrants earn far higher wages in the GCC area than they could hope to earn in similar service work at home, and remittances from temporary workers abroad frequently serve as engines of growth and investment for sending communities. Other regions of South Asia, such as Kerala, central Bangladesh, and Nepal, have leveraged labor migration and remittances into substantial economic growth. Mizoram’s relative remoteness and small population has meant the state has previously had few connections to employers abroad and little emigration to date. Following the example of these other regions, however, the Mizoram state government and local NGOs have in recent years encouraged workers to seek employment opportunities abroad, and have sought assistance to evaluate a program to train and place Mizos in hospitality sector jobs in the Gulf region.

Sample In July–August 2018, in collaboration with the Government of Mizoram’s Mizoram Youth Commission (MYC) and a local NGO (MZP), we recruited a group of prospective applicants interested in overseas employment from in and around Mizoram’s capital city, Aizawl (for additional details, see *Appendix 1.2*). From the group of candidates who responded and expressed interest, along with our recruitment partner (a Mumbai-based recruitment firm, Vira International), we selected candidates that met basic requirements for obtaining hospitality sector jobs in the GCC countries: English language skills and educational attainment.⁵ All of these subjects were surveyed at baseline by a Delhi-based firm (CVoter, Inc.) to record basic demographics and pre-treatment outcome measures (*Appendix 1.3* discusses survey methodology).

⁴Furthermore, Sasikumar and Timothy (2015) estimate that there are around 600,000 - 800,000 annual migrants from India to the Gulf, whereas annually India adds 7 - 8 million new workers to the labor force. This makes out-migration one of the major sources of new employment for Indian workers.

⁵English is a main language of instruction, apart from Mizo, in Mizoram schools; thus a large proportion of candidates had the required skills.

The resulting pool of 392 candidates is broadly reflective of the upwardly-mobile population that stands to benefit from work abroad: young, educated, and unemployed. The average age in our sample was 23. More than 70% of participants had completed high school and more than 85% were unemployed at the start of the program. These characteristics are similar to those of South Asian migrants in the UAE and other Gulf countries more broadly (see *Appendix 8* for comparisons between our study sample and the Kerala Migration Survey). From this pool, half were randomly selected to attend the training and recruitment module (T=196, C=196). Before selecting individuals into treatment and control, we used a matching algorithm to generate blocked pairs to ensure balance along key covariates which might predict economic prospects (in particular, gender, education, and English proficiency).

Treatment The main treatment in this study consists of two parts, designed specifically to connect subjects with potentially lucrative employment opportunities in GCC countries. First, selected individuals were enrolled in a fully-funded, five-week training program to impart service and interview skills related to jobs in the Gulf hospitality sector, administered by a Bangalore-based job-training firm (Free Climb, Inc.). The program included both classroom units and basic practical training in local restaurants and hotels, such as counter service, customer interactions, and interview skills. This part of the intervention was designed to equip candidates with the elemental know-how needed to credibly interview for hospitality-sector job opportunities in international destinations and was necessary for foreign firms to hire program participants.⁶ Additional details are provided in *Appendix 1.4*. Second, selected individuals were entered into a placement pool for interviews with employers in the hospitality sector in the GCC region. Our recruitment partner (Mumbai-based Vira International) gathered and vetted for ethical labor practices potential employers interested in recruiting and sponsoring workers from Mizoram. Prospective employers ranged from multinational food and beverage service outlets such as Pizza Hut and Costa Coffee to luxury hotels such as Mandarin Oriental.

The treatment is by necessity bundled. Yet it was designed to facilitate the evaluation of the impact of enhanced opportunities for international employment, rather than job training itself, on

⁶Note that the foreign employers in our program planned to independently provide in-depth training to all candidates who were eventually hired in order to prepare candidates for job-specific roles. By contrast, the training program in our intervention was focused less on skills upgrading and more on helping candidates acquire the basic fluency needed to demonstrate eligibility for overseas jobs.

individual attitudes and behavior. First, there was little about the training program that was unusual or likely to affect political consciousness or behavior. Hospitality training programs are common in Mizoram, provided both by the government and by local NGOs. Many of those in the treatment group had previously attended such training programs; these individuals still sought our program in order to have their skills judged by instructors with international recruitment connections. Moreover, more than one-third of the individuals in the control group attended a different skills training program run by a local NGO. Individuals who attended other job training programs in the area showed no substantial differences on any of our key outcomes compared to those who did not attend training programs (see *Appendix 6.1*).

Second, by contrast, reliable connections to overseas jobs are extremely rare and are therefore in high demand in Mizoram. Reputable international recruiters rarely venture into the Northeast of India. Nevertheless, there is a widespread belief that significantly greater economic opportunities are to be found internationally than domestically, particularly for Northeastern communities that disproportionately comprise historically marginalized minority ST groups, like the Mizos in our study. We pre-registered an empirical test of this claim. We asked all participants (both treatment and control) to rate their interest in job opportunities in the Gulf compared to other parts of India (Table 1). Respondents consistently reported that compared to mainland India, jobs in the GCC region would be better-paying, provide more opportunities for career advancement, feature substantially better treatment by employers, and involve lesser ethnicity-based discrimination. This provides evidence to support the claim that members of marginalized groups look toward employment in the global economy as an avenue to escape discriminatory barriers in domestic labor markets—a theoretical motivation of our study.

Table 1: Individuals Perceive International Job Opportunities as Valuable/Less Discriminatory

	<i>Gulf Region</i>	<i>Mainland India</i>
In which place...		
will you be able to get a better paying job?	81%	3%
will employers value your skills more?	61%	10%
are you more likely to be promoted?	40%	4%
are employers more likely to treat you better?	54%	7%
will Mizos face less employment discrimination?	55%	8%

Hypothesis was pre-registered that Gulf jobs would be preferable to Mainland India jobs across all dimensions. Remainder of responses were “Don’t Know / Can’t Say.”

Table 2: Treatment Individuals Explored International Employment Opportunities

	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Control</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
Applied for Passport	80 %	40 %	.000***
Looked into Labor Laws Abroad	77 %	56 %	.003***
Looked into Companies Abroad	70 %	54 %	.002***

Hypothesis was pre-registered that the treatment would increase the efforts that individuals put into opportunities abroad. P-Values of difference-in-means, based on randomization inference.

Third, the opportunities provided by the program were specifically international in nature. While hospitality jobs in the Gulf region required this type of training to demonstrate eligibility at the interview stage, hospitality jobs in Mizoram typically do not require attending such job training programs—personal connections, in particular, tend to matter a great deal more in gaining access to the few jobs that exist locally. The subjects in our study specifically interpreted the job opportunities associated with the treatment as being international in character and scope. Both treatment and control groups expressed interest in international jobs at the beginning of the study, but we find at the evaluation stage that the treatment group had actively taken steps to investigate the possibility of living abroad and pursue concrete actions to initiate the relocation process. Table 2 presents evidence from our pre-registered hypothesis, indicating clearly that individuals in the treatment group were far more likely than those in the control group to have applied for a passport and sought out information about employers and labor laws abroad.⁷ The gap in attitudes and behavior between both groups is qualitatively large and highly statistically significant. None of these activities were included in the training program; therefore, they evidence a credible desire—one requiring time and effort—to prepare to move abroad for work. The findings in Table 2 demonstrate that individuals in the treatment group had begun to consider the possibility of *cross-border* migration. Massey et al. (1993, 460) notes that “international movement requires migrants to overcome more barriers than does internal movement” since it entails “costs of learning and adapting to a new culture [and] the costs of acquiring appropriate documentation.” When provided with the opportunity to connect with overseas employers, individuals in the treatment group undertook the unique steps necessary to open the possibility of cross-border movement.

⁷Passport fees in India range between Rs.1,500 and Rs.4,000 (depending on the passport length and processing speed). This is a meaningful sum in our context given that the monthly median wages of study participants who were employed at baseline was Rs. 8,500.

The treatment provided the opportunity for overseas employment rather than the actual experience of migration. Not everyone assigned to treatment enrolled in the training program and interviewed for jobs abroad (although all were given several opportunities to interview with overseas employers). This is, of course, unsurprising; while employment abroad is relatively lucrative, it is also a major life-changing process. At the same time, all individuals in the treatment group—even those who decided against placement—confronted an enhanced and tangible possibility of overseas employment and emigration. By contrast, control group individuals, while free to pursue their own training programs and options, were not provided international placement opportunities in our program. We are theoretically interested in examining the effect of the prospect of job opportunities abroad on policy preferences and political behavior. Therefore, we surveyed study participants after they had completed the training program and been entered into the recruitment pool, but before they received job offers or migrated abroad. Although individuals in the treatment group could anticipate future employment opportunities, they had not as yet experienced real economic gains or been exposed to life overseas. In other words, the treatment excludes the experience of migration and captures only the anticipation of future migration-induced economic benefits.

Ethical Considerations Careful consideration was given to the ethics of this study, which was approved by IRB committees at [University Name Redacted], [University Name Redacted], and [University Name Redacted]. While international employment offers otherwise unattainable economic opportunities for many immigrants, it potentially poses risks to their physical and psychological wellbeing. There have been reported cases of exploitation of immigrant workers in GCC countries (Sasikumar and Timothy, 2015). This study was embedded within the [Omnibus Research Program Name Redacted] program that aims to improve empirical knowledge regarding labor migration to the Gulf in order to promote fairer labor mobility processes and better outcomes for migrants and stakeholders. The goal of our project was to evaluate a blueprint for ethical cross-border labor migration, to be used by governments and NGOs in the future. We worked closely with our partners to minimize the potential risks that participants might face, to ensure that the benefits of the program flowed to participants, and to protect participants' informed consent (Teele, 2014; Humphreys, 2015).

We situated the study in Mizoram because of the demand for international employment, both

from individuals and from the state government. The Government’s MYC, Mizoram’s Chief Minister, and local NGOs sought to create recruitment opportunities for Mizo workers in GCC countries, and called upon researchers to assist in evaluating scientifically processes of skills training and overseas placement that were already underway. By helping connect government and community organizations with reputable partners both inside and outside of India, the program enabled local stakeholders to better screen potential employers, protect citizens during their employment tenures abroad, and facilitate migrant integration. We undertook a number of steps to vet project partners; select an employment sector (hospitality) that is relatively reputable compared to sectors where labor violations had previously been reported (e.g., construction); screen specific employers for fair recruitment and labor practices; connect would-be migrants with agencies safeguarding migrants’ rights; and offer subjects extensive information on risks, rights, and resources. In particular, the program was designed to improve recruitment processes for prospective migrants relative to those who migrated on their own accord. Future government initiatives in the region were expected to benefit from the knowledge generated and the connections created. An extended discussion of ethical considerations is provided in *Appendix 1.5*.

Outcomes and Estimation Details regarding the sample and balance tests are reported in *Appendix 2*. The main outcome survey was conducted in January–March 2019. Of the 392 pre-treatment subjects, 290 responded to the outcome survey (a response rate of 74%). Following a host of statistical tests, we find no evidence of systematic bias resulting from attrition; in fact, there does not appear to be any systematic pattern in response rates at all (see *Appendix 3*). First, a simple multi-sample t-test shows that treatment subjects were not significantly more likely to respond than control subjects. Second, an omnibus F-test predicting attrition by all pre-treatment covariates (and interactions between covariates and treatment) indicates no significant patterns in attrition. Third, F-tests predicting treatment status by pre-treatment covariates confirms that there are no significant imbalances either among all subjects or among respondents. This suggests that coefficient estimates between treatment and control respondents are likely to be valid estimates of the treatment effect among respondents, and possibly among non-respondents as well.

We evaluated three major attitudinal and behavioral effects associated with international job opportunities corresponding to three pre-registered hypotheses (Table 3), driven by the theoretical

Table 3: Key Outcomes

<i>Area</i>	<i>Expectation</i>
Economic Confidence	Greater confidence in future wages and employment prospects
Economic Policy Preferences	Increased support for lower taxation and government spending
Political Participation	Greater participation in electoral and non-electoral politics

conjectures described earlier. For each outcome, we asked 3-10 survey questions, which we combined with a z-score index of the main outcome in order to reduce the number of comparisons (and therefore the chance of false positives). The specific wording and answer choices for these questions are listed in *Appendix 4*. We configured all outcome variables such that the hypothesized direction of the effect is positive and that all effect sizes are in units of standard deviations of the dependent variable.

The main results show the estimated average treatment effect (ATE) for each hypothesis. We estimated p-values using randomization inference (RI), replicating the randomization procedure 10,000 times to show the range of possible ATE estimates that might occur under the strict null hypothesis. RI helps account for the fact that our randomization procedure (using blocked pairs) restricted the possible variance that could occur. All hypotheses and procedures were pre-registered on the Experiments in Governance and Politics online registry. Consequently, we use one-tailed p-values reflecting the pre-registered effect direction.

Experimental Results

Overall, we find qualitatively meaningful and statistically significant evidence that prospective international employment opportunities impacted individuals' economic attitudes, policy preferences, and political behavior. Table 4 and Figure 1 show the estimated treatment effects of our program on the three key outcomes discussed above. We include two ATE estimates: a simple difference-in-means (left column) and the OLS coefficient controlling for a pre-treatment measure of the outcome variable (right column). The full results on all component questions can be found in *Appendix 5.1*. These estimates are very similar to those using standard errors from a more traditional parametric analysis (*Appendix 5.2*).

First, we find that employment opportunities abroad substantially increased individuals' confidence in their economic prospects. Individuals selected for the treatment group were

Table 4: Estimated Treatment Effects on Main Outcomes

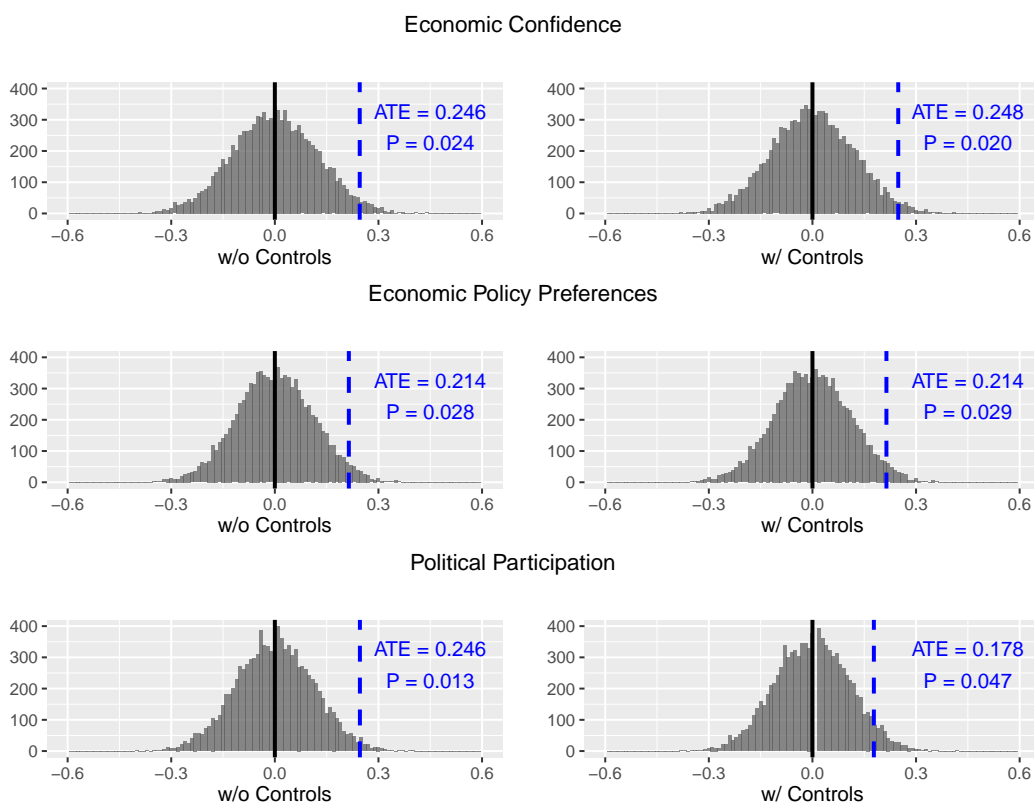
	w/o Controls		w/ Controls		<i>N</i>
	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	
Economic Confidence	+ .246	.024**	+ .248	.020**	290
Economic Policy Preferences	+ .214	.029**	+ .214	.030**	288
Political Participation	+ .246	.012**	+ .178	.047**	289

Rows show the effect of the treatment on outcome variables, measured in standard deviations of the outcome index. Columns 2-3 are a simple difference-in-means test, while Columns 4-5 control for the outcome index pre-treatment. The standard errors and p-values were estimated through randomization inference, replicating the treatment assignment process. The p-values are based on one-sided pre-registered tests.

considerably more likely to believe that they would advance professionally in the future than those in the control group (67% vs. 57%). They were also significantly more likely to assert that their next job would be more lucrative and that they would one day be much better off financially than their parents. This reflects a qualitatively material attitudinal change, one that is especially noteworthy because the young, upwardly-mobile participants in our program were already relatively optimistic about their futures at baseline. Overall, selection for our program increased the economic confidence index by a quarter of a standard deviation.

This finding accords with the theoretical framework regarding cross-border mobility outlined earlier. Seminal work theorizes that the anticipation of economic gain—what Massey et al. (1993, 434) dubs the expectation of “a positive net return, usually monetary”—motivates individual decisions to migrate abroad. We provide micro-level experimental evidence here of a prior and more elemental transformation: exposure to new overseas labor market opportunities motivate individuals to reconceptualize their economic futures and forecast significant material advancement. The economic optimism that motivates migration decisions appears to itself emerge from tangible access to emigration opportunities; this access, therefore, is the first step in the migration process. The economic confidence that we document is all the more striking in light of prior work showing that potential cross-border migrants *underestimate* both their employment prospects and their incomes in foreign countries (McKenzie et al., 2013). Taken together, our evidence supports the theoretical claim that “*cognitive migration*, the narrative imagining of oneself inhabiting a foreign destination,” a process that is distinct from physical cross-border mobility, alters individuals’ socio-economic outlooks and, in turn, influences a host of outcomes, including the decision to migrate (Koikkalainen

Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Treatment Effects



Each row is the estimated treatment effect (in blue) on a standardized index of questions on each topic. Left: simple difference-in-means. Right: OLS controlling for pre-treatment outcome measures. P-values are one-sided (treatment effects were pre-registered) and estimated by randomization inference (grey bars).

and Kyle, 2016, 759, emphasis in original).

Second, international employment opportunities significantly altered individuals' policy preferences, decreasing support for state-led taxation and redistribution and increasing faith in principles of individual economic autonomy. Selected individuals were more likely to oppose high taxes and spending (32% vs. 26%), less likely to support reducing economic inequality (37% vs. 43%), and more likely to express the belief that economic success was a result of individual effort rather than circumstance (71% vs. 64%). These results provide clear causal evidence that economic opportunity shifted program participants to adopt more fiscally conservative views. Overall, our index of opposition to economic redistribution increased more than 0.2 standard deviations.

Notably, for both economic confidence and economic policy preferences, these differences were driven by a change in the treatment group; while the control group's preferences remained nearly identical to those at baseline, the treatment group moved substantially (additional details provided in *Appendix 5.1*). The treatment effects that we document, therefore, are not driven by disenchantment or alienation in the control group.

Qualitatively, these results speak directly to our theoretical claims regarding the impact of prospective economic mobility on policy preferences for individuals who gain access to employment opportunities in the global economy. A robust finding in the political economy scholarship is that economically advantaged individuals are less apt to favor taxation and redistribution (e.g. Alesina and La Ferrara 2005; Meltzer and Richard 1981; Margalit and Shayo 2019; Ansell 2014). In this study, however, the treatment group had neither realized material benefits nor attempted cross-border migration at evaluation. Instead, their policy preferences shifted based solely on the *anticipation* of economic enhancement. This provides the first (to our knowledge) field experimental evidence of the POUM hypothesis laid out by Benabou and Ok (2001) and Acharya (2016): that the mere potential of upward material mobility can shift economic policy views, even before individuals realize economic gains.

There are implications for debates regarding the impact of cross-border migration on policy. The immigration literature presents competing accounts of how migrant remittances shape redistribution attitudes within families that receive remittances (cf Acevedo 2020) and, more broadly, on welfare state policies in sending regions (Doyle, 2015; Ahmed, 2012; Adida and Girod, 2011; Duquette-Rury, 2014). Our evidence shows that even the prospect of finding higher wage employment abroad reduces

preferences for domestic redistribution, according with the claim that the opening of migration opportunities in the global economy may reduce redistributive demands in sending regions, with knock-on implications for development and welfare state politics in countries of the Global South.

Third, and finally, we find that access to international employment opportunities changed subjects' political behavior in consequential ways. Individuals assigned to the treatment group began to participate in politics in a larger and more vocal manner in order to translate their new preferences into policy. Fortuitously, the 2018 Mizoram legislative assembly elections cycle took place in the month between the training program and the survey, allowing us to study the behavioral political effects of the program.⁸ Individuals in the treatment group were substantially more likely than those in the control group to vote in the legislative assembly elections (84% vs. 76%). They were also significantly more likely than those in the control group to engage politically in other ways during the election cycle—by attending community events (58% vs. 50%), turning out for political rallies (29% vs. 21%), and discussing politics (34% vs. 20%). Overall, our index of political participation increased by 0.25 standard deviations in the treatment group.

Our results on the impact of new overseas employment opportunities on indicators of political engagement are striking. A long line of work argues that enhanced material resources are associated with greater political participation (cf Brady et al. 1995; Almond and Verba 2015). Yet scholars have long debated whether this relationship is driven primarily by current resources (e.g., additional time or material ability to engage in costly participatory actions) or future stakes (forward-looking incentives to shape economic policy). We show here that the anticipation of pecuniary gain is sufficient to mobilize individuals to engage electorally and non-electorally in the political arena and transform individuals' political consciousness.

These results should be situated within the broader debate about how cross-border migration impacts political mobilization and democratization trends in sending countries (Goodman and Hiskey, 2008; Duquette-Rury, 2014; Pérez-Armendáriz, 2014; Careja and Emmenegger, 2012; Barsbai et al., 2017). Existing work delineates how the physical act of migration induces economic changes that alter how migrants and their families engage with the state. Our findings suggest that the prior stage of the opening of cross-border migration opportunities can have political consequences

⁸State-level elections are the most salient type of elections in Mizoram; Mizoram's overall voter turnout was 80% for the 2018 state election compared to 63% for the 2019 national parliamentary election.

for the broader set of individuals who begin re-imagining their economic futures. That treated subjects in our study both reduced support for taxation and redistribution and evidenced greater political activism is consistent with claims that new migration opportunities make citizens more willing to mobilize politically to enact policy change.

We conclude by noting that our observational analyses indicate that these results are driven by economic empowerment and not by unrelated effects of job training, such as social interactions in the classroom (see *Appendix 6*). There are no substantial changes in the treatment effects when controlling for job training attendance. By contrast, individuals who became more economically confident also made greater economic investments and became more opposed to redistribution.⁹ Taken together, our findings support the conjecture that POUM associated with international migration opportunities shifts individuals' economic forecasts, policy preferences, and willingness to mobilize politically to achieve policy change.

Conclusion

Our randomized controlled trial provides strong evidence that overseas employment opportunities change political preferences and behavior for individuals belonging to marginalized communities. Scholars and policymakers alike have long sought to understand how migration affects the politics of sending communities, particularly in developing countries. These debates generally focus on the small number of people who are directly affected by migration, namely migrants and their families. Migrants themselves might disconnect from politics, shape economic and political outcomes with the remittances they send, or return home bringing new experiences and norms. We show here that opportunities for migration can affect a much broader group of potential migrants, many of whom have the option to migrate but do not end up doing so. These individuals' political preferences and behavior can be shaped by the mere exit option of emigration, as our study establishes. As economic opportunities and expectations expand, potential migrants appear to become more assertive politically and less supportive of social insurance.

These findings have important implications for the study of the politics of South-South migration and for sending communities in the Global South, where overseas employment has provided

⁹In *Appendix 7*, we explore if the treatment impacted social attitudes, finding weak results on youth political empowerment and no effects on gender empowerment.

otherwise unattainable economic opportunities for communities in a broad range of regions—e.g., the Philippines, Nepal, Bangladesh, or Kerala—in recent decades. They also provide an evidentiary basis to interpret the politics of sending regions in a range of historical and comparative cases, such as European countries that experienced large waves of emigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, where exit options impacted not only emigrants and their families but also the broader set of individuals left behind (Karadja and Prawitz, 2019). Policy-wise, additionally, our results on welfare state preferences lend support to a growing body of work that explicates how globalization can undercut domestic support for the poor (Stiglitz, 2002; Linardi and Rudra, 2020). We note that opportunities for cross-border labor migration vary over time and space, shaped by shocks to policy regimes, technologies of mobility, and social infrastructures. Our findings provide a template for scholars to study how changing emigration opportunities can alter the politics of sending regions that otherwise feature constrained local labor markets. Future research can build on the micro-level experimental evidence that we have presented in order to analyze whether and how new out-migration opportunities alter broader trends in political engagement and policy change in regions integrating into the global economy.

Our study illustrates how globalization can open new economic opportunities for members of marginalized groups in developing countries, who face discrimination and other systematic barriers to economic mobility in domestic markets. Osgood and Peters (2017) document that women-owned enterprises in patriarchal countries tend to be more export-oriented because the global economy affords them opportunities to escape from domestic discrimination. In the domain of cross-border mobility, our study draws attention to the possibility that members of historically disadvantaged communities seek out overseas employers, since foreign firms have fewer incentives to discriminate based on ascriptive hierarchies in sending regions. The global economy thus holds the potential of empowering traditionally-marginalized communities by offering new avenues for economic advancement and incentives for political participation, in turn opening pathways to remedy existing socio-economic and political inequities.

Finally, our findings help clarify the mechanisms by which economic standing impacts political preferences and behavior. The political economy scholarship documents that higher-income individuals have different rates of political participation and hold different views on redistribution than the poor, yet prior work has struggled to distinguish whether this effect is due to present

resources or future-oriented policy preferences (Benabou and Ok, 2001; Acharya, 2016). By isolating the anticipation of economic opportunities from the realization of material gains, we demonstrate that these effects are at least partially prospective. The promise of enhanced wealth changes economic expectations, leading individuals to participate more in politics and support economic policies that are likely to benefit their future selves.

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Supporting Information:
Do International Employment Opportunities Impact Individuals’
Political Preferences and Behavior?

May 18, 2021

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1 Additional Information about the Project

1.1 Intervention Location and Study Context

Figure 1: Map of Mizoram, India



Mizoram is situated in northeastern India, bordering Bangladesh from the east and Myanmar from the west. The state is sparsely populated, with around one million residents. Aizawl, the capital city, hosts a third of this population with 300,000 residents. Mizoram has a highly educated population: the literacy rate is 91.33 percent according to the 2011 Census. Female literacy is 89.27 percent, which puts Mizoram amongst the highest literacy and female literacy rates in India (Census 2011). Mizoram also has one of the highest female-to-male demographic ratios as well as one of the lowest literacy gender gaps in the country (Census 2011). While most people in Mizoram speak the local language, Mizo, English is also widely spoken and used as the other official language of the state. The vast majority of the state's population belong to various tribes that are collectively known as Mizos. These tribes have been classified under the Indian Constitution as Scheduled Tribes, a category indicating groups that have been historically marginalized and discriminated. Today, the Indian Constitution guarantees Scheduled Tribes quotas in government jobs, educational institutions, as well as elected positions. The majority of Mizos identify as Christians and only a small minority identifies as Hindus or Buddhists.

Mizos migrated to current Mizoram from upper Burma sometime between the 15th and 18th centuries. British colonization was formalized in 1895 after the Lushai Hills were declared to be part of British India. Mizoram administratively became a district of the province of Assam. This was also the time when Christian missionaries arrived to the area and set up schools. Missionaries achieved wide-reaching changes in Mizo society by converting the majority of the population to Christianity, opening schools, and educating the masses. After India's independence, Mizoram

remained a part of Assam state, but centralized control from Assam frustrated Mizos and in the 1960s the Mizo National Front (MNF) started an armed insurgency. Mizoram became the 23rd state of India in 1986, following a peace accord between the Government of India and the MNF.

Subsequently, the MNF reformed itself as a political party and contested elections in 1987. The Indian National Congress (INC)—established in 1961—is the other major political party in the state. The INC and the MNF have regularly alternated in power in the state’s legislative assembly. At the local level, after the abolition of chieftainship, village councils were established in 1957. Mizoram, as a Sixth Schedule state, is excluded from quotas instituted for women, Scheduled Castes, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), in village councils under the 73rd amendment of the Indian constitution.

Despite its high human capital, Mizoram lacks employment opportunities. The relative geographic isolation and mountainous topography have constrained industrial growth and produced high unemployment rates. Mizoram’s GDP per capita is around US\$1,600, which puts it at 19th amongst 27 Indian states (Institute for Human Development 2013). The majority of the population remains employed in agriculture, even though the contribution of agriculture to GDP has been declining (Institute for Human Development 2013). Industrial output is only 19.39 percent of the state’s GDP, whereas the tertiary sector makes up 66.29 percent of the GDP. The largest employer within the services sector, however, remains the government. Taken together, Mizoram has struggled to create employment opportunities outside of small-scale agriculture and the public sector, which leaves its educated population without adequate employment opportunities.

Why focus on the India - GCC migration corridor? Much of prior research on migration has analyzed population flows from the Global South to the North, but migration across countries in the Global South has increased exponentially in the past twenty years. According to the 2017 United Nations Migration Report, migrants around the world are most likely to originate from Asia, which sends 41 percent of the world’s migrant population (United Nations 2017). India alone sends 16.6 million migrants abroad making it the country with the largest number of emigrants in absolute terms. Furthermore, Sasikumar & Timothy (2015) estimate that there are around 600,000 - 800,000 annual migrants from India, whereas annually India adds 7 - 8 million new workers to the labor force. This makes out-migration one of the major sources of new employment for Indian workers.

Due to the role of economic incentives, social networks and immigration policy regimes, migrants often end up in a small set of countries. Around 60 percent of Asian migrants, for instance, migrate to another Asian country, and only a much smaller subset, 16 and 19 percent migrate to Europe and North America, respectively.¹ Moreover, the 2017 United Nations Migration Report estimates that more than 67 percent of the world’s migrant population live in only twenty countries. Out of these twenty, Saudi Arabia has the second largest migrant population, the United Arab Emirates the eighth and Kuwait the twentieth. This has not always been the case. Countries outside of a small group of Western industrialized countries have been registering rapid growth in migrant populations only in the past twenty years (United Nations 2017). GCC countries are amongst the world’s most significant migrant destinations today both in terms of volume and growth in migration.

When looking at migration flows between countries, Indian migration to the UAE is second only to the Mexico-US migration corridor. However, migration between India and the Gulf is growing much more rapidly. Migration between India and the UAE registered almost a three-fold increase and migration from India to Saudi Arabia doubled in the past twenty years.

It is not only the size of migration within the Global South that warrants scholarly and policy attention, but also its economic impact. India is the largest recipient of overseas migrants’ remittances, with US\$78.6 billion received in 2018 (The World Bank 2018). For comparison, India

¹In absolute terms this means that out of 105 million Asian migrants in 2017, 63 million migrated within Asia, 20 million migrated to Europe and 17 million to North America.

received US\$44.37 billion in foreign direct investment. Over half of these remittances are sent from GCC countries by Indian migrants. For low or middle income countries the size of these remittances often make up a significant portion of the economy. For India's northeastern neighbor, Nepal, remittances equal 28 percent of its gross domestic product (The World Bank 2018). Unlike development assistance, remittances flow directly to recipient households making it an important source for consumption and investment.

An important difference between South-South migration and South-North migration is that many Western industrialized countries offer a route to citizenship, although they restrict labor migration flows tightly and often privilege educated and skilled migrants in the case of employment-based immigration (Peters 2017). By contrast, countries in the Global South usually welcome labor migrants of varying skill levels, but make it very difficult for newcomers to obtain citizenship and permanent residency status.

1.2 Recruitment Strategy

We identified and recruited a group of prospective candidates interested in migrating to GCC countries for employment, but lacking the know-how and connections to do so. We relied on a variety of different media to advertise the job training and placement opportunity. We posted advertisements in leading Mizo newspapers as well as on local Mizo television networks (specifically, Zonet and LPS). We sent recruitment materials and application forms to regional offices of local skills training organizations and visited job fairs organized by the government. One of the job fairs took place in a suburb of Aizawl, while the other one in a neighboring district's headquarter. Additionally, we placed banners around Aizawl advertising the program. Finally, we reached out to the largest Mizo community organization, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) to advertise on their social media platforms. Advertisement materials were translated to Mizo to reach a wide audience. The advertisement period lasted for two months over the summer of 2018. While we targeted the entire state of Mizoram with our advertising strategy, the majority of applicants came from Aizawl, which was unsurprising given the higher educational attainment and English skills in the capital city.

All our advertising materials asked applicants to be above the age of 18 and have at least Grade 10 standard education. We also required English competency. Once registration for the program took place, our team in Aizawl called back all registered applicants and screened them for their English skills over the phone.

We randomly assigned treatment status using the final list of applicants who passed the English language screening. We matched these applicants into blocked pairs based on age, gender, education level, and English proficiency (judged in the English screening). We then randomized between each pair, assigning one to treatment and the other to control.

1.3 Survey Methodology

We were interested in examining the prospective effects of economic opportunity, as distinct from the effects of realized economic gains as well as the effects of migrating abroad, on our theoretical outcome variables of interest. Therefore, we interviewed subjects (both treatment and control) in two survey rounds: a baseline survey before participants were selected for the treatment, and an endline survey after the training program but before individuals secured jobs and began migrating abroad.

Both surveys were administered by a New Delhi-based survey company (CVoter Inc.), that hired twenty local, Mizo-speaking enumerators of both genders to conduct the surveys. This ensured that participants had access to enumerators of the same gender. Both surveys were written in English and then translated and back translated by CVoter’s team into Mizo. We offered subjects the choice of Mizo and English versions of the survey. The topics that formed the basis of our surveys are socio-political topics that are routinely discussed in Indian society and that are identical or similar to questions that are commonly asked in many types of preexisting surveys, including government surveys (notably National Family and Health Surveys) carried out across India on a regular basis.

The baseline survey was a face-to-face survey that took place in Aizawl. Survey subjects were invited to the research team’s offices in central Aizawl, where they were asked to fill out a survey by enumerators using handheld tablets. In order to facilitate re-contacting, we collected the phone numbers and addresses of each respondent as well as a back-up family member. Shortly after the baseline survey, we contacted our respondents via phone to ensure that appropriate contact information had been given and to verify respondents’ willingness to participate in future surveys.

After our training sessions were concluded, we fielded our second survey round. The survey was administered as a 30-minute computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) by CVoter enumerators. To boost participation, we offered phone credits worth a month of free calls, text messages, and 1 GB data to participants for taking the survey.²

²Depending on the telephone operator, this cost around INR 169-199 (USD 2.36-2.78).

1.4 Job Training Program and Participants

In this section, we provide further details regarding the treatment component related to the intensive training program geared toward employment opportunities abroad. The training program was designed to equip individuals with the skills required to access employment opportunities overseas and overcome logistical barriers to migration. Individuals selected for the program had the opportunity to attend a five-week job training program designed to impart skills that would be useful in hospitality sector employment in GCC countries. Individuals were also informed that upon completion of the program, they would be contacted for employment opportunities by a recruitment firm partnering with the training program.

During the first half of the program, participants attended classroom training sessions, administered by a Bangalore-based training firm, Free Climb. This component of the program included modules on restaurant food service, beverage and counter service, and housekeeping. Specifically, the training sessions included instructions on food production (e.g., food safety, knife skills, cooking methods, kitchen equipment handling and maintenance), beverage production (e.g., beverage equipment handling, inventory and storage principles, cleaning schedules, safety and accident prevention), counter services (e.g., customer interaction, communication, order-taking principles, cash register control, cleanliness and hygiene), casual dining service (e.g., table set-up, communication, billing standards and cash control, handling of complaints, food handling principles), and housekeeping (e.g., making of beds, cleaning of guest rooms and baths, re-stocking of guest amenities, handling special requests, managing household equipment), among others. Students attended class five days a week for six hours a day.

In the second half of the program, participants conducted on-the-job training in hotels, restaurants, and fast food chains in Aizawl. Overall, this part of the intervention was designed to upgrade candidates' skills, equipping them with basic knowledge required to demonstrate eligibility for hospitality-sector job opportunities in international destinations at the interview stage. Concurrently, instructors also helped participants prepare resumés and work on interview skills. Resume formats and interview preparations were designed with the input of our Mumbai-based recruitment firm, Vira International, to ensure that participants' job application materials were consistent with GCC hiring standards. To prepare participants for integration into the GCC countries, instructors also provided them with information on regulations and resources abroad. The focus on preparing students for jobs abroad distinguished the training program from other skills training initiatives that were geared toward domestic employment opportunities. Upon completion of the training session, participants were given a course completion certificate.

Figure 2: Photos of Training Program and Participants



1.5 Ethical Considerations

While international employment offers otherwise unattainable economic opportunities for many immigrants, it potentially poses certain costs and risks to their physical or psychological wellbeing. Labor migrants sometimes struggle to integrate into new political and social environments. Relocating for work, especially overseas, requires navigating a complex, often uncertain set of costs and benefits. International employment can be lucrative but it also requires migration-specific knowledge that is difficult to obtain. This explains why individuals who could gain the most from migration often do not migrate (Bryan et al. 2014). Specifically, in the context of GCC countries, there have been documented instances of migrants facing extortion by recruitment agencies that charge illegal recruitment fees (Sasikumar & Timothy 2015). Furthermore, Gulf countries have also faced criticism for overlooking employer exploitation, such as the withholding of workers' passports or employers' renegeing on promised salaries (Human Rights Watch 2019). Reports of labor code violations have been concentrated in the construction sector; domestic household workers have also experienced exploitation (Human Rights Watch 2019).

This study was conceptualized and embedded within [Omnibus Research Program Name Redacted]: “[Omnibus Research Program Name Redacted] aims to shed light on the processes that sustain unfair migrant labor by improving our empirical understanding of the structures and dynamics implicated in recruitment for temporary work in the Gulf region (and, where relevant, elsewhere).” [Omnibus Research Program Name Redacted] was founded in order to generate scientific knowledge regarding labor migration as a way to remedy labor recruitment practices in the Persian Gulf that are often private, unsupervised, and opaque, and to help develop and promote fairer migrant labor processes that can lead to better outcomes for migrants and their communities.

Within [Omnibus Research Program Name Redacted], the goal of our project was to design and evaluate a blueprint for ethical and safe cross-border labor migration, to be used by governments and NGOs in the future. While designing our project, we paid significant consideration to the ethics of the study. We were mindful of the general obligation of researchers “to anticipate and protect participants from trauma stemming from participation in research” (APSA Committee on Human Subjects Research 2019). We worked closely with our partners to minimize the potential risks and costs that participants might face, to ensure that the benefits of this program flow to participants and their communities, and to protect participants' informed consent (Teele 2014, Humphreys 2015).

We situated the study in Mizoram because of the demand for international employment opportunities, both from individuals and from the state government, in this region. The Government of Mizoram's earlier attempts at training and recruitment had drawn large numbers of youth looking for lucrative international work, given the scarcity of employment opportunities within Mizoram. The Government's Mizoram Youth Commission (MYC), the Chief Minister of Mizoram, and several leading Mizo community organizations sought to create recruitment opportunities for Mizo workers in GCC countries, and called upon researchers to assist in evaluating scientifically processes of skills training and overseas placement that were already underway. By helping connect government and community organizations with reputable partners both inside and outside of India, the program enabled local stakeholders to better screen potential employers, protect citizens during their employment tenures abroad, and facilitate migrant integration. Although we (and the government) could not possibly facilitate supervised employment opportunities for *all* individuals seeking employment abroad, our goal was to help the government and NGOs build an ethical template for future skills development and employment placement programs in the region.

One of the major obstacles to fair labor migration is the high costs of migration, often due to illegal recruitment fees (Sasikumar & Timothy 2015). Prospective migrants may also be subject to the possibility of exploitation overseas. We strived to minimize both of these costs and risks for

participants. We designed our skills training and placement program for employment within the hospitality sector, which is relatively reputable, remunerative, and desirable compared to sectors where labor violations had previously been reported (e.g., construction or household work). We worked closely with New York University Abu Dhabi's Office for Compliance & Risk Management to carefully vet project partners and employers. We scrutinized our recruitment partner (Vira International) closely and worked alongside Vira International to screen and assess specific employers that entered the placement program for fair recruitment practices, working conditions, and migrant worker treatment. Employers agreed to charge no recruitment fees, sponsor and guide prospective employees through the work visa authorization process for the receiving country, cover expenses for round-trip flights, visas, and other immigration costs, help recruits relocate and find housing abroad, provide competitive salaries and benefits, and enter into labor contracts that permitted workers to switch employers or leave their jobs at any time. All labor contracts were registered with governmental agencies in both home and host countries. To minimize participants' financial obligations, training (including tuition, course materials, and on-the-job training) was provided free of charge. While not all participants may eventually obtain employment in the GCC, their training was deemed broadly useful for jobs in the hospitality sector.

Cognizant of potential power differentials between employees and employers, we strived to fortify participants by informing them of their rights and resources in destination countries. The GCC states have passed several decrees in recent years that require employers to cover recruitment expenses (including visas and costs of travel), provide competitive salaries and benefits, and furnish housing and health fees for foreign workers. New reforms allow workers to leave their jobs at any time (subject to contractual obligations) and make it easier for workers to switch employers. Under the new policies in the U.A.E., for instance, prospective migrants sign a standard employment offer in their home country that is registered at the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) before a work permit is issued. Once the worker arrives in the country, the agreement becomes registered as the contract and no changes are allowed unless the employer extends further benefits to the worker. Our project provided subjects with detailed information regarding the locations and helpline numbers of MoHRE offices. Additionally, the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India has established Indian Workers Resource Centres in GCC countries that provide helplines and conduct awareness classes and counseling programs on legal, financial, and social issues. Our project ensured that subjects were aware of these resources and had access to them. In addition, in order to assist with integration and reintegration, our project provided participants with access to comprehensive information regarding legal and counseling services both in the GCC states and in Mizoram.

We took a number of steps to guarantee that participants were provided extensive information regarding the potential risks associated with international employment before agreeing to participate in the training and recruitment program. Individuals attended information sessions detailing opportunities and challenges associated with overseas employment. During these presentations, subjects were informed about the potential risks associated with the process of international employment, including the risk of labor law violations by employers. Additionally, we designed the project such that our field research team would follow up regularly with all participants who undertook employment abroad to check on their wellbeing and safety.

Subjects were required to provide informed consent prior to participating in the study and had the right to withdraw from the project at any point. Additionally, participants had distinct decision points (from participating in surveys and attending the training program to sitting for placement interviews and deciding to accept employment contracts) where they were able to reaffirm or withdraw consent. The informed consent process is central to the study design (Humphreys 2015, APSA Committee on Human Subjects Research 2019): the participants themselves were the parties

most affected by the intervention, and they had clearly marked opportunities throughout the process in which to provide and withdraw consent.

Overall, the program was designed to significantly improve and safeguard recruitment and employment processes for prospective migrants as compared to individuals who decided to migrate on their own accord or through unsupervised private channels. It was anticipated that future government initiatives in the region would be able to benefit from the knowledge generated and the connections created by the program.

2 Demographics and Balance

2.1 Demographics of Sample

Our sample comprises relatively young, unmarried, and unemployed adults, most of whom are well-educated. Mizoram generally has higher rates of education but also higher rates of unemployment among educated young adults.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

	Respondents
N	290
Mean Age	22.7
Pct. Male	55 %
Pct. Completed Grade 12	73 %
Pct. Employed	13 %
Pct. Scheduled Tribe	96 %
Pct. Married	1 %

2.2 Balance Table

The following regressions attempt to predict treatment status by pre-treatment covariates, first among all subjects and then among respondents. The covariates include both demographic characteristics and pre-treatment measures of key outcome variables. We find little evidence of significant differences between treatment and control group, even after attrition; while one variable exhibits differences, this might be expected when conducting multiple statistical tests. To adjust for potential imbalances, we include the pre-treatment outcome measure in the main regressions.

Table 2: Balance Table

	<i>DV: Treatment Status</i>	
	All Subjects	Respondents
Age (Years)	-.014 (.009)	-.009 (.011)
Male	-.013 (.052)	.005 (.062)
Education (0-3)	.024 (.032)	.007 (.038)
Employed	-.031 (.075)	-.091 (.091)
Scheduled Tribe	-.061 (.121)	-.047 (.160)
Married	.066 (.199)	.121 (.306)
English Prof. (1-4)	.007 (.025)	-.000 (.030)
Pre-Treatment Economic Prospects	-.017 (.026)	-.006 (.030)
Pre-Treatment Participation	.075 *** (.026)	.064 ** (.031)
Pre-Treatment PE Attitudes	-.021 (.026)	-.021 (.029)
N	389	289
F-Stat	1.06	0.64
P-Value	.394	.783
P-Value (RI)	.141	.630
Adjusted R2	.001	-.013
<i>P-values:</i>	* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$	

3 Attrition

3.1 Effect of Treatment on Response Rate

The first set of attrition checks test whether differences in response rates between the treatment and control groups are larger than what might be expected based purely on chance. There is no significant evidence that treatment is affecting response rate. The RI-based test shows that even if the treatment had no effect on attrition in any individual case, the randomization procedure would have resulted in larger differences between the two groups in almost 40% of cases.

Table 3: Response Rates: Treatment vs. Control Group

Response Rate: Treatment Group	76.0 %
Response Rate: Control Group	71.9 %
Difference in Response Rate	4.1 %
P-Value: Two-Sample T-Test	.358
P-Value: RI-based Test	.371

3.2 Effects of Pre-Treatment Covariates on Response Rate

We also predicted response rates using all recorded pre-treatment demographic covariates (in a single regression, for ease of interpretation). There was no evidence that any demographic covariate or pre-treatment outcome measure significantly affected response rate, nor that all of the covariates collectively provided any predictive power (the p-value on F-statistics are each greater than .10).

Table 4: Demographic Predictors of Response Rate (OLS)

	<i>Dependent variable: Response</i>		
Age	-0.010 (0.008)	-0.011 (0.008)	-0.016 (0.011)
Education	0.0001 (0.028)	0.0004 (0.028)	0.015 (0.039)
Scheduled Tribe	0.128 (0.105)	0.122 (0.106)	0.087 (0.165)
Employed	-0.024 (0.065)	-0.027 (0.066)	0.064 (0.095)
Married	-0.236 (0.172)	-0.249 (0.174)	-0.257 (0.296)
Male	-0.046 (0.045)	-0.048 (0.046)	-0.084 (0.066)
English Ability	0.006 (0.022)	0.009 (0.022)	0.024 (0.031)
Pre-Treat Econ. Prospects		-0.009 (0.022)	-0.025 (0.033)
Pre-Treat PE Attitudes		-0.010 (0.022)	-0.006 (0.031)
Pre-Treat Participation		0.017 (0.023)	0.025 (0.035)
Treatment			-0.188 (0.459)
Treat x Age			0.013 (0.016)
Treat x Edu.			-0.045 (0.057)
Treat x S.T.			0.079 (0.222)
Treat x Employed			-0.184 (0.135)
Treat x Married			-0.038 (0.375)
Treat x Male			0.064 (0.093)
Treat x English			-0.028 (0.045)
Treat x Pre-Econ			0.030 (0.046)
Treat x Pre-PE Attitudes			-0.003 (0.045)
Treat x Pre-Participation			-0.019 (0.048)
Observations	389	389	389
F Statistic	1.293	0.983	0.713
P-Value	.253	.254	.821
Adjusted R ²	0.005	-0.0004	-0.016
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

4 Survey Questions

Table 5: Questions: Confidence in Economic Prospects

Question	Options
Do you think your next job will pay better or worse than the average salary in Mizoram?	Much better Somewhat better About the same Somewhat worse Much worse
In the next year, do you think your own and your family's economic situation will be better or worse?	Much better Somewhat better About the same Somewhat worse Much worse
When you are the age your parents are now, do you think you will be better off or worse off financially than them?	Much better off Somewhat better off About the same Somewhat worse off Much worse off
Do you agree or disagree that in the future you will be able to advance professionally, get promoted, and earn higher incomes?	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Table 6: Questions: Economy Policy Preferences

Question	Options
In general, do you think that it is possible for someone who is born poor to become rich by working hard?	It is almost impossible It is somewhat possible It is very possible
Do you agree or disagree: Should the government reduce income differences between the rich and the poor?	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
Do you agree or disagree with this statement: The government should lower taxes for ordinary people, even if it means that it will have less funding for public services to help the poor in Mizoram.	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Table 7: Questions: Political Participation

Question	Options
<p>Here is a list of things that people sometimes do as citizens. Please tell me if you have personally done each of these things during the past year.</p>	
<p>a. Attended a campaign rally? b. Attended a meeting with a political candidate or campaign staff? c. Attended a village council meeting? d. Attended a different type of community meeting (e.g., a union or NGO)? e. Try to persuade others to vote for a certain candidate or political party? f. Work for a candidate or party? g. Given money to a political party or to a political cause? h. Voted in a local election? i. Spoke at a community council meeting?</p>	<p><i>(For Each)</i> Yes No</p>
<p>How likely do you think it is that you would vote in the next Mizoram state assembly elections or Indian national elections?</p>	<p>Very likely Somewhat likely Somewhat unlikely Very unlikely</p>

5 Main Results

5.1 Full Results, Including Component Questions

Table 8: Effects on Economic Confidence

	<i>C Mean</i>	w/o Controls		w/ Controls		<i>N</i>
		<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	
Economic Confidence Index		+.246	.024**	+.248	.020**	290
Will advance professionally (1-5)	4.51	+.15	.017**	+.15	.012**	289
Next job will be better (1-5)	4.47	+.13	.045**	+.13	.044**	290
Will be better off than parents (1-5)	4.37	+.10	.093*	+.10	.084*	290
Family finances will improve (1-5)	4.48	+.01	.435	+.01	.433	289

Table 9: Effects on Economic Policy Preferences

	<i>C Mean</i>	w/o Controls		w/ Controls		<i>N</i>
		<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	
Economic Policy Index		+.214	.029**	+.214	.030**	288
Poor can work out of poverty (1-3)	2.62	+.08	.082*	+.08	.079*	288
Gov't should lower taxes (1-5)	3.89	+.11	.154	+.12	.139	288
Gov't shouldn't reduce inequality (1-5)	2.06	+.08	.260	+.08	.270	288

Each row shows the effect of treatment (selection to the job placement program) on an outcome variable (configured so the hypothesized direction of the effect is positive). Columns 2-3 are a simple difference-in-means test, while Columns 4-5 control for the outcome index pre-treatment. Row 1 is a standardized index of economic empowerment, and the subsequent rows are the component questions of this index. The average treatment effect is estimated with an OLS model controlling for pre-treatment outcome. The standard errors and p-values were estimated through randomization inference, replicating the treatment assignment process. The p-values are based on a pre-registered one-sided test.

Table 10: Effects on Political Participation

	<i>C Mean</i>	w/o Controls		w/ Controls		<i>N</i>
		<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	
Political Participation Index		+.246	.012**	+.178	.047**	289
Will vote in 2019 (1-4)	3.71	+.10	.076*	+.09	.095*	289
Voted in 2018	.76	+.07	.068*	+.05	.121	288
Attended community event	.51	+.07	.121	+.06	.162	288
Attended rally	.21	+.08	.060*	+.06	.113	288
Debated politics	.20	+.15	.002***	+.12	.009***	288
Met with campaign	.16	-.02	.717	-.05	.892	288
Attended council meeting	.13	+.01	.370	+.01	.415	288
Worked for campaign	.13	+.04	.161	+.03	.245	288
Spoke at event	.09	+.03	.219	+.02	.302	287
Donated to candidate	.05	+.02	.289	+.01	.316	288

Each row shows the effect of treatment (selection to the job placement program) on an outcome variable (configured so the hypothesized direction of the effect is positive). Row 1 is a standardized index of political participation, and the subsequent rows are the component questions of this index. The average treatment effect is estimated with an OLS model controlling for pre-treatment outcome. The standard errors and p-values were estimated through randomization inference, replicating the treatment assignment process. The p-values are based on a one-sided pre-registered test.

One additional note: We believe these results are driven by the treatment group moving the hypothesized direction, not by the control group moving in the opposite direction. One illustration of this is to compare the treatment group and control group’s change relative to their baseline outcomes. Not all of the outcome questions were asked in precisely the same way in the baseline, but below are the analyses of those that were. This comparison is slightly more difficult for political participation, because the post-treatment period included an election cycle whereas the pre-treatment period did not.

Table 11: Main Outcomes Pre and Post-Treatment

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Control</i>
Economic Confidence	4.46 → 4.66	4.47 → 4.51
<i>Agree: Will Advance Professionally (1-5)</i>	(+ 0.20)	(+0.04)
Economic Policy Preferences	3.86 → 4.00	3.94 → 3.89
<i>Agree: Govt Should Lower Taxes (1-5)</i>	(+ 0.14)	(- 0.05)
Political Participation	1.40 → 2.55	1.11 → 2.15
<i>Activities Participated (0-8)</i>	(+1.15)	(+1.04)

5.2 Main OLS Models

The following table includes the OLS models for the main results. The SEs and p-values are parametric estimates from OLS.

Table 12: OLS Models for Main Results

	Confidence	Policy Preferences	Participation
Treatment	.248 ** (.115)	.214** (.118)	.178** (.112)
Baseline Index	.178 *** (.058)	-.000 (.058)	.305*** (.057)
N	290	288	289

One sided p-values:

* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

The baseline measurement for political economy / redistribution preferences was not predictive at all of endline preferences.

6 Exploratory Non-Experimental Tests

6.1 Role of Job Training

One question regarding our results is whether our treatment effects are due to unrelated aspects of the training program itself (e.g., such as social interactions with other participants) rather than subjects' improved economic prospects. As stated in the paper, our job training program does not appear to be particularly unusual in the local context. More than one-third of our control group attended a similar training program offered by an alternate training firm, and many more had attended similar programs in the past. To probe this question further, we conducted additional empirical tests. We do not have causally-identified evidence on the effect of job training specifically, but we can look observationally for some clues as to whether job training attendance is correlated with the effects we document. These tests were not pre-registered, and we view them as exploratory and suggestive non-experimental investigations.

We can examine if treatment assignment still has a large effect when holding constant job training. Here, we reran the main OLS models but controlled for job training attendance. We still find evidence that treatment assignment had a powerful effect on our outcomes, even after holding attendance constant.

Table 13: OLS Results, Controlling for Job Training Attendance

	Confidence	Policy Preferences	Participation
Treatment	.228 ** (.121)	.210** (.124)	.160* (.118)
Attendance	.091 (.121)	.032 (.124)	.036 (.119)
Baseline Index	.167 *** (.058)	.000 (.058)	.306*** (.058)
N	290	288	289
<i>One sided p-values:</i>		* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$	

Second, we look for a treatment effect of job training in our control group, controlling for baseline covariates. Job training attendance has little systematic effect on the main outcomes.

Table 14: Effect of Training Attendance, Control Group

	Confidence	Policy Pref.	Participation
Attendance	-.274 (.184)	-.420 (.188)	.048 (.187)
Demographic Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-Treatment Outcomes?	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	140	139	139
<i>One sided p-values:</i>		* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$	

6.2 Role of Economic Confidence

For comparison, we replaced job training attendance with economic confidence (our first outcome) to see if the shift in economic confidence is correlated with the effects we observe. Overall, there is stronger suggestive evidence that growth in economic confidence is associated with the treatment effects.

Table 15: OLS Results, Controlling for Economic Confidence

	Policy Preferences	Participation
Treatment	.170* (.117)	.183* (.114)
Confidence	.179*** (.059)	-.022 (.057)
Baseline Index	.001 (.057)	.305*** (.058)
N	288	289
<i>One sided p-values: * p < .10, ** p < .05, *** p < .01</i>		

Table 16: Effect of Economic Confidence, Control Group

	Policy Preferences	Participation
Confidence	.230*** (.087)	.030 (.087)
Demographic Controls?	Yes	Yes
Pre-Treatment Outcomes?	Yes	Yes
N	139	139
<i>One sided p-values: * p < .10, ** p < .05, *** p < .01</i>		

7 Additional Outcomes

Per our pre-analysis plan, we also investigated the effect of the treatment on attitudes toward youth participation in society and politics (pre-registered under H7 and H9) and women’s participation in society and politics (H6 and H8). We do not find significant effects on participants’ participation in family planning and household decision-making (H4 and H5), and results are available on request.

7.1 Youth Participation Attitudes

Table 17: Effects on Youth Participation Attitudes

	<i>C Mean</i>	<u>w/o Controls</u>		<u>w/ Controls</u>		<i>N</i>
		<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	
Youth Participation Index		+.170	.069*	+.148	.099*	286
Youth Should Challenge Elders (1-5)	2.04	-.05	.669	-.02	.559	286
Youth Should Challenge Tradition (1-5)	4.47	-.01	.531	-.02	.573	286
More Youth in Community Orgs (1-5)	3.77	+.20	.027**	+.17	.048**	286
More Youth in Politics (1-5)	3.81	+.18	.044**	+.15	.071*	286

Each row shows the effect of treatment (selection to the job placement program) on an outcome variable (configured so the hypothesized direction of the effect is positive). Row 1 is a standardized index of political participation, and the subsequent rows are the component questions of this index. The average treatment effect is estimated with an OLS model controlling for pre-treatment outcome. The standard errors and p-values were estimated through randomization inference, replicating the treatment assignment process. The p-values are based on a one-sided pre-registered test.

7.2 Gender Attitudes

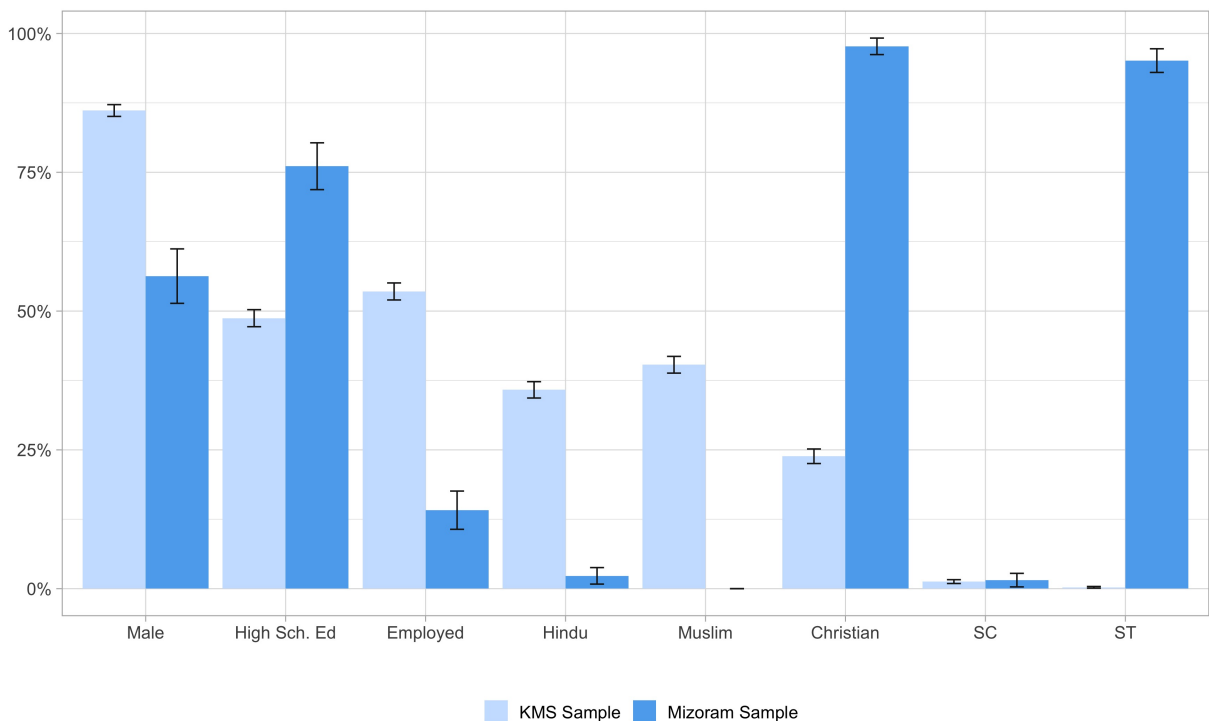
Table 18: Effects on Gender Attitudes

	<i>C Mean</i>	<u>w/o Controls</u>		<u>w/ Controls</u>		<i>N</i>
		<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P-Val</i>	
Gender Attitudes Index	−.028	+.054	.310	+.076	.219	287
Men shouldn't have priority for jobs (1-5)	3.42	−.07	.693	−.05	.631	287
Boys shouldn't have priority for school (1-5)	3.99	+.07	.304	+.09	.224	287
Wives should have equal say in finances (1-5)	4.40	+.05	.269	+.06	.228	284
Women should have work opportunities (1-5)	4.22	+.11	.169	+.12	.137	284
Women should serve in gov't (1-5)	3.01	−.09	.778	−.08	.764	285
Women should be equal in gov't (1-5)	3.85	+.08	.249	+.08	.236	285
Women suited for political work (1-5)	2.65	+.05	.363	+.06	.331	286
Wives should vote independently (1-5)	3.63	+.01	.460	+.03	.425	286

Each row shows the effect of treatment (selection to the job placement program) on an outcome variable (configured so the hypothesized direction of the effect is positive). Row 1 is a standardized index of political participation, and the subsequent rows are the component questions of this index. The average treatment effect is estimated with an OLS model controlling for pre-treatment outcome. The standard errors and p-values were estimated through randomization inference, replicating the treatment assignment process. The p-values are based on a one-sided pre-registered test.

8 External Validity

Figure 3: Comparison of Migrants from Kerala vs. Mizoram Sample



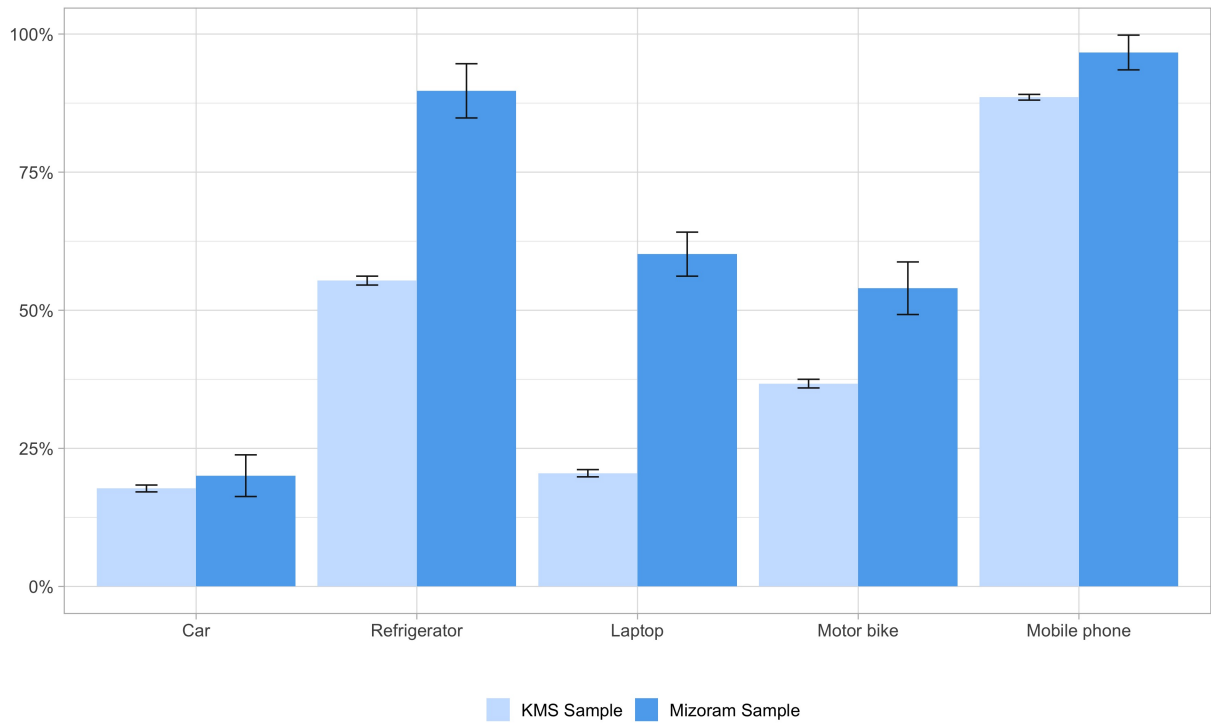
Note: The Kerala sample includes migrants surveyed in the Kerala Migration Survey, 2013.

Given our study setting of Mizoram, it is worth asking whether our sample is representative of the broader population of individuals in South Asia and in the developing world who pursue overseas employment opportunities. There are few systematic surveys of labor migrants overall, but the Kerala Migration Survey (KMS) has tracked labor migrants from the state of Kerala to the GCC countries over multiple years. As a result, the KMS offers one proxy for the labor migrant population from South Asia more generally.

There are a number of similarities between our Mizoram sample and the larger Kerala sample. First, as our paper suggests, members of underrepresented religious or ethnic groups tend to be overrepresented among potential migrants in both settings. Muslims and Christians make up less than 45% of the Kerala population (with Hindus in the majority), but make up more than 65% of the KMS sample. Like the rest of the Mizoram population, the vast majority of our sample were Christians and members of Scheduled Tribes. Second, potential migrants tend to be fairly educated for their context. The majority of Indian young adults have not completed Grade 10, yet nearly 50% of the Kerala sample and about 75% of the Mizoram sample had passed Grade 12. Third, the majority of migrants in both cases are male.

The main differences in the two samples come from our project being more focused on hospitality sector work. Compared to construction, the largest sector employing migrants, the hospitality sector pays more, has higher standards for education, and employs more women. Our sample, then, are somewhat more likely to be female, to have completed Grade 12, and to come from less impoverished backgrounds. The migrants in the Kerala sample who are engaged in service work show the same patterns; they are more likely to be female, more likely to be educated, and less likely to come from

Figure 4: Comparison of Migrants from Kerala vs. Mizoram Sample



Note: The Kerala sample includes migrants surveyed in the Kerala Migration Survey, 2013.

poor backgrounds.

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