

EFFECTS OF PATERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION ON LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN IN DISTRICT BAJAUR: GUARDIAN PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of father labor migration on the children who are left behind. Migration can lead to economic prosperity, but it also causes the departure of cultural and traditional family members, ultimately impacting the lives of those who remain, especially children. The primary aim of this study is to examine the effects of paternal labor mobility on the children who are affected by it. The study employed the qualitative method of inquiry. The data collection using the snowball sampling technique. The study was done in the tehsil of Khar, located in the Bajaur district. The statistics were gathered from the caretakers of the children who were left behind. Conducted were semi-structured interviews. The data was analyzed using the thematic data analysis technique. The study revealed that offspring of migrants had enhanced health and educational prospects. There is a positive correlation between budget allocations for health and education and migration. Nevertheless, the children who are abandoned are deeply influenced by their want for their father's safeguarding, which becomes ingrained in their characters. Likewise, women hold the belief that they are financially stable, however they also encounter emotional strain, isolation, and melancholy. The study aims to aid stakeholders and policymakers in formulating evidence-based social policies that mitigate the adverse impacts of migration on children who are left behind.

Keywords: Left-behind children's, labour migration, Bajaur, rural area, remittances.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a widespread occurrence that consistently contributes significantly to the creation of new opportunities in various sectors in both emerging and established nations. As per the World Migration Report 2022, over 281 million individuals, which accounts for 3.5 percent of the global population, reside in countries other than their birthplace. Out of these migrants, 169 million, or 63.5 percent, have relocated mostly for employment reasons. Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world. Pakistan possesses a labor force of 61.7 million, making it the second largest labor supplier in the area. Approximately 12 million Pakistanis are employed overseas, making a significant contribution to the stability of the economy through remittances. Pakistani migrant workers constitute 53 percent of the labor migrant population in Saudi Arabia, making it the primary destination country for them (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou 2022).

The root causes of international and national labor mobility are poverty and a dearth of employment possibilities. Individuals residing in underdeveloped countries have the belief that migration possesses a mystical ability to resolve all their economic challenges (Mahmood 2010). Individuals residing in underdeveloped nations have the belief that they might alleviate their circumstances of poverty and unemployment by the act of migration. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the advantages, migration incurs substantial expenses. Most Pakistanis suffer from a lack of education and

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consequently emigrate to foreign nations, which prevents them from being able to bring their family along. Migration is not a concrete occurrence, but rather a challenging experience that causes suffering for the entire family. So, migration doesn't just affect the migrant life rather it influences the existing example of the family and local area (Tasleem et al. 2021; Saeed & Griffin 2019). Most study has mostly concentrated on the impact of migration on community development, specifically examining remittances as a possible catalyst for both local and national progress. Insufficient research has been conducted regarding the concerns surrounding left-behind children and their overall welfare. The impact of paternal absence on children's academic achievement, physical well-being, mental health illnesses, and feelings of isolation within their native nation has received limited research attention (Ali et al., 2022; Mushtaq, Gul, and Muhammad Tahir Khalily, 2022). Nevertheless, there exists an abundance of scholarly works that explore the ways in which migration positively impacts community development, as well as the role of remittances in alleviating financial limitations within households. Consequently, the predominant and renowned discussion on international migration prioritizes the challenges associated with movement, while giving less importance to the well-being of the families left behind. Given that labor migrants predominantly originate from developing countries, existing research primarily focuses on attributing movement to remittances. However, the consequences of migration on the children who remain in their home countries have only recently become a subject of investigation (Rafiq, Saeed, and Israr 2022; Harbison 1981). The orientation and extent of migration have been the topic of extensive deliberations, although remain incompletely comprehended. Hence, to get a more profound understanding of the children's encounters linked to migration, it is imperative to give undivided attention to those who have been abandoned (Xiao and Liu 2022). Literature on the impact of migration on children who are left behind focuses exclusively on health, ignoring the difficulties they encounter in the absence of the father. Due to the significant societal burden associated with migration on individuals who remain in their home country, it is crucial to perform study on the response of children who are left behind because of labour migration (Lu et al., 2020).

There has been a rise in the trend of labor migration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2021. Bajaur is a recently incorporated district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. It is situated in the northwestern part of the province and shares a border with Afghanistan's Kunar province. The prevalence of the joint family arrangement is widespread in the area. The majority of the district's population is illiterate due to the absence of adequate resources and the unstable security situation that has persisted for the past ten years. Similarly, a substantial share of the male population is labour migrants, and their greatest destination place is Saudi Arabia (Kpboit 2010). The district's population, as of the 2017 census, is 1.2 million. Over 60,000 individuals have engaged in labor migration, leaving their home country for employment opportunities. This district ranks sixth among the top ten districts with significant labor migration trends in 2022, as reported in the World Migration Report.

Objective and research question

Parents especially father play a significant role in shaping the attitudes and behavior of their children. The main objective of the study is to investigate the impacts of paternal labour migration on the lives of left-behind children in the district Bajaur of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The principal research question which leads this study is "How the paternal labour migration affects the social lives of left-behind children in district Bajaur?"

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parents play a key role in the lives of their children, and any migration can have a significant impact on the children who remain in their home country. Migration leads to an increase in the amount of money that households may invest towards child education and health. This, in turn, reduces child labor and increases school enrollment (Antman 2012). The movement of males leads to the father's absence, which can adversely affect a child's school attendance and academic performance, so counteracting the beneficial consequences of migration. Migration has a favorable impact on the expenses related to education and healthcare for children who are left behind in Moldova (Yang 2008). Given the vital role that dads play in the lives of their children, their absence in Albania has a detrimental effect on their children's school attendance (Yu 2022). Hence, parental relocation might detrimentally affect the education, conduct, and overall welfare of the children who are left behind. Similarly, children from migrant backgrounds exhibit lower educational expectations compared to children who are not from migrant backgrounds (Alcaraz, Chiquiar, and Salcedo 2012). This aligns with the observation that the

enrollment rate in migrant homes is greater than in non-migrant households up to the matric level. However, the situation is reversed above the matric level, with higher enrollment in non-migrant households. Nevertheless, the results of Liang and Chen's study (2007) are remarkably unique. A study revealed that the scholastic achievement of children whose father is a labor migrant remains unaffected by migration. By doing a comparative analysis of the academic performance of migrant children and non-migrant children, he refutes the premise that migration has an impact on grades. The exodus of adults has a detrimental effect on the educational achievements of children in rural China. Conversely, remittances foster the growth of human capital within the migrant's home. Yang's research indicates that migration leads to beneficial increases in income, which in turn contribute to the development of human capital in the country of origin.

Remittances enable improved access to educational and health facilities for children of migrants, leading to a rise in both enrolment and attendance. According to Bennett, Clifford, and Falkingham (2012), there is a positive correlation between long-term migration and school enrolment in Tajikistan. Consequently, individuals allocate their remittances towards immediate expenses rather than prioritizing additional investments in their children's education and fulfilling household requirements. In Pakistan, in households where there are no male members, the woman assumes the role of the family head. Nevertheless, she neglected to prioritize the education of her female child due to her heightened protectiveness towards her male sibling, resulting in a greater allocation of resources towards his schooling.

According to Alcaraz, Chiquiar, and Salcedo (2012), Mexico's low infant mortality rate and high birth weight highlight the favorable correlation between migration and children's health. Liang and Chen (2007) discovered a positive correlation between remittances and nutritional status in Ecuadorian children, specifically in terms of weight for height and age, both in the short and long term. Remittances contributed to an increase of about 80 percent in people's standard of living, however only 20 percent was allocated towards productive projects. The remittances also provided help for the health and education of children. Migration has a beneficial impact on children who remain in their home country, as it leads to increased financial resources being allocated towards their education and healthcare. Yu (2022) argues that father relocation disrupts family structure and negatively impacts the emotional and psychological well-being of abandoned children. Offspring of migrants have a higher probability of experiencing mistreatment, dishonesty, and aggression.

Theoretical Lens: Multidimensional Approach to Development

It is necessary to precisely define what development means in order to comprehend how migration affects development and left behind. The development concept typically disregards social, political, and cultural factors in favour of income. Meaning of advancement makes serious vagueness that impedes significant speculation. Migration is, without a doubt, a result of both the countries' economic, social, cultural, and political transformations. Policymakers frequently overlook the socio-cultural, and psycho-political psychological, cultural, and political effects of migration on those who are left behind in favour of remittances for economic development. Both tangible and intangible indicators, such as health, education, and psychological well-being, can be used to measure well-being. By looking at development as well-being, we can learn about the many ways that migration affects the lives of those who stay behind. In addition, it enables us to calculate the impact of migration on relatives who have remained behind using a benchmark that is somewhat less arbitrary.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We used the qualitative research inquiry in this study. Creswell and Miller (2000) say that qualitative inquiry is appropriate when little is known about the phenomenon and the subject needs to be investigated. The reason of choosing qualitative research methodology is to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study in the study locale. Snowball sampling technique has been used for the selection of population for the study. The snowball sampling technique. The snowball sampling technique was continued till we reach the data saturation point. We have conducted total 10 interviews of guardians (mostly mothers) of the left behind children's. During the data collection in interviews, my sister Chandni was along with me, because of the cultural values of the study locale. In Pashtun culture men are not allowed to talk with women of others, it is considered a deviation from cultural values and norms. In the first phase of the data collection, Chandni went to the respondent's

homes, to convince the respondents to interview, and then the researcher had gone for an interview and take the interview in front of his sister. The study has been conducted in tehsil Khar of district Bajaur. We chose Tehsil Khar for two reasons in order to obtain in-depth qualitative data on the impact of male migration on children's who remain behind.

1: Male migration is extremely high.

2: Being native of the tehsil Khar, I can easily approach to the research subjects.

The carefully chosen sample is made up of children's whose fathers have been abroad for at least two years and the guardians mostly the mothers who have been look after these children's. This study used face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. For the participant's convenience, the interviews were conducted in Pashto, taped with their consent, and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Each interview was translated and transcribed at the conclusion. Transcripts were sent to the participants for checking (member checking) to ensure that they accurately reflect the participants' interpretations. This increases the validity of interview data. Codes were used to keep the participant's identity a secret. We used a case study approach to examine how and why a phenomenon occurs in the community and who is a part of it. According to Berg (2007), the case study method aids in the collection of extensive qualitative data on a particular phenomenon in a particular setting. In this study, there are two primary research question:

“How does paternal migration impact the social well-being of children who are left behind?”

Different sub questions were posed to obtain responses to this major question.

Thematic data analysis was used for the analysis of the collected data. In the first phase the interviews were transcribed then the transcribed data were coded. The similar coded data were clubbed together, and themes were generated from the data.

RESULTS

Findings and discussion

The following themes were emerged from the collected data after applying the thematic data analysis technique.

Understanding the wellbeing of children's

Using tangible indicators like budget allocations for children's education and health and intangible indicators like the emotions and psychology of children left behind, the theoretical lens of the multidimensional approach to development is used to explain the well-being of children. A multidimensional approach to development is useful for analyzing the impact of male migration on the well-being of families left behind (Rodolfo 2010). According to the interview data, parents see their children's health and education as investments in their children's well-being. Every participant is aware of the significance of education in enhancing children's well-being. It also suggests that decisions regarding investments in children's education should take personal and cultural perspectives into account. Peer learning in private schools and collages is generally regarded as superior to public schooling in Pakistan. Because of this, the migrant families in Pakistan are financially secure and send their children to private schools. According to one participant,

"My children are learning in private schools, where expenditures are really huge, so when my husband sends remittances, I feel that remittances are more than enough for our needs." However, "after paying the school fees, tuition fee, van charges, and daily pocket money, I left with very little money for my other household requirements (R10 and R3),"

She stated.

"My children are learning in private schools, where expenditures are really huge."

The data show that children's educational requirements influence household spending decisions. The family prioritizes the education of its children and devotes the majority of its budget to meeting their educational needs. According to Bennett, Clifford, and Falkingham (2012), households allocate more money to their children's education after a certain amount of time has passed since migration. Yang (2008) examined the fact that migration improves the economic status of the family that is left behind and gives children in migrant household's better access to health and education facilities. In addition, some wives are under the impression that their husband lacked the necessary skills to land a job in Pakistan, which results in family disintegration. As a result, women are giving their children the opportunities they need to avoid being separated from them in the future.

Educational Performance

One participant expressed her feelings in the following manner regarding how migration affects the school performance of the migrant's children:

“Yes, my older son doesn't go to college often, and he started loitering and hanging out with bad people; His academic performance is also not up to par. He frequently causes me difficulties. Now I've asked my husband to close your business and return to Pakistan to properly check on his older son (R1)”

The participant believes that the presence of his father can influence his older son's behavior in a positive way. According to Giannelli and Mangiavacchi (2010), father absence has a negative impact on children's school attendance in Albania because fathers play a crucial role in their children's lives, affecting their grades and performance. Nie (2022), and Yu (2022) state that while non-migrant households have a lower enrolment ratio above the matriculation level, migrant households have a higher enrolment ratio below it.

Children's Health and Paternal Migration

Remittances are regarded as a reliable source of financial support; there are typically two types of effects that remittances have on a household's well-being. First, remittances have a short-term effect of increasing consumption and reducing poverty, while long-term effects include investing in education and improving health. Some women stated that their children's height and weight are superior to those of their peers in their age group. Additionally, previous research demonstrates a positive correlation between children's health and migration. According to José-Ignacio Antén (2018), Ecuadorian children's weight for height and age are positively correlated with remittances and their nutritional status improves both in the short term and in the long term. In this regard, another participant stated:

“My children are taller and heavier than their peers their age. My daughter's weight and height, in particular, are much better than those of her peers her age (R4), and they both appear more mature (R9).”

The results of the interviews show that having no father has a positive effect on a girl's health. Similar findings were discovered by Mansuri (2006) in Pakistan. She stated that migration provides Pakistani girls with better health opportunities and discovered that girls from migrant families are taller than girls from non-migrant families. Remittances have a positive impact on child health because they make it easy to get health care (Chimhowu 2003).

Absence of Father Love

Children's emotions and actions are significantly influenced by family structure, parental care, and discipline. Migrant children are raised by single parents, so the lack of parental care may have a significant social impact. The children left behind may experience psychological insecurity as a result of men's absence. A study found that children experience feelings of sadness and insecurity when their father is absent. In the following ways, one participant expressed her emotions:

“My children's behavior is very cool and calm when my husband visits us; during this time, they play with the children of neighbours and show them the things that their father brings for them from overseas. However, my children become agitated when my husband returns to the United States, and my son occasionally calls his father while crying. Despite the fact that they talk with the dad day to day and at some point they request from their dad to return Pakistan (R4-R2)”

According to the data, children's personalities change positively when their fathers are present, whereas when fathers are absent, there are psychological gaps that can become problematic in the near future. As one of my participants explained, the absence of a father can sometimes lead to health issues for the children left behind:

“My daughter became ill when my husband moved away, and she was uncomfortable inhaling. At first, I thought she had an allergy, but when we went to the doctor, he told us that she was basically missing her father and that the separation from him had put stress on her mental health, making it difficult for her to breathe (R5)”

The data show that the father's migration had a negative impact on the children's emotions and psychology. The emotional stress and mental anguish may harm the child's personality as a whole and cause certain gaps. According to Alcaraz, Chiquiar, and Salcedo (2012), migration deforms the emotional and psychological development of children who are left behind and destroys the family structure.

Changes in children personality

In a similar vein, children whose fathers have immigrated may have additional household responsibilities. When compared to their peers their age, they adopt a mentality that is more responsible and sensible. As participants described:

“My older son is in charge of everything that has to do with his younger brothers' education and health, and in the absence of their father, my children become more responsible (R2, R4, and R6)”.

According to interview data. In our culture, the father's role is similar to that of an umbrella; children who are left behind become pessimistic, shy, and silent when their father is absent (Lu, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Migration has a number of effects on a family's socioeconomic status, the development of human capital, and the emotions and psychology of children's who are left behind. There are two types of consequences for the children's left behind. One is positive, such as an improvement in quality of life, an increase in household income, and increased access to a wider range of goods and services; the other is negative, such as the sense of insecurity and loneliness felt by children and women. This study also shows that migration improves the family's and children's left-behind socioeconomic situation by giving them better access to life's luxuries and comforts. Additionally, male migrants particularly fathers make all significant decisions regarding the health and education of their children. Despite the fact that he is living in another country, he is in charge of all family matters via phone and the Internet. Both a married woman and a migrant husband have limited freedom and autonomy when it comes to making decisions. In a similar vein, research reveals that women are dissatisfied with how their children are raised. It has also been observed that when a man is not present, women must rely on other male members of their extended family to advance in society. Additionally, she and her children are experiencing emotional disturbance, loneliness, and sadness.

Limitation and future research directions

The study uses a small sample of ten wives from the Khar tehsil of district Bajaur. The researcher's ability to interpret interview data and recognize emerging themes are critical to the study's validity. The study only focuses on the male migrated family; however, more interesting themes can be discovered by including non-migrant household members in the research. In addition, the children whose father has left the country were the focus of this study. In the not-too-distant future, researchers may investigate how parental (father and mother) migration may impact the well-being of children who are left behind. Additionally, an ethnographic study should be done to know the perspectives of the people to labour migration in district Bajaur.

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