

International Male Migration and Its Impact on Education of Children and Wives Left Behind: Evidence from Punjab Pakistan

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Abstract

It is observed that international migration is a growing phenomenon and has got considerable attention. It has profound effects on the source countries. In the present study, an effort has been made to identify the possible impact of migration on families left behind, with special focus on children's education and females. Migration of labor mobility affects the education of the family members in many ways *i.e.* remittance enables the migrant families to spend more amount on education, many problems faced by the wives of migrant left behind regarding the education of their children and work load. In-depth interviews were conducted from the respondents for the collection of data. The preliminary findings of the study show that emigration has left deep social-economic impacts on life standards of families left behind in Gujrat.

Keywords

Migration, Education, Remittance, Pakistan

1. Introduction

Unemployment and lack of opportunities are encouraging the workforce to explore the employment opportunities outside the national border. Development scholars consider migration in positive sense for development, and according to World Bank estimation, remittance was 283 billion US dollar worldwide. Pakistan is also one of those countries whose main source is income of remittance having been sent by Pakistani migrants living in foreign countries [1]. Pakistan experienced large scale labor migration during 1975 to 1982, especially the Middle East which were experiencing rapid economic growth. Half of people who migrated worked in production sector

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[2]. A significant increase in income of the household of migrants was observed [3]. “The United Nations in its Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1, defines a migrant as any person who changes his or her country of usual residence”. Pakistani migrant has been continuously sending remittance to their families. Pakistan became the fifth largest remittance-recipient nation in the developing world in 2011. Afsar [4] after making research on student’s enrollment concluded that school enrolment rates were higher among migrants’ families in the rural areas than the non-migrants of Bangladesh. This remittance has a significant effect on education of the family members left behind, as a study conducted in Philippine indicated that remittance had increased the investment in the education of children of migrants [5]. Later on studies conducted in Guatemala and Nepal [6] confirmed the significantly positive effect of remittance in the migrant’s children education. But a survey of Mexican household showed the negative effect of migration on the education of migrant’s children [7]. The research of Giannelli and Mangiavacchi [8] conducted in Albania also confirmed the negative impact of parental migration on school attendance for children who were left behind. Migration is of two types: one is migration with in national boarder and the other is international migration. The current study has just focused on international migration. “In addition, the education of the migrant also serves as a proxy for the investment which the migrant’s parents have made in the migrant (both in terms of cost and effort). Therefore, the implicit family loan theory [9] hypothesizes that migrants with higher level of education send higher remittances to repay parents’ investments in their education. Research showed that international migration is positive, as with the increase of remittance, more budget is becoming available for education, which decreases the children usage as labor, and there is a positive impact on health of children. There are many factors which affect the migration decision, which include education level, prescriptive gender role and social class.

It was observed in a research conducted in UK, India and China that due to male’s migration, wives faced many problems including emotional disturbance, lack of guidance and loneliness. Shahnaz and Khan [10] conducted a survey from the migrants and non-migrants households in tehsil Kharian Punjab Pakistan in order to investigate the impact of male’s migration on the work load of females left behind. It was observed that the main reason of migration was financial and after male’s migration females had to take all the responsibilities of households and they were independent to utilize remittance sent to them by their male migrants. But Chee [11] observed in his research that due to migration marital status was also disturbed between couples, as some couples experienced emotional distances, conflict and even some led to divorce and permanent separation [12].

The core objective of the present study is to unearth the socio-economic condition of the migrant’s household and possible effects of the male’s migration on their spouse and children.

2. Materials and Methods

In this study qualitative technique was used to gather and interpret the data. In order to achieve the objectives of the study; researcher had conducted in-depth interviews from the wives of the 12 migrants in district Mandi Bahauddin in Punjab province of Pakistan. The purposive and convenient sampling techniques were used for the selection of the respondents because there was no sampling frame was available to the researcher. The key informants (respondents) of the study were the wives of migrants who were the residual of District Mandi Bahauddin. A semi structured interview schedule was used. The authors had used successfully this technique in different researches [13]. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.

3. Empirical Findings of the Study

In most of cases Migration has effected positively the education of children who are left behind. Migration also make migrant families more broad minded as in some families there was no concept of girl’s education, but after migration they become start educating their girls. As it was observed that in most of cases, migrants want their children to be educated even if they themselves uneducated. But their absence has caused many psychological problems in their children. Especially those families where no man available to look after, after migration of father, children become less confident, also some children faces sort of inferiority complex. They hesitate to talk with new people. Those migrant who have technical skills want their children to complete their education in technical field rather than general education.

It was observed that education level of the wives of migrants play very important role in education of the children, those mothers who have higher education, their children are also good in education and these educated mother are better able to cope the educational issue of the children in the absence their father and also their

children suffer from less psychological problems. Education makes them to take better decisions regarding the education of their children and to make them better teach their children to be more confident. Research findings relate with the study conducted by university of Punjab also pointed that mother's educational level has significant influence on the children's personality; mother with higher education is more likely to have extroverted children and this relationship become stronger in the absence of father. So model can be drawn like this:



It was observed that overall migration has positive effect on the financial condition of the household. Almost all families were financially in better position after migration of their family member who continuously sending remittance to the family left behind. Those migrant who were skilled worker or had business were in better position than who were in labor in foreign countries.

Migrant's wives face many problems in the absence of their husband. Many new responsibilities add to their already tough life. They feel loneliness and anxiety as few migrant visit their families after long time. In the absence of their husbands wives have to look after all the educational activities of their children, need to visit schools, shopping and family visits. They face problem of mobility. Mothers face difficulties to control their boy children who were in higher classes especially if no male family member is available to look after them. Uneducated women face difficulty in communicating with their husband due to lack of IT skill and high charges on International on mobile and landline. Some wives have to live alone with their children which cause in them feeling of fear. Although some wives who live with their laws feel secure but they have to face some teasing and annoying behaviors of their in laws. They face difficulty in maintaining personal life and relations with in laws. Some wives have to face sexual harassment from their relatives in the absence of husband. Mothers also face difficulty in saving their children from bad company and negative effect of the society.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This article reviewed the impact of migration on family members left behind, with a focus on those most dependent on the migrant for support on his children and spouse. Separation leads to several problems especially when separation between husband and wife is for a long period. In a society where usually men do all outside work and women are supposed to manage only the household jobs, the responsibilities in terms of doing things independently is something which is not familiar to the women. However difficult the task may be, getting it done by both husband and wife, who enjoy the success or accept the failure together and be a source of support and console to each other, is the beauty of married life, something which is missing from these separated couples. Migration of the spouse to faraway places for some years puts the women in a perplexed and alien condition where they need lots of supports and help from the families and society. In many cases the women find it difficult to get adjusted to such a condition where they will have to struggle a lot not only physically but also psychologically.

It is evident from the findings of the study that economic remittances from their working abroad fathers are enabling the children to have better education as a majority of them are studying in private English medium schools. Due to the absence of their fathers at home, children have become self-reliant, independent and courageous. At the same time, children do feel less confident, insecure, lonely and over and less protected.

A majority of the children feel that their families are incomplete and their mothers are overprotective towards them. They feel very happy when their fathers come back home. Most of the children communicate with their fathers through telephone and internet etc.

It was also observed that wives of the migrants also have some positive and negative impacts of their husband migration. Due to the remittances sent by their husbands, the economic conditions of the households have been improved. The females are more empowered as compared to the situation before the migration of their husbands. But on the other hand they have to be more responsible than before as they have to play the role of their husbands in some cases.

Overall, migration has a positive effect on the education of the children left behind but in some cases absence of father can cause negative things in the personality of the children. The economic conditions of the respon-

dents have been improved after the migration of their male member. The absence of male member causes other issues like: females have to play double roles in the absence of their husbands; they also have to face loneliness and stress in the absence of their husbands.

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