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Research Article

Bangladeshi Migrants' Attitudes in Italy and European Countries: An Economic Perspective

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Abstract. This research article examines the economic motivations, labour market trajectories, and social attitudes of Bangladeshi migrants residing in Italy and, where relevant, across other European contexts. Anchored in the leading strands of migration scholarship—neoclassical economics, the new economics of labour migration (NELM), human capital models, segmented labour market theory, and world-systems approaches—the paper synthesises secondary evidence, peer-reviewed studies, and author-compiled qualitative vignettes to analyse how household strategies interact with institutional architectures to shape migration decisions, remittance behaviour, and integration pathways. To visualise differences in opportunity structures, the study introduces a heuristic ‘Integration & Opportunity Index’ (0–10 scale) spanning four dimensions: (1) legal pathways and regularisation, (2) wage levels and enforcement, (3) skills/credential bridging, and (4) financial inclusion. Using Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom as comparative cases, the analysis suggests that although Italy functions as an accessible entry node with dense migrant networks, prolonged legal precarity and segmentation into low-wage services can erode expected utility over time. By contrast, countries with clearer regularisation channels and strong skills-bridging systems (for example,

Germany's vocational education and training architecture) tend to support more predictable earnings and financial inclusion. Policy recommendations emphasise timely regularisation, enforcement against wage theft, targeted language/credential recognition, and portable protections.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Italy, migration, labour market, remittances, integration, regularisation, VET, segmented labour market, push–pull

INTRODUCTION

Europe remains an especially salient horizon of opportunity for many households in Bangladesh. Long-standing social narratives, migrant networks, and the steady visibility of transnational success stories shape aspirations in districts that face persistent economic constraints and environmental stressors. In this milieu, Italy occupies a distinctive position: geographically proximate to the Central Mediterranean route and historically characterised by episodic regularisation campaigns, Italy serves as both an entry point and a site of settlement for South Asian migrants, including Bangladeshis (Massey et al., 1993; Della Puppa, 2016). At the same time, the Italian labour market features a pronounced secondary segment—delivery work, hospitality, cleaning, agriculture—where protection gaps and informality often intersect with migrants' legal precarity (Piore, 1979). This article advances three interlocking contributions. First, it distils theoretical insights across major traditions in migration studies—neoclassical economics, NELM, human capital, segmented labour markets, and world-systems—to show how they jointly illuminate Bangladeshi migration to Italy and onward/return dynamics in Europe (Massey et al., 1993; Stark & Bloom, 1985; Wallerstein, 1974; Piore, 1979). Second, it synthesises empirical findings from recent scholarship and official/grey literature to characterize opportunity structures in Italy relative to Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2019; Fontefrancesco & Mendonça, 2022; Di Cristo & Akwei, 2023; Della Puppa, 2016). Third, it introduces a heuristic “Integration & Opportunity Index,” an analytical device—rather than an official statistic—that facilitates visual comparison across four institutional dimensions that are repeatedly highlighted in the literature: legal pathways and regularisation; wage levels and labour law enforcement; skills and credential bridging; and financial inclusion. The analysis foregrounds the lived realities of Bangladeshi migrants in Italy—their work routines, remittance strategies, interactions with local institutions, and experiences of inclusion or exclusion—without reducing those realities to mere anecdotes. While every trajectory is unique, recurring patterns emerge when decisions and outcomes are situated in households and structures: remittances are coordinated with family needs; networks reduce search costs but may deepen dependence on brokers; and legal status, language acquisition, and credential recognition act as gateways to upward mobility (Stark & Bloom, 1985; OECD, 2019). Seen from this vantage point, the “rationality” of migration is neither confined to wage differentials nor amenable to single-factor explanations; rather, it is multi-scalar and relational, woven from aspirations, constraints, and institutions that span origin and destination contexts (Massey et al., 1993; Sassen, 1991).

Finally, a word about method and scope. The article is a desk-based synthesis that triangulates peer-reviewed studies, credible reports, and qualitative vignettes compiled by the author as part of ongoing academic work. It does not claim to represent official statistics; whenever indicative figures are used (e.g., in the constructed index), these are clearly marked as heuristic. This design choice privileges conceptual clarity and policy relevance while acknowledging the limits of the evidence base.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories of International Migration

The contemporary canon in migration studies offers complementary lenses for interpreting Bangladeshi mobility to Italy and Europe. Neoclassical frameworks model migration as a utility-maximising response to spatial wage gaps, conditional on costs and information. In this view, migrants move if the expected present value of destination earnings, net of migration costs and risks, exceeds origin alternatives (Massey et al., 1993; Harris & Todaro, 1970). The perspective is parsimonious and empirically tractable, yet often ill-equipped to account for persistent irregularity and household-level decision-making under uncertainty. The new economics of labour migration (NELM) reframes migration as a household strategy to diversify income, access capital, and insure against market failures such as absent credit and imperfect insurance (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Stark, 1991). In rural and peri-urban districts of Bangladesh, remittances support schooling, health shocks, and small enterprise investment; migration also reallocates risk within extended families. NELM thereby explains why even modest and irregular earnings in Italy can have outsized welfare effects in origin communities, especially when local capital markets are thin. Human capital models add a dynamic dimension: migration as an investment whose returns hinge on skill transferability, language acquisition, and credential recognition (Chiswick, 1978; Sjaastad, 1962). For Bangladeshi workers in Italy, returns are moderated by institutional filters—recognition of foreign qualifications, access to vocational education and training (VET), and employer demand in secondary sectors. Germany's well-documented dual system of VET illustrates how destination institutions can translate migrant skills into stable employment trajectories (OECD, 2019). Segmented labour market theory explains why migrant labour is persistently channelled into low-wage, secondary segments regardless of individual preferences (Piore, 1979). Employers' demand for flexibility, coupled with social closure, can trap migrants in precarious niches such as delivery services, seasonal agriculture, and informal hospitality. These patterns are observable in Italian cities where platform-mediated work has expanded (Fontefrancesco & Mendonça, 2022).

Finally, world-systems and core-periphery approaches locate migratory circuits within broader geoeconomic relations (Wallerstein, 1974; Sassen, 1991). They clarify why Italy functions as a semi-peripheral gateway in the European migration system, with frequent onward moves to core economies (Germany, the Netherlands, the UK) when legal opportunities or better earnings emerge (Di Cristo & Akwei, 2023).

Empirical Scholarship on Bangladeshi Migration in Italy and Europe

A growing body of work documents the entrepreneurial initiatives and labour market positioning of Bangladeshi migrants in Italy. Fontefrancesco and Mendonça (2022) show how vendors in Rome's Nuovo Mercato Esquilino leverage social capital and ethnic-niche demand to move from informal labour into micro-enterprise. Della Puppa (2016) analyses the emotional logics of family reunification among Bangladeshi couples, highlighting ambivalences that shape settlement decisions. Work on onward migration has proliferated: Di Cristo and Akwei (2023) explore why migrants in Italy aspire to the UK and how networks shape these moves; additional case studies detail circular trajectories between Italy and the UK, including return moves when realities diverge from expectations. The policy literature underscores institutional determinants of integration. OECD (2019) reviews Germany's migrant skills policies and the role of VET in translating competences into recognised qualifications. Such frameworks stand in contrast to Italy's more fragmented pathways, where legal precarity can delay access to stable contracts and social rights. Complementary sources, including credible news and statistical portals, document push factors at origin (e.g., poverty disparities across Bangladeshi districts) and risks in irregular routes across Libya and the Central Mediterranean (The Business Standard, 2024; The Daily Star, 2024).

METHODS AND DATA

This article adopts a synthesis-driven approach that integrates (a) established scholarly literatures, (b) official and credible grey sources, and (c) qualitative vignettes compiled by the author as field notes in Italian urban settings during 2024–2025. The aim is interpretive rather than causal estimation. Evidence is triangulated to achieve robustness: theoretical expectations are checked against empirical regularities, and qualitative observations are situated in institutional context.

Constructed Comparative Index

To visualise cross-national differences, the paper constructs a heuristic “Integration & Opportunity Index” for four countries (Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom) across four dimensions repeatedly identified in the literature: (1) legal pathways/regularisation; (2) wage levels and enforcement; (3) skills/credential bridging; and (4) financial inclusion. Each dimension is scored on a 0–10 scale based on qualitative synthesis of the literature and policy frameworks, and the composite equals the average of the four. The index is explicitly non-official and intended purely as an analytical device to organise discussion. Scores are documented in Table 2 and plotted in Figures 1–2.

Qualitative Vignettes

Qualitative vignettes anchor the analysis in everyday realities—shift schedules, interactions with municipal offices, experiences of harassment, or difficulties securing contracts. Vignettes are anonymised and reported at a level of abstraction that preserves confidentiality while conveying structural mechanisms (Della Puppa, 2016; Fontefrancesco & Mendonça, 2022).

Limitations

The approach trades statistical precision for conceptual coverage. The constructed index does not substitute for official indicators; rather, it complements them by assembling dimensions that cut across legal and economic institutions. Vignettes may be sensitive to selection and reporting biases; triangulation with scholarly and official sources mitigates, but cannot eliminate, these risks.

Origin-Side Context: Push Factors and Aspirations in Bangladesh

Economic motivations for migration from Bangladesh are intertwined with spatially uneven development, exposure to climate risks, and constrained access to credit and insurance. Households in districts such as Madaripur—reported as among the most poverty-affected by recent national mapping—perceive international migration as a pathway to intergenerational mobility (The Business Standard, 2024). Aspirations crystallise through social comparisons: remittance-financed homes and businesses act as visible symbols of successful transnational strategies, often cited in local toponyms such as “Italy Market” or “Italy Colony.” In the NELM perspective, these aspirations are not merely individual preferences; they are family strategies to diversify income and protect against shocks (Stark & Bloom, 1985). When local employment is seasonal or low paid, and when formal credit is scarce or costly, the expected utility of migration increases even if the move entails risk and debt. Family networks pool resources to finance travel and settlement, while remittances repay loans and fund education for siblings or children. The moral economy of obligation—expectations of support for parents, in-laws, or cousins—structures the cadence and composition of remittances, reinforcing the collective nature of migration decisions. Attitudes toward Europe are filtered through network narratives and media. Italy appears simultaneously attainable and precarious: attainable because of geographic proximity and networked pathways; precarious because regularisation may be slow and labour niches are often informal. These mixed perceptions help explain both initial moves to Italy and onward aspirations to countries perceived as offering clearer routes to stability (Di Cristo & Akwei, 2023).

Routes and Risks: Libya, the Central Mediterranean, and ‘Body Contract’

The literature and credible reporting have documented the hazards of irregular routes that transit Libya and the Central Mediterranean. Accounts of extortion, detention, and violence—alongside frequent maritime tragedies—underscore the extreme risks that some migrants shoulder when legal channels are blocked or unaffordable (The Daily Star, 2024). In Bangladesh, terms such as “body contract” capture the grim resolve of would-be migrants to reach Europe at any cost. Brokers and intermediaries—‘adam bebhayi’—reduce search frictions but also impose information asymmetries and extract rents, particularly from households with limited outside options. Economic models illuminate why risk-laden routes nonetheless persist. Under NELM, families facing severe credit constraints and risk exposure may accept high-variance outcomes if the right tail—successful entry and eventual regularisation—promises transformative remittance flows. Under world-systems

framings, irregular corridors are the dark mirror of core–periphery connections: demand for flexible, low-wage labour in destination economies interacts with restricted legal pathways to produce shadow markets in mobility (Wallerstein, 1974; Sassen, 1991). The result is a fragmented opportunity structure in which Italy functions as an entry node and, for some, a springboard for onward migration.

Labour Markets and Legal Status in Italy

Italy's segmented labour market has long relied on migrant labour in services, seasonal agriculture, logistics, and household care. Platform-mediated delivery and ride services have added new layers of informality and algorithmic management, where access to decent work hinges on contractual status and local enforcement. For Bangladeshi workers, typical entry niches include hospitality (restaurants, cafés), cleaning, warehouse/logistics, and delivery services. Wages at the lower end of the distribution and variable hours can make income management difficult, especially when remittances are a salient obligation (Fontefrancesco & Mendonça, 2022). Legal status is a pivotal determinant of trajectories. Without recognised status, migrants are effectively excluded from formal contracts, collective bargaining, and many social protections. Regularisation—whether through employment, family channels, or asylum-related avenues—alters the opportunity set: with a *permesso di soggiorno*, workers can convert informal roles into formal contracts, open bank accounts, and accumulate contributory records. However, pathways to regularisation may be slow and administratively complex, creating prolonged periods of precarity that amplify vulnerability to wage theft or dangerous work (Piore, 1979).

Language proficiency and credential recognition interact with legal status. Even when workers have secondary or tertiary schooling, lack of recognition or local licensing can depress returns to human capital. Targeted Italian language instruction and transparent recognition procedures can materially increase matching efficiency between migrant skills and employer demand. Evidence from other European contexts indicates that where VET bridges are available, migrants transition more readily into stable, semi-skilled roles (OECD, 2019). The social reception of migrants also shapes economic outcomes. Experiences of discrimination—ranging from subtle exclusion to overt harassment—can impose psychological costs and influence residential and occupational choices. Qualitative accounts from riders and shift workers point to exposure to late-night harassment and to variability in neighbourhood safety, reinforcing the importance of municipal policies on lighting, policing, and safe infrastructure for cyclists and delivery workers. These experiences should be interpreted structurally: they are not idiosyncratic anecdotes but signals of institutional gaps in urban safety and inclusion.

Comparative Opportunity Structures: Germany, the Netherlands, the UK

Cross-national comparisons clarify how institutional designs shape migrant outcomes beyond individual traits. Germany's migrant skills policy and dual VET system are frequently highlighted for facilitating the translation of prior competences into recognized qualifications, with pathways that combine in-company training and classroom instruction (OECD, 2019). The Netherlands, while smaller, offers

structured integration programming and generally predictable regularisation for qualifying categories. The United Kingdom historically benefited Bangladeshi migrants through language familiarity and dense diaspora networks, though the post-Brexit regime has tightened entry criteria for low-wage workers. The constructed index (Table 2; Figures 1–2) summarises these institutional contrasts across four dimensions. Italy's score is pulled down by slower or episodic regularisation and weaker skills-bridging infrastructure. Germany scores higher on skills/credential bridging because VET and recognition processes are integrated into labour market institutions. Wage levels and enforcement are also more predictable in Germany and the Netherlands, raising expected utility even when taxes and living costs are higher; stability and rights partially offset these costs through reduced income volatility and improved access to credit. Financial inclusion matters as both outcome and mechanism. A bank account and documented earnings open access to safer remittance channels, micro-credit, and entrepreneurial investment. Where migrants operate in cash-based informal niches, they face higher risks of theft and fraud, and remittances may be irregular. In turn, remittance regularity affects household investment horizons in Bangladesh (Stark & Bloom, 1985). The feedback loop is therefore clear: legal status → formal employment → financial inclusion → predictable remittances → household asset accumulation and educational investment.

REMITTANCES, HOUSEHOLD WELFARE, AND ATTITUDES

Remittances occupy a central place in household strategies. In early settlement, migrants often remit a large share of disposable income to repay migration debts, finance housing improvements, and support schooling for siblings or children. Over time, remittance shares may decline as local expenses rise and as migrants invest in on-site integration (language courses, certifications). Instability in earnings—driven by seasonal work or variable platform hours—translates into remittance volatility, complicating origin-side planning (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Attitudes toward host societies evolve with economic integration. Positive experiences in language instruction, fair contracts, and supportive municipal services often lead to stronger identification with local communities, higher participation in civic life, and a decline in onward-migration intentions. Conversely, prolonged precarity, harassment, and bureaucratic delays can entrench a sense of liminality. Entrepreneurial activity—documented among Bangladeshi vendors in Rome—supports economic autonomy and daily social interaction, often functioning as a bridge to wider networks (Fontefrancesco & Mendonça, 2022). Family reunification introduces its own emotional and logistical complexities, as partners negotiate role changes and expectations in new socioeconomic settings (Della Puppa, 2016).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidence across the comparative literature and qualitative vignettes suggests a coherent policy agenda:

- 1) Timely regularisation: Reduce backlogs and make transparent criteria for status conversion from informal to formal employment. Legal security is the single largest lever for improving outcomes across wages, safety, and inclusion.
- 2) Targeted language and credential recognition: Scale subsidised Italian courses tied to sectoral needs; align recognition of foreign schooling and professional skills with employer demand (less paper-based, more competency-based assessment).
- 3) VET bridges and apprenticeships: Pilot and scale city-level partnerships with employers to create earn-and-learn pathways for migrants in logistics, hospitality, and technical services, drawing lessons from German dual VET (OECD, 2019).
- 4) Enforcement against wage theft and unsafe conditions: Increase labour inspections and penalties for systematic abuses in sectors with high migrant density; expand whistle-blower protections regardless of status.
- 5) Financial inclusion: Encourage low-fee accounts and digital remittance products with consumer protections in partnership with regulated providers; support micro-credit for migrant-led enterprise with mentoring.
- 6) Urban safety for platform workers: Improve lighting, bike infrastructure, and targeted policing at known hotspots; include platform firms in co-responsibility for worker safety during late hours.
- 7) Information and legal aid: Fund community-based organisations to provide verified information on legal pathways and to counter predatory brokers, thereby reducing reliance on risky routes.
- 8) Data and evaluation: Invest in linked administrative and survey data to track outcomes by legal pathway, sector, and city; publish regular dashboards to align policy with evidence.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The constructed index is illustrative and should not be over-interpreted as a ranking. Future work could replace heuristic scores with comparable administrative or survey indicators (e.g., time-to-regularisation, contract conversion rates, earnings distributions by citizenship, banking access, remittance costs). Qualitative insights would benefit from systematic sampling across cities and sectors. Longitudinal designs could track changes in attitudes as migrants move from initial settlement to potential family reunification, onward migration, or return.

CONCLUSION

Bangladeshi migration to Italy and Europe is best understood as a set of interdependent household and institutional decisions rather than as isolated individual choices. Italy's position as an accessible entry node, combined with dense networks, explains its ongoing centrality. Yet protracted legal precarity and persistent labour segmentation can erode expected utility, especially when combined with exposure to harassment or unsafe working conditions. Comparators with stronger skills-bridging architectures and more predictable enforcement—Germany, the Netherlands, and, in some respects, the UK—illustrate how institutional designs modulate both economic and attitudinal outcomes. Policy levers are neither mysterious nor unattainable: timely regularisation, VET bridges, enforcement against

wage theft, and financial inclusion would materially improve wellbeing for Bangladeshi workers while aligning outcomes with Italy's own goals of labour market efficiency and fiscal contribution. Centring migrant agency means recognising the rationality of household strategies under constraints and building institutions that expand the frontier of feasible, dignified choices (Massey et al., 1993; Stark & Bloom, 1985; Piore, 1979; OECD, 2019).

Table 1. Migration Theories and Implications for Bangladeshi Migrants in Italy/Europe

Theory	Core Idea	Implications for Bangladeshi Migrants in Italy/Europe	Representative Sources
Neoclassical Economics	Migration responds to wage differentials; individuals move to maximize expected earnings.	Italy/Europe attract workers from lower-wage contexts; outcomes depend on legal status and wage enforcement.	Massey et al. (1993); Harris & Todaro (1970)
New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM)	Households diversify risk and overcome market failures via migration; remittances are central.	Remittances smooth consumption, fund schooling, and de-risk shocks in districts like Madaripur; irregular status can destabilize flows.	Stark & Bloom (1985); Stark (1991)
Human Capital	Migration is an investment in skills and earnings; returns depend on recognition and skill use.	Credential recognition, language acquisition, and VET-bridges (e.g., Germany) shape long-run returns.	Sjaastad (1962); Chiswick (1978)
Segmented Labour Market	Advanced economies segment migrants into low-wage secondary sectors	Concentration in delivery, hospitality, cleaning, and agriculture;	Piore (1979); Kogan (2006)

due to structural demand. difficult mobility without legal and linguistic assets.

World-Systems / Core-Periphery Global economic linkages and historical relations shape migratory circuits and opportunities. Italy functions as an accessible 'semi-peripheral' entry node; onward migration to core states (DE, NL, UK) is common. Wallerstein (1974); Sassen (1991)

Figure 1. Composite Integration & Opportunity Index (Constructed, 0–10)

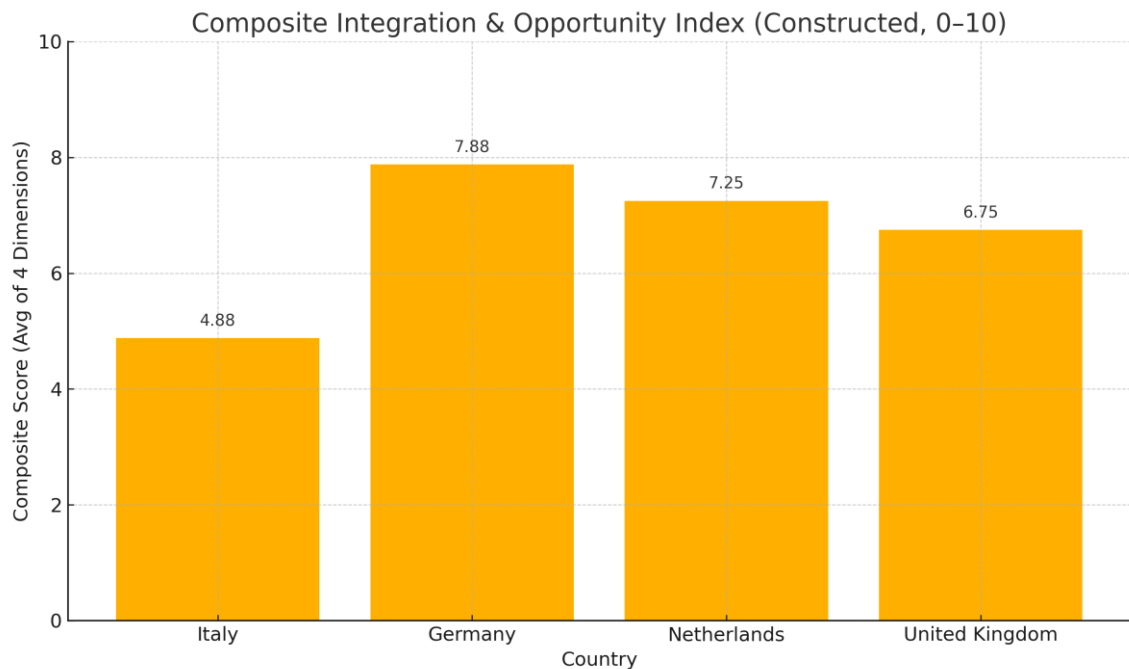


Table 2. Integration & Opportunity Index (Constructed, 0–10)

Country	Legal Pathways (0–10)	Wage Level & Enforcement (0–10)	Skills/Credential Bridging (0–10)	Financial Inclusion (0–10)	Composite (Avg)
Italy	4.5	5.0	4.0	6.0	4.88
Germany	7.5	8.0	8.5	7.5	7.88
Netherlands	7.0	7.5	7.5	7.0	7.25
United Kingdom	6.0	7.0	6.5	7.5	6.75

Figure 2. Index Components: Italy vs Germany (Constructed)

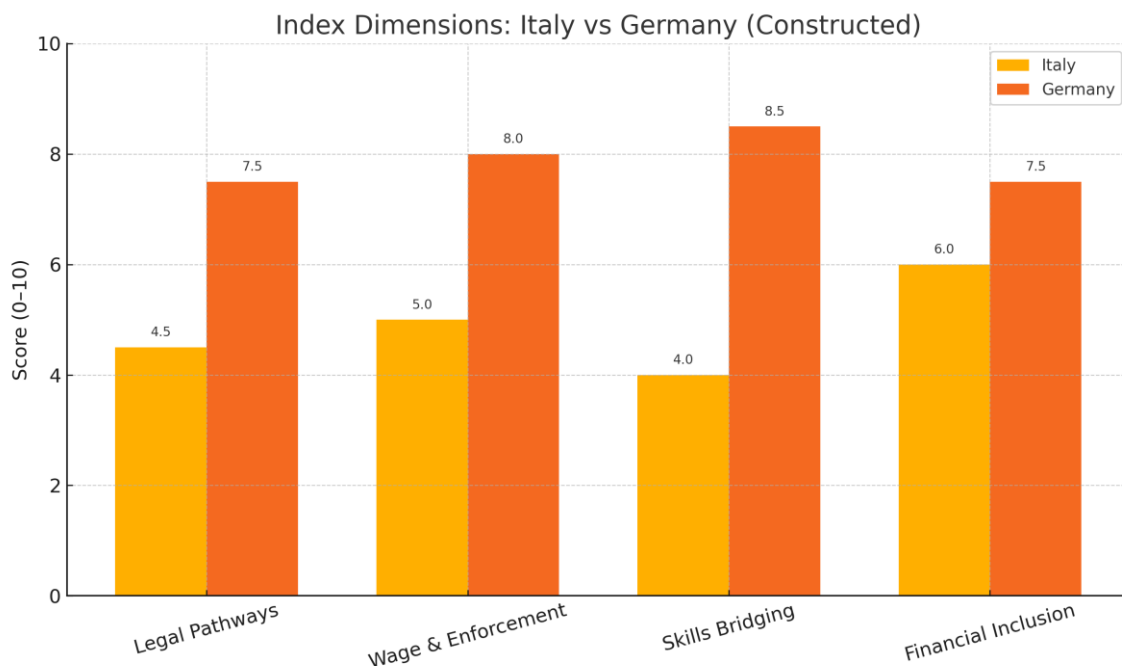
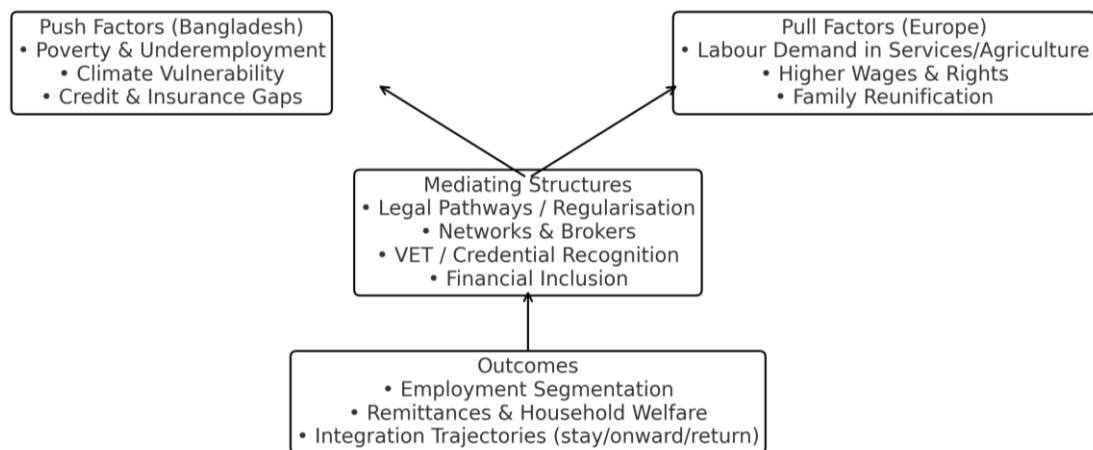


Figure 3. Conceptual Push-Pull & Mediating Structures

Conceptual Push-Pull & Mediating Structures



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- Author's note: This article synthesises and extends content from the author's earlier draft on Bangladeshi migrants' attitudes in Italy and Europe, integrating that text with additional literature and analysis.