



WORKSHOP in-person and online. French and English

MIGRATIONS FROM THE MENA REGION: A BLESSING OR/AND A CURSE?

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51 rue Barthélemy de Laffemas, 26000 VALENCE

Migration: An adaptive strategy for middle class youth to cope with the pandemic in Tunisia

Céline BONNEFOND (*speaker*)

CREG, Université Grenoble Alpes, France

Fatma MABROUK

Centre for Economic and Social Studies and
Research (CERES) Tunisia

Tsiry ANDRIANAMPIARIVO (*speaker*)

Université Grenoble Alpes, France

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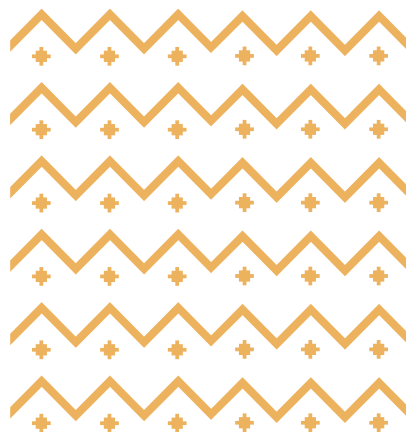
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01.

**Introduction
and research
motivation**



1. Motivation of the research (1/2)

- **In Tunisia, the socio-economic consequences of the COVID crisis have been severe**
 - The main victims have not only been the most vulnerable workers, but also the Tunisian middle class (Bonfond and Mabrouk, 2023)
- **To cope with a shock in developing countries, individuals can rely on different social protection systems** (Barrientos, 2008 ; Devereu et Getu, 2013 ; Dupuis and Fagnani, 2018 ; Okolouma, 2018 ; Gondard-Delcroix et al., 2021)
 - Formal mechanisms (social policies for instance)
 - Informal mechanisms (interpersonal mutual support, family support, remittances from migrants, ...)

1. Motivation of the research (2/2)

- Among these informal mechanisms, we specifically focus on **adaptive strategies based on migration**, taken in its two dimensions
 - **International migration**: through remittances from migrants
 - **Internal migration**: through the mobility of individuals inside the country
- International and internal migrations in Tunisia can often be considered as **strategies adopted by households in times of crisis or to escape difficult socio-economic situations** (Ben Hamza & Guérin-Pace, 2023 ; Gaied, 2023 ; Gammoudi & Omrani, 2021; Belhedi, 1999, 2019)
 - In addition to formal arrangements that were sometimes far from satisfactory (Berguiga, 2023 ; Devereux, 2021 ; Gentilini et al., 2020)

1. Purpose of the research

- Identifying the different informal social protection mechanisms mobilized by the Tunisian population to cope with the COVID crisis: can we distinguish an adaptative strategy based on migration?
- Characterizing the individuals that implemented adaptative strategies relying on migration, in particular according to their socio-demographic characteristics and social categories

1. Contribution of the paper

- Very few current quantitative studies have been conducted on the middle class in Tunisia, and on the impact of the COVID crisis on Tunisia's social stratification
- Focus on informal social protection mechanisms which have been largely neglected in research, unlike the relatively well-documented formal mechanisms
- To our knowledge, we are the first to explore the role of both dimensions of migration (international and internal) as an informal mechanism of social protection in times of crisis, and to connect it with social stratification



02.

**Literature Review:
Migration and
development in
Tunisia**



2. Literature Review: Migration and development in Tunisia (1/2)

Who are the Tunisian migrants?

- They are around 566.000 Tunisian living abroad, approximately 69% are men, 34% of them are aged between 30 and 39 years old, and 47.4% of them are highly educated (National Institute of Statistics, 2021)

Migration Push Factors

- Unemployment of higher education graduates (23.2%, INS 2023), lack of professional opportunities, low wages (El Bey, 2012; Samet, 2014b, Tejada & Garcia Delahaye, 2014)
- Poverty and precarious living conditions (Gaied, 2023; Gsir & Bounouh, 2017; Hibou et al., 2011)
- Political Instability since the Arab spring (Boubakri, 2013)
- COVID crisis (Nicoli, 2023)

2. Literature Review: Migration and development in Tunisia (2/2)

Contribution of the Tunisian diaspora to their home country

- **Investments in Tunisia (real estate, business or other sectors) and contribution to economic growth** (Ben Mim & Mabrouk 2014; Cassarino, 2007; Mabrouk, 2012; Mabrouk, 2018)
- **Remittances: up to 12% of GDP during the COVID crisis** (World Bank, 2022)
 - Stimulate household consumption and business activities

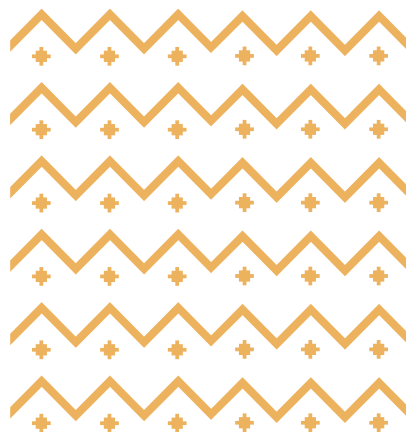
Internal migration in Tunisia

- **After the independance: mainly towards the capital and, more recently, coastal provinces** (Jedidi, 1994; Ben Hamza & Guérin-Pace, 2023)
- **Job opportunities, better living conditions, better access to public services and infrastructures** (Amara & Jemmali, 2018)
- **The COVID crisis may have increased internal migration because some Tunisians had to find adaptation strategies due to the closure of their workplace or the loss of their job**



03.

Methodology



3. Data



منتدى البحوث الاقتصادية
ECONOMIC RESEARCH FORUM

Microdata Catalog

DATA CATALOG

CITATIONS

HOME / CENTRAL DATA CATALOG / TUN_CMMHH_APR-2021_V5.0



COVID-19 MENA Monitor Household Survey, CMMHH- Apr. 2021

Tunisia, 2021 [COVID-19 MENA Monitor Household Surveys](#)

Economic Research Forum

Created on **November 22, 2021** Last modified **November 22, 2021** Page views **37376** Download **964** Metadata [DDI/XML](#) [JSON](#)

STUDY DESCRIPTION

DOCUMENTATION

DATA DESCRIPTION

GET MICRODATA

- February 2021 wave for Tunisia
- 1908 individuals aged between 18 and 64

3. Identifying social categories

- **Combining the economic and sociological approaches** (Bonnefond et al., 2015)
- **Implementation of a mixed classification technique based on five factors that are determined at the individual's level:** income, education level, occupation and socio-professional category, institutional sector, employment status
- **4 main social groups in Tunisia in 2021** (Bonnefond & Mabrouk, 2023)
 - Poor and vulnerable group (37.1%)
 - Lower middle-class (22.6%)
 - Middle-class of entrepreneurs and self-employed (17.3%)
 - Upper middle-class and rich group (23%)

3. Identifying adaptative strategies to cope with the COVID crisis

- Implementation of a **mixed classification technique** based on six factors that are determined at the individual's level: spent savings, family or friends in the country, family or friend abroad (remittances), back to village or family (internal migration), borrowing bank/employer/lender, selling assets
- Using characterization variables to describe the strategies (clusters) identified: socio-demographic variables and social categories previously identified



04.

Results



4. Adoption of informal social protection mechanisms : 8 clusters

- **8 coping strategies (clusters) identified**
 - No informal mechanism mobilized (1 cluster)
 - One specific informal mechanism mobilized (6 clusters)
 - Combination of different informal mechanisms (1 cluster)
- **➔ We will focus on the two clusters of individuals that have resorted to migration to cope with the COVID crisis**
 - International migration through remittances
 - Internal migration

4. Profile of individuals who adopted a remittances-based coping strategy (international migration)

Demographic characteristics

- **Mainly urban residents** (80.6%)
- **Young people** (18.3% are between 18 and 24 years old and 43.4% between 25 and 39 years old)
- **Single person** (41.7%)

Socio-economic characteristics

- **Members of the “middle class of entrepreneurs and independents”** (23.1%) are over-represented
- **Intermediate incomes** (42.3% earn between 550 and 1100 dinars monthly)
- **Self-employed workers** (21.1%) and **entrepreneurs** (18.3%) are over-represented

Region of origin

- **South-East region are over-represented in this group** (12% compared to 7.8% in the population)

4. Profile of individuals who adopted internal migration-based coping strategy

Demographic characteristics

- **Mainly men** (67.2%)
- **Young people** (22.4% are between 18 and 24 years old and 47% between 25 and 39 years old)
- **Single people** (44%)

Socio-economic situation characteristics

- **The "lower middle class"** (33.6%) is over-represented
- **Intermediate incomes** (37.3% earn between 550 and 1100 dinars monthly)
- **Employees** (55.2%), **workers** (32.8%) and **intermediate professions** (9.7%)
- **Particularly in the informal private sector** (33.6%)

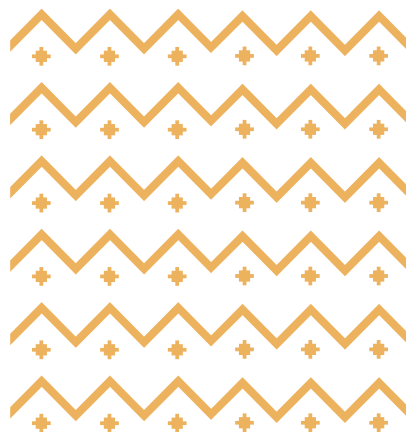
Region of origin

- **Rural residents are over-represented** (38.1%)
- **The poorest regions of the Center-West are over-represented in this group** (17.2%)



05.

Conclusion and discussion





5. Migration as a specific adaptation strategy for the middle classes

1

Remittances

Has enabled the urban youth of the “middle-class of entrepreneurs and independents” to compensate for a decrease or cessation of activity / International family network

2

Internal Migration

Adopted by educated young rural workers from the “lower middle class” to deal with unemployment or job loss, frequently in the informal sector / Less expensive strategy

3

Specific Strategies

These two migration strategies appear to have been discriminatory because they were mostly adopted by Tunisian middle-class members, implying a certain level of resilience

5. Migration as a specific adaptation strategy for the middle classes



Family solidarity

Migration, whether international or internal, constituted an adaptation strategy based on family solidarity values put in place by Tunisian households to cope with the pandemic



Social inequalities

These migration strategies seem to have been discriminatory, because they were mainly adopted by members of the Tunisian middle classes, revealing social inequalities in facing the crisis



Role of the State

These results raise the question of the capacity of the Tunisian public authorities to put in place social protection measures adapted to different social categories, particularly the middle classes

5. Research Prospects

Effectiveness of migration strategies

Have migration strategies contributed to the economic and social stability of those who implemented them?

Role of public authorities

What social protection measures should Tunisian public authorities put in place to support the different social categories, particularly the middle classes?

Vulnerability of the middle classes

How to explain the vulnerability of Tunisian middle classes to crises, and what are the possibilities for strengthening their resilience?

Thank you for your attention !

Any questions, comments or suggestions please ?

Adaptative strategies relying on informal social protection – results of the cluster analysis

Table 1. Stratégies d'adaptation reposant sur des mécanismes de protection sociale informels – Distributions comparées des variables de classification selon le cluster*

| Variables | Cluster 1 (19.7%) | Cluster 2 (9.2%) | Cluster 3 (11%) | Cluster 4 (12.6%) | Cluster 5 (7%) | Cluster 6 (17.8%) | Cluster 7 (11.1%) | Cluster 8 (11.6%) | Ensemble |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Désépargne | | | | | | | | | |
| Non | 100% | 36% | 36.4% | 44% | 47.8% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 47.5% |
| Oui | 0% | 64% | 63.6% | 56% | 52.2% | 100% | 100% | 0% | 52.5% |
| Aide d'un proche dans le pays | | | | | | | | | |
| Non | 100% | 41.7% | 46.9% | 53.9% | 53% | 100% | 0% | 0% | 57% |
| Oui | 0% | 58.3% | 53.1% | 46.1% | 47% | 0% | 100% | 100% | 43% |
| Aide d'un proche à l'étranger | | | | | | | | | |
| Non | 100% | 0% | 86.6% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 89.3% |
| Oui | 0% | 100% | 13.4% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 10.7% |
| Retour au village ou dans la famille | | | | | | | | | |
| Non | 100% | 77.7% | 87.6% | 83.8% | 0% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 87.5% |
| Oui | 0% | 22.3% | 12.4% | 16.2% | 100% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 12.5% |
| Prêt, emprunt | | | | | | | | | |
| Non | 100% | 80.6% | 100% | 0% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 85.6% |
| Oui | 0% | 19.4% | 0% | 100% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 14.4% |
| Vente d'actifs | | | | | | | | | |
| Non | 100% | 96.6% | 0% | 85.9% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 86.9% |
| Oui | 0% | 3.4% | 100% | 14.1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 13.1% |

Notes : (*) Les caractères gras (*italiques*) indiquent que la valeur est significativement élevée (faible) dans le cluster comparé au reste de la population (sur la base des résidus standardisés ajustés du Khi² au seuil de 5% pour les variables qualitatives). Fréquences conditionnelles en ligne et colonne.

Source : ERF, COVID-19 MENA Monitor Household Survey, Tunisie, février 2021.

Demographic characteristics of the different adaptative strategies relying on informal social protection

Table 2. Profil type des stratégies d'adaptation durant la crise COVID - Distributions comparées des variables démographiques selon le cluster

| Variables | Cluster 1 (19.7%) | Cluster 2 (9.2%) | Cluster 3 (11%) | Cluster 4 (12.6%) | Cluster 5 (7%) | Cluster 6 (17.8%) | Cluster 7 (11.1%) | Cluster 8 (11.6%) | Ensemble |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Sexe | | | | | | | | | |
| Homme | 55.7% | 63.4% | 65.1% | 61.8% | 67.2% | 56.5% | 58.3% | 66.1% | 60.7% |
| Femme | 44.3% | 36.6% | 34.99% | 38.2% | 32.8% | 43.5% | 41.7% | 33.9% | 39.3% |
| Localisation / résidence | | | | | | | | | |
| Urbain | 69.3% | 80.6% | 66% | 75.5% | 61.9% | 74.1% | 68.7% | 61.1% | 70.1% |
| Rural | 30.7% | 19.4% | 34% | 24.5% | 38.1% | 25.9% | 31.3% | 38.9% | 29.9% |
| Age | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-24 ans | 9.9% | 18.3% | 14.8% | 10.4% | 22.4% | 16.2% | 14.7% | 7.7% | 13.5% |
| 25-39 ans | 26.1% | 43.4% | 43.1% | 34.9% | 47% | 30.6% | 41.2% | 35.3% | 35.7% |
| 40-49 ans | 24% | 17.7% | 21.5% | 28.6% | 16.4% | 22.4% | 23.7% | 29.9% | 23.6% |
| 50-59 ans | 27.5% | 14.9% | 15.8% | 20.7% | 9% | 21.5% | 12.3% | 19.6% | 19.1% |
| 60-64 ans | 12.5% | 5.7% | 4.8% | 5.4% | 5.2% | 9.4% | 8.1% | 8.6% | 8.1% |
| Région | | | | | | | | | |
| Grand Tunis | 21.1% | 25.1% | 16.7% | 27.4% | 18.7% | 23.2% | 31.8% | 23.5% | 23.5% |
| Nord-Est | 14.9% | 12.6% | 19.6% | 19.9% | 13.4% | 16.8% | 17.5% | 12.2% | 16.1% |
| Nord-Ouest | 12% | 5.7% | 8.6% | 7.9% | 9.7% | 7.6% | 6.2% | 10.4% | 8.8% |
| Centre-Est | 26.7% | 30.9% | 27.3% | 26.1% | 29.9% | 27.6% | 23.2% | 26.7% | 27.1% |
| Centre-Ouest | 12% | 8% | 13.4% | 8.7% | 17.2% | 8.8% | 10.4% | 15.8% | 11.4% |
| Sud-Est | 6.4% | 12% | 11% | 5% | 4.5% | 9.1% | 6.2% | 8.1% | 7.8% |
| Sud-Ouest | 6.9% | 5.7% | 3.3% | 5% | 6.7% | 6.8% | 4.7% | 3.2% | 5.5% |
| Statut marital | | | | | | | | | |
| Jamais marié | 24.8% | 41.7% | 31.6% | 22.8% | 44% | 30.3% | 35.1% | 20.4% | 29.8% |
| Marié | 69.3% | 51.4% | 64.1% | 73.9% | 51.5% | 67.6% | 58.8% | 75.1% | 65.6% |
| Veuf / divorcé | 5.9% | 6.9% | 4.3% | 3.3% | 4.5% | 2.1% | 6.2% | 4.5% | 4.6% |

Notes : (*) Les caractères gras (*italiques*) indiquent que la valeur est significativement élevée (faible) dans le cluster comparé au reste de la population (sur la base des résidus standardisés ajustés du Khi² au seuil de 5% pour les variables qualitatives). Fréquences conditionnelles en ligne et colonne.

Source : ERF, COVID-19 MENA Monitor Household Survey, Tunisie, février 2021.

Socio-economic characteristics of the different adaptative strategies relying on informal social protection

Table 3. Profil type des stratégies d'adaptation durant la crise COVID - Distributions comparées des variables socio-économiques selon le cluster

| Variables | Cluster 1 (19.7%) | Cluster 2 (9.2%) | Cluster 3 (11%) | Cluster 4 (12.6%) | Cluster 5 (7%) | Cluster 6 (17.8%) | Cluster 7 (11.1%) | Cluster 8 (11.6%) | Ensemble |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Quintile de revenus | | | | | | | | | |
| Moins de 400 dinars | 27.7% | 13.7% | 27.3% | 12% | 23.1% | 15.3% | 20.4% | 29.9% | 21.3% |
| Entre 400 et 550 dinars | 22.7% | 15.4% | 25.4% | 20.7% | 18.7% | 17.4% | 20.4% | 28.5% | 21.2% |
| Entre 550 et 1100 dinars | 22.7% | 42.3% | 28.2% | 36.5% | 37.3% | 32.1% | 36.5% | 28.5% | 31.7% |
| Plus de 1100 dinars | 26.9% | 28.6% | 19.1% | 30.7% | 20.9% | 35.3% | 22.7% | 13.1% | 25.7% |
| Niveau d'éducation | | | | | | | | | |
| Enseignement de base non achevé | 33.1% | 16.6% | 29.2% | 21.2% | 19.4% | 17.4% | 25.6% | 37.1% | 25.5% |
| Enseignement secondaire | 16% | 15.4% | 24.4% | 16.6% | 20.1% | 12.4% | 14.7% | 17.2% | 16.6% |
| Enseignement supérieure | 28.3% | 43.4% | 36.8% | 40.7% | 32.1% | 41.8% | 33.6% | 30.8% | 35.7% |
| Education supérieure | 22.7% | 24.6% | 9.6% | 21.6% | 28.4% | 28.5% | 26.1% | 14.9% | 22.2% |
| Statut de l'emploi | | | | | | | | | |
| Salariés | 44.8% | 42.9% | 37.8% | 53.5% | 55.2% | 37.9% | 48.3% | 46.6% | 45.1% |
| Indépendants et entrepreneurs | 12.5% | 21.1% | 26.8% | 17.8% | 11.2% | 19.1% | 17.5% | 13.1% | 17.3% |
| Travailleurs non rémunérés | 0% | 0.6% | 1.9% | 0.4% | 0.7% | 0.6% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.6% |
| Sans emploi | 42.7% | 35.4% | 33.5% | 28.2% | 32.8% | 42.2% | 33.6% | 39.8% | 37.1% |
| Secteur institutionnel | | | | | | | | | |
| Public | 9.6% | 4% | 5.3% | 15.8% | 4.5% | 11.5% | 7.6% | 5.9% | 8.7% |
| Privé formel | 27.5% | 39.4% | 44.5% | 43.6% | 29.1% | 33.8% | 36% | 29% | 34.8% |
| Privé informel | 20.3% | 21.1% | 16.7% | 12.4% | 33.6% | 12.4% | 22.7% | 25.3% | 19.4% |
| Sans emploi | 42.7% | 35.4% | 33.5% | 28.2% | 32.8% | 42.4% | 33.6% | 39.8% | 37.1% |
| Catégorie socio-professionnelle | | | | | | | | | |
| Managers, cadres et dirigeants | 7.5% | 9.1% | 4.8% | 13.3% | 8.2% | 10.9% | 9% | 5.4% | 8.7% |
| Entrepreneurs, chefs d'entreprise | 9.6% | 18.3% | 23.4% | 16.2% | 9% | 15.6% | 13.7% | 10.4% | 14.3% |
| Techniciens et professions intermédiaires | 5.9% | 5.7% | 6.7% | 9.1% | 9.7% | 7.1% | 7.1% | 3.2% | 6.7% |
| Employés | 7.5% | 8.6% | 4.8% | 9.5% | 5.2% | 6.5% | 8.5% | 7.2% | 7.3% |
| Ouvriers | 24% | 20% | 23.4% | 22% | 32.8% | 14.1% | 24.2% | 31.2% | 23% |
| Agriculteurs | 2.9% | 2.9% | 3.3% | 1.7% | 2.2% | 3.5% | 3.8% | 2.7% | 2.9% |
| En recherche d'emploi | 5.9% | 9.7% | 8.1% | 5.8% | 8.2% | 6.8% | 5.2% | 10.9% | 7.3% |
| Retraités | 7.5% | 1.7% | 1.4% | 2.5% | 0.7% | 5.9% | 3.8% | 3.6% | 4% |
| Autres sans emploi | 29.3% | 24% | 23.9% | 19.9% | 23.9% | 29.7% | 24.6% | 25.3% | 25.8% |

Notes : (*) Les caractères gras (*italiques*) indiquent que la valeur est significativement élevée (faible) dans le cluster comparé au reste de la population (sur la base des résidus standardisés ajustés du Khi² au seuil de 5% pour les variables qualitatives). Fréquences conditionnelles en ligne et colonne.

Source : ERF, COVID-19 MENA Monitor Household Survey, Tunisie, février 2021.

Adoption of different coping strategies according to social categories

Table 4. Profil type des stratégies d'adaptation durant la crise COVID - Distributions comparées des différentes catégories sociales selon le cluster

| Variables | Cluster 1 (19.7%) | Cluster 2 (9.2%) | Cluster 3 (11%) | Cluster 4 (12.6%) | Cluster 5 (7%) | Cluster 6 (17.8%) | Cluster 7 (11.1%) | Cluster 8 (11.6%) | Ensemble |
|--|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Catégorie sociale | | | | | | | | | |
| Catégories populaires et vulnérables | 42.7% | 35.4% | 33.5% | 28.2% | 32.8% | 42.4% | 33.6% | 39.8% | 37.1% |
| Classe moyenne inférieure | 24% | 20% | 23% | 19.9% | 33.6% | 13.5% | 23.2% | 31.7% | 22.6% |
| Classe moyenne d'entrepreneurs et indépendants | 12.5% | 23.1% | 26.8% | 17.8% | 11.2% | 19.1% | 17.5% | 13.1% | 17.3% |
| Classe moyenne supérieure et catégories aisées | 20.8% | 23.4% | 16.7% | 34% | 22.4% | 25% | 25.6% | 15.4% | 23% |

Notes : (*) Les caractères gras (*italiques*) indiquent que la valeur est significativement élevée (faible) dans le cluster comparé au reste de la population (sur la base des résidus standardisés ajustés du Khi² au seuil de 5% pour les variables qualitatives). Fréquences conditionnelles en ligne et colonne.

Source : ERF, *COVID-19 MENA Monitor Household Survey*, Tunisie, février 2021.