



Cite Us



Mahwish Zeeshan *

Sadaf Zaheer †



Gender Role and Managing Responsibilities: A Case Study of Women with Male Migration in Mirpur Azad Kashmir

Abstract *The decision to migrate actively involves women as they gradually take on increased responsibilities in running the households on their own, for the health and education of their children, and management of their funds and properties. The research was conducted in Mirpur Azad Kashmir, which aimed to study the effects of male out-migration on the females of the emigrants' families. The data collected with a descriptive research methodology. In-depth interviews and case studies are the tools of research. The study's findings reveal three types of effects on the women of these families. First is women's autonomy, second revolves around financial hardship and increased responsibilities. Third, it is termed a consequence of weakening or strengthening the relationship between husband and wife.*

Key Words: Emigrant, Gender, Responsibilities, Male Migration, Women Role

Introduction

A large share of Pakistan's economy is based on foreign remittances. It is among the top 10 recipients of global remittances (Zeeshan & Aneela, 2020). Migration depends on Push and Pull factors; the poor economic activity and lack of job opportunities and those that attract the individual to leave their home for better economic opportunities, more jobs, and a better life often pull people in a new location. The nomadic tendency in man and his movement from one location to another is prehistoric. Besides this, modern humans frequently migrate both internally and externally in search of a job or a better living. Migration is universal, and it is one of the most familiar movement phenomena. Man's nomadic tendency and movement from one place to another is as old as the history of man itself. Primitive migration refers to people wandering freely over territories for hunting and gathering from time immemorial. Sedentary settlements made it challenging to migrate for every other necessity of life. Nevertheless, when people cannot fulfill their needs due to the

unavailability of resources or means, they try to move on. Every individual needs some motivation to attain his objectives in life, and if he finds the appropriate opportunities, he certainly tries to make use of them.

Movement is the process through which people move to settle from one place to another. Increasing communication facilities has increased migration, especially from one country to another, for better job opportunities. Migrate is a Latin word. The term migration is to change the area where you were living. In short, a change of residence of an individual or a group from one place to another is known as migration' (Hangerstrand, 1989). In the case of migration, the social welfare decreases because of certain factors such as children's education, the excessive workload on females, and frustration on the part of the family members left behind.

Migration depends on two factors, "Push" and "Pull." "Push" factors are the ones that compel or force individuals to migrate. Life threat, exhaustion of resources at a particular

* Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Pir Mehr Ali Shah, Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: mahwish.zeeshan@uaar.edu.pk

† M.Sc Student, Department of Anthropology, Pir Mehr Ali Shah, Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

niche, poverty, lower socioeconomic status, lack of job opportunities are vital to push factors for movement. "Pull" factors in the destination country attract or pull the person or the group to leave their home for better economic opportunities, more jobs, and safe and better quality of life at the new location ([Mincer, 2009](#)). The decision to migrate is when family members, including women, are actively involved. Women of the migrant's family play an active role. They gradually take on increased responsibilities for running the households independently, 'instead of better health and education of their children and management of their funds and properties' ([Gilani, 1981](#)). Also, Migration has radically exposed the younger generation to this challenge threatening the lingual heritage ([Chaudhry & Zeeshan, 2019](#)).

The higher level of income of migrants tended to increase their economic welfare. However, social welfare decreased because of certain factors such as children's education, the excessive workload on women, and frustration in the family members left behind (Jetly, 1987). Migration additionally impacts the status of left-behind spouses in the family. The nonattendance of a male counterpart enhance the general status of ladies, as they have better access to cash which they can spend as they wish; they have the flexibility of development; they can make free choices concerning the training of their youngsters and kind of treatment to be given to them on the off chance that they fall wiped out, without male a ladies feels rationally bothered ([Bose, 2000](#)).

The research aimed to investigate the impact of overseas employment on the social development of migrant families left behind in Pakistan. The study focused on the role of women living in both nuclear and extended setups and tried to assess whether the nature of problems varies with the family setup. Any individual migrating abroad aims to seek better employment opportunities to uplift his socio-economic status. It was observed that progress was seen limited to a few aspects of progress, like improvement in private housing. These areas

emerged as a positive aspect of social development, alongside a lack of father's control on children, resulting in a high dropout rate from schooling. Males stand out as the sole breadwinners in our families and are held responsible as the head of the family in the patriarchal setup. In the absence of the breadwinner, the elderly male of the family heads it. Where women are not living in extended households, 'wives of migrant workers live isolated lives. They badly felt the absence of the male members in their families and had an incredible feeling of insecurity ([Abbasi and Sheikh, 2000](#)).

The primary reasons for out-migration have been the deterioration of undeveloped outputs that has resulted in low output and food insecurity. In the absence of males, wives have become responsible for managing farmland and the household. Wives of migrants from the rural setup cope with such change whether their condition improves in the absence of their males or not ([Laughlin, 1998](#)). The research was conducted to investigate the cost of socio-economic impacts of migration. On the one hand, it brings progress and prosperity in better economic resources and stability. On the other hand, how does it weaken the family's social ties, in terms of lack of paternal control, role in decision-making, loosening bonding with children, and additional pressure on women to play a role reversal in taking over the responsibilities of the men?

Literature Review

The movement of the population in search of food or other essentials has been frequent since ancient times. It is emphasized that the migration procedure depends on the push and pull factors that explain the relationship between the volume and direction of migration flows. With the external conditions as the main factors of the program and the cost and profit analysis promote migration by collecting information of the external forces through which migration occurs and evaluating all these factors with the help of information about the new location ([Donald,](#)

1972).

There lies a series of forces that encourage an individual to leave one place and attract him to settle in another. The explanation, which is known as the "push and pulls" theory was extended by Herbie (1938) in his study on the survey of German theories on causes of rural-urban migration. The push factors involve a decline in national resources resulting in a decrease in demand of agricultural resources, loss of employment due to increased mechanization, political, ethnic, or religious oppression, and alienation from the community, lack of personal growth, and development natural catastrophe. On the contrary, the pull factors include better employment opportunities, better income, desired education and training, preferable working and living environment, cultural and recreational activities, and dependency on some other individual who is migrating (Iqbal, 2007).

The migratory probability is affected by the ability of women to migrate which occurs due to the interaction of women's roles, status, and age within that particular socio-cultural context. Individual, familial and societal level of migration has been considered in a United Nations' report on women and migration. Age, birth order, race/ethnicity, urban/rural origins, marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed), reproductive status (children or no children), role in the family (wife, daughter, mother), position in family (authoritative or subordinate), educational status, occupational skills/training, labor force experience, and class position are the individual factors. Family factors include size, age/sex composition, life-cycle stage, structure (nuclear, extended, etc.), status (single parent, both parents, etc.), and class standing. Societal factors include those community norms and cultural values that determine whether or not women can migrate and, if they can, how (i.e., labor or family reunification) and with whom (alone or with family) (Byod, 2003).

It is considered that 'the effect of migration on the status of females might be both positive

and negative, and relies upon the financial, social and family settings in which the development happens. Ladies are monetarily dynamic; the larger parts are occupied with low-paying occupation with little status. Albeit, in the case of male migration, ladies have increased financial advantages, the negative impacts may exceed positive/benefits. Studies suggest that the absence of security for females of the male out migrants, may also make them helpless against manhandle and misuse' (Ukwatta, 2003). Studies propose that an individual who is a member of a family and group, made relocate and utilize settlements, and may get the influence of area history. The social practices, family structure, local financial issues, social networks, family, and social status affect the individual's decisions and choices. A progression of minor choices happens, concerning where the transient will go, how they will remain away, how best they will utilize the settlement, where they will return. These are the issues once the decision to migrate is made by an individual (Conway, 2008).

Molar studied the impact of foreign employment on the social development of labor families left behind. He concentrated on a few aspects of social development, like infrastructural improvement in the community through the highest standards of living and improvement in private housing (Molar, 2003). These two areas emerged as positive aspects of social development, whereas the lack of paternal control appeared to be the significant negative implication.

In the sixties, people preferred to go to Europe or America for earning instead of working in their own country, and most of them are settled here. The main reason for their settlement was that the Europeans and Americans ensured their citizenship to the people who lived and worked in their country for a considerable time (Jetley, 1987). On the other hand, Middle Eastern migration comprises workers mostly unaccompanied by their families and dependents. The higher income level of migrants tended to increase their economic welfare. However, social welfare decreased

because of certain factors such as children’s education, the excessive workload on women, and frustration in the family member left behind. Though women play their active part when it comes to the decision-making regarding migration of their male counterparts, they are the ones who generally get stuck in the vicious cycle of responsibilities compared to any other individual in the family. Health, education of children, and financial management add on to their responsibilities (Gulati, 2011)

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Mirpur AJK Sector B-III in 2017. Data was gathered through a detailed socio-economic survey form and questionnaires from 105 respondents over three months. The sampled women were approached through a snowball; referral chain Sampling methodology. The methodology used in this research was descriptive. Results are presented in the next section in percentages.

Results and Discussion

Certain factors are held responsible for the women of the left out migrants from the study. One of the significant factors is the type of family one is living in, which is directly correlated to the economic independence of their females. Data revealed that 18% of respondents from extended families and 28% from nuclear families said they feel economic independence in the absence of their male members. However, 27% of

respondents from extended families and 25% from Nuclear families responded that they had not achieved economic independence due to male migration. The decision-making gains economic independence in the financial allocation of resources and decision-making for children. Since 30% of women living in nuclear families have the authority in terms of finances, they took it as a privilege.

On the contrary, most of the women from extended but a considerable percentage of women from nuclear families also felt devoid of economic independence due to lack of finances with them. Their male counterparts were taking hold of the finances either from abroad. Alternatively, some other senior males or female household members regulated their financial affairs.

The extended family generally has more control over the wives of migrants in some settings. This charge may be exercised by the mother-in-law and other males in the family. Men’s labor migration may lead to residential independence over a longer period from the extended family and thus greater freedom for the wife. The financial benefits of labor migration, if the benefits do materialize, can lead to significant improvements in a family’s well-being, especially in its housing, and may allow the family a greater chance of residential independence by establishing a household separate from that of in-laws and relatives (Khaled, 1997).

Table 1. Economic Independence* Type of Family

Family System	Yes		No		Total	
Extended	19	18%	29	27%	48	45%
Nuclear	30	28%	27	25%	57	54%
Total	49	46%	56	53%	105	100%

It was noted from the findings that a sudden significant change was not seen in the family’s financial stability immediately after the movement of the husband. Instead, with time, economic prosperity was seen in the households of the migrants from a smaller to a large scale,

varying upon the income and returns from them. The very changes were seen in the schooling of their children, dresses, and their food and resultantly in the socio-economic status of the families.

The noticeable changes were reflected by the

decision-making of the migrants' children being sent to other cities for higher education. Another pertinent indicator of economic prosperity was in terms of property. People made houses and other assets for the future, like plots, markets, and agricultural land, to secure their old age and next generation. Migration here was claimed necessary for their families' safe economic standing and to cover many social and economic lags in their lives. The left-behind families got many chances in their lives to get more

prosperous, but with this change, they often faced many problems regarding their daily and social life (Palmer, 1985). It was reported that the male member's absence makes his wife's life complicated. Her workload increases as she has to take on some added responsibilities, which are ethnically expected to be the sole responsibility of men in any patriarchal society. Apart from doing the regular household chores and taking care of the family, she manages all outdoor work.

Table 2. Effect of family typology on Decision Making

Family System	Yes		No		Total	
Extended	20	19%	28	26%	48	45%
Nuclear	28	26%	29	27%	57	54%
Total	48	45%	57	54%	105	100%

In this table, the researcher established a relationship between the family's typology and its effect on the women's independence of decision making about their own life and other family matters, like property, children's education, social interactions, etc. The preceding table indicates that the females living in the Nuclear family system are more independent than those from joint family wives. In joint families, 19% of females responded positively regarding freedom of decision making whereas 26% responded negatively. Besides this, 26% of women from the nuclear family system responded positively, and 27% responded negatively. The ratio of women's independence in the nuclear family system was more than those living in extended or expanded families.

The probable enhancement in decision-making stabilizes after some time and has no association with migration duration. The age of women has a significant negative association with decision making, probably because older women, having more prolonged exposure to traditional culture, are less likely to accept new behavior. Women from the upper class have limited scope to change their traditional behavior. Land ownership has a significant positive association with decision-making among women. In the absence of men, women in migrant families play broader roles in family affairs. They are less under the domination of men, thus substantially raising their decision-making capacity. (Khadafy, 1982).

Table 3. Change in status of women in the absence of the male partner

Family System	Yes		No		Total	
Extended	27	25%	21	20%	48	45%
Nuclear	35	33%	22	20%	57	54%
Total	62	59%	43	40%	105	100%

Male and females are assigned specific roles and responsibilities in our society. In a traditional patriarchal setup, males are heading the households where they are not merely the sole breadwinners but take care of the decision-

making. The death or migration of a male family member brings a shift in responsibilities. Role reversals are seen in these cases, especially in female-headed households, which resultantly appear in the form of change in the status of

women. Table # 3 is based on findings reflecting that her role has changed way more in the nuclear family system than its ratio in the extended family system. Most respondents believed that women’s status gets changed in the absence of a male partner, especially in the nuclear family system where women had double responsibility. Besides being a mother, she needs to take on the father’s responsibility, which does not turn out to be perfectly well in all cases. Women may gain improved status and roles as a result of male migration. A study on Ecuador suggests that the conjugal relationship of men and women improved after migration, through negotiations despite the distance. Women tended to be less dependent on their relatives, which might be due to economic independence. Managing the household expenditures makes them more

responsible since they aim to get more literate with more determination in childcare improvement. Spousal communication tends to be more egalitarian, where women share greater responsibility within the household (Pribilsky, 2004).

The role of women was also changed. Her responsibilities increased as her male member migrated. When their males, who mainly migrated to Britain, got back home, they have mostly transformed individuals. The migrant’s wives living in a nuclear family system were more vulnerable than the migrant’s wife living in a joint family. The reasons given by females depicted that they had to deal with their household at the same level of production as left by their husbands (Lee, 1972).

Table 4. Family systems and Decline in Social Relationships

Family System	Yes		No		Total	
Extended	23	21%	25	23%	48	45%
Nuclear	30	28%	27	25%	57	54%
Total	53	50%	52	49%	105	100%

The figures mentioned above from the table reflect a decline in the ratio of social relationships without male members. In an extended family system, the females decrease their social mobility leading to reduced social relationships without a male family member. In the nuclear family system, females generally confine their social relationships further without their male counterparts being more insecure.

The male migration changes the relationships of left-behind families. Males working in other countries usually come across people from similar areas and form new relationships there, which are also sources to leave behind families for interaction between their left-behind families (Hugo, 2002). Then, they also know those people (travel agents) who helped them with their visas and securing jobs abroad. Usually, male clients from their families visit their agents off and on and try to follow up with them to get a chance to go abroad.

The left-behind families need to establish

some other relationships. Females need to take their children to bus stops or to schools where they come across other females, and it is widely recognized that females make interactions more quickly than males and get involved in conversations (SAMP, 2004). These informal relationships help them socialize with women of more or less similar social status. The relationships between the left behind wives and in-laws also get molded in the absence of their male members. In such cases, either these relationships get stronger with cooperation or weaker when faced with continual friction resulting from decision-making on finances. In many cases, there is a clash on the use of authority among females and their in-laws, which resultantly weaken family ties changed and ultimately in family structure.

Flows of remittance were comparatively expected, established, and increasing. This flow was likely to maintain even though remittance tends to fuse between the first and second

generation, who tend to be more diffused with the culture of their migrant community (Kenneth, 1971). Men settled abroad are considered as a source of problem-solving. It is expected that different types of foreign income and remittance could increase to meet the needs of ordinary people during times of disaster. Also, in the absence of males, mishaps that occurred in the family were solved with difficulty with the help of other neighboring people. This specific region

lacked a male population due to immigration, who were generally aloof from the problems faced by their families in their absence and remained unfruitful in finding their solution. After a couple of years, the trend of returning migrants home was enough of a gap for their female counterparts to get done with their issues on their own. The males come back only for two or three months after two or three years of an average gap (Howell, 1999).

Table 5. Effect of Family on Difficulty in Child Care

Family System	Yes		No		Total	
Extended	27	25%	21	20%	48	45%
Nuclear	31	20%	26	25%	57	54%
Total	58	55%	47	45%	105	100%

The women living in nuclear families face more issues in terms of child care than those living in extended families. It is not just a myth. The results from the preceding table affirm that too. The responsibility of children gets divided and often shared by the grandparents or paternal uncles and aunts of the male out-migrants in case their females are residing with their family. However, they are neither taken up nor fulfilled the same way when their women choose to live in a nuclear family setup where the burden lies on the women. Not all women can take off this responsibility, and many of them complain of their children getting out of control when it comes to their education and enculturation.

Conclusion

A very few migrants took their families abroad. Women left behind were facing females many social and psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, and feeling of insecurity. A general change observed was in the context of the economic uplift, but the communication gap had also increased between the migrant parent and

his children. The very bonding of the family was missing in the migrant families as responded by the females. Some got involved in negative socialization, such as gambling and drugs. Lack of parental control, especially father's control over children, was seen in the form of a high dropout rate of school children. Women were taking added responsibilities of their males, such as taking care of the children, husband's family, property, farmland, managing resources and households, health, schooling, commuting of the family members, and keeping connections with family and friends. Trying to cope with both roles made it difficult for most of them to stay mentally and physically healthy. They were facing psychological or physiological issues such as hypertension, BP, Diabetes, which are generally triggered by stress. The study suggests that problems exist for women living in nuclear and extended families. However, the range and extent of problems for females with the nuclear setup is more since she is solely responsible for everything. In contrast, the women living in extended families shared some of them with their in-laws.

References

- Abbasi, S. R. S. & Sheikh, K. (2000). Impact of Foreign Employment on the Social Development of Migrants' Families Left behind in Pakistan. *Journal of Rural Development and Administration*, 32(3), 88-101.
- Bose, A. (2000). Demography of Himalayan Villages: Missing Men and Lonely Women. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(27), 2361-2363. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4409463>.
- Chaudhry, A. G., & Zeeshan, M. (2019). Migration's Impacts on Diminishing Lingual Heritage. *Global Language Review*, 4(1), 60-65.
- Conway, D., & Cohen, J. H. (2008). Consequences of Migration and Remittances for Mexican Transnational Communities*. *Economic Geography*, 74(1), 26-44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-8287.1998.tb00103.x>.
- Dion, K. K., & Dion, K. L. (2001). Gender and Cultural Adaptation in Immigrant Families. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(3), 511-521. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00226>.
- Donald, I. (1972). Push and Pull Factors of Migration. *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*. The Macmillan Company and Free Press. New York.
- Grieco, E.M., & Boyd, M. (1998). Women and migration: incorporating gender into international migration theory. *Migration information source* 1, 1-7.
- Gulti, T. (2011). "International Migration in the Third World". In the population Paper presented at the *Regional Conference on Migration, development and Pro-poor Policy Choices in Asia*, Dhaka, Bangladesh. 144.
- Hägerstrand, T. (1989). *Phenomena of migration In: Migration in a Potowar Village*. M.Sc Thesis, Department of Anthropology, Quaid - e- Azam University Islamabad, Pakistan. 63-72.
- Howell, J. (1999). Expanding women's roles in southern Mexico: Educated, employed Oaxaqueñas. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 55(1),99-127.
- Hugo, G. (2002). Effects of international migration on the family in Indonesia. *Asian and Pacific migration journal*, 11(1), 13-46.
- Ijaz, G. Khan, M, F. & Iqbal, M. (1981). *Labor migration from Pakistan to the Middle East and its impact on the domestic economy: part I*.
- Iqbal, S. A. (2007). *Earning the Ashes*. An ethnography of return migrants in Punjab 25-26.
- Jetley. S. (1987). Male migration: Dynamics, issues and difficulties of left-behind families. *Asian and Pacific Journal of Social Sciences journal*, 4, 44-53.
- Khafagy, F. A. (1982). Socio-economic impact of emigration from El-Quebabat village. *Population Studies*, 61, 39-45.
- Lee, E. (1972). *Population: An introduction to concepts and issues*. 5th (ed). Wadsworth Publishing Company: Belmont. California. USA. 5th (ed).
- Louhichi, K. (1997). "The Impact of the Emigration of the Husband on the Status of the Wife: The Case of Egypt." *Women and Families: Evolution of the Status of Women as Factor and Consequence of Changes in Family Dynamics*. Paris: CICRED 323-339.
- Mincer, J. (1978). Family migration decisions. *Journal of Political Economy*, 86(5), 749-773.
- Molar, N. (2003). Main usage of remittances of the left-behind families of migrants. *International Encyclopedia of Economics*. Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers London 34-37.
- Newman, R. J. (1983). Industry Migration and Growth in the South. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 65(1), 76-86. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1924411>.
- O'Laughlin, B. (1998). Missing men? The debate over rural poverty and women-headed households in Southern Africa. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 25(2), 1-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066159808438665>.
- Palmer, I. (1985). *The impact of male out-migration on women in farming*.

- Pribilsky, J. (2004). Aprendemos A Convivir': Conjugal Relations, Co-parenting, and Family Life among Ecuadorian Transnational Migrants in New York and the Ecuadorian Andes. *Global networks* 4(3),313-334.
- SAMP. (2004). *South Africa: Mainstreaming Migration Jonathan Crush and Sally Parody*. Southern Africa Migration.
- Ukwatta, S. (2003). Male Migration and Marti weighted Households. *United Nation Economic Commission for Western Asia, and International Migration in the Arab World*, 7 (1), 23-26.
- Zeeshan, M., & Sultana, A. (2020). Return migration to Pakistan during Covid-19 pandemic: Unmaking the challenges. *Pakistan Perspectives*, 25(1).