

The Role of Fathers' Overseas Migration in Educational Performance of Female Children in Sindh, Pakistan

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Abstract

The process of out-migration has significantly been associated with the welfare of the households at origin across the world. The process of migration is mainly initiated from Pakistan with a prime objective to elevate the social position as there are only a few opportunities left for the people to work and earn for livings. The overall size of international migrants from Sindh province is a handful (approximately .9 million) and the majority of these migrants moved to the Gulf region but some also moved to the rest of the world particularly in Europe and the US. The impact of migration can be seen on many aspects of households of migrants but for the current research, it is focused only on female children's education in the case of Khairpur (Mir's) district in the province of Sindh, Pakistan. The selection of the respondents was made by using purposive sampling technique. The data was collected from 120 households of migrants who at least had one member living abroad and sending remittances regularly. The focus of the current research was on two major aspects; (a) out-migration and inflow of remittances and (b) educational outcomes of the female children studying at primary school level. It is perceived that migration of father and subsequently the inflow of remittances can make a huge difference for the educational outcomes of female children. In some cases, the inflow of remittances leads toward the improvement in the educational performance of the female children.

Keywords: Female Education, Overseas Migration, Pakistan, Remittances, Sindh

Introduction

International migration and inflow of remittances has widely been studied to weigh the impacts on households at origin. There were more than 252 million migrants across the world during 2017 (World Bank, 2017) but this size has increased to 272 million (IOM, 2019:2). The size of Overseas Pakistanis has also raised since the last three decades (Khan, 2017). Now more than 10.6 million Pakistanis are living abroad under the category of registered migrants as per the recent statistics shown by the Government of Pakistan (BE&OE, 2020). The overseas Pakistanis are contributing their households at home with continued transfers of remittances and this year they have sent about \$21 billion (IOM, 2019:36). Remittances for Pakistan makes roughly about 7 percent of the country's GDP (IOM, 2019:77). The transfers of remittances are used for multiple purposes in Pakistan but most of its part is allocated to the non-productive activities (Khan *et al.*, 2009). Normally households of migrants allocate remittances for the household accessories, luxuries, household welfare, investment in the existing businesses, the establishment of new businesses, for land-related investments, construction of houses (in some cases very big bungalows-those remained vacant though) and jewellery, etc.

The process of international migration from British India – currently a part of Pakistan-started during the 1930s when some people, who were associated with the boat-making industry, found some opportunities to move to the UK (Hasan & Raza, 2011). During this era, several migrants mainly originated from Mirpur, Jhelum, Attock and other regions of upper Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) moved to England to find odd jobs mainly at the seashores and later on they switched to the mills in various cities in England (Ahmad, 2015). They started working on the variant jobs at the seashores like fire stokes, loaders, and sweepers and later on started to call upon their relatives and friends from the country of origin (Ballard, 1987). This outflow of migration from

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present-day Pakistan continued during the 1940s and 1950s but the size was limited to only some thousands (Khan, 2017). During the 1950s the migrants expanded their labor destinations from England to other parts of Europe and established in reasonably good numbers in Germany, Spain, and France. During the 1960s the size of international migrants from Pakistan increased as they started exploring other parts of the world as well.

Some migrants from Pakistan also moved to Norway during the 1960s where Norwegian people thought that they are kind of seasonal/temporary migrants and hopefully will return to their country of origin after spending a short time but that has never happened in this case (Hetland, 2010). These Pakistanis not only settled there permanently but they also paved a way for their close-relatives (*rishtadar*) through the process of family reunification (Khan *et al.*, 2012; Hetland, 2010). In addition to Norway, a reasonable stock of Pakistanis also moved to Middle-East with a boom in the oil economy. During this time a huge bulk of Pakistanis moved to the Middle-East to pursue jobs under three major categories, a) skilled workers, b) semi-skilled workers, and unskilled workers (Addleton, 1992). During 1970, this outflow of international migration not only continued to the Middle-East and some parts of Europe but at the same time it further expanded to Australia, Canada, and the United States of America (Gazdar, 2003). The recent trends of international migration are varying as compared to the previous decades. More than eighty percent of Overseas Pakistanis are presently inhabiting the Gulf region especially in Saudi Arabia (BE&OE, 2019).

The impact of international migration has widely been studied in the context of its impact on the children's education while staying in the country of origin. Researchers find it compelling about the effects of migration on the education of such children. This understanding has mainly been divided into two major streams, the first one identifies the positive effects for the education of children through the increased economic resources which consequently make it possible for the households to spend more on education. The second one stresses on that the migration could have some adverse impacts for the educational achievement of the children, as the increase in the economic resources doesn't ensure the possibilities of improving educational achievements, rather than these children could be spoiled by becoming truant and deteriorating time and economic resources with peers.

Review of Literature

In the recent past, Pakistan has made tangible efforts to curb the issue of illiteracy. Despite continued efforts made in this regard and the increased budget allocations for education but the results are still not up to the mark across all provinces. Although some provinces have performed better in this regard but the Sindh province has shown some inconsistency in the literacy levels in the recent past (Pakistan Today, 2019). In comparison to other provinces, the literacy levels have reduced from 63 to 62.2 percent in Sindh (Government of Pakistan, 2019: xii). There are several reasons which lead to an increase in school dropout and a reduction in the school enrolment of female children in Sindh. Among others, poverty, school distance, parents' lesser interests, non-availability of school teachers, parents' insecurities (particularly, for female children) are the major reasons (Alif Ailan, 2019; Pakistan Today, 2019). In such a scenario, father out-migration could be one major factor that may lead to the change in the possibility for female children to get the objectives of education done.

The role of foreign remittances has been explored by several researchers across the globe. The findings of such studies are normally divided into two major groups. The first group favours the role of foreign remittances in improving the education-related activities (a. improves enrolment, b. raises attendance, and c. improves the academic performances) of the children in households of migrants at origin (Acosta, 2006:16; Acosta, 2011:920; Alcaraz *et al.*, 2012:156; Cox-Edwards & Ureta, 2003:456; Funkhouser, 1992:1212; Hanson & Woodruff, 2003:24; López-Cordóva, 2005:217; Yang, 2004:29; Yang, 2008:593). Contrary to this some researchers have the opposite findings. In their perspectives, the out-migration of parents and subsequently the inflow of remittances could have the adverse effects on the educational achievements of children (Antman, 2011:200; Cortes, 2015:64; Gibson & McKenzie, 2011:107; Giannelli & Mangiavacchi, 2010:80; Jampaklay, 2006:93, 107; McKenzie & Rapoport, 2011:1331). They maintained that since one of the parents is absent from the home in such a case the element of supervision lacks substantially and it might increase the chances that these children may involve in non-academic activities.

International migration has become one of the cross-cutting issues in the current age of globalization. The total size of international migrants has reached 272 million (IOM, 2019:2) with an

overall size of foreign remittances received by only developing countries reaches to \$444 billion (World Bank 2017:v). The total size of overseas Pakistanis has reached 10.6 million (BE&OE, 2020) with remittances contribution raised to \$ 20.1 billion during 2017 (World Bank 2017:3). The major proportion of overseas Pakistan resides in Middle-Eastern countries with the highest concentration in Saudi Arabia (approximately 5 million). But the size of migrants from Pakistan is increasing to Europe and other advanced countries. The role of foreign remittances is very profound for the wellbeing of the households at the origin. The migrants not only send money back to their loved ones but at the same time they also change their worldview about life activities through social remittances or by sharing the personal experiences they come across while living abroad (Khan, 2016). The migration has two major effects on the lives of the children in school going ages in the left-behind households, i.e. (a) it makes it possible with an increased income and allows the children to afford to get the education of their own choices, and (b) it orients them about the worldview of the outer world that how they have to get an education which could lead them to grasp on the best opportunities of jobs in the future or at least could lead to chain migration.

Theoretical Framework

Why do people migrate? To address this question it has been explored by many researchers across the world and has presented some models to investigate it properly. The decisions about the migration are mostly based on the rational-choice mechanisms in which not only the migrants but at the same time their households are also equally involved in the decision-making processes. During the 1980s Stark and Bloom (1985) pioneered the model known as “New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM),” which primarily emphasized on the role of household and the relatives in decision-making about the migration. This model suggests that decisions about the migration are based on the consultative mechanisms in which migrants, their households, and sometimes close-relatives, are involved and they make decisions more rationally keeping in view the positive and negative aspects in mind. This model was subsequently authenticated by several researchers like, Stark (1991) and Oda (2007), and Khan (2017). For the current research, this model was used to see whether decisions about migration were made by the individual migrants or it was a consultative mechanism in which households and close-relatives were also involved. Since the households were living in the poverty prone areas their main objectives to move abroad remained in improving the economic situations.

The second model which we used for this research is the “Social and Kinship Model.” A lot has already been said about its significance in terms of decision-making, identifying opportunities at destination, swift process of migration, and accommodating the migrants at destination. This model emphasizes that migration is a very difficult process and in such a case, the role of social and kinship circles is very crucial. Anjos and Campos (2010:1) mentioned that although this model was introduced during the 1970s but until recently it has been used by the migrant researchers to see its role in the process of migration not only in the case of initiation of migration but at the same time in the situation of accommodating the migrants at destinations. Scholars like Hussey (2007), Woodruff and Zenteno (2007), and McKenzie and Rapoport (2006) also pointed out the positive aspects of this model in the migration process. Nair (1998) and Shah (1998) particularly mentioned the case studies from India and Pakistan from where people moved to Middle-East and have identified that it as the most significant in all three levels of migration such as; (a) identifying opportunities at destinations, (b) the migration decisions and possible ways to reach abroad, and (c) accommodating them at destinations for lodging and job. They found that if someone from the known circle is already at aimed destination it becomes much easier for the migrants to reach there and find jobs.

McKenzie and Rapoport (2006:16) presented a remittances-education model which later on was used by several researchers (including, but not limited to Bredl, 2011; Khan, 2017; Khan, 2016; Kusumawardhani, 2012). They mentioned that there are three possible effects of migration and remittances for households of migrants in the case of children’s educational achievements. The first one is known as “remittance effect” which comes into play when the migrants send remittances for households and it allows them to spend more for educational attainments. In addition to that, the transfers of remittances also reduce the poverty burden and make it possible for the households to ease up their livings. The second one is “disruptive family effect” which comes into act when a household member, especially a father, moves abroad and their left-behind children spend most of the time without a practical/de-facto household head and it deviates them from the main objectives of their lives such as education because of least supervision. The final one is the “immediate substitution

effect” which refers to migration of the children as most of the children in such households are aspired to move abroad by following the footprints of their fathers rather than excelling in education. We found it as a very pivotal to use this remittances-education model to see the possible effects of migration and remittances on educational outcomes for the female children in the households of migrants.

Research Hypothesis

“The fathers’ out-migration and transfers of remittance lead to the improvements for female’s educational opportunities.”

Methodology

The present research study was conducted to explore the impact of migration and inflow of remittances on educational outcomes for female children. For the said purpose 120 respondents were approached from the households of migrants. Purposive sampling technique was used with a special selection criterion that at least one household member must come under the category of migrant. The migrant shall be sending remittances regularly. In addition to this, there should be at least one female child from the household studying at the primary school level. A well-structured interview schedule was devised to study the phenomenon at length. The following sections were formulated for the interview schedule; (a) demographic profile of the respondents, (b) history of out-migration and the transfers of the remittances, (c) allocation of the remittances, d) the role of remittances in the educational achievements of the children. The data were analysed through the use of the latest version of SPSS and frequencies were generated at the first stage. Later on, cross-tabulation and chi-square tests were also run to see the relationship among selected variables such as; (a) migration, (b) inflow of remittances, and (c) educational performance of female children.

Results and Discussion

Table No. 1 provides basic information about sampled respondents’ socio-economic and demographic profiles. The first category deals with the age of the respondents and data depicts that most of the respondents were between 22-27 years of age. Only 20% of respondents were beyond 34 years of age.

Table No. 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents *n=120*

| Categories | <i>f</i> | % |
|-------------------------|----------|------|
| Age | | |
| 16-21 | 14 | 11.7 |
| 22-27 | 52 | 43.3 |
| 28-33 | 30 | 25.0 |
| 34 and above | 24 | 20.0 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 34 | 28.3 |
| Female | 86 | 71.7 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Unmarried | 37 | 30.8 |
| Married | 78 | 65.0 |
| Widowed | 02 | 1.7 |
| Separated | 03 | 2.5 |
| Household Income | | |
| <30000 | 14 | 11.7 |
| 30001-40000 | 37 | 30.8 |
| 40001-50000 | 22 | 18.3 |
| 50001> | 46 | 38.3 |

In most of the cases in Pakistan, the households are patriarchal in nature and male heads decide about the major life aspects of the households. Contrary to the general patterns, in the case of the current study, about 71.7% of respondents were female and 28.3% were male. This situation was different from the majority of the households in Pakistan. The major reason behind such different results was that from these 120 sampled households the male members were living abroad as migrants and these households became Matri-weighted households- in which females were taking on the responsibilities in the absence of their male counterparts.

The third category was about the marital status of the respondents. The results show that 65% of the respondents were married while 30% percent were living as unmarried. The fourth category was about the households’ income per month from all resources (including remittances) and the data

reveals that the majority (57%) of the households' income was more than 40000 rupees. The second table deals with the information about the migrants and the transfers of remittances to the households at origin. The first category of the data was about the age of the migrants and the data depicts that 72.5% of the migrants' ages were below 35 years.

Table No. 2 Information on Migration and Remittances *n=120*

| Categories | F | % |
|-----------------------------------------|----|------|
| Age of Migrant Member | | |
| 16-25 | 18 | 15.0 |
| 26-35 | 69 | 57.5 |
| 36-45 | 26 | 21.7 |
| 46-55 | 6 | 5.0 |
| 56 and above | 1 | 0.8 |
| Time of Migration (Years) | | |
| 1-3 | 26 | 21.7 |
| 4-6 | 55 | 45.8 |
| 7-9 | 22 | 18.3 |
| 10> | 17 | 14.2 |
| Reasons of Migration | | |
| Poverty and Unemployment | 18 | 15 |
| To Improve Living Standards | 23 | 19.1 |
| For Better Opportunities at Destination | 79 | 65.8 |
| Remittances Reception | | |
| <20000 | 16 | 13.3 |
| 20001-30000 | 37 | 30.8 |
| 30001-40000 | 49 | 40.8 |
| 40001> | 18 | 15.0 |

The next category of the information in this table is about the period since these migrant members have been living abroad. The data shows that the majority (67.5%) migrants were relatively newer as their period was below 6 years. On the other side, there were about 14.2% of respondents who have spent more than 10 years abroad. The next category of information was about the reasons of out-migration. The majority of the respondents mentioned that their migrant members took this initiative because of the opportunities available at the destinations. In comparison to the situation prevailing in the Sindh most of the respondents find it as a life-changing opportunity when they find an opportunity to move abroad to elevate their social positions.

These migrants were very concerned about their households and were sending remittances to cater their needs. On average 55.8% of migrants were sending more than 30,001 rupees per month to their relatives. These remittances were used for several things in the household. But the majority of these were allocated to the food, education, health, and other related needs.

Table No. 3 presents a cross-tabulation of the two important variables such as the inflow of remittances (independent variable) and the academic performance (dependent variable) of the female children in households. The results showed a positive correlation with highly significant chi-square results (0.005). These results depict that remittances were having a profound effect on the educational performances of the female children in the sampled households.

Table No. 3. The Impact of Migration on Female Education

| <i>Do migrants financially support female education</i> | <i>Does female enrolment, attendance and academic performance increased</i> | | | Total |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|-------|
| | GE | SE | NA | |
| Great extent (GE) | 54 | 16 | 2 | 72 |
| Some extent (SE) | 17 | 20 | 5 | 42 |
| Not at all (NA) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Total | 74 | 38 | 8 | 120 |
| Value | 14.937 | | | |
| Df | 4 | | | |
| Asymp. Sig. | 0.005 | | | |

The first component, "remittance effect" of remittance-education model pioneered by McKenzie and Rapoport (2006:16) and later on re-tested/applied by various researchers like Khan

(2017), Khan (2016), Bredl (2011) and Kusumawardhani (2012) this be considered as appropriate in the current scenario of the research study. Hence, we find the results of the first group of scholars who stood affirmed about the positive effects of remittances, in terms of escalated incomes on the educational outcomes for the female children studying at primary school level in households of migrants at the origin. It is pertinent to mention here that since the Sindh province is still lagging in terms of achieving sustainable development goals particularly to provide quality educational opportunities for all children. The out-migration could be seen as a ray of hope for the other to follow the footprints of fellow migrants and achieve education-related objectives that they might not be in a position to gain otherwise.

Conclusion

Education stands significant especially for the developing countries where access to quality education has never been given a priority by the governments. This pushes the UN to keep quality education at the fourth position in the priority list of the 17 SDGs. In normal circumstances, education shall be given a priority because it trains the youth to become active citizens to take part in the better functioning of the society. But in countries like Pakistan where households take the lead in provision of the quality education by spending most of what they earn on education. So, the migrant households had the leverages of having improved resources because of the continued inflow of remittances which in turn makes it easier for the dependents to achieve educational objectives. The migration-education model of McKenzie and Rapoport (2006) has been proved as we found some positive effects of the inflows of remittances on the educational outcomes of the children from the sampled households in the District Khairpur (Mir's). In the majority of the cases, transfers of remittances made it possible for the migrant dependent households to feel comfortable with an elevated social position which consequently helped them in an increased allocation for female children's education especially at primary school level.

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