



# Southern Philippine Migrants in Bitung City: Characteristics and Causative Factors

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Abstract: The number of migrants from the Southern Philippines in Bitung City is significant because they have reached the thousand mark. This research examines the causative factors that make Bitung City the destination area for migrants from the Southern Philippines. This research uses a descriptive-qualitative method and uses migrants from the Southern Philippines as informants. The research results show that the consideration for migrating to Indonesian territory is due to the attachment to the ancestral land (Sanger-Talau region) and the relatively small income in the area of origin. Bitung City was the destination area because the city has a fishing industry and a port town in North Sulawesi. This characteristic of Bitung City guarantees them to get work, especially offers to work on fishing vessels.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Population migration of Sangir-Talau descent and Filipinos who settled in the Southern Philippines region to Indonesia, both legally and illegally, began in the early 80s (Raharto et al., 1993, p. 36). This migration continues, and the migrants are spread across several areas in North Sulawesi Province, including Bitung City.


The research shows that migrants from the Southern Philippines to the North Sulawesi Province were born in the southern Philippines. Their citizenship status is unclear because they do not have residency or other identities (Pristianto et al., 2013, p. 60). The existence of a reality like this means that it is not surprising that the Bitung City Government does not consider the presence of migrants from the Southern Philippines in Bitung City as Indonesian citizens.


A report from the National Unity and Political Agency of Bitung City shows that in 2017, in Bitung City, 1479 migrants from the Southern Philippines did not have citizenship identity. Meanwhile, in 2021, 1148 migrants from the Southern Philippines did not yet have citizenship status (Laporan et al.

2020 Tentang Orang Tanpa Dokumen Di Kota Bitung, 2023). This number is quite significant when viewed from a population aspect, primarily if it is related to the addition or increase in population of 27,386 people over the last five years (2017-2022) in Bitung City (Naungmapia, 2023).

Based on the various phenomena above, it is relevant to study the presence of South Filipino migrants who migrate from the South Philippines spread across Bitung City, especially studies related to the factors that are the reasons for international migration to Indonesia, especially to Bitung City.

Several researchers have conducted studies focusing on migrants from the Southern Philippines. First, Raharto et al. (1993) researched the potential that is owned and the natural potential and businesses that can be developed in the areas they want to go to (destination areas) in Indonesia to support their lives after returning to Indonesia from people from Sangir-Talau who migrated to the Philippines who wanted to migrate back to Indonesia. Second, Kimbal et al. (2014), through their research, identified problems related to illegal border crossers from the Southern Philippines and their distribution in the North Sulawesi region. Third, Niode (2017) studied the political integration

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process of Southern Filipino migrants in the Talaud Islands Regency to obtain a Republic of Indonesia Identity Card (KTP) in 2010-2014.

This research aims to study the causative factors that make Bitung City the destination area for migrants from the Southern Philippines.

## 2 LITERATUR REVIEW

### 2.1 Conception of Migration

In general, it is stated that migration is a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence (Lee, 2000). Meanwhile, the United Nations Population Division (1994) defines migration as a change of permanent residence from one particular geographic unit to another. This second definition is similar to Rusli (1989: 106), who says that a person is said to have migrated if he or she moves permanently or relatively permanently (for a certain minimum period) by traveling a certain minimum distance or moving from one geographical unit to other geographic units. Geographical units often mean administrative units of government, either countries or parts of countries. According to Rusli (1989: 106), migration is a form of geographic, spatial, or territorial population movement between geographic units that involves a change of residence, namely from place of origin to destination.

Spatial boundaries, namely countries and parts of countries in the definition above, are identical to the definition of migration put forward by Munir (in Lembaga Demografi Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas Indonesia, 2000: 116) that migration is the movement of the population to settle from one place to another beyond the political/state boundaries or administrative/partial boundaries within a country.

From the definitions of migration above, an initial conclusion can be drawn that migration is a form of geographic, spatial, or territorial population movement between geographic units involving a change in residence.

### 2.2 Types of Migration

Based on geographical area coverage, Pressat (in Raharto, 1997: 32-33) classifies migration into internal and international migration. Internal migration is migration carried out by individuals or groups whose scope is still within the country. Meanwhile, international migration refers to migration across national borders. Thus, it can be

concluded that international migration crosses political boundaries between countries.

International Migration can be classified into several specific types, namely:

- a) Permanent migrants (settlers), including migrant workers and their families who later follow them;
- b) Temporary contract workers: generally uneducated/skilled who live in the host country for a certain period, usually two years;
- c) Professionals with temporary residence permits: namely educated/trained personnel who move from one country to another, usually as experts, staff, or employees of international organizations or multi-international companies;
- d) Illegal migrants (clandestine): namely those who enter and stay in the receiving country without supporting documents and permission from the competent authorities;
- e) Asylum seekers: namely those who enter another country by applying for a residence permit based on fear of punishment due to ethnicity, religion, politics, organizational membership, etc.;
- f) Refugees: namely those recognized as refugees according to the requirements of the 1951 UN Convention concerning the Status of Refugees. Civil war and oppression are the leading causes of genuine refugees (Weeks, 1998: 247).

From the various explanations above, it can be concluded that the migrants who will be studied in this research are classified as international migrants because they are migrants from neighboring countries in the Philippines.

### 2.3 Causative Factors of Migration

Many theories explain the reasons why a person or group migrates. Mulyadi (2003: 129), for example, explains that what drives someone to move is not only determined by the fundamental factors that exist in the area of origin (push factors) and destination (pull factors) but is also determined by the soul's perception of these factors. Personal sensitivity, intelligence, and awareness of conditions in other places influence his evaluation of the conditions of his place of origin. Meanwhile, knowledge about the conditions at the destination depends on a person's relationships or based on various information obtained. From this theory, it

can be seen that three factors influence a person in deciding to move, namely:

- a) Factors found in the area of origin (push factors), namely factors that will encourage someone to leave their area;
- b) Factors found in the destination area (pull factors), namely factors that attract people to move to that area;
- c) Personal factors of the individual himself.

Munir (in Lembaga Demografi Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas Indonesia, 2000: 119-120) suggests that the factors that motivate a person to migrate are:

- a) The decreasing number of natural resources available in the area of origin that can provide a decent income;
- b) Narrowing employment opportunities in the area of origin due to the construction of facilities/infrastructure and the use of pretty sophisticated machines that dominate activities more than the use of human labor;
- c) There is political, religious, ethnic, and customary discrimination in the area;
- d) Not suitable for the living environment;
- e) Work and marriage reasons, where it is felt that it is difficult to change careers in the area of origin;
- f) Saturation of the existing sector in the area of origin;
- g) Compulsion, namely moving because they have committed/caused a disgrace that the people in the area cannot forgive;
- h) Maintain personal safety due to conflict, natural disasters, etc.

The pull factors for migration, according to Munir (in Lembaga Demografi Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas Indonesia. 2000: 120), are:

- a) Feeling of superiority in a new place or having an excellent opportunity to enter a suitable job market;
- b) Opportunities to gain better education/skills;
- c) Environmental conditions supported by facilities that provide a sense of security and tranquility, peace and enjoyment;
- d) Attraction from people who are expected as a means of shelter;
- e) Activities in big cities, entertainment venues, cultural centers, and activity centers that provide a unique color for village people who previously did not witness and participate in such things.

Economic factors are often considered essential factors that encourage people to move or migrate. However, international migration is also related to the laws of the receiving and sending countries. Political factors such as war, political disturbances, and decolonization can also cause individuals or groups to mobilize people across countries (Raharto, 1997, p. 32).

Meanwhile, according to Rich (in Ghazali et al., 2015: 14-15), migration is determined by two factors that influence each other: internal or push factors and external factors or pull factors. Many driving factors are determined by the conditions of the country of origin, such as life prospects, gloomy economy, ethnic and religious discrimination, oppression, and so on. Common motivating factors are usually economic, but many are also political or both, such as the struggle for territory or the freedom to determine the fate of one's group. Apart from that, there are also forms of forced population movement. Meanwhile, pull factors are determined by the conditions of the destination place or country, which usually has or promises a better situation.

### 3 METODE PENELITIAN

This study used a descriptive qualitative method. Data and information were obtained through interviews with sources, namely several officials and migrants from the Southern Philippines who live in Bitung City.

Data obtained through interviews and document collection were analyzed through 3 (three) stages. First, carefully record all information, notes, and transcripts from in-depth interviews and document collection. Second, the answers or information are coded, grouped, or categorized (Creswell, 2009, p. 185). Third, data analysis was carried out using the interpretation method (Creswell, 2009, p. 176) on the answers or information provided by informants from officials and migrants from the Southern Philippines, both those who had obtained Indonesian citizenship status and those who had not yet obtained Indonesian citizenship status. The results of the data analysis stage will illustrate various reasons or considerations for making Bitung City a destination area.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Characteristics of Migrants from the Southern Philippines in Bitung City

#### 4.1.1 Citizenship Status and Its Implications

The data collection results of the National Unity and Political Agency of Bitung City in 2021 found that 1,148 residents from the Southern Philippines did not yet have citizenship status. The number of migrants from the Southern Philippines constantly changes because many do not live permanently in Bitung City.

In Bitung City, migrants from the Southern Philippines are spread across several districts in Bitung City (North Lembe District, South Lembe District, Maesa District, Artembaga District, and Madidir District) and live in a community that generally come from the Southern Philippines coastal areas or plantations owned by residents on a rental basis.

Table 1: Distribution of Migrants from the Southern Philippines in Bitung City.

District	Sub-District
Lembe Selatan	Batulubang,
Aertembaga	Aertembaga, Aertembaha Satu, Aertembaga Dua
Madidir	Wangurer, Madidir Unet
Matuari	Manembo-Nembo, Manembo-Nembo Atas Tanjung Merah
Girian	Girian

The areas of origin of migrants in the Philippines include Sarangani, Balut, Basilan, Davao, General Santos, and Zamboanga de la Sore. These areas are on the island of Mindanao.

The study results show that population migration from the southern Philippines to Indonesian territory, especially to the Bitung City area, is first characterized by population migration of Filipino descent. Moreover, secondly, population migration from people who are still descendants of Sanger-Talaud. To differentiate between migrants of Filipino descent and migrants of Sanger-Talaud descent, you can identify them by surname or name. The second group of population migration can also

be divided into two categories: those with an identity or ID card as Indonesians issued by the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Davao City and those who do not have an identity or population document.

Fishing workers on medium-scale fishing vessels dominate the work of migrants from the Southern Philippines because they have expertise in catching fish. Migrants who have an Indonesian identity will find it easier to get work as fishing workers compared to those who do not have an identity or population document.

#### 4.1.2 Legal and Illegal Population Migration

Another thing described in this section is how migrants from the southern Philippines entered Bitung City. This is considered substantive because of the consideration that population migration carried out by migrants from the Southern Philippines is classified as international migration because it has crossed the country's territorial boundaries, as well as the existence of an agreement between the Government of Indonesia and the Government of the Philippines (Agreement on Border Crossing Between the Republic of Indonesia and the Republic of Philippines) that the mobility of residents and goods in border areas in both countries must go through Border Crossing Entry and Exit Stations.

The results of investigations through in-depth interviews, both groups of migrants of Filipino descent and groups of migrants of Sangir-Talaud descent, show that the majority of informants entered Indonesian territory without reporting at the Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station either in the Philippines (Mabila et al.) or in Indonesia (Marore and Miangas) or entering Indonesian territory illegally.

There are several reasons migrants travel by sea from the southern Philippines to the Sanger-Talaud region using an unusual route ("rat route"). First, avoid inspection by Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station Officers because they carry goods that can be traded in the destination area, including alcoholic drinks. Second, some migrants have the status of Filipino citizens, and some do not have ID cards as Indonesians, so they avoid Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station Officers. Third, there is reluctance on the part of migrants to report themselves at the Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station, both in the Philippines and in Indonesia, because their destination areas are far from the Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station. Moreover, fourth, there is a

habit among migrants not to report themselves at the Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station when they want to cross the border in the two border areas because they assume that this route was the shipping route of their ancestors and, therefore, does not need to be restricted (Niode, 2017, pp. 137-142 ).

The information above describes a discrepancy between the rules implemented in the Indonesia-Philippine border area and reality. People of Sanger-Talaud and Filipino descent who migrate from the Southern Philippines to Indonesian territory tend to use illegal routes for various reasons; for example, the area they are going to is far from the Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station and the migration route they use is the traditional route which it was also used by their ancestors so that the various laws and regulations that were made were seen as instruments to limit their space for movement. This traditional population movement cannot be seen as independent of the residents' reasons that they are in an area that has long been a cultural unit (Hayase, 2004). This is used as a reference for residents living in the border areas of Indonesia and the Philippines so that migrating from the Southern Philippines to Indonesian territory is not considered unlawful.

On the other hand, migrants who entered Indonesian territory by reporting their arrival at the Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station gave the reason that their action in reporting their arrival in the Indonesian border area was related to the location of the Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station which was close to their arrival location. They could receive benefits when registered at the Border Crossing Entry and Exit Station: protection and freedom to visit all border areas. This is possible because the Revised Agreement on Border Crossing Between the Republic of Indonesia and the Republic of the Philippines (Revised Border Crossing Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Republic of the Philippines), which was signed in 1975, stated that the agreement aims to regulate the movement of the inhabitants who live in the border area of Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as to prevent violation of laws for the movement of the population who live in border area of Indonesia and the Philippines.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Agreement On Border Crossing Between The Republic Of The Philippines And The Republic of Indonesia In 1974, Article II, III, dan IV.

### 4.3 Causative Factors Bitung City to Be Used as a Destination Area for Migrants from the Southern Philippines

Judging from citizenship status, population migration from the southern Philippines to North Sulawesi Province is divided into two categories, namely those who have an identity or ID card as an Indonesian issued by the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Davao City and those who do not have an identity. The group of migrants who do not have an identity in Bitung City is divided into two groups: Sangihe-Talaud descent and Filipino descent.

The study results show that they migrated to Indonesia, especially those of Sangihe-Talaud descent, due to their attachment to their ancestral land (the Sanger-Talaud region) and the relatively small income in their area of origin. Meanwhile, for those of Filipino descent, the dominant factor that makes them choose to migrate to Indonesian territory is due to limited employment opportunities, especially in the fisheries sector, as well as limited capital for fishing businesses.

Bitung City was used as a destination area because of the consideration that Bitung City is a city in the fishing industry and a port city in North Sulawesi, which was the main reason for making Bitung City a destination location. Bitung City's status guarantees them to get work, especially offers to work on fishing vessels. Because migrants have skills in catching fish and are tenacious in their work, fishing boat owners often use the services of migrants from the Southern Philippines to be employed on fishing boats.

The reasons for migrating are based on calculations of profit and loss. It was once concluded by de Haas (in Noer, 2010: 160) that migration is a rational, active actor who moves because of economic calculations. The calculations made by migrants are seen as individual efforts to seek more benefits in the destination area, which cannot be obtained in the area of origin. Furthermore, this view assumes that when individuals have gained profits in the destination area, they will either directly or indirectly distribute what they have gained from the destination area to their place of origin. In this way, migration creates an economic balance between the region of origin and destination (Noer, 2010, p. 160).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The reason migrants from the Southern Philippines migrate to Indonesian territory, especially those of Sangihe-Talaud descent, is their attachment to their ancestral land (the Sanger-Talaud region) and the relatively small income in their area of origin. Meanwhile, for those of Filipino descent, the dominant factor that makes them choose to migrate to Indonesian territory is due to limited employment opportunities, especially in the fisheries sector, as well as limited capital for fishing businesses.

Bitung City was a destination area for migrants from the Southern Philippines because Bitung City has a fishing industry and a port city in North Sulawesi. Bitung City's status guarantees them to get work, especially offers to work on fishing vessels.

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