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Posted Date: 30 September 2024

doi: 10.20944/preprints202409.2401.v1

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Article

Nouns as Essential Migration Signifiers for Improving Migrant Mental Health Through Social Services Supporting Problem-Focused or Emotion-Focused Coping

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Abstract: Migrate is a verb representing a process where the intention of providing social services to migrants is to reduce their instability and discomfort. Consequently, social service providers are inclined to view migrants as pitiful, often also those to be feared, with migrants learning to form negative views of themselves, decreasing their mental health. Considering migration as a verb neglects the noun initiating the migration when the migrant is heading to a person, place, thing, event, or idea. In viewing migration as noun-dependent, the migrant is identifiable as self-directed in seeking aid rather than pitiful or inciting fear. This study aims to examine the types of nouns migrants conceptualize for guiding their migration based on a Google Scholar search of “[noun-type] to which [whom] migrants head in their migration” for each noun type regarding the four most highly cited reports published since 2020. The purpose is to determine the social services applicable to migrants in their self-direction regarding theoretical foundations that contrast problem-focused with emotion-focused coping. Viewing such migration nouns as essential migration signifiers encourages migrants’ favorable identification. In recognizing the intended self-direction of the migrant, their mental health is improved and is supportable through relevant and appropriately available social services.

Keywords: migrate; social services; migrants; mental health; nouns; self-direction; coping

1. Introduction

Migration is defined as the change of residence from one geographic location to another [1](p. 11). A 2021 publication on migration notes that migration studies currently are at an impasse—and have been so for several decades—remaining surprisingly under-theorized as a field of social inquiry [2]. This same publication goes on to state that although there has been significant empirical research on migration, systematic theorizing on migration has been lacking, focusing on the lives, identities, and experiences of migrants. The theories supporting this empirical research are grounded in mobility [3], exchange economics [4], and various migration processes [5]. As representations of functionalist and historical-structural theories that see society as a system comparable to a living organism [2], migration becomes a consequence and an intrinsic part of broader social change [6]. Although the author of this 2021 publication presents a new systematic theory regarding migration focused on a structure related to positive and negative liberty and agency concerning perceived aspirations and capabilities through geographical opportunities, the crux of this theory remains mobility—the movement from one place to another under uncertainty.

The constant with the previous migration research considered at an impasse is that all view migration as a verb. As a verb, the semantic focus is the movement itself from one geographic location, through a transition period, to another geographic position. In this respect, there is little difference between older theories regarding migration and the one newly proposed in 2021. However, there need not be an equation of migration with being a verb. The conceptualization of migration can be as a noun where those who migrate do so based on a personally identified

connection with a person, place, thing, event, or idea—representing various possible semantic components of a noun. Although there is recognition that migration theories depend on driver theories leading to the initiation and perpetuation of migration flows [7], rather than researchers realizing this view of migration depends on conceptualizing migration as a verb, the comparison has been only between mobility and immobility [2]. As such, there has been no identification of the problem in the impasse of migration theory as being unable to see the relevance of nouns as essential migration signifiers.

Social services provided to migrants connect with vulnerability, occupying a central role in migration theory [8]. Viewing migration as a verb, what makes migrants vulnerable is the change they undergo in migrating, the uncertainty it creates, and the dependence on social services to help the migrant overcome this change [9]. As such, all migrants have identical basic needs, including food, water, shelter, and sanitation [10]. These are the necessities that are the concentration of social services when viewing migrants as vulnerable yet healthy, where health is the ability to adaptively self-manage regarding social, physical, and emotional challenges [11]. When ill health is also present, the necessities of migrants expand, yet migrants are less likely to utilize the health services available [12](p. 33). In this regard, given that the services offered are those necessary for the continuation of life—ones taken for granted by residents of the place to which people migrate—migrants are pitied for their situation by residents, and donations to their cause are as a result of this pity [13]. Simultaneously, migrants are not trusted [14] to be satisfied with hand-outs and are viewed as likely to resort to anti-social activity [15] to retain necessities. Specific social, economic, and political hierarchies and policies are recognized to produce and pattern poor health in migrants [16]. These outcomes are a result of conceptualizing migration as a verb.

Considering migration as a noun, this different perspective necessitates rethinking the social services required for migrants. The migrant directed by a personally relevant noun is identifiable as a self-directed instigator in their journey, where self-directed means they display confidence, commitment, readiness, and understanding and are not demoralized in monitoring the situation [11]. In this case, the social services they require are specific to the type of noun that has defined their reason for migration. In this way, migrants are neither pitiful nor a cause of suspicion because their needs are not primarily basic. Instead, their needs are related to achieving their goal of migration concerning the type of noun that is the focus of their self-direction. As such, required social services by those migrating to a person will differ from those needed by migrants to a place, a thing, an event, or an idea—and all of them will vary from the basic needs thought relevant for all migrants when migration is a verb. This change in perspective depends on considering the role of migrant values [17], as their values define these migration-directing nouns.

This study examines the different types of nouns representing what people migrate towards based on their values. This undertaking is novel because research regarding nouns observes that although linguists widely hold nouns and verbs as the two major word classes of all human languages, there is little attention paid to the semantics of nouns in contrast to verbs [18]. This examination will test if considering migration as a noun necessarily results in the self-direction of migrants, although it may be their initial intention. By investigating the categories of nouns migrants value, the purpose is to realize the type of social services that this way of examining migration demands. Doing so is intended to change the narrative regarding migrants from those to be pitied and feared (resulting from a focus on migration as a verb) to portrayals of self-directed individuals with a purpose in their migration based on the nouns they value. This type of portrayal is a new narrative that requires social services outside the basic needs standardized as essential for all migrants. The conclusion is that by reconceptualizing migration from a verb to a noun and providing appropriate social services according to those nouns, there is an enhanced ability of migrants to adjust to their new surroundings, resulting in less likelihood that their health will suffer from the migration and that society will view their migration negatively.

However, the finding is that not all nouns identified with migration result in self-direction. The requirement then is social services based on different types of coping where coping is an action-oriented and intra-psychic effort to help the individual manage environmental and internal demands

and conflicts that result from stress that taxes or exceeds personal resources [19]. Considering relevant social services for migrants through one particular coping theory [20], those related to self-directed migrants depend on problem-focused coping. In contrast, migrants who may start as self-directed concerning their values, as represented by nouns, but become other-directed through migration require social services related to emotion-focused coping. Both forms of coping are identified as maintaining mental health in migrants, differing from the decreased mental health of migrants in appraising migration as a verb.

2. Materials and Methods

Nouns are investigable in several ways, including their division into grammatical categories [21] and using a cognitive-functional approach [22]. These methods are relevant to linguists and cognitive scientists but do not offer insight into studying nouns in representing values. In this regard, examining the semantic properties of nouns holds promise, as these properties involve the meanings of the nouns [18]. Furthermore, the relevance of the semantic properties of nouns to morphology is a current area of research in linguistics [23], characterizing the semantic properties of nouns as worthy of academic consideration.

A division into five types of nouns—persons, places, things, events, and ideas collects the materials of this semantic analysis of nouns relevant to migrants. For each, a limited review of Google Scholar identifies those publications of the last five years regarding the following statement “[noun-type] to which [whom] migrants head in their migration”, necessitating five different searches. Excluded are those articles that do not include the noun type, migration, or do not relate to the migration as directed to the noun type. Also excluded are chapters in books published before 2020 but republished after that date. The intent is to include only the most recent research regarding the topic. In deciding to use the first four relevant references returned, this is neither a systematic review [24] nor a scoping review [25]. As a crawler-based search engine [26], Google Scholar returns give primacy to the most cited reports concerning a topic; however, the same returns may not be reproducible with different searches [27]. As such, noting the date of each Google Scholar search is imperative for referencing every search [27].

The limited review presented provides a narrative regarding the most cited examples of each type of noun that return in the various Google Scholar searches. In emphasizing the most influential work regarding each noun, this process follows the narrative review method [28] to reveal the dominant narratives of the returns. In this regard, on identifying the most relevant titles, a summary of the report findings emphasizes the type of noun under investigation for a particular search. Narrative reviews are appropriate and valuable in exploring various trajectory modeling approaches in epidemiological research [28] and human-centered design approaches to healthcare that strive to support innovative, effective, and person-centered solutions [29]. As the aim of reconceptualizing migration as a noun rather than a verb is to promote improved mental health in migrants, the relevance of the narrative review method to studies of better healthcare decisions is significant.

3. Results

Five subsections divide the results into sequential Google Scholar searches of the five different types of nouns. For each search, consideration is of the four relevant reports returned first. Table 1 presents the results. The searches were conducted at different times—sometimes on different dates. The date of each search is highlighted in the various subsections, as Google Scholar is inconsistent with returns over subsequent searches.

Table 1. The five types of nouns and the various interpretations of those nouns in each of the four relevant reports returned plus their citation number for the Google Scholar searches conducted.

Noun	Report 1 [Cit. #]	Report 2 [Cit. #]	Report 3 [Cit. #]	Report 4 [Cit. #]
Person	Family [30]	Older self [31]	Tolerated self [32]	Parents as youths [33]

Place	In place [34]	Ghetto [35]	Unsettled [36]	Rural [37]
Thing	Citizenship [38]	Internet [39]	Self-employment [40]	Privilege [41]
Event	Grandchild birth [42]	Marriage [43]	Granting asylum [44]	Policy change [45]
Idea	The good life [46]	Being heard [47]	Better job and pay [48]	Aid by others [49]

3.1. People

The 16 September 2024 search of persons to whom migrants head in their migration returned “about 17,300” reports. However, the first five pages of returns produced few relevant studies. Most related to the people migrating rather than the persons to whom the migrant was heading. Another type of return was people from the home country forcing the migration of the migrant—equally irrelevant for this study. A third type of return excluded from this study is regarding families migrating together. From the list of ten returns per page, the first relevant return appears near the top of page two—the book *Introduction to Migration Studies* [50]. Next, at the bottom of page three, is the article “Family project or individual choice? Exploring agency in young Eritreans’ migration” [31]. The third relevant return is on page five—“Knowledge production, reflexivity, and the use of categories in migration studies: Tackling challenges in the field” [32]—as is the final return (a book chapter) included, “Introduction: definitions, typologies and theories of return migration” [33].

The book *Introduction to Migration Studies* [50], the first return, was published in 2022 and provides current information on people to whom migrants are heading in their migration. The relevant chapter regarding people is “Family Migration” [30]. Significantly, migrant females working in domestic, informal, and formal caregiving functions are often the sponsors of their husbands, children, and parents [30](p. 139). As such, these secondary migrants are traveling to their wives, mothers, or children. In this situation, the type of social services that migrants seek are the means to keep in touch with their sponsor during the migration through information communication technology (ICT). Providing the most stable and reliable access to loved ones is the preferred social service in this type of migration [30](p. 141). Another invaluable social service in this situation is offering information and support to both the sponsor and the migrant in the case of separation [30] (p. 142). Various services might include, but not be limited to, information on government policies, immigration status, settlement, healthcare services, and education. However, despite diversity in this area, there is little research [50](p. 160). It is also relevant that all family members be treated equally in this type of migration as parents and other kin often are marginalized from the nuclear family; this is more so as there are growing restrictions on parents as migrants [30](p. 143). In 2017, family migration remained the largest source of permanent migration in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, ahead of labor and humanitarian migrations [50](p. 286).

The 2020 publication “Family project or individual choice? Exploring agency in young Eritreans’ migration” [31], presents a different understanding of the person the migrant is moving towards. In this case, it is considered a rite of passage for young people to find themselves by being unaccompanied minor migrants. In this regard, the person they move towards is an older and wiser version of themselves. Even though unaccompanied, the authors of this publication consider the migration a family project as the idea of the young person migrating is fully supported by the family for the child to reach adulthood successfully. As the child arrives at the destination as a minor, this poses a problem for those societies that view children as incapable of this responsibility—with the admitting countries only willing to offer basic needs to children [51] rather than the complex needs that would come from considering them responsible for their actions. Yet, a more adequate response to these unaccompanied minors looking for their independence is needed as the number of unaccompanied minors is increasing [52].

“Knowledge production, reflexivity, and the use of categories in migration studies: Tackling challenges in the field” [32] is a 2021 publication expanding the view of migration to a person as a

more tolerant conceptualization of their parents for mixed-race children in Switzerland. The purpose is to have themselves and their parents accepted as people rather than a combination of racial characteristics. Such migration aims for the migrant to feel like an international citizen where the identity of their parents and their mixed race is not an issue. In this sense, the child is leaving the bigoted conception of their parents and themselves to one that is tolerant so that the parents and the child can be viewed more positively by the child in the new location. Consequently, this is a second-order understanding of migrating to a person since the person is their new conceptualization. This view is similar to queer migration in finding “home” where the migrant can become themselves [53]. The social services these migrants seek encourage belonging and opportunity to participate as members of the new environment.

Finally, a 2022 book chapter, “Introduction: definitions, typologies and theories of return migration” [33], investigates the children of immigrants returning to their ancestral homes. The people they return to may be relatives who were left behind. However, in some sense, these children are looking to find their parents as youths. This migration is named a “return” even though these children have never lived in the originating country of their parents. The authors state that this type of migration by adult children has been flourishing in recent years. The types of social services that these migrants are seeking are specific to the area where their parents grew up. As, in some sense, the services they seek are those from a past era provided to their parents when they lived in the area, the authors state that post-return outcomes often do not live up to expectations, resulting in disillusionment. Whether this outcome is inevitable or a result of undifferentiated services offered to them as migrants is the question. Those returnees who find the stable institutional environment their parents pictured for them are more likely to remain and engage in entrepreneurship [54].

3.2. Places

In considering “places to where migrants head in their migration” as the 18 September 2024 Google Scholar search, the returns were very different than regarding the search of people. In this case, there was no need to look further at the 17,000 results than the first four returns of the search. Each of these returns was relevant to examining how migrants embark on their travels because of considerations regarding place. The first return is “Beyond here and there:(Re) conceptualising migrant journeys and the ‘in-between’” [34]. The second “The role of arrival areas for migrant integration and resource access” [35]. The third is “Migrants moving through mobility regimes: The trajectory approach as a tool to reveal migratory processes” [36]. The final return “Going rural: qualitative perspectives on the role of place attachment in young people's intentions to return to the country” [37].

The 2020 work, “Beyond here and there:(Re) conceptualising migrant journeys and the ‘in-between’” [34], advises that rather than considering places on the migration route as ‘In-between’, a reevaluation of them should be as ‘in place’. The reason is that migrants in transit make lives for themselves at the stops along the way in these journeys, and recognizing these stops as the destination themselves reconceptualizes the social services considered meaningful for the migrants. Rather than offering ways and means to leave the stop, the direction of social services should be to help migrants in their self-direction to construct meaningful lives where they find themselves. Migrant decisions about whether or not to move on concern the lives lived, the relationships formed, and the opportunities that arise in these stop-over places. If there has been a positive outcome in at least some regard, there is less likelihood that the place to which the migrant is heading is anywhere other than the location where they find themselves. In staying put, studies signify new social contacts met while traveling as those who become the most trusted sources of information and support [55].

“The role of arrival areas for migrant integration and resource access” [35] is another 2020 article with a similar message to the first. It argues that for migrants who journey to a place with a defined social ghetto for migrants, social services too frequently focus on encouraging the upward mobility of the migrant outside the concentrated area for newcomers. The article argues that by understanding the dynamics of these urban arrival areas regarding their infrastructures and specific role in resource provisions for newcomers, the role of policymaking and urban planning can be more attuned to

increasingly complex and mobile urban societies. As such, the focus of the social services should be enhancing the life migrants lead as members of the ghetto in which they dwell. That migrants might choose to remain in these close quarters results from those who come in large numbers preferring to segregate in enclaves where they can lead a familiar lifestyle with people who can support it [56].

The third article, "Migrants moving through mobility regimes: The trajectory approach as a tool to reveal migratory processes" [36], was published in 2021. Unlike the other two articles that consider the migrant preference as staying put where they land, this article stresses that, once the migrant arrives at their intended destination, the migration does not end. This study demonstrates that after they cross a border, migrants tend to migrate for short distances within their new destination. By investigating the most fitting location to settle within the border, social services to these migrants cannot stop at issues regarding border safety. Instead, these social services must consider how to aid these short-term travelers inside the country's border to find the particular destination they seek. The author of this third article found these conditions in investigating both refugees and unauthorized migrants. In such situations, the migrant learns quickly how to adapt their personal narrative into the host country's legal language to effectively express the role expected of them in these circumstances, demonstrating migrant agency [57]. In providing social services, it is advised to take these recapitulations at face value and provide migrants with what they seek.

"Going rural: qualitative perspectives on the role of place attachment in young people's intentions to return to the country" [37] is the final article regarding migrants heading to a place to be considered. Published in 2021, this article differentiates migrants who move to an urban area are less tied to place than those who choose to return to the rural areas from which they came. People and jobs are seen to be what leads rural dwellers to the city when young. However, about what these migrants hope for their children, they intend to move back to their rural roots. The reason appears to be specific cherished memories tied to the place of their original homes. To encourage and facilitate this move to the country after an original migration to the city for non-place-related reasons, social services should focus on providing ongoing information about activities in the rural area, including any incentive programs to return to the rural area. In this regard, social services can be improved by recognizing rural/urban connectivity with an emphasis on the bidirectional nature of rural/urban relationships [58].

3.3. Things

An 18 September 2024 Google Scholar search of "things to which migrants head in their migration" produced "about 16,600 returns". Similar to the returns regarding people, the relevant articles generally were not the ones initially returned. Most earlier returns focused on the term migrate as a verb regarding the drivers of migration rather than specifying to what thing the migrant was traveling. Other reports concern what pushed the migrants to leave. Both considerations exclude them. These two types of returns were the majority. That said, the first relevant return is on the first page of returns as the third entry. The significant chapter in *International Migration and Citizenship Today* is Chapter 8, "Citizenship, nationalism, and national identity" [38]. Although this chapter returned on the first page of the search, the following relevant return did not appear until the first entry of page five—"Displaced and dismayed: how ICTs are helping refugees and migrants, and how we can do better" [39]. Unexpectedly, all the relevant returns to follow are from page five of the search. The return immediately following the previous one is on page five—"Self-employment and reason for migration: are those who migrate for asylum different from other migrants?" [40]. The final relevant study is the last return on page five of the search—"Practising privilege. How settling in Thailand enables older Western migrants to enact privilege over local people" [41].

In the 2023 book chapter "Citizenship, nationalism, and national identity" [38], the thing to which migrants are heading is citizenship in their destination country. Yet, as stated by the author, there is no single definition of citizenship. The author notes this lack of a singular definition as a contributing factor to the controversy surrounding citizenship in representing a relationship between the individual and the country regarding the rights and duties of each (p. 142). There are five different things the author lists concerning what migrants consider citizenship. In summary, these are a sense

of identity, being able to work with others who are different from them, a desire to participate in the political process of the country, a willingness to exercise restraint regarding personal choices, and an understanding of justice regarding fair distribution of resources (p. 143). With citizenship equitable to any of these things, or more than one, the types of social services that would aid migrants in gaining citizenship would differ depending on which of these options is attractive to the migrant. As such, providers of social services helping migrants who endeavor to become citizens must be cognizant of the understanding of citizenship held by the migrant. In seeking what the migrant values regarding citizenship, this understanding is knowable by these providers [59].

"Displaced and dismayed: how ICTs are helping refugees and migrants, and how we can do better" [39], published in 2020, presents internet connectivity as the thing migrants may head towards, citing the rise in migrant interconnectivity as exponential. The paper notes that migrants now consider connectivity essential and will walk miles to get free Wi-Fi. What is particularly valuable regarding this report is that once accepting the desire for interconnectivity as a thing leading to migration, it examines each of the various types of internet services that help migrants survive and thrive while aiming to support what it is that migrants might value. As such, the results of this report are significant when interpreting migration as a noun rather than a verb. This article judges three relevant information and communication technology aspects for their successful deployment to migrants. The first is providing consistent, sustainable funding to the social service offered. The second is matching the online social services to the scale of their intended niche. Lastly, the end users must be involved to provide the necessary cultural attributes and make relevant changes. The requisite of internet connectivity has been argued as essential for improvement in quality of life—representing a defining feature of marginalized groups [60].

According to the 2021 paper "Self-employment and reason for migration: are those who migrate for asylum different from other migrants?" [40], a significant thing to which people migrate is the opportunity to be self-employed. This article suggests that migrants are 6% more likely to be self-employed than those native to the UK, the region the focus of this study. However, such self-employment does not arise automatically. The results demonstrate that, in the UK, migrants generally take twelve years to achieve more likelihood of self-employment than native-born residents and that twenty years is the optimal point for expecting greater self-employment of migrants than those born in the UK. Given the extended time it takes migrants to begin their intended self-employment, social services to this group should focus on ways and means to decrease the number of years before the realization of self-employment. The need for such social services is apparent as those who become self-employed in their new residence are less likely to be self-employed in their home country, indicating that, when beginning, they have less experience with self-employment [61].

"Practising privilege. How settling in Thailand enables older Western migrants to enact privilege over local people" [41] is a 2020 publication investigating a group of migrants who migrate to demonstrate their privilege over the residents where they migrate. Any related pity for these migrants might concern their lack of consideration for others. The fear associated with them is not regarding the potential loss of property or jobs, as it might be with other migrants. Instead, the fear related to them concerns their aim and ability to exploit members of the receiving country to take up employment that reduces their rights such that finding exploitable people and situations are the social services sought by this group. However, from the point of view of the native residents, social services should educate them to respect others and to use their wealth to benefit the receiving country rather than enhance their selfish motives. Yet, in contrast, these selfish motives may, in the long run, improve the lives of the exploited. Marriage of young Thai women to older Western men is an example. Although these marriages may initially start as exploitive, over the lifetime of the marriage, the wife gains increasing independence and opportunity [62]. This type of study may do much to reconceptualize the social services provided to older Western men wanting to migrate to Thailand for marriage—stressing how they can help their wives to independence earlier in their marriage.

3.4. Events

Migration drivers are associated with unexpected negative influences, such as environmental change, food insecurity, and violence [63]. Therefore, it is unusual to think of events as what migrants are heading towards. A 22 September 2024 Google Scholar search of “events to which migrants head in their migration” demonstrated the disparity between events as drivers and as draws for migration. Of the “about 16,900 results”, those appearing on the first few pages predominantly regard events as migration drivers. Yet, there are examples of events guiding migration in these returns. The first appears on page one, “Internal Migration and the Role of Intergenerational Family Ties and Life Events” [42]. The following relevant article appears as the third entry on page three, “Families in comparison: An individual-level comparison of life-course and family reconstructions between population and vital event registers” [43]. The third relevant article is from the middle of page four of the returns, “Defining and transforming local migration policies: a conceptual approach backed by evidence from Germany” [44]. Demonstrating how unusual it is to research events as a draw for migration, the final report under consideration did not return until page ten of the Google Scholar search, “Rapid Evolution of Refugee Policy in Poland: Russian Invasion of Ukraine as a Focusing Event” [45].

“Internal Migration and the Role of Intergenerational Family Ties and Life Events” [42] is a 2020 publication that stresses that life events can draw people to migration. These events can include the birth of a grandchild in influencing either the adult children or the grandparents to migrate. Other events that can trigger migration are separation from or the death of a spouse, with the remaining partner migrating to the home of another family member. These events initiate migration because they represent a period during life when needs are acute and resources are low. They are also associated with the giving and receiving of care. Regarding the social services relevant to these types of migrants, the argument is that these needs should be considered from the perspective of aging as a migrant [64]—as such, focusing on various events in the life trajectory as guiding migration.

“Families in comparison: An individual-level comparison of life-course and family reconstructions between population and vital event registers” [43], also published in 2020, examines events drawing migrants from a similar position to the first article. In this case, beyond birth, marriage is included as an event to initiate migration. Nevertheless, this paper focuses on life events registration rather than migration. There is little information provided on how life events draw people to migration. Other reports highlight the marriage event as a significant reason for people deciding to migrate, especially Asian migrants [65,66]. Little research is devoted to the experiences of women who relocate to their husbands’ countries but are not given citizenship rights [67]. The social services they might require concern providing legal advice regarding their citizenship [67].

“Defining and transforming local migration policies: a conceptual approach backed by evidence from Germany” [44] is a 2021 article that looks at a change in government policy as the draw to migrants—granting asylum to migrants being one of the most significant. The article stresses that when this occurs, social services require the coordination of volunteers, where the various municipalities decide if and how to engage with migrants. Relevant to making decisions regarding social services is the flow of population over time rather than the population size. Local migration development also influences local policies. Activities are stimulated in particular if the perception of migrants is a welcomed element of the local society. When changes to government policies encourage migration through the granting of asylum, research has noted that it does affect migration with the recognition rate, processing times, and the risk of repatriation shaping asylum flows [68].

“Rapid Evolution of Refugee Policy in Poland: Russian Invasion of Ukraine as a Focusing Event” [45] is the final return under consideration regarding events that draw people to migrate. This paper is the most recent publication of the four, published in 2023. The event was a positive change in refugee policy from the perspective of increasing migration in Poland as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Unlike the other articles considered regarding events, this report introduces the concept of a focusing event regarding migration—a sudden, shocking, unexpected, relatively uncommon, and attention-potential situation. The political changes that took place led to the creation of new evolutionary legal regulations for refugees from Ukraine—ones that would incline their migration to Poland. The paper notes that migrants from Ukraine have represented the largest

group of foreigners (mainly labor migrants) in this receiving country for years before these changes. Poland's desire to admit migrants primarily from culturally similar countries is the basis of this political change. Focusing events mobilize social services and developing a Transformative Refugee Service Experience Framework that draws on marketing, sociology, transformative service, and consumer research literature is seen to create hospitable service systems for these migrants [69].

3.5. Ideas

The conducting of a Google Scholar search of "ideas to which migrants head in their migration" took place on 22 September 2024, returning "about 16,800 results". The first relevant return occurred in the middle of page one—"A theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework" [46]. However, the pertinent return to follow did not appear until the second entry on the fourth page of returns—"Listening with displacement: Sound, citizenship, and disruptive representations of migration"[47]. The articles between these entries were regarding the meaning of migration, not the ideas to which migrants move. Page four also produced the third relevant return—"Onward migration and intra-European mobilities: A critical and theoretical overview" [48]. The final applicable article appeared on the sixth page as the third entry—"Vulnerability in the context of migration: A critical overview and a new conceptual model" [49].

The 2021 article "A theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework" [46], has as its primary concern developing a particular migration theory. Based on aspirations and capabilities, its focus is not the verb migrate. As such, it concerns other aspects of migration than migration divers. Still, this paper does not focus on the nouns migrants move toward. Instead, its similarity concerning a concentration on nouns is to self-reflection regarding migrant skills and where those skills are best applied concerning migration. Yet, as part of this theory development, the authors note that people migrate to search for the "good life"—why the paper mentions an idea to which people migrate. These authors relate that international migration is strongly associated with material and social success regarding their view of the good life such that many youth focus obsessively on leaving and that this 'culture of migration' has contributed to rapidly evolving ideas of the good life, contributing to increasing disaffection with traditional, agrarian lifestyles. However, simultaneously, there is another view of the good life as an idyllic rural life that some middle-class families seek [70]. As such, the types of social services acceptable to those who migrate based on an idea of the good life will depend on the vision of the good life held by these migrants concerning their view of flourishing [71].

"Listening with displacement: Sound, citizenship, and disruptive representations of migration"[47] is an innovative assessment of the importance of listening to the sounds of migration published in 2020. As part of this examination of sounds during migration, the authors point to the relevance of people migrating to locations where they believe they will be listened to so that the idea they seek in migrating is recognition within the noise of sounds. A 2019 paper discusses the appropriateness of developing narrative biographies of migrants to support this desire to be heard [72]. The value of this point of view is evident in the inclusion of the paper as a chapter in a 2022 book as part of a more general account of biographical research [73]. Listening to migrants is a significant feature of the social services that social workers engage in with migrants, as is apparent from the number of recent publications on this topic, including the need for cultural competence [74], presenting a unique challenge with unaccompanied minors [75].

"Onward migration and intra-European mobilities: A critical and theoretical overview" [48] is a 2021 publication that presents the idea of migrating that is considered evident in the literature—people migrate to improve their position in the labor market and increase their income [76]. However, the 2021 paper sees this idea of migrating as based on a myth, as migration generally does not realize the intended idea [77,78]. Given the disappointment migrants often encounter who move with the idea of a better job and making more money, the role of social services when this is the reason for migration is to provide migrants with realistic information concerning their job prospects as well as relevant contacts to help them become more likely to meet their expectations [79].

The final paper considering the noun "idea" of why people migrate is a 2024 publication, "Vulnerability in the context of migration: A critical overview and a new conceptual model" [49].

Although the intent of changing the focus of considering migrating from a verb to a noun is that, in doing so, the narrative changes from migrants representing those who are to be pitied and feared, the idea presented in this paper is that certain people migrate because they consider that they are vulnerable and need the support of humanitarian aid to achieve their migration goal. As such, these migrants consider their aim as a receiver of social services and, by this intent, they hope for pity on their arrival at their destination. Perhaps paradoxically, it is these migrants who are least likely to receive the social services they crave [80]. This result is especially so because they have unrealistic expectations regarding what to expect in migration, believing that everything will work out because of the supposed support they should receive in migrating [81].

4. Discussion

This discussion will focus on three things. The first is an analysis of Table 1 regarding what the results signify. The second concerns the mental health problems of migrants in considering migration as a verb and in what ways, based on the analysis of Table 1, an improvement in mental health in migrants can result by examining migration as a noun. Third, the provision of a theoretical foundation regarding the types of social services that can benefit migrants—ones interpreted from the analysis of those nouns in defining migration that improve migrant mental health. Lastly are the limitations of this study.

4.1. Nouns Regarding Migration

In representing the five types of nouns to which migrants head, based on the four relevant reports of a Google Scholar search returning with the highest rank, there are notable features of Table 1. The first is that none of the nouns are the same. This result is significant because it was unanticipated as the general understanding of what leads people to migrate is to be with family [30] or to obtain a better job at an increased salary [48]. Although family remains the most influential reason regarding OECD countries for migration [50](p. 286), and economic factors are additionally consequential [82], they are not the only reasons. What Table 1 shows is that various nouns distinguish what draws people to migration.

Also notable from Table 1 is that not all the types of nouns produce positive reasons for migrating. As such, not all would relate to the reason for focusing on nouns concerning realized self-direction by migrants. The bases of all the nouns associated with “ideas” are hopes and wishful thinking but not actual self-direction. Moreover, two nouns related to ideas are features of entirely other-directed people. When people migrate to be heard [47] or to have others provide them with aid [49], they do not consider that they have control over their lives and that others are required to look after them, as the stronger a person’s reliance on social assistance, the weaker their motivation to be self-directed because of a lesser tendency to develop a strong sense of self [83]. Two other nouns regarding persons also suggested that the migrant is other-directed in the migration rather than self-directed—those who migrate to find themselves as tolerated by others [32] and migrants returning to locate the younger version of their parents in the ancestral country [33]. The nouns associated with these two types of persons focus on others and not migrating with a strong sense of independence; however, unlike the nouns connected with “ideas”, mentioned above, it is not entirely clear that people migrating for these reasons are not self-directed. In wanting to find themselves as tolerated, they may merely want fair treatment, although this is difficult to differentiate from status-seeking regarding others [84]. In the second case, the sense of self that the migrant has developed may be tied intimately to the stories their parents related about their youth in the ancestral home [85]. Still, the possibility is that people migrating for either of these reasons do so because they are entirely other-directed [86], and, as such, these nouns are not relevant as ones demonstrating actual self-direction in migrants.

Although not as popular as migrating to be with family, the nouns associated with events are the most compelling regarding migrating for self-directed reasons. Each of the birth of a grandchild [42], marriage [43], a receiving country granting asylum [44], and a policy change by a government to improve the prospects of immigrants [45] provide the type of rational reasons that someone might

migrate. These reasons are rational because migrating produces more benefits than costs under these conditions [82]. This reasoning is in contrast to those who migrate for a thing. Although the decision to migrate may appear somewhat rational in migrating to obtain citizenship [30], get better internet coverage [31], become self-employed [32], or have the ability to display privilege over the native population [33], the reasons relate to hopes that may not be realized initially [87,88] or in the long run [89], or they may take many years to accomplish once at the destination [90]—producing a higher cost than benefit.

If the type of noun that is the focus is place, from the reports returned, it is difficult to claim that those who focus on a place in their migration are self-directed. The examples returned are people who migrate to the first place they arrive, staying in place [26], those who migrate to be part of a concentrated ghetto of others of the same nationality [27], people who migrate to be able to travel from place to place with no determined destination, remaining unsettled [28], and those who want to escape city life and move to the idealized tranquility of rural life [29]. To be self-directed, the migrant must have an achievable intent for which they have decided to work and take responsibility, even under changing circumstances [91]. Although a person migrating from city to country can be self-directed, wanting this transition more frequently is to reduce burnout [92].

One unique noun related to persons is migrating to find one's older self [31]. This aim may be entirely self-directed as a process of achieving wisdom [93], or it may be involuntary and part of the culture to which the migrant belongs in reaching adulthood [94]. Thus, knowing a person is migrating to achieve their future self is insufficient information to realize if they are self-directing in their migration.

This discussion demonstrates that not all nouns related to migration can be associated with self-direction regarding what or whom the person migrates towards, although the migrant may begin the migration process self-directed towards what they value. The finding is that only those migrating based on an event do so because of self-direction. Those who migrate based on an idea do not self-direct because they do not take responsibility for the outcome of the migration. Regarding those who migrate to persons, places, or things, it will depend on the particular noun to determine if the migration is self-directed

4.2. Mental Health of Migrants

In considering the most recent evidence concerning the mental health of migrants, the view is unanimous that there is a high prevalence of mental health disorders compared with native counterparts, mainly attributable to depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder [95–97], with much that goes undiagnosed [98]. These results are reliable, although there remains a lack of clarity over who is a migrant [99]. Yet, studies devoted to the mental health of migrants focus on the process of migration, beginning with pre-migration [100,101], the migration itself [102,103], and post-migration [101,104,105]. As such, migrate is considered as a verb. What is uninvestigated is the mental health of migrants with the examination of migration as a noun.

Of the five types of nouns, only one report appraises any regarding the mental health of migrants—a 2023 systematic review of the effect of place on their mental health [106]. Regarding the search conducted for this 2023 systematic review, nine returns of the 34 studies published since 2020 identify migration to a place regarding the mental health of migrants. Table 2 presents the relevant data from those nine studies.

Table 2. Citation numbers of articles considering the importance of place to the mental health of the migrant regarding the country, environment, the mental health issue, and the key findings. Based on Table 6 of [106], the creation of the table is by the author,.

Cit. #	Country	Environment	Mental Health Issue	Key Finding
[107]	Greece	Refugee camp vs. urban apartment	The Mental Component Scale of the Health-Related Quality-of-Life	Lower mental health in refugee camp/higher mental health in urban apartment

[108]	US and Canada	Urban	Post-traumatic stress symptoms	Interpersonal violence, discrimination, financial insecurity, housing instability, unsafe neighborhood
[109]	Germany	Rural	Wellbeing and place attachment	More social contact with local residents better mental health
[110]	Norway and Denmark	Rural	Stress and wellbeing	Harsh climate and short winter daylight stressful offset by social interaction with other refugees
[111]	US and Canada	Urban	Anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms	Discrimination worsened symptoms of all mental health outcomes
[112]	Canada	Urban	Resiliency and wellbeing	Living environment and access to natural space improved wellbeing
[113]	US and Canada	Urban	Anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms	Resettlement violence produces poor mental health outcomes
[114]	Australia	Rural	Wellbeing and health	Strong sense of safety but stress from lack of secure employment

The studies indicate that migrants to rural locations [109,110,114] are more likely to have positive mental health than urban migrants [111,113], but this is only if they have strong social connections [110], and are especially likely to experience poor mental health in urban areas without social connections [108] with the reason being the violence and discrimination they face. Yet, migrants are overburdened with mental health issues compared with urban dwellers if they have migrated to a refugee camp [107]. In all, this systematic review did not differentiate between migrants who have self-directed to their place in contrast to those who felt forced to migrate. Therefore, the extent of feeling a lack of control over their mental health condition is unclear. Making this differentiation is significant because self-directing their behavior in choosing where to migrate is a problem-focused form of coping—and problem-focused coping strategies are those reducing stress in migrant populations by directly addressing the problem [115].

4.3. Theoretical Foundation of Social Services Support for Migrant Mental Health

In the results provided concerning the various nouns found in the Google Scholar searches performed regarding the five types of nouns, relevant social services were mentioned. They were presented as unique to each noun and appeared without any theoretical foundation. This section indicates a valuable theoretical foundation that applies to the 1984 coping theory of Lazarus and Folkman [116]. What is significant is that in differentiating migration as a noun in contrast to a verb, there is an identification of why both problem-focused coping, directly addressing the problem, and emotion-focused coping, attending to the associated emotions, are successful for migrants. Problem-focused coping strategies are identified as more adaptive in controllable situations, while emotion-focused coping strategies are more adaptive in uncontrollable situations [117,118]. In conceptualizing migrate as a noun, the purpose was to identify those types of nouns to which or to whom people self-direct to migrate. The finding is that not all nouns relate to self-direction in migration. Through Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory, some nouns require problem-focused coping and others

emotion-focused coping strategies. The problem-focused coping results from the migration undertaken in a controllable situation. Emotion-focused coping concerns uncontrollable situations.

Regarding the Google Scholar search, only those migrants who self-direct to migrate because of an event (birth of a grandchild [35], marriage [36], the granting of asylum [37], or a government policy change [38]) are those who are in control of their situation. This result is not to say that all events can promote self-direction in migration. Only those events that permit rational problem-solving are those that involve self-direction. In this regard, not all cases of people migrating towards people are self-directed based on problem-focused coping. When the migrant heads to a person to find an individual that they have imagined (such as a future self [31], a non-discriminated-against self [32], or meeting younger versions of parents [33]), emotion-focused coping for improving mental health is more significant as the results of the migration are not controllable by the migrant. This lack of control is even more so if migrants head towards an idea that has sustained them, irrespective of the reality, as can be the case when migrants head towards the good life [39], being heard [40], a better job and pay [41], or to obtain aid by others [42]. In these situations, emotion-focused coping is what can produce positive mental health. Things to which migrants head also may be realistic or merely dreams. From the Google Scholar search, these things include obtaining citizenship [31], reliable internet service [32], self-employment [33], and being able to exercise white male privilege [34]. If obtainable, the migrant can be self-directed using problem-focused coping. When these things are outside their reach and directed by external forces, the mental health of the migrant is maintainable through emotion-focused coping. Involving place, as was seen in the previous section, whether the migrant self-directs to place, the defining feature of the mental health of the migrant is creating positive social connections. This result, although migrating to a climate very different from the country where the migration begins [110], can negatively impact mental health and necessitate emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping through self-directed behavior is found most likely in rural destinations [109,110,114] in comparison with urban, although urban destinations compare more favorably to refugee camps [107]. Yet, these findings cannot determine if problem-focused coping will result from migrants to a place. In each of the in-place migrations [27], migration to a ghetto [28], unsettled migration [29], and rural migration [30] returned in the Google Scholar search, none were self-directed migrations, although these nouns might have been. In each of these particular cases, emotion-focused coping maintained mental health rather than problem-focused.

Problem-focused and emotion-focused coping are the types of coping that have been found most relevant to positive mental health in migrants [119]. Regarding the variety of social services that are pertinent to problem-focused coping and those that concern emotion-focused coping, for those migrants who are self-directing their migration, it is the problem-focused coping that can help them. The types of social services that will aid them are reliable information available when and where the migrant needs it. Self-directed individuals are most likely to use online services to inform them [120]. Consequently, the direction of social services should be to create relevant online information for migrants regarding events and places and to maintain this information [121]. For those migrants who are heading to people, places, things, or ideas that may be in contrast to actuality, social services that are most relevant are those that permit the migrant to engage with emotion-focused coping [115]. Online resources remain most applicable for those who initially started as self-directed, but dissolution altered their coping from problem-focused to emotion-focused. These include counseling services through telehealth; however, accessing these services will depend on migrant readiness [122], personal resources [123], and on these migrants actively seeking help [124]. Strategic communication with migrants in these situations to promote positive mental health depends on a value basis congruent with that of the migrant [125] and related to conceptions of the good life for migrants [126].

4.4. Limitations

A limitation of this study is that in reconceptualizing migration as a noun from a verb to note the self-direction of migrants to a person, place, thing, event, or idea, this different perspective does not take into consideration those migrants who are forced from their homes by causes such as climate

change [127], war [128], natural disasters [129], sexual violence [130], gang violence [131], or disease [132]. The point of reconsidering migration as a noun rather than a verb is not to claim all migrants have a choice in where they go; it is to say that when considering it as a noun, migrants can have improved mental health from their noun-specific self-direction.

A second limitation is that the conducted search was neither a scoping nor a systematic review. These reviews would be required to follow Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines [133,134] and would have produced a more extensive range of reports regarding each type of noun. The review also concerned only Google Scholar, which has been found valuable for grey literature searches but not recommended for primary searches [27]. Google Scholar was selected rather than a review that follows PRISMA guidelines because the point was not to return as many reports that fit the inclusion criteria as possible. Instead, the purpose was to find the most searched articles related to any one of the nouns as representative of the five types of nouns. In this regard, Google Scholar is not only an acceptable database to search, it is the most appropriate one [135]. As a crawler-based search engine, it returns the most searched articles first [136]. Given that the purpose of the search was to identify these types of articles, there is no discrepancy in using Google Scholar for this search of the four most relevant articles related to each of the five types of nouns.

Conducting this study by one researcher is another limitation—cognitive bias [137] is a potential outcome. One way to counteract this bias is employing additional researchers to check results [138]. As this report is single-authored, there was no use of this method. What was employed is a version of the “SLOW” tool used for clinical accuracy [139,140]. This acronym follows a checking process: “Sure about that? What is lacking? what if the Opposite were true? Worst case scenario?” Conducting the Google Scholar search identified publications that relate to each of the five types of nouns to check the accuracy of whether migration is considerable as a noun regarding migrant self-direction. The purpose of the search was to locate some examples of each type of noun, not to do a meta-analysis of the findings. The information regarding each report returned is provided in the reference list with their synopsis provided in the results section, providing sufficient detail for anyone to check this author’s interpretation of the content of the studies selected. In this way, there is a facilitation of identifying possible cognitive bias. Determining what is lacking, each of the four included reports returned that identify migration as a noun was evaluated for self-direction in the migrants. The finding was that identifying migration as a noun sometimes does not result in migrant self-direction—other-direction becomes the outcome most often. In this case, where the outcome is the opposite, positive mental health can still result if the focus of social services is emotion-focused coping rather than problem-focused coping relevant to self-direction [141]. For the worst-case scenario, migration cannot be considered a noun—particularly, resulting from forced migration. In this case, the expectation is that the social services provided do not extend beyond pity and may include fear of the migrant.

A fourth limitation is the selection of the Lazarus and Folkman coping theory [116]. There are several coping theories [142–146]. However, there is a consideration of no others. The reason for choosing the Lazarus and Folkman version of coping theory is that these authors have provided good reasons why coping must involve a process that changes with circumstances. This view is in contrast to other coping theories that consider coping trait-based. That migrants can start as self-directed, depending on problem-focused coping, but resulting from disappointments faced in the migration, they need to readjust their coping to emotion-focused is a reason for the choice of the coping theory of Lazarus and Folkman. The Lazarus and Folkman version of coping theory supports such coping modification and is anticipated and incorporated into it.

Concerning the interpretation of the Lazarus and Folkman coping theory, it is a limitation that the account offered here concerns only two forms of coping—problem-focused and emotion-focused. Several other forms remain unmentioned [116]—this is not an oversight. This study was to concentrate on the aspects of this coping theory that produce positive mental health in migrants. The finding is that only problem-focused and emotion-focused coping behaviors produce positive mental health in migrants [119]. It is for this reason that there was no consideration of other forms.

5. Conclusions

In considering migration as a verb, those who migrate lack control of the process. This understanding of the meaning of the term encourages social service providers to pity migrants and possibly fear them. These views decrease the mental health of migrants as a result. If, in contrast, migration is considered a noun, the view of them can be as self-directed in their choice of destination and the social services with which they engage. As such, they can maintain their mental health.

This study has investigated the range of nouns to which (or to whom) people can migrate. In doing so, the identification is that not all nouns produce self-directed behavior. For those that do, problem-focused coping leads migrants to search out appropriate social services—preferably online. With those nouns that result in other-directed behavior, the migrant can maintain positive mental health by initiating emotion-focused coping. It is also the case that a migrant may start with problem-focused coping, only to take up emotion-focused coping if their expectations are unmet in the migration. For social service providers, the relevant role is to provide reliable and current information regarding the noun in question. This approach contrasts with expressing pity or assuming a fearful attitude toward migrants.

Reconsidering migration from a verb to a noun is novel. Consequently, there is no other research on this topic. Suggested future research would involve having social service providers survey the type of noun that has led an individual to migrate and then adapting the social service offered to that noun. The concentration would be on relevant and well-maintained online services. The further intention would be to (1) investigate if the migrants were self-directed and then to use problem-focused coping, or, if other-directed, relying on emotion-focused coping, and (2) to study if with either of these two means of coping the migrant is successful in maintaining positive mental health as earlier research has suggested. With research of this kind, there is the possibility of improving migrant mental health and breaking the current theoretical impasse of migration studies.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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