International Migration of Father and Academic Performance of Children Left Behind: A Case Study of Dir Lower

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Abstract

Migration is a global phenomenon. People migrate from one place to another for various reasons such as war, or climate change or similarly for better job opportunities. Many Pakistani Labour people work in the Arab states of Persian Gulf, leaving their families behind. We consider the consequences for their children's education, such as absenteeism, lack of participation in the class activities, and unsatisfactory grades in subjects like mathematics, science, and English. In absence of proper check and balance, labour migrants' children prefer gaming over giving more attention to their studies. It is evident from the study that emigration of father has a significant impact on learning abilities and level of concentration in class. In this context, it is evident that stress is a major factor which hinders the learning abilities of children of emigrant fathers. It is evident that father emigration is responsible for poor performance in the school. The academic performance such as test performance of children remain poor whose father work abroad particularly, in subjects such as mathematics, science, and English.

Keywords: International migration; education of left behind children; academic participation; achievements

Introduction

International migration occurs all over the world. People migrate due to various reasons such as war, famine, and natural disasters but most often for economic purposes. International migration has greatly increased in the last decade, often, labour migrants leaves families behind leading to what is known as transnational families (Rossela, 2012). According to International Organization (2012) report about 192 million people are residing outside their families or place of residence which comprise 3 percent of world population.

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The migration took place because of lack of opportunities in home countries, family reunification, ties with countries of destination, better available opportunities and services such is health, education, access to material goods. Increased demand of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers including higher wages in the country of residence attracted the people to migrate. (Demilio et al., 2007). It provides productive labour and economic lifeline for million people and relieves the pressure of unemployment in origin countries. Further Demilio et al., (2007) stated that labour migration has positive impact on household economy/budget and is important source of income in developing countries. In addition it is a source of empowerment in term of self-esteem and economic independence of migrant workers. In most part of the world migration took place specifically for livelihood/economic purpose (Massy et al., 1994). Various factors responsible for migration affecting many countries such that rural urban migration is one of the dominant factors. Among the most common factors of migration are globalization, international division of labour in various regions and countries of greater labour demand and higher wages however, conflicts, environmental differences in various region of the world also the reason of international migration.

According to Demilo et al. (2007), international migration is linked with survival strategies for economic purpose to fulfil the needs of their families. The migration process varies from place to place and region to region. In Asian countries specifically in Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa mostly male members migrates to Gulf Countries for better income opportunity while doesn’t accompanied by families because of economic factors (Whitehead & Hashim, 2007). Thus caring of left behind families and children is a crucial task and they decide to provide care for the left behind families to look after the routine activates of the family and children. Mostly such arrangents have been done from the blood relatives to provide them protection during his absence and help them in routine activities as well as caring their left behind children (Durišić & Bunijevac, 2017) In Pakhtun culture and society extended family is a common system therefore grandparents and carry out the task of care giving and guardian. However, Mexican families doing such arrangements to avoid the problems of undocumented travelling and crossing US border (Durišić & Bunijevac, 2017). International migration having positive and negative effects and consequences for left behind families and children especially the education of children greatly suffered. (Ranja, 2007; Farooq, 2009).

Studies on migration focuses on remittances however, ignored the noneconomic factor for left behind children, spouses and elderly family members psychological, emotional and health outcomes. The impact of migration on children and families has been numbered to be so numerous that apart from the risk of broken families it can leads to
redefining of familial relations such as in extended families children replacing biological parents with the relative with whom they are cared of. Sometime even they go to the extent that they calling their care takers grandparents as mum and dad (Toth, 2007).

Majority of Pakistani labour and people of Pakhtunkhwa working in Arab and Gulf countries (Farooq, 2009). According to Economic Survey of Pakistan (2008), 45% of all emigrants work in Arab and Gulf countries while, remaining works in other developed countries of the world. In this context, international migration has improved the family quality of life and contributed to rural poverty alleviation in the form of remittances (Zuhry, 2002). He further stated that workers’ remittances have been posted positive growth in last year’s such as the remittances increased to $11,569.82 million in April -July 2012-13 instead of 10,876.99.

Backer et al., (2009) is of the view that Father Emigration negatively affected families and children left behind. In this regard, consumption patterns of families with emigrant workers have demonstrative effects on their spending which is a consequence (Addilton, 1984). Benjamen and Turpin (2008) is of the view that children health, socialization and education affected negatively. Similarly, international migration of father affected the morality, personality, and behavior as well as school performance of children remains behind (Rossi, 2006). Further, father absences have demonstrative negative impacts on children such as self-esteem, increase depression, anger and feeling of abandonment (African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) Observatory on migration 2012). The drop out ratio increased while, school enrolment increased due father absence as an emigrant (Rossi, 2006). The school attendance, education attainment, achievements, and academic performance lowered at middle, secondary and higher secondary level because of father emigration. (McKenzi & Rapoport, 2006).

Studies on international migration in Pakistan focuses on remittance while ignore the factors of adverse impact of international migration on education of left behind children. Although the developmental factors of remittance cannot be ignored such that it has a positive impact on the economy of country, improve family life standard, better and luxurious life. The education of children remains behind have been negatively exaggerated i.e their school performance, educational attainments school attendance and participation in class activities while,- the remittances received from abroad have positive impacts on economic prosperity of family in shape of investing in small businesses and construction works Such remittances are invested in various sectors of life i.e business, construction works. The academic achievements, class participation, homework, attendance and good grade at various test/subjects such as English, Mathematics, and other science subjects of
Parental migration has both positive and negative impacts on families and children remains at home (Antamen, 2012). Increase household income, improvements on family life, and health while it6 have negatively affected the academic achievements, performance, participation in class activities, and increase the dropout ratio of remaining children at home. Mostly, children are absent from school to perform father responsibilities, no interest in studies, thinking school as a prison and burden while prefer to do domestic activities. According to Saliva (2012), International migration affects children’s behavior, health, attitude as well as education. It is found that parental migration have adversely effected the school attendance, of left behind children (Giannelli, 2010). It is also found that migration of father is significantly associated with academic achievements, behavioral and emotional problems of children at home (Li et al., 2010). Further, it is also found that international migration of father is significant lag in educational progress of girls (Antamen, 2012). Moreover, international migration of fathers have a significant effect on education of older children at home (McKenzie et al., 2011). It is concluded that parental migration have positive impacts on family economy, standard of life, luxury households, women autonomy, participation in decision making and spending the money while have strong negative impacts on education of children as the academic performance, participation in class/school activities weak grades in various subjects and mostly remain absent from school at Middle, secondary and higher secondary level. The drop ratio of children increased due to father emigration.

Statement of the Problem

Parental migration has both positive and negative impacts on children (Antamen, 2012). Migration positively affect the household income, standard of life, while it has negatively affect the education of children such as the academic achievement, absence from school, weak performance class, participation in curricular activities. Mostly children are involved to perform father responsibilities. International migration affects children’s behavior, health, attitude as well as education (Saliva, 2013; Abramowitz et al., 1992). Studies found that emigration of father is significantly associated with academic achievements (Li et al., 2011; Rozelle and Zhang, 2010). Further, it was found that international migration of father in China is associated with a significant lag in the educational progress of girls (Antamen, 2012). The education of older children comparatively most affected (McKenzei et al., 2011).

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Inherently, international migration involves parental absence which has negative impacts on children outcomes at school (Antamen, 2012). Also, considering the fact that Joint, extended and nuclear family system exist in Pakistan especially in Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa specifically in Malakand division. Extended family member plays important role in caring of children left behind.

This study was carried out with the hope that the result obtained will helpful to the questions arose in international debates that how emigration adversely affect the education of left behind children? The current study was thus attempted to explore the impact of father absence being migrated to Middle East and gulf countries that how such migration adversely influence the educational attainment of children left behind? Particularly, the study will investigate the impact of emigration i.e academic achievements, participation in class activities attendance in school, attitude toward educational attainment as well as participation in school activities.

Further, the results of the study will help the policy makers in the destination and country of emigration to take children into consideration when framing their policies on migration and family reunification.

**Objective of the Study**

1. The major objective of the current study is to find, discuss and elaborate the role of parental migration in children drop out of children at school level. In this regard, the specific objectives of the study are given below:

2. To study the father absence on children participation in School activities.

3. To investigate father absence on children academic achievements.

**Methodology**

Qualitative research design was adopted for the current study, in order to study the problem in-depth and to dig out the root causes of the issue Bakker et al., (2009). This study was carried out in the capital City of District Dir Lower, and Dir Upper. The data was collected from 6 government and 6 private middle and high schools of the districts. Moreover, 15 teachers was selected from these schools having knowledge of emigrants because they know about the locality, school performance, participation in school curriculum activities etc.

1. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

1.1. Emigration of father and Academic Performance of Left behind Children
The educational performance of children can be examined through their efficiency in various subjects i.e., test score, class participation, performance in various exams arranged in the school, homework, co-curricular performance etc.

**Test Score**

Spera, (2005) are of the view that absence of father has a significant effect on children school performance. The mentioned studies measured the performance of left behind children where various methods were applied such as test scores in major subjects i.e., Mathematics, Science subject, English etc. The studies indicated that 78 per cent of left behind children performed below average (Zhao et al., 2012). Liang and Chen (2007) further argue that children with poor performance lead to drop out. Spera (2005) is of the opinion that parental presence and monitoring of their children has a significant positive effect on school performance of their children at different levels while the father's absence adversely affects the performance of their children at different levels and such effects are numerous at middle and secondary levels. Zhao et al., (2017), identified that parental migration has significantly exogenous and have adverse effects on children school performance. He further pointed that one more migratory parent marginally reduces the performance of left behind children at school 1.73 percent more. Field information in relevance to the literature show that the test performance of children having father working abroad remain poor. Majority of the respondents stated that children with emigrant fathers often fail test specifically of difficult subjects such as Math, English, and science subjects. In this regard, a respondent argued that:

“...According to my observation the performance of children whose father remain at home is three times better than the children whose father work abroad. Further, the children whose father abroad have every facility such as stationary and they have enough pocket money. The reason of poor performance in school is because of no proper care from parental/father side…” (Ahmad Nawaz).

Another respondent said that:

“...students whose parents are emigrant are weak in Maths, English, physics, chemistry, and other science subjects. The results in the mention subjects are very poor because these subjects need attentive study and more time as compare to other subjects while children with emigrant father are allergic from the book. They do not perform well because of lack of interest in the study....” (Rooh Ul Amin).

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It is evident from literature as well as field information that academic performance such as test performance of children remain poor whose father work abroad in particular in subjects which are difficult. These subjects include math, science and English.

**Exam Performance**

Exam performance of children without parents (e.g. in case of death, divorce and migration) often remain poor. Parents are important for the emotional stability, psychological satisfaction and need fulfillment of the children. Similarly, education or schooling is one the most important aspects children’s life. Parents are important for educational care of the children. Parental care such as visiting to school, discussion with teachers, taking information about the moral and behavioral conduct of the children is necessary whereby migrant parents are unable to do it which may lead to problems regarding exam performance among school children. Many studies confirm that children of migrant parents perform poorly in exam. It include low grades as well as failure in exams. It is also evident that failure in exam and poor grades often result in discontinuation of education (Giannelli, 2010). Field information show resemblance to the literary information. Majority of the respondents agreed with the argument that children of emigrant fathers are poor performers in exam. Field information highlighted many reasons for the poor performance of the left behind children e.g. excess of money involve them in other activities, lack of supervision, lack of parental visits to school and discussion with teachers and keeping the bad company. In order to validate the argument, an extract from an interview is:

“….I have observation on many children of emigrant parents. I have identified three children who were very good in exams; however, when their fathers emigrated they started performing poorly….,” (Gauhar Ali).

Regarding the reasons of poor performance the same respondent stated that:

“….there are multiple reasons for such a poor performance, for instance, they buy expensive phones and get involve with anti-social peers due to lack of supervision…” (Ahmad Irshad).

Another respondent asserted that:

“….not all but some of the children get poorer in exams when their father emigrates. It all depends upon the money or electronic devices such as phone or laptop send by their fathers…,” (Hamd Ullah).
The discussion reveals that exam performance of the children left behind is affected by the father emigration. They receive remittance and buy expensive phones, get involve with anti-social peers, develop lack of interest in schooling as well as lack of supervision leads to poor performance in exam of left behind children.

**Co-Curricular Performance**

Co-curricular activities play an important role in psycho-social development of a child. Co-curricular activities include as a significant component of modern educational and schooling system. It helps in developing positive personality with competence, decision making and self-presentation. Co-curricular activities include games at school level, debate arrangement, interactive sessions among children etc (Zhao et al., 2017). Children in absence of parent (for example due to death, divorce or migration) have been observed inactive in co-curricular activities. Such lack of inactivity is often as a result of lack of parental discussion and visiting to schools, stress and lack of aspiration and inspiration. Children with low involvement in co-curricular activities are perform academically poor. For example, they score low marks in test and papers and overall have low grades or frequent failure in exams (Koser, 2007). Field information in this context resemblance to the literature. Respondents were of the opinion that many of the children remaining inactive in co-curricular activities belong to families with emigrant parent(s). These children are stressful and have less interest in such activities. Another important factor mentioned by respondents was the use of cell phone and greater involvement with peers of children with emigrant fathers. A respondent stated that:

“....children whose father works in Middle East countries often have expensive cell phones, tablets and other electronic gaming accessories. They are less interested in games with physical activity which are necessary and help in keeping the mind active. They do not participate in debate competition arranged weekly in the school. As a result, they do not develop confidence and competence level which affect their exam performance as well. We have many children who remain active in co-curricular activities and they are good in exams as well...” (Sami Ullah).

Another respondent argued that:

“....usually those children are good participants in co-curricular activities whose parents visit to school, and migrant fathers visit school rarely. As a result, children of migrant parents are less active in co-curricular activities....” (Iarar Ahmad).

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The discussion reflects that father’s emigration is responsible for lack of communication between parent and teachers as well as leads to lack of aspiration for children. Such a situation leads to inactivity of children in co-curricular activities. Children not participating in co-curricular activities are academically not good which may lead to drop out as well.

**Learning Abilities and Class Room Participation**

A bulk of literature enumerates that children of migrant parents are average and below average in class participation (see the studies of Smith, 2001; Thomson et al., 1994). Chares (1990) argues that physical presence of father is very important for children. During migration process, father leave the country and emigrate while left their children behind whose lose the required parental support which have a negative impact on the participation of their children in class activities (Duan, 2013). In addition to it, stress prevail among children of emigrant parent(s). Stress is significantly linked with concentration level in class. Lack of concentration in class is responsible for lack of ability to note lecture, learn lecture and then participating in class (Thomson et al., 1994). A study conducted in India concludes that children of migrants have three times lower tendency to participate in class. They often remain silent in class and are weak in responding answer to a question (Smith, 2001). A study conducted by UNICEF indicated that for children whose father abroad do not interested to take part in the class activity (UNICEF, 2008). Field information shows a significant resemblance to the literary information. For instance, respondents agreed that children whose father works abroad are weak learners. Children of emigrant fathers are not active in the class and they often are stressful. Therefore, they lack interest and concentration in class which also make them unable to learn effectively. In this regard, an extract from an interview is:

“...I have observed many of my students who remain stressful in class, and by asking them I came to know that they were missing their fathers. It also affected their activeness in the class....” (Hazrat Hussain).

Another respondent avowed that:

“...I am not sure about the reason, however, children of fathers working abroad are weak learners. They do not understand easily and therefore also perform poorly in tests and exams....” (Islam Hussain).

A respondent (Israr Ahmad) stated that:

“...children of emigrant fathers are stressful, they do not have concentration in class and are weak learners. These children also remain weak in exams and eventually discontinue their education....”
Further, another respondent told that:

“... The student participation in the class depends on the father presence. I know that participation of children in the class whose father remains at home is better compare to the students whose father work abroad. Those children whose father work abroad do not have support to encourage them to participate in the class activities” (Baqiat Ullah).

The discussion reveals that emigration of father has significant impact on leaning abilities and level of concentration in class. In this context, it is evident that stress is major factor which hinders the learning abilities of children of emigrant fathers. Stress does not allow children to concentrate in class and learn according to their abilities. Lack of concentration and ability to learn also affect the test and exam performance of such children which can lead to discontinuation of education.

**Home Work Related Problems of Left behind Children**

Home work is an important component of modern schooling and educational system. Homework contributes significantly to the skills and learning abilities of the children (Zhao et al., 2017). Parents has a vital role in helping the children in doing homework e.g. reminding the children to do homework, helping the children to understand the concepts in case of any difficulty etc. therefore, absence of parent (s) create a gap which affect the educational performance of children. Absence of father makes the children ignorant such as he is not reminded to do his homework, the children relaxes in case of having authority over him. As a result, the school performance is affected and dis-continues their education in many cases (Grant & Booth, 2009)). Field information show similar results to mentioned literary information. Homework is an important component of modern schooling system and is good for improvement in educational performance of the children. Field information obtained through in-depth interviews reveal those children whose fathers working abroad often do not do their homework. Their mothers have less control over them and fathers’ absence allows them to ignore homework. In this context, a respondent replied that:

“...yes, off course children whose father is in Dubai or Saudia does not bother to do homework....” (Rooh Ullah)

Another respondent stated that:

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“…one of the major reasons of poor exam performance among children of emigrant fathers is the homework issue. Children in absence of father are ignorant in context of homework…. ” (Israr Ahmad)

The discussion enumerates that homework and related problem prevail among left behind children. The information shows that left behind children are not supervised at home such as lack of reminding and authority to do homework leading to irregularity in doing homework. It also affects the academic achievement and may lead to discontinuation of education.

The discussion indicates that left behind children performance is lower. Their academic achievement is weak because mother illiteracy and no awareness about education. Mostly, the children are busy in household activities so that they do not give importance to their education. Such children spend most of the time using mobile phone, laptops and games which make their performance weak in the school.

Conclusion

Migration of father specifically for economic purpose is one of the important aspects related to children education, socialization, and health. The emigration of father is one of the important factor of which effect the education of children negatively however, such migration have positive effect on household income. Study reveals that the academic achievement of left behind children is poor. It is evident that father emigration is responsible for poor performance in the school. The academic performance such as test performance of children remain poor whose father work abroad particularly, in subjects such as mathematics, science and English. Father absence as emigrant, make the children empower to use Mobile phone, and laptops, watching movies, long hours talking on cell phone, bad peers groups etc. are reasons of losing interest in school activities/educational attainments. The current study states that because of no supervision and illiteracy of mother, exam performance of the children left behind is affected badly. They receive remittance and buy expensive phones, get involve with anti-social peers leads to poor performance in exam of left behind children. Furthermore, father’s emigration is responsible for lack of communication between parent and teachers as well as leads to lack of aspiration for children. Such a situation leads to inactivity of children in co-curricular activities. Children not participating in co-curricular activities are academically not good which may lead to drop out as well. It is evident from the study that emigration of father has significant impact on leaning abilities and level of concentration in class. In this context, it is evident that stress is major factor which hinders the learning abilities of children of emigrant fathers. Stress does not allow children to concentrate in class and learn according to their abilities. Lack of concentration and ability to learn also affect the
test and exam performance of such children. The study enumerates that homework and related problem prevail among left behind children. The study shows that left behind children are not supervised at home such as lack of reminding and authority to do homework leading to irregularity in doing homework which negatively affected the academic achievements of left behind children. The results of the current papers are important for educational policy makers to frame policy for quality education of emigrants children keep special focus children remains at home. The paper is also helpful to educational institution to give special attention to the children study in their schools and ensure quality performance of such children.

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