

Migration and Women Left Behind: Challenges and Constraints

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Original Article

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Abstract:

Migration is the phenomenon that is widely recognized and practiced for various reasons. The migration of the head of the family in pursuit

of work often gives rise to problems in the family. The stress and strain that resulted from the husband's absence cause many women to become ill or to leave their homes. Families in Pakistan are experiencing this phenomenon which is caused by the absence of male members of the adult figures. This study aims to explore the challenges faced by left behind women. For this purpose the Qualitative Method was adopted to get in-depth insights and broader views of the topic. Semi-structured interviews also were taken. The data was gathered through Purposive sampling techniques from the metropolitan areas of Quetta City. This study explores that left behind women and families face numbers of challenges at different levels. They face loneliness, overwork, insecurity, sadness, stress; innumerable frustrations in social issues. Government should provide more technical job opportunities to the people to stop this chain of migration.

Introduction

The act of movement from one country to another country is called emigration. Anyone who moves permanently to another geographic region of the same country and all who move permanently to another country can be defined as migrants (J.R. Weeks 1985). The definition of migration can be confounded by the fact that such activity (changing residence) is carried out by people under varying legal and socio-political circumstances (J.R. Weeks 1985). History of mankind is replete with examples of people migrating from one country to another country either for permanent settlement or for a short duration in search of better social and economic life. This kind of social shoving and jostling is seen in Pakistan as extremely miserable and detrimental. (Rauf Zafar 2004).

Ask most educated Pakistanis today what they want for their future you will find a large number will say to settle down in America. Pakistani's, especially the professionals, have been leaving the country at an alarming rate in the last three decades seeking opportunities and benefits outside the country. Pakistani society is spoiled due to: mental stress; poor economy; corruption; terrorism; unemployment; lack of

self-dignity; law and order situations; poverty; insecurity; bribery; bomb explosion; suicide bombing; deficiencies of ethical values; political instability. The youth is migrating towards other countries because of these pervasive situations. While the development of any country educationally and economically always depends on each youth, the youth faced such overwhelming conditions will abandon that country. The large number of these Pakistanis belongs to the computer technology profession. In last few years, they received many chances to get visas through different computer firms and went away forever (Ikuomola 2015). These caused very critical effects on the economy of Pakistan because foreign and local investors were not interested to invest their money here; that here everything is possible; anything could happen and be demolished anytime. Here the Supreme Court could be attacked anytime. (Mehmood Zaman 2000)

The migration flow of high qualified professionals started in 1990's and today it is on peak. The most despondent fact is that today is that those who leave Pakistan have left it forever; no one wants to live here (Mehmood Zaman, 2000). Australia is encouraging our Doctors, Nurses, computer experts

and scientists for permanent emigration. According to the Australian High Commission, every year they give permanent emigration to 700 with our families (Oishi, 2002). Some European countries like Spain, Germany, and Ireland also give permanent emigration to Pakistanis. Spain gives emigration to only computer technology experts. Ireland gives emigration to cooks, butchers, nan-Bai's and other skilled laborers.

Another factor fueling frustration is that the system here in Pakistan is that talent is not properly rewarded. In foreign countries, talent is rewarded on *WHAT YOU DO, NOT WHO YOU KNOW!* (Karam Ilahi, Sara Safdar 1994). History of mankind is replete with examples of people migrating from one country to another country either for permanent settlement or for a short duration in search of better social and economic life. In the remote past, this was contrary to historical migration when there were few checks on the movements of people leaving one country for another owing to the reason of better quality of life. But the present migration between countries is not open-ended. There are strong state interventions usually in the form of statutory and regulatory measures both in the country of origin and destination of migrants. However, historians have typically addressed migration as a symptom of economic change, and said very little or nothing at all about the problems of ethnicity and the changing identity of migrants that have resulted overtime. The interest of sociologist in migration, on the other hand, largely revolved around the problems of 'race' relations within Western economies which have been the final destination of migrant streams. (S. Akbar Zaidi, 2006)

Problems Associated with Migration

The migration of the head of the family in pursuit of work often gives rise to problems in the family. Changing values and norms

do not always keep pace with economic and socio-cultural development and traditional concept of honor and disgrace. Segregations of the sexes proves difficult to break through. (Hussain Ahmad Siddiqui 2002).

The stress and strain that resulted from the husband's absence cause many women to become ill or to leave their homes. Newly married women, who have been childless, return to their parents. Illness is the culturally accepted form of protest by the weak and occurs particularly among women who already have children and for whom running away is a feasible alternative.

Migrant workers abroad frequently involve separations of families which is socially disruptive at home and which contributes to the rise of prostitution and homosexuality. (James M. Rubenstein, 1983).

Families in Pakistan face numbers of serious challenges at different levels due to lack of male members of the adult figures. Youngsters and women left behind are in the position in which they have to react more particularly to which they are accustomed to.

Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted on migrants and their left behind families. Among various consequences of migration loneliness is by far the leading problem followed by the added responsibilities. The most alarming issue is the emotional and psychological strain that most of the women underwent in the absence of their husbands. (Devasahayam, 2010).

There are only a few studies focusing on the challenges of individual women who have been left behind; otherwise most of the studies have taken into consideration the overall family left behind. There are several pull factors which effect the migration of people. These pull factors are associated with the place of destination including employment opportunities at the destination.

To be successful in all favorable conditions, migration results must include steps towards the wellbeing of the left behind wives and children, too. (Chapagain 2015).

Left behind women face psychological strains when the migrant husband leaves them at the place of origin. Wives feel lonely and sexually disturbed in the case of new marriages. Consequently, some couples experienced conflict and emotional distance, divorce, and extra marital affairs while others oppositely develop stronger emotional ties with other women during their separation. (Farooq & Javed 2009)

Research Methodology

Qualitative mode of data technique was adopted to carry out this study. The purpose of adopting this type of technique was to get in-depth interviews and close observations. The data was collected through interview guides, and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were taken from 16 left behind women in different areas of Quetta City. The universe of the study was Quetta City and Purposive sampling technique was used to select those female respondents.

Research Questions

The study consist of two main research Questions:

What challenges are faced by women left behind?

What can be the solutions to overcome these challenges?

Results

In-depth interviews were taken from 16 left behind women. Researcher narrated the responses of the interviews. Results shows that left behind women face multi-dimensional problems including: overwork; loneliness; lack of security; sadness; lack of security in terms of marriage; frustration; stress; innumerable frustrations in social issues.

In the absence of husband left behind women feel burdens of responsibilities caused by unmanageable situations. There are also cases of husbands that after gaining money don't go straight back to their family when they return home but instead live with their new spouses.

The children, who are often caught in the middle, suffer enormous psychological and emotional distress when their mothers start badmouthing their fathers, which lead children to lose respect for their fathers. They have to look after the children; send them to school; take care of their activities; run their household affairs like buying daily household materials; doing the jobs which were formerly done by male members. This process and load of work leads towards physical and mental fatigue; this stress proceeds further when they see that the coming generation is becoming delinquent; has alien values, moral ethics and poor family affairs. Their educational level decreased day by day because all the aspirations and temptations are centered on the activity to ultimately flow abroad.

The tensions, worries, and miseries are there because the other half is missing. This may cause some sexual deviance on the part of women here and the men abroad. What will happen to the families may a person may ask? But will the track these families are following lead to destruction, emptiness and future barren cultural values and traditional practice. Deciding to live abroad and leaving your family behind is not an easy thing to do. It will have to be a family decision. It's not just the money that you have to count, but the entire wellbeing of the family members.

Discussion

The present study intended to explore the problems and challenges of left behind women of Quetta City. During data collection the researcher observed that the main reason for migration in males was to earn

good money and improve quality of life. Therefore, most of the researchers consider migration an opportunity for individuals to earn significantly for the well-being of left behind family members. (Biao, 2007)

According to current study, when their husbands are migrants, most females suffer from many psychological problems including: isolation; depression; lack of confidence; feeling lonely; loss of family life; face more responsibilities; see adverse effects on the children education; increased anxiety for communications (Hondagneu 1999).

Further, the findings show that left behind women are very curious about their children's studies and feel doubly sad about the absence of their fathers. One report by a women's federation highlighted the fact is left behind children have: poor academic performance; high school drop-out rates; problems in socialization and other psychological development (Biao 2007).

The major findings of this study by researchers disclosed effects on left behind women as those women face numerous social and psychological challenges. The present study was conducted in Quetta City of Balochistan, Pakistan.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested to settle the problem:

Ensuring welfare of the families left behind, and ensuring social and economic re-integration of return migrants so they can start their own earning means in the country. Economic and social problems, political and security reasons, and better standard of life were some of the reasons forcing people to migrate to other countries. So the government should increase employment opportunities; establish political and security stability; offer a better standard of life.

NGO's should launch a campaign to alert the government about the problems and issues of left behind women and their

families. They should support left behind families economically till the government takes any steps for their betterment.

Conclusion

Migration has been a constant in the history of Pakistan. From its inception, its people have been moving in migratory waves. This migration of people started with the moving of millions of people from India into Pakistan when the two nations gained their independence from British colonial rule. Muslims moved to Pakistan in hopes of a better life, not just economically but socially and religiously as well. The study set out to explore the challenges for left behind women. Left behind women face psychological strains when the migrant husbands leave them at the place of origin. The wives feel lonely and sexually disturbed in the case of new marriages. Consequently, some couples experienced conflict and emotional distance, divorce, and extra marital affairs while others oppositely develop stronger emotional ties with others during their separation. This research can be helpful nationally and internationally to study and overcome the challenges for left behind women and their families.

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