

Socio-Psychological Impact of Spousal Migration for Financial Support on Newly Married Women in Pakistan

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Abstract

Husbands mostly migrate for the financial support of their families. Yet it also results in the absence of cultural and traditional figures from their families. Sooner or later, this absence comes up with changes in the lives of newly married women. Aims of this research delve into the social, economic, and psychological dimensions of women and families affected by migration, employing a qualitative approach. The study reveals that migrant wives benefit from enhanced access and healthcare opportunities. Additionally, migration correlates positively with increased budget allocations for households needs. However, psychological disturbances manifest in the personalities of newly married women (NMW) due to the absence of their husbands, contributing to emotional stress, loneliness, and sadness. Similarly, while women may experience economic stability, they also contend with emotional challenges.

Keywords: families and women, psychological disturbance, economic stability, Psychology Stress.

Introduction

The current Pakistan political, economic and social conditions are the mega factors in the form of push factors to move in the abroad for the purpose of better employments. Many of the male are move due to these push factors toward the other countries for the better employment. The phenomenon of male migration in search of better economic opportunities has profound socio-psychological implications for newly married women in Pakistan. Many of the newly married male spouse leave the country for the purpose of better earning abroad. It is also indicated by the better opportunities of the employments and many others factors are the pull factors in the employment abroad. husbands leave to secure financial stability for their families, these women often grapple with feelings of loneliness and emotional distress. Research indicates that the absence of their partners can lead to increased anxiety and depression, as they face the dual pressures of managing household responsibilities and societal expectations (Khan & Zafar, 2022). Many women report a sense of

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isolation when their husbands migrate, resulting in diminished social circles and a lack of emotional support (Raza & Javed, 2020). This situation is further exacerbated by traditional gender roles that place significant burdens on women, compelling them to adapt to new dynamics while often feeling powerless in their circumstances (Iqbal, 2023).

Moreover, the research conducted by Chaudhry, M.A (2017), impacted that, these spouses migrated abroad leads toward the chronic anxiety in the female couple, due the social and other constrains. These stress, further disturbed, once their kids due to lack of supervision take less interest in the education.

However, some women also find empowerment through this experience, taking on new responsibilities and developing resilience in the face of adversity. This duality highlights a complex landscape where financial necessity can empower women while simultaneously exposing them to emotional hardship (Ahmed, 2021). The interplay of these factors underscores the importance of community support systems to mitigate the adverse effects of migration, enabling women to navigate their challenges more effectively. Addressing these socio-psychological issues is crucial for fostering well-being among newly married women left behind, thus informing policy interventions and community initiatives aimed at supporting their needs (Khan & Zafar, 2022).

Objectives of the Study

- i. To know the socio-psychologically effect of the migration of spouse on the newly married women.
- ii. To find the solution and recommendation need to over come the socio-psychologically effect of migrant spouse on the newly married women.

Theoretical Framework

The socio-psychological impact of male migration on newly married women in Pakistan can be understood through several interconnected theoretical lenses.

i. Social Support Theory

Social Support Theory posits that emotional, informational, and practical support from others can mitigate stress and enhance well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985). For newly married women whose husbands have migrated, community support becomes crucial in alleviating feelings of loneliness and anxiety. Strong social networks can provide emotional sustenance and practical assistance, allowing these women to cope better with their circumstances (Raza & Javed, 2020).

ii. Gender Role Theory

Gender Role Theory explains how traditional gender roles can shape individuals' experiences and identities (Eagly & Wood, 1999). In Pakistan, cultural expectations often place the burden of household management on women, particularly when husbands migrate. This theory highlights how women may struggle with increased responsibilities while also facing societal pressures to conform to traditional roles, leading to a conflict between empowerment and emotional distress (Iqbal, 2023).

iii. Coping Theory

Coping Theory emphasizes how individuals respond to stressors in their lives (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Newly married women may adopt various coping strategies—both problem-focused and emotion-focused—in response to the challenges posed by their husbands' migration. Understanding these coping mechanisms can provide insight into the psychological resilience or vulnerability of these women, revealing how they navigate their dual roles as breadwinners and caregivers (Khan & Zafar, 2022).

iv. Economic Dependency Theory

Economic Dependency Theory explores the relationship between financial support and psychological well-being (Duncan, 1996). As many women depend on remittances from their migrated husbands, this dependency can create a complex emotional landscape where financial security may be counterbalanced by feelings of insecurity and isolation. This theory aids in understanding how economic factors influence the socio-psychological health of women left behind (Ahmed, 2021).

Conclusion

The interplay of social support, gender roles, coping mechanisms, and economic dependency provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the socio-psychological effects of migration on newly married women in Pakistan. By examining these dimensions, the study aims to highlight the multifaceted challenges and resilience of these women, ultimately informing interventions that can enhance their well-being.

Research Methodology

The families randomly selected from the Pakistan various districts for the purpose of the selection of their views on the said study. The comprehensive case of the families was taken for the said study. The interview, which was framed in the semi structured form, was conducted on the given theme of the research.

A case study approach was employed to examine why and how the occurrence of phenomenon within the communities and who is involved, as recommended by Berg (2017). This approach facilitated the collection of in-depth, rich qualitative data information on the specific phenomenon in the specific surroundings of District Gujrat.

Research Design and Key Informants

This research is qualitative in nature. The participants were contacted through their family head, which was explained in detail about purpose of research and sample subjects, of informed consent on behalf of the interviewee. In all of the interviews key informants either were male or NMW herself or were relatives or acquaintances of the NMW identified such household where husbands' migration had taken place. As informants were explained about nature of subjects therefore it was easy to gain their consent and cooperation for the in-depth interviews. The informants asked about subjects in pre interview informal discussion and encouraged participants to express their natural experiences about the subject under investigation.

Interviews of the Respondent of the Study

All the interviews were arranged to conduct in the participant's homes over a period of 2 weeks. In two sessions the process was completed. Researcher tried to possibly conduct interviews in an informal environment ensuring a genuine and trusting exchange discussion. Because of the good cause rapport between the participants and interviewers, both were pro-actively conversed and seemed quite contented during the interview. The participants answered in detailed as per base of their personal experience and feelings. Due to the study requirement interview protocol was written and developed in English, after that according to ease of interviewee translated into Urdu language. Interviews were recorded by cell phone voice recording application.

Sample of the Study

There were 09 females performed as sample participants whose husbands had migrated to Europe, Dubai and Saudi Arabia since two to ten years prior and purposive sampling technique was use. Three women were belonging to rural families and the other six were settled in urban areas, but two of them recently shifted from rural to urban vicinity. Approximately 25-to-40-year range of age wise women was selected for this study. Mostly of them participants were matured and responsible either belongs to rural or urban background. All were well educated, only three of them had passed Intermediate. According to this range their

education level starts from Higher Secondary School to Ph.D. They have spent their married life from 3 to 10 years. All the participants, except two women, had one or more children with them.

Results of the Study

Data Analysis

After conducting these interviews translate data from audio form to English and then were transcribed. This study was purely qualitative in nature so the transcribed data was converted for thematic analysis. Questions of the research were used as the coding frame and the answers of the individuals' participants well as the communication between the individual participants of the groups were considered as units of data. With the help of alphanumeric coding method which traditionally used for this purpose was adopted and transcribed. As guide in the light of questions of the research, the text was coded after searched. Different numeric and alphabetic codes with colors highlighters were used to distinguish each denoted a category. At the end on the stage of main themes identified, the data which was remaining got re-coded.

Thematic Analysis

Almost all themes for this research were driven from the actual data; while the name for every theme was selected as the name used by previous researches to match the themes. The main purpose behind this practice was to figure out the universality of the participant's feelings and their life experiences. Eight themes were identified by the thematic analysis: Husband as protective shield, understanding of in-law's moods and attitudes, emotional distresses, feeling of loneliness, additional responsibilities, worries without husband, worries about tough and targeted life of husband, self-expectations and life satisfaction, prioritize the things and lemmatize you. Researcher tried to describe each theme below as per data collected with natural feelings and experiences of the participants:

Husband as Protective Shield

Protection in context of married woman is the most impotent element in life. Individually as well as in joint family systems women always want a strong relation of husband who introduces her as his companion. It has been observed that happiness, feeling joys and moments in life of women who are living with their husbands are quite satisfying in respect of those who are suffering alone after migration of their life partner. One woman said that I feel very disrespectful on events in or

outside the family without my husband although all members of the family are very cooperative, but that time I miss him a lot (P8). It clearly shows that presence of a person in relation has great meaning in a woman life after her marriage.

Understanding of In-law's Moods and Attitudes

Women argued that after migration of their husband over all family expectations become attached with them and every one want individual attention from them. It has been observed that in joint family system the responsibilities are mostly divided upon elder son and his wife and after migration his wife is the only person who will take care of all alone. As a participant told that being elder sister-in-law to take care of younger brothers, sisters and parents increases toughness in my routine which is not only a great responsibility even other members of the family also expected me for solutions of daily household problems

Emotional Distresses

After marriage a major change in woman life is to shift from parent's house to the husband house and in Pakistani society husband is the only person who bare her all expenses. As for as when she starts a new life and get emotional attachment with her husband, so a lot of expectations she has in her mind. Suddenly or a planned migration come and push her towards feelings of emotional distress and sadness. One of the participants expresses that I feel emptiness in my life which was not in past because I expected to move along with him but now, I am also far from my own parents so sudden changes are difficult to accept and these are not easy to manageable.

Self-Dependency and Economic Empowerment in Life

After marriage every woman wants an independent life with her husband. Decision of migration is mostly taken mutually by the both members for better economic life. In Pakistan it is common that young people migrate in several countries because of unemployment and still overall ratio is increasing day by day. Although in labor market of other countries especially in Europe Pakistani youngster found hardworking and loyal with the work because they belong to the poor backgrounds. They do work hard and pay the taxes also timely send remittances to the family back for their household expenses. Normally in Pakistani culture women do not take part in decision making but they want to be self-dependent and to spend remittances sending by their husbands. One participant says that I was availing financial support from my father before marriage but after marriage I went into financial stress because money is not in my hand and

all responsibilities are now upon me which a tough and targeted assignment for me

Feeling of Loneliness

Feeling of loneliness is the common and biggest problem of almost every woman whose husband has migrated after marriage. Emotional and physical separation pushed them in the feelings of loneliness and in the interview these women were expressed with evidences. Many women were intensively distressed, because their husbands were being far away from them and they missed them a lot in every moment of the life. One woman expressed that I feel loneliness to manage most of the things myself and alone to take household decisions. She also related that yes, I feel loneliness and now we have decided to take decision about our family reunion process because life is too short and necessities has no end, so control spending and live together. It has been also observed that the intensity of loneliness feeling degree of expressed directly related to the time spent apart.

Worries Without Husband

These women also claim to worry about health issues of their migrated husbands in the host country. Mostly women admitted in their interview's different types of worries about management issues of their household matters. One of them told the researcher my father-in-law suffering from cancer disease so health issues regarding parents affect me because being a woman many of the time I feel difficulty to manage it alone.

Additional Family Responsibilities

After migration of their husbands, many of the women started to play a more pro-active role in management of the family matters, by making them self-independent if not all together independent. These women performed a significant role and taken up their family's responsibilities, households, and manage the financial issues of the house, also establish good social relations and interactions with the relatives of families as directed by their husbands. Although in most of the interviews it has been noticed that these women were not willing and happy with these responsibilities. Not all expressed but the many of them had taken up these duties as an additional burden by their husbands and for his happiness fulfilling the responsibilities.

- i. *We were participated in managing household responsibilities together but after migration these are totally shifted upon me.*
- ii. *No, there are no extra responsibilities upon me till now.*

- iii. *Yes, responsibilities get increases especially in-laws house, work in kitchen, and other household also contribution in different activities.*
- iv. *Yes, when he was here so all the responsibilities were upon him and after his migration it is my duty to handle all of them.*
- v. *Yes, you need to face extra responsibilities which were belongs to your husband and now you need to fill that empty space and take care of whole family as well.*
- vi. *Being an elder sister it was a great responsibility to take care of all family after migration.*
- vii. *Yes, both inside and outside of the house responsibilities were upon me.*
- viii. *Yes, my extra responsibilities get tripled.*
- ix. *Not much, just to deposit utility bills in bank or to bring grocery items from store were added in my extra responsibilities.*

To look after their personal and family financial matters by remittances which received from their husbands, communicate with him about day-to-day affairs related to the health issues of his family members are a few of the additional responsibilities. In continuation of the interviews regarding context of the study most of women also told that their participation as compensation for their husband's absence in their family gatherings such as funerals, engagements and weddings. Women who are living in joint family systems also have duty to take care of their parent's in-laws suffering with different diseases.

Worries about Tough and Targeted Life of Husband

Similarly, Jurado et al. (2017) differentiate that there are several stressors related to migration or factorial components passionate trouble, such as administratively after change of place, trauma amid migration, personal lawful status, and ability to speak language. While most emigrants wish to make better their lives, unfortunately some of them passed through a few experiences at multiple levels, such as theirs, social (support) network, financial status or near family engagements, and they faced a type of discriminatory behavior on the regular basis.

Self-Expectations and Life Satisfaction

Self-satisfaction is the always be a major problem of women who live alone after marriage. Especially in joint family system and after migration of husband she always tried to accomplish her household duties. When the researcher did in depth interviews so find that in fact, they are

all trying to do busy themselves in the daily house works or otherwise pass their time on the social media. One participant said that all the day I do busy myself in homework and feel mental stress although all family members respectfully treat me but when I get tiered than start missing him (husband). Another participant expresses her feelings that I got married for my husband so s I am alone here so I need to focus on further studies to pass this crucial time.

Discussion and Findings

The Participants response which the researcher has been got from in depth interviews are grouped under multiple themes to discuss above research questions.

Conceptualizing the Wellbeing of Parents and Family

The interview data highlights that migrants perceive the well-being of their parents as an investment in their health at the old age stage. Participants understand the significance of physical health in enhancing their parent's well-being, and their decisions regarding investment in health are influenced by personal and cultural perspectives.

In Pakistan, there is a general perception that private hospitals offer better peer healthcare facilities compared to public hospitals. As a result, migrant families, who are often economically well-off, get treatment of their parents in private hospitals. However, this choice comes with significant financial implications, as illustrated by one participant who expressed that remittances are primarily allocated towards health expenses, leaving little for other household needs.

The data also suggests that household expenditure choices are influenced by parent's health requirements, with healthcare being prioritized and a major portion of the budget allocated accordingly. Over time, households may allocate even more resources towards their wives. Migration can uplift the economic status of families left behind, providing better access to healthcare facilities for parents. Additionally, some women believe that their husbands' lack of qualifications led to their inability to find employment in Pakistan, which ultimately contributed to family disintegration.

Day to day Life Attainment

Migration of husband impacts on the NMW life performance is evident in the interview data, as expressed by one participant who shared concerns about her daily routine life style. The participant believes that the presence of the husband could potentially bring about positive changes in the behavior of her mental satisfaction.

Remittances

Foreign remittances are in fact considered a financial contribution source for households, and they have both long-term and short-term effects on household development. In the short term, remittances often lead to increased consumption and poverty alleviation.

The interview data from participants in researcher study support the positive impact of remittances on parent's health and well-being of wives. Overall, the interview data underscore the remittances effects on parent's health that how they provide them an easy access to healthcare services and contribution in improved nutritional status, specifically among NMW.

Responsible Attitude

Wives of migrants often take on more responsibilities within their households due to the absence of their husbands. They become more mature and responsible at an early stage after marriage as compared the others.

In our society, the role of the husband is often seen as that of an umbrella, providing protection and support to the family. The absence of the husband due to migration can lead to feelings of pessimism, shyness, and silence among the parents and family left behind. This suggests that the absence of the husband not only affects the practical responsibilities within the household but also has psychological and emotional implications for the family.

Migration and NMW

Decision of male to migrate from house is a difficult process that directly entails emotional, physical, and also financial effects on the newly married women. Under various themes these effects can be grouped, as the researcher discussed below:

Emotional Impact: Male migration decision often results in significant emotional distress for the NMW. They may experience feelings of loneliness, sadness, and anxiety due to the separation from their spouse. The absence of emotional support and companionship can take a toll on their mental well-being.

Increased Responsibilities: With the male migrant's absence, NMW often have to shoulder additional responsibilities within the household. They may need to take on tasks such as managing finances, caring for parents, and handling household chores, which can lead to physical and mental fatigue.

Financial Strain: The migration of the male family member can also have financial implications for the women left behind. They may face challenges in managing household expenses and may have to rely solely on the remittances sent by the migrant. This financial dependency can create stress and uncertainty regarding the family's financial stability.

Social Isolation: Women may also experience social isolation as a result sudden migration of their husbands. They may feel disconnected from their social circles and community, leading to feelings of alienation and loneliness. Mostly now use social media for time pass.

Uncertainty and Anxiety: The decision of the male to migrate often brings about a sense of uncertainty and anxiety for the NMW. They may worry about the safety and well-being of their spouse abroad, as well as the future of their family in his absence.

Overall, the decision of the male to migrate has multifaceted effects on the NMW, encompassing emotional, physical, financial, and social dimensions. These effects can significantly impact their well-being and quality of life, cope with the emigrational challenges highlighting the need for support systems and resources to help them.

Women Enjoy Improved Socio-Economic Status

The data from the study indicate that the decision to migrate was often driven by poverty and financial hardship experienced by the families before migration. Nearly 90% of the participants reported that their families were struggling with poverty before migration of male member from the family. Participants shared stories of financial struggle, with some even having to work to make ends meet before their husbands decided to migrate.

One participant explained that her husband didn't have a job in Pakistan, and their family was living in poverty. The responsibilities of their parents, including health, seemed insurmountable. In response to their difficult circumstances, her husband decided to migrate abroad. However, after migration, they were able to improve their socio-economic status, and they now have access to all the facilities of life.

This highlights the significant migration impact on the socio-economic status of the women and families left behind. Foreign remittances sent by the emigrant family members play a diversifying role in improving household income, consumption patterns, and asset accumulation. As a result, families left behind are able to alleviate poverty and achieve a better quality of life.

Overall, the data underscores the economic motivation behind migration and the positive socio-economic results experienced by NMW and families as a result of foreign remittances.

No Role in Decision Making

In Pakistani society strong traditional principles push up the male to perform a dominant role in making decisions of household while on the other side role of female is ever been as caregiver in our society. This research revealed that in Pakistani society there is no change till now. Migration of male family members strengthens rather than weaken the ideology of gender traditions. There is another reflection has been observed that without female consent the decision of migration made by the husbands.

Women Wishes about Migration

All participants shared their wish feelings regarding emptiness of life in the absence of her male: *Fewer earnings are better than more but to live with family is worth full either you live here or abroad especially your wife is not a demand person.*

If a chance to take decision so I advise him to come back and live with me in Pakistan.

Start a business here in Pakistan or also take me with him where he lives.

I wish him to decide family reunion and take us with him. My life is now controversial here otherwise requests my mother-in-law to treat me with justice.

I am against this system in which wives are here and husbands are abroad so I wish to live together.

No one can spend happy life with only wealth or without husband; both are important.

Life is too short and necessities have no end so control spending and live together.

I am in the favor of family reunion at any cast

Some time I get double minded but my wish is to live together even no money.

Data had been quantified that the woman's economic security makes them confident and brave. It has been already identifying that, increases in responsibilities at the initial stage of migration get woman away from her actual duties and without her husband she feels alone.

Communication Channels

According to this study researcher find that families of emigrant's regularly communicate with the migrant through social media. By the technological advancement cross border distances get shrinks and these resources help to decrease the emptiness and sadness level of in family.

Some of the participants told that by using these communication tools such as WhatsApp, Skype, IMO and internet migrants also spend their free time with their families.

Conclusion

On the socio-economic family's status migration has multidimensional impacts especially psychology and emotions of members in the house behind. NMW experienced here both negative and positive consequences in migration context. Migration many of the time turn to an improvement in the family's quality of life, an increase in daily households' earnings, and bigger access to a daily useable items and services. On the other side, it has also negative shadows and consequences, such as feelings of insecurity of the women and loneliness.

In this study it has been explored that male migration most of the time a source of up gradation in socio-economic migrant's NMW and families by providing them with more access to comfortable life setups. However, also indicates that women eventually unable to anticipate in the process of decision making. Health related decisions are very important in nature both and decisions about NMW as well as parents are controlled by the husband, even though he may be living abroad. Women, either living behind or with their husband abroad, often have restricted autonomy and freedom in process of decision-making.

Furthermore, this study advised that NMW may not be comfortable and satisfied with their personal life without their male partners. NMW may need to depend on other family members of in-laws for mobility in society. They may also experience emotional disturbance, loneliness, and sadness in result of migration of husband.

Despite these challenges, the economic benefits of migration may outweigh the difficulties faced by NMW, leading them to accept and adapt to their circumstances within the family and society. The study underscores the complex interplay between economic prosperity, emotional and social challenges experienced by NMW in context of migration.

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