

Children's Schooling and Parental Migration: Empirical Evidence on the 'Left-behind' Generation in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study examines the long-term effects of parental international migration on the schooling of children left behind in Pakistan. Although parents' migration usually benefits children economically but the lack of parental care may cause relational and psychological problems that may affect children's welfare in the long term. The locale of the present study is district Gujrat where the labor migration is considered as the best viable way to cope with an increasing poverty and the scarcity of public resources for sustaining households' incomes. To gain the objectives of the study, a mix methods approach has been used for the collection and analysis of data. In the present study the impact of migration on the education of the children was measured through their enrolment in school, type of institution and level of investment on education, dropout from the school, level of achievement. The results show that parental migration has a positive impact on the enrolment of children and investment on education, but it has negative impact on the dropout and level of achievement especially in case of boys.

Key Words: Children's Schooling, Parental Migration, Left Behind, Pakistan

Introduction

People have been moving since human life started. Migration is neither a new phenomenon nor a replacement for development. Individuals move from one place to another on the verge of their attempt to improve their own lives as well as the lives of their families, to acquire new experiences, to learn new skills, disaster or famine or to find a job or to run away from unsafe condition insecurity (Bredl, 2011; Meyerhoefer, and Chen, 2007). Migration can be regarded as a social, economic, and political process that affects not only those who move but also those who stay behind and the places where they go. With the advent of globalization, in the realm of migration, labour migration has become a global phenomenon (Amudedo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2010).

International migration from Pakistan has become very common. Although international migration started soon after independence in 1947, however, it was more accelerated in 1970 due to a construction boom that began in the Middle East because of the dramatic rise in oil prices. It has a profound impact on both the economic and social life of the people and the country (Haque, 2005; Ahmed, 2008).

According to the World Bank official statistics, the number of emigrants from Pakistan reached 4.7 million by the end of 2010 (World Bank, 2011). On the other side, the Overseas Pakistani Foundation (OPF) stated that about 2.7 million Pakistani workers left the country during the last five years. The overall proportion of foreign remittances in Pakistan is also rising. Furthermore, the overall proportion of foreign remittances in Pakistan is also rising. By the end of 2010, Pakistan was able to receive about 9.4 Billion US dollar however this number substantially amplified to 15 Billion US dollar in 2013 (World Bank, 2013). These remittances helped to rescue poverty at both household and state levels.

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Considering the transnational perspective, sometimes migration is as much about the people who stay behind as it is about those who move. In some cases, migration has a lot to do in transforming lives. As the ties between migrants and non-migrants are very strong and widespread that the migration tends to radically transform the lives of individuals who remain at home (Elbadawy & Roushdy, 2010, Kuhn et al., 2011). People, money, and social remittances or the ideas, practices, identities and social capital that migrants remit home, permeate the daily lives of those who remain behind, altering their behavior, and transforming notions about gender relations, democracy, and what states should and should not do (Schapiro, 2009; Elbadawy, 2010).

The long-term impact of overseas employment on families left behind in the country of origin became a big problem that was increasingly attracted by the tension of police markers and social scientists over the span of the last decade. Socioeconomics implication on the families of the migrants has also started receiving special attention (Giles and Ren, 2007; McKenzie & Rapoport, 2011, Antman, 2011). The other major area of interest includes the patterns of remittances that are being spent by migrant's families which results in maximizing the benefits for the migrant's country of origin.

The recent studies explored spritely the impact of remittances and the migration on the education of the optimal family. The variables are often having an active role in a solution to the internal aspect of the effect between remittances or migration on education outcomes (Gibson et al., 2011). But it seems very challenging to find a fundamental variable and to satisfy restrictions exclusion.

Mckenzie and Rapoport (2006) stated that the overall impact of migration on educational attainment in Mexico, while using the historical migration networks in 1920 as well as a tool to migrate after seven decades. They were able to measure the internal aspects of the potential decision of migration families. Therefore, they found that children in immigrant families are less likely to attend school and have completed a few years of education than children in non-impact families. They also concluded that the children in immigrant families are more likely to have migrant; boys are more likely to be working, and women to do domestic jobs.

It has been identified from the review of literature that migration is a phenomenon that is growing and considering its social, economic and political impacts it also requires more attention. Most of the studies in this strand focused on new dimensions of migration like; determinant migration, use of remittances, modes of remittances, and other economic impacts of migration (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011; Kuhn et al., 2011; Giorguli & Angoa, 2016; Chung & Griffiths, 2018). But on the other hand, very less attention has been given to the impact of parent's migration on children's education left behind, especially concerning Pakistan. There are also some methodological biases in the study of migration. The literature review also shows that most of the researcher have based their studies to study and measure the impact of migration quantitatively. Moreover, it also shows that most of the quantitative techniques are not enough to measure the impact. Therefore, in the current study, an effort has been made to bridge these research gaps. It also attempted to try exploring the impact of male migration on their families left at home with a special focus on the health of the family, education of the children and impact on their spouse.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the present study is to measure the impact of parent's migration on children's schooling who are left in the source countries.

Material and Methods

Present research is the part of PhD research and was conducted in one of the migrant exporting district (Gujrat) Punjab, Pakistan. The main reason for the selection of current locale was the volume of remittances received through official channels and the number of migrants. In this research mix methodological approach was used for the collection and interpretation of data. In first phase researcher utilized the core ethnographic techniques such as rapport building, key informing and informal interviews from the migrant household heads. In the second phase those households were identified whom children were enrolled in academic institutions and a face-to-face survey was conducted to understand the impact of the international migration on education of the children. In the first phase 50 migrants' households were selected from the total population of 152 for survey and head of the household was selected for in-depth interviews through purposive sampling technique. In the second phase survey method was used to further dig out the problem in detail with the help of purposive

sampling. In this phase 280 children in school going age (including 135 males and 145 females) were selected from the migrant's families. The results are presented below by utilizing statistical and thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion

The impact of parent's migration on children is not clear in the literature. In many studies argued that migration influence educational through three distinct channels: the income effect through remittances; the direct effect of father's migration on the demand for child work and the impact of prospect to migrate upon the incentive to invest in education. Consequently, the remittances are expected to improve the resources available to education, father's absence could cause more work for children at home and the less help from parents could cause poor educational performance and increase dropout from school (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011; Kuhn et al., 2011; Giorguli & Angoa, 2016, Chung & Griffiths, 2018).

Analyzing the impact of migration on the education of children is furthermore complicated by the fact that this impact may depend upon other various factors such as the age, sex of the children and the parent's education level (Lee, 2012). It may also affect by the family size and structure. Therefore, the results of the empirical research may highly be specific to the study area. In the present study the impact of migration on the education of the children was measure through their enrolment in school, type of institution and level of investment on education, dropout from the school and level of achievement.

Invest on Education

The level of invest on education was used as an indicator to measure the impact of education on children. It was measure through the preferred type of institution for the children, the academic and tuitions fee of the children before and after the migration of family member. It has been observed that there was significant improvement in the investment on the children education after the migration. For example, one of the respondents said that; *Our children were getting education in government school before the migration of my husband because at that time we had not enough money through which we can pay the fee of private schools. But after the migration of my husband, we have enough money through which we can educate our children in private institutions. I think if you want to provide quality education to your children then you should enroll them in private institution because in government schools' teachers do not teach properly.*

Another respondent reported that; *we are investing much more on children education as compare to before the migration of my husband. Although at that our children were small, but we were not able to pay their tuition fee but now we can afford their all requirements.*

According to the findings of the data a lot of improvements have been observed after the migration of family member. The data suggest that investment on education has been increased significantly. It has also been observed that with the improvement of economic conditions; the institutions for children have been changed. After the migration parents want their children in the best institutes and they were ready to give maximum input on education. So it can be concluded that migration has improved the investment level on education.

Enrolment in School

Prior literature shows that child enrolment in school is good predictor of impact of migration on education. The findings of the present study did not find any significant impact of migration on children enrolment in school. The main factor which was observed was the educational policies of the government through which child enrolment in school is compulsory. So due to compulsory enrolment it was observed that hundred percent children of the migrant's families were enrolled in school. The other main factor which contributes to the educational enrolment in the school was parent's interest in the education of the children. Mothers were much keen in the education of the children. They respond that it's their duty to get enrolled their children and invest on their education; and after that it's the luck and hard work of their children how much they can get education. For example, one of the respondents reported that; *I could not get education but it's my wish that my children might get good education. I am ready to take any step for their education.*

Another respondent said that; *we have spent our lives and now we are facing all the hardships for our children... now we wished that our children became nice persons after getting education.*

Findings of the study suggest that there were hundred percent enrolments of children in school in the study area. Parents were much eager for their children education. Filed data depict that the migration status does not affect children enrolment in school because according to Government of Punjab Pakistan polices enrolment up to five-year age is mandatory, enforced and free. So, enrolment rates were typically very high. The government policy and parents' interest were the key factors determining enrolment in basic education rather than the feature of migration. After basic school age the enrolment changes and this will be explored in more detail in next section.

Children Dropout from School

The enrolment up to 16 years of age does not appear to be strongly affected by migration. There are multiple explanations for this. Migration also generates a demonstration effect causing children, particularly boys; to drop out of school to follow their fathers as soon as they complete the mandatory school program. It was observed that people of the study area were very much passionate about overseas migration. Migration was considered as a status symbol in the study area. Male were eager to migrate internationally, so they were not much interested in getting education. The level of migration and the limited opportunities in the study area has significant effect on boys' dropout. For example, one of the respondents said that; *Boys are not much educated in our area. They attend school only up to matriculation and after that they left. And after the dropout from school their biggest wish is to migrate internationally. My two sons have attended school up to matric and after they have left their studies and they are asking their father for migration.*

Another respondent said that; *there is no culture of male's higher education because people think that in there is no job security even someone is well educated. So, children dropout from school and get migrate overseas. People consider that life could be secured through migration... and when they search mate for their daughter, they prefer to get married their well-educated daughters to migrants.*

According to the findings of the study male dropout ratio was very high in the area. The main factor behind the boys' dropout from school was the migration. So, there was a clear effect of migration on male children dropout. On the other hand, the situation among girls' education was quite different from the boys. Girls' dropout level was very less as compare to boys. They were much conscious about their studies. There were multiple factors behind the less dropout level among the females. The main contributing factors were females' interest in education, marriage and the economic up gradation of families. For example, one of the respondents reported that; *Girls do more hard work in their education as compare to boys here. I think their education is very much important because it's very difficult to find out a life partner for an illiterate daughter. In our time, there was not enough money through which our parents could provide us good education. But now thanks Allah (Alhamdulillah); due to the migration of my husband we have enough money through which we can provide good education to our children. The other reason for girls' higher education is that they feared from their families and they study with keen interest. On the other hand, when boys got a little bit mature, they do not follow their mothers and fathers already had been migrated so that they do whatever they want.*

Another respondent said that; *Girls are more conscious about their education as compare to boys that's why they do not quite their education.*

It has been observed from the findings that although there was no direct impact of father's migration on children drop out but there was a profound indirect impact. This impact varies from age to age and gender to gender. Dropout ratio among the boys was very high as compare to girls. According to the findings of the study boys were much eager to migrate overseas so they quit their education at the age of maturity. On the other hand, girls went for higher education and among them there was very rare chance of dropout. The other main factor behind the dropout of males were reported the less control of family. Respondents told that after the migration of husbands; females have very less control on the male children especially at the age of maturity. They do not bother about their mothers and they only do whatever they want. So, it was concluded that father's migration has very serious impact on male dropout from school.

Level of Achievement

The final component of impact of migration on education is the level of achievement. The evidence from the

fieldwork does not show any clear impact of migration on the level of achievement of migrant's children. However, there are some evidences which show that the lack of support with regard to education may harm their performance especially in case of boys.

Migration affects academic achievement level negatively through reducing parental supervision and assistance. Children became demotivated or behaving worse due to the lack of parents' attention especially from fathers. As one of the respondents reported that; *Parents' role has great importance in the success of children. But unfortunately, we could not find proper time for children because after the migration of my husband I have to take the responsibilities of my husband also. Most of the time I could not find time for the children due to these responsibilities and which causes poor performance by our children.*

Another respondent reported that; *it is very difficult for a woman to handle the children in the absence of her husband especially to male ones. When the boys grow up, they do not follow their mothers. Lack of parental control is the main factor of spoiling boys.*

Another respondent reported that; *I think both parents are very much important for the success of children. I try my best in the socialization of children but there is a clear absence of father's role.*

One of other respondent reported as; *Father absence can be clearly seen in the academic achievement of the children. A female could not control the children in proper as male can; therefore, the children could not perform well after the migration of their father.*

According to the findings of the data it was concluded that the father's migration has diverse effect on the level of achievement of children. It has been observed that after the migration of fathers; the investment level on education has been improved significantly but on the other hand females have to play multiple roles in the absence of their husbands and they were unable to control the children especially male ones. Due to the less attention of parents; level of achievement among boys decreased. Therefore, it was concluded that migration has negative effect on children's educational achievements.

To measure the impact of migration on the education of the children the researcher has tried to measure it quantitatively. He also tried to measure the impact of family size on the education to make clearer.

Symmetric Measures of Monthly income and the level of education of Male children

H₀: - There is no association between the level monthly income and the level of education of Male child.

H₁:- There is association between the level monthly income and the level of education of Male children.

Level of Significance: $\alpha = 0.05$

Statistical test: Kendall's tau-b was used to test the hypothesis

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Kendall's tau-b	.237	.069	3.376	.001
N of valid cases	135			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis. b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Since the p value is used to determine the significance of a hypothetical test here it is found to be 0.001 which shows that it is less than the level of significance value therefore the H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted and conclude that there is association between the level of monthly income and the level of education of male children. Since the Kendall's tau-b value is positive which shows that there is positive relationship between the level of monthly income and the level of education of Male children. Therefore, it's concluded that higher level of monthly income leads towards the higher level of male children education.

Symmetric Measures of Monthly income and the level of education of Female children.

H₀: - There is no association between the level monthly income and the level of education of female child.

H₁:- There is association between the level monthly income and the level of education of female children.

Level of Significance: $\alpha = 0.05$

Statistical test: Kendall's tau-b was used to test the hypothesis

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Kendall's tau-b	.137	.069	3.376	.02
N of valid cases	145			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis. b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Since the p value is used to determine the significance of a hypothetical test here it is found to be 0.02 which shows that it is less than the level of significance value therefore the H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted and conclude that there is association between the level of monthly income and the level of education of Male children. Since the Kendall's tau-b value is positive which shows that there is positive relationship between the level of monthly income and the level of education of female children. Therefore, it's concluded that higher level of monthly income leads towards the higher level of female children education.

Symmetric Measures of family Size and the level of Education of Children

H_0 : - There is no association between the family size and the level of education of child.

H_1 : - There is association between the family size and the level of education of children.

Level of Significance:

$$\alpha = 0.05$$

Statistical test: Kendall's tau-b was used to test the hypothesis

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Kendall's tau-b	.091	.069	3.376	.23
N of valid cases	145			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis. b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Since the p value is used to determine the significance of a hypothetical test here it is found to be 0.23 which shows that it is more than the level of significance value; therefore, the H_1 is rejected and H_0 is accepted and conclude that there is no association between the family size and the level of education of children.

Percentage of Education of the Children by Gender

Educational Achievement level	Male	Female	Chi. Square Value
Never Enrolled	2.2	17.6	
Primary	20.75	10.5	
Middle	36.35	33.1	
Matric	25.2	19.2	
Inter	9.6	11.8	
B.A& Above	5.9	7.8	
Total	100	100	.000

The above table shows the percentage of education achievement level of children by gender. The level of significance; .000 of Chi. Square test shows that literacy status of the children varies with gender. The educational level is statistically associated with the gender. There is less percentage of male who never enrolled as compared to female children but on the other hand as the level of education increased, female's achievement level increased.

So according to the findings of the study it is concluded that the investment level on education has been increased after the migration of family member. So, migration and investment on education has positive association but it has no clear impact on the achievement level of the children. On the other hand, it has increased the dropout rates among the male children. So, it has diverse impact on the dropout of the male children.

Conclusion

The role of labor remittances in economic development of source countries is considered as an important dimension of research. Remittances have become an important source of foreign exchange earnings, mainly

from developed countries to developing countries. The availability of foreign exchange through remittances has not only helped the recipient countries in achieving a rationally high economic growth by reducing the current account shortfall, but it has also decreased their external borrowing as well as external debt burden.

There is, however, also another possible view that remittances may have a negative strong effect on input in recipient economies. While immigration policies are being designed to trigger development in sending countries. There is an intense need for a better understanding of the impact of migration on the education of those who left behind. Theoretically, the impact of migration of parents on children's education is not clear. On one hand, that the absence of the parents disrupts the family life and pose some psychological and social barriers. In the absence of parents, they have to participate in social gatherings which ultimately affect their education. Moreover, the findings of the study suggest that parents' migration has both positive and negative impacts on children's education. Though parents' migration has improved enrollment in school but due to father's absence, the dropout ratio among male children has also been significantly improved.

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