

OVERSEAS MIGRATION: BEHAVIOURAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS OF LEFT BEHIND CHILDREN IN AZAD JAMMU & KASHMIR PAKISTAN

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Abstract

International labor migration has become a crucial engine for economic development of many countries globally. The migration of rural people for jobs and better income to cities has resulted in the separation of many families. The present study measured the role of paternal overseas migration on behavioral and emotional problems of left behind children. The Sample comprised of 300 children, including 200 left behind children (boys n=100 and girls n=100) and 100 children of non-migrant parents (boys n=50 and girls n=50) as a control group. Sample was selected on the basis of purposive convenient sampling technique. Age range of children was from 6-18 years. Data of present study was collected by using Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) and a demographic sheet. Findings showed significant difference in behavioral and emotional problems, children of overseas migrant parents have more problems as compared to children of non-migrant parents. Left behind children of non-working mothers were found to have more behavioural and emotional problems as compared to children of working mothers. Results of the present study showed gender and age wise nonsignificant mean differences on internal and external problems of left behind children however the findings indicate significant interaction effect of gender and age on internal and external behavioral and emotional problems of children in left behind families.

Keywords: Overseas Migration, Left Behind Children, Behavioral and Emotional Problems.

1 INTRODUCTION

Overseas migration of a parent results in both positive and negative consequences for children staying in their country of origin. Earlier scientific literature has focused on the contributions of father for the family and connects the resulting loss when he becomes a migrant (Antman, 2012; Lahaie et al., 2009).

There is possibility that money sent back may relax the household budget constraints and have positive impact on child education, their health, and a decrease in child labor (Alcaraz et al., 2012; Edwards & Ureta, 2003; Yang, 2008). However, on the negative side Mental health studies indicated profound effects on the psychological wellbeing of children when separated from a parent (Amato & Cheadle, 2005; Huurre et al., 2006).

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B Left behind children (LBC) term is used for those who are left in their home country while one or both their parents migrate to work abroad for a period of at least six months (Gao et al., 2010).

According to Attachment theory, children of sensitive and responsive parents are better able to develop along a healthy pathway. It was studied in agreement with Bowlby's theory that most of psychological problems occur because of intolerable separations and neglect during the childhood and in clinical practice such children have been observed as "withdrawn and isolated" (Bowlby, 1988). Early negative experiences and separation from the attachment figure, when occurs along with the no availability of an adequate substitute causes suicide, depression, substance abuse, conduct disorder, and most of the personality disorders among children (Artico, 2003). The survey conducted by United Nations Children's Fund found that left behind children of migrants parents lack emotional support and face difficulty overcoming parental separation. These children are at risk to cut off their relationships with their peers, and preferably maintain relationships with those children who were living without parental care (United Nations Children's Fund, 2008).

Role of each parent has its own importance in emotional and psychological development of a child. The international Organization for Migration in Bangladesh documented that boys who are left behind with their mothers tend to be more undisciplined and rebellious because of lack of male role models. Other factors can play their role but migration of fathers was cited to be a dominant feature (International Organization for Migration, 2008).

Left behind children under the age of 12 years was assessed for psychological well-being in four Asian countries Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Results of the study showed that in comparison of children in nonimmigrant households, children of migrant fathers in Indonesia and Thailand were more likely to have poor psychological well-being (Graham & Jordan, 2011). Risk of depression was studied in left behind children in China along with a control group of non-migrant parent children. Findings of the study indicated higher risk rate of depression in left behind children as compared to children of non-migrant parents (He et al., 2012). Similarly a study conducted in Pakistan, also revealed that children felt loneliness and lack of guidelines in the absence of their fathers (Farooq & Javed, 2009).

A cross-sectional national study including 820 children matched for both age and gender by using multi-stage random sampling was conducted to find effect of labor migration with left behind children health. Findings indicated that two from every five left behind children suffered from mental disorders by proposing that social and emotional maladjustment and behavioural problems can occur in parental absence. Left behind male children was

more vulnerable to develop psychological disorders (Wickramage et al., 2015).

Overseas employees are one of the most important features in economic development of Pakistan, it has been estimated that since 1971 till 2014 (March) around 7.4 million overseas Pakistanis living/working round the globe (Government of Pakistan, 2014). In Pakistan effect of overseas migration on left behind family has mainly studied in economic perspectives, giving very little attention to in depth study pertaining psychological sufferings of left behind family members (Azhar, 2008; Khan et al., 2010). Past researches mostly consider remittances having crucial importance in emigration effects while large and important psychosocial dynamics have mainly been ignored (McKenzie, 2005).

Present study measured the emotional and behavioral problems of left behind children of overseas migrants in two districts (Poonch and Sudhanotti) of the State of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K). Large number of people from this area moved abroad, because of economic reasons. In Azad Kashmir during 2010 (around 22,535), in 2011 (around 33,133), during 2012 (38,833), during 2013, (40,038) while in 2014, (52,120) workers move abroad (Government of Pakistan, 2015).

These migrants have been sending money on regular basis. Due to these remittances living standard of people in AJ&K has improved (Government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, 2007). Evidence from literature indicates that their families are at risk to suffer at psychological, social and emotional level (Amato & Cheadle, 2005; Huurre et al., 2006; Liu et al., 2009). Considering these aspects present study highlighted the problems suffered by such families, with specific reference to children and in the light of the findings, measures may be taken at state level for addressing and eradicating the problems faced by left behind children.

Once the nature of behavioral and emotional problems is identified, it would further be helpful for mental health professionals and counselors to provide need-based interventions and skills required to deal effectively with the behavioral and emotional problems of the population.

In migrant sending countries no policies exist for left behind children (Yeoh & Lam, 2007). To date no national survey is available on behavioral and emotional problems of left behind children in Azad State of Jammu & Kashmir, and unless and until we don't have information about prevailing behavioral and emotional problems of left behind children of study population, we cannot suggest suitable policies for their remedies.

1.1 Objectives

1. To compare behavioral and emotional problems of the children of migrant parent with non-migrant parents.
2. To study the role of gender and age of left behind children on their internal and external behavioral and emotional problems.

3. To study the effect of demographic variables on study variables

2 METHOD

2.1 Participants

Following all the ethical considerations a total sample of 300 children was selected from two districts of Azad State of Jammu & Kashmir (Sudhnotti & Poonch) through purposive convenient sampling technique. Prior consent of mothers of the children was taken in the form of written agreement for taking part in the present study. The sample of 300 children, was further divided into two groups, first group comprised of 200 left behind children of overseas migrants (including n= 100 school going boys n=100, school going girls,) and second group comprised of 100 children of non-migrant parents, that served as a control group (including school going boys n=50 & school going girls n=50). Sample of control group of children comprised of those children who were residing with both of their parents. Sample of control group was selected from the same areas from which sample of left behind children was selected. Age range of the participants of the study was from 6-18 years. Only those children were selected whose fathers havemigrated to work abroad for a period of at least one year.

2.2 Instruments

Behavioural and Emotional problems of the sample were measured in terms of their scores on Child Behavioral Checklist CBCL (Achenback & Rescorla, 2001). This checklist has been widely used for measuring the child behavioral and emotional problems. These problems include internalizing (i.e., anxious, depressive, and over controlled) and externalizing (i.e., aggressive, hyperactive, noncompliant, and under controlled) behaviors. It also include social withdrawal, somatic complaints, anxiety and depression, destructive behavior, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, aggressive behavior, and delinquent behaviors (Achenbach, 1991).

CBCL has two versions, one for preschool children and other for school age children. On Child behavioral checklist problems are identified by the person (Parent, teacher & Care giver) who knows the child very well. They provide the information in the form of Parent Report Form, Teacher Report Form, while Youth Self Report Form is also available (Achenback & Rescorla, 2001). For the present study parent report form was used (children with the age range of 6-18 years). It has 113 items with a 3-point Likert scale. For each of 113 behavior items, mothers of left behind children were asked to select 0 if the statement is “not true” for the child, 1 if it is “somewhat true”, and 2 if it is “very true” or “often true. External behavioral and emotional problems were measured by combining the raw scores of the behavioral domains of rule-breaking behavior (12 items) and aggressive behavior (20 items), while Internal

behavioral and emotional problems were measured by combining the raw scores of the behavioral domains of Anxious/depressed (13 items), Withdrawn depressed (8 items) and Somatic complaints (11 items). The psychometric properties of CBCL are quite satisfactory. Internal consistency ranged from .78 to .97. (Achenback & Rescorla, 2001). In the present study alpha reliability was reported to be quite high .94.

3 RESULTS

Table 1 shows frequency and percentage of children of migrant and non-migrant parents. Left behind children of overseas migrants were equal in number male children (f=100, 50.0%) and female children (f=100, 50.0%). Greater number of left behind children were having age range from 6-11 years (f=108, 54%) as compared to 12-18 years (f=92, 46.0%). Left behind children having non-working mothers were (f=139, 69.5%), while having working mothers were (f=61, 30.5%). Left behind children with low income of their families were (f=40, 13.3), middle income (f=116, 38.7%) and high income (f=44, 14.7%).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Participants (N=300)

Demographic Variables	f	%
Children of Migrant and non-migrant parents		
Left behind children	200	66.67
Children of non-migrant parents	100	33.33
Left behind Children Gender		
Boys	100	50.0
Girls	100	50.0
Left behind Children Age		
6-11years	108	54.0
12-18 years	92	46.0
Mothers' Profession		
House wife	139	69.5
Teaching & other profession	61	30.5
Income		
Low Income	40	13.3
Middle Income	116	38.7
High Income	44	14.7

Table 2 shows Mean, Standard deviation and t values for children of migrant and non-migrant parents on Child Behaviour Checklist. Results indicate significant mean differences on behavior and emotional problems of children with $t(298) = 11.68, p < .001$. The findings show that children of overseas migrant parent have significantly more behavioural and emotional problems ($M = 43.62$,

SD=26.18) as compared to children of non-migrant parents (M=12.41, SD=7.34).

Table 2 Differences on Behavioral and Emotional Problems of Children of Migrant and Non-Migrant Parents (N=300)

variables	Children of Migrant Parent (n = 200)		Children of Non Migrant Parent(n =100)		t(298)	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		LL	UL	
CBCL	43.62	26.18	12.41	7.34	11.68**	25.94	36.46	1.62

Note. CBCL= Child Behaviour Checklist*p < .05, **p < .01 Table 3 shows Mean, Standard deviation and t values for children belonging to house wives mothers and working mothers on Child Behaviour Checklist. Results indicate significant mean differences on behavior and emotional

problems of children with t (198) = 3.16, p < .002. The findings show that children of housewives mothers have significantly more behavioural and emotional problems (M = 59.35, SD=9.13) as compared to children having professional mothers (M = 55.16, SD=7.30).

Table 3 Mean, Standard Deviations and t-values along Mothers' profession on their left behind children behavioural and emotional problems (N=200)

Left behind children behavioural and Emotional problems	House wives	Teaching and other profession	95% CI					
	(n= 139)	(n= 61)	t	p	LL	UL	Cohen's d	
	M (SD)	M (SD)						
	59.35(9.13)	55.16(7.30)	3.16	.002	1.57	6.79	0.51	

df=198 Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit.

Result of table 4 shows Mean, Standard deviation and t values for male and female left behind children on Child Behaviour Checklist. Findings indicate non-significant difference between behavior and emotional problems of boys and girls left behind children, although mean and

standard deviation values show that left behind male children have slightly more behavioral and emotional problems (M=40.30, SD=27.16) as compared to left behind female children (M=37.17, SD=20.68) t(198)= .91 = n.s.

Table 4 Gender differences in behavioral and emotional problems of left behind children (N=200)

Variables	Gender				t(198)	95% CI		Cohen's d
	Boys (n = 100)		Girls (n = 100)			LL	UL	
	M	SD	M	SD				
CBCL	40.30	27.16	37.17	20.68	.917	-3.60	9.86	0.12

Note. CBCL= Child Behaviour Checklist

Table 5 presents the results of Mean, Standard deviation and t-values for internal and external problems of left behind children of overseas migrants. Results indicate non-significant mean differences on internal and external

problems of left behind children while the findings show that overall boys have more internal (M=13.73, SD=9.15) and external problems (M=13.20, SD=9.07) as compared to girls with (M=13.21, SD=7.47) on internal problems and (M=11.50, SD=6.66) on external problems.

Table 5 Differences on Internal and External Behavioral and Emotional Problems of Left behind Children gender wise (N=200)

variables	Boys		Girls		t(198)	95% CI		Cohen's d
	(n = 100)	(n = 100)	M	SD		LL	UL	
Internal Problems	13.73	9.15	13.21	7.47	.66	-1.81	2.85	0.06
External Problems	13.20	9.07	11.50	6.66	.13	-.52	3.92	0.21

*p < .05

Table 6 Two Way ANOVA for Combined effect of Left behind Children age and gender on their Internal Behavioral and Emotional Problems (N=200)

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Child gender	28.51	1	28.51	.42
Child age	16.57	1	16.57	.25
Child gender* Child age	529.18	1	529.18	7.81**
Error	13283.30	196		
Total	50132.00	200		

p<.01

Table 6 indicates effect of independent variables i.e. left behind children age and gender and their interaction effect on the dependent variable i. e. internal behavioural and emotional problems. The results indicate a statistically significant interaction at the level of p<.01. There was non-significant difference in internal behavioural and emotional problems between male and female children as well as between their ages.

Table 7 Two Way ANOVA for Combined effect of Left behind Children age and gender on their External Behavioral and Emotional Problems (N=200)

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Child gender	161.70	1	161.70	2.54
Child age	.72	1	.72	.01
Child gender* Child age	78.60	1	78.60	1.23
Error	12467.77	196		
Total	43196.00	200		

p<.05

The table 7 indicates effect of independent variables i.e. left behind children gender and age and their interaction effect on the dependent variable i. e. external behavioral and emotional problems. The results indicate a statistically significant interaction at the level of p<.05. There was non-significant difference in external behavioral and emotional problems between male and female children as well as between their ages.

4 DISCUSSIONS

Present research aimed at measuring the difference in behavioral and emotional problems of left behind children

(LBC) of overseas migrants in comparison with children of no migrant parents. Findings of the present study showed significant difference between behavioral and emotional problems of the two groups. The prevalence of behavioural and emotional problems were more high among left behind children as compared to children of non-migrant parents. These findings are in accordance with already existing literature (Bakker et al., 2009; Graham & Jordan, 2011; Lahaie et al., 2009). Number of studies have found that as compared to children living with their parents, left behind children are more vulnerable to emotional and psychological stress, low self-esteem, feeling of abandonment, anxiety and depression, which can negatively affect their development and their socialization patterns (Bryant, 2005; De La Garza, 2010; Edillon, 2008; Stirbu, 2006). Research also shows that children who are separated from parents because of migration have improved economic status but they are twice more than other children to suffer from emotional problems (Jones et al., 2004).

In Pakistan effect of migration of earning members (to Gulf States only) was studied among left behind children. This study was limited to families settled in Karachi City only and who were seeking psychiatric help for one of their family members. A comparison group of families attending outpatient department was also selected to compare maladjustment among children of such families. In migrant families twenty-two families out of twenty-five families reported statistically significant recent maladjustment in children upto 30%, while in comparison group only twelve families reported maladjustment in children for only 10% (Ahmed & Zainulabdin, 1991). Present study also focused on measuring gender differences in behavioural and emotional problems of left behind children. Although the findings of the present study didn't show the significant gender difference but mean difference between the scores of male and female left behind children can be seen, as left behind male children showed more behavioural and emotional problems with (M=40.30, SD=27.16) as compared to left behind female children (M=37.17, SD=20.68). Although results of the study do not completely support the hypothesis but results are partially supported by depiction of more behavioural and emotional problems in the direction of proposed hypothesis. One reason for this non-significant difference can be the high literacy rate in Azad State of Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) and focus of parents on their children. According to the statistics of Survey of Pakistan (2005-2006) (Government of Pakistan, 2006) literacy rate of AJ&K is above 60% and this number is significantly higher than the national average of Pakistan. According to the official report of Planning and Development Department of Azad State of Jammu and Kashmir the gross enrolment rate (between the age of 5-9 years) for boys at primary level is *95% and for girls is*88% (including the enrollment in both public and private schools) (Planning and Development Department, 2014). So the importance and involvement of both boys as well as girls

in education can be contributory factors in having non-significant differences of behavioural and emotional problems across gender. However, difference in mean values of behavioural and emotional problems of left behind male and female children indicate findings in the line of earlier studies that left behind male children are at risk to show more behavioral and emotional problems (International Organization for Migration, 2008).

Another reason for these non-significant behavioural and emotional problems across gender can be that all mothers might not reliably reported about the emotional and behavioural problems of their children. Some might have under or over rated the behavioural problems of their children. Future researchers can be planned to have more reliable data by taking information from teachers also by using teacher-report form (Graham & Jordan, 2011).

To study the difference in expression of behavioral and emotional problems caused by separation from parents gender wise, few studies have been conducted in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago. Boys usually externalize their sufferings and girls express their sufferings through internalize behavior. Research studies reported that boys have more interpersonal relationship problems and girls mostly express by having negative mood conditions along with low self-esteem. Results of the present study showed non-significant mean differences on internal and external problems of left behind children gender wise. Although proposed hypothesis was not accepted but the findings of the present study indicate over all more prevalence of both internal and external behavioural and emotional problems among boys as compared to girls in left behind families. Results showed that children separated from their parents at young age showed high level of anxiety and depression as compared to other children (Liu et al., 2009).

To test the combined effect of gender and age on Internal and external behavioural and emotional problems of left behind children, differences in their scores were analyzed by using 2x2 independent ANOVA. The first factor was gender (male and female left behind children) and second factor was age categorized into (6-11 years & 12-18 years). Although main effect of gender and age was non-significant on internal and external behavioural and emotional problems of left behind children while interaction effect of gender and age was significant. Similarly results of the study indicated that main effect of gender and age was non-significant on external behavioral and emotional problems of left behind children while interaction effect of gender and age on external behavioural and emotional problems of left behind children was significant.

Quantitative studies on 146 LBC and qualitative studies on a sample of 24 LBC between the age range of 12-16 years indicated that in spite of improved economic situation because of parent migration, left behind children have twice more suffer from psychological and emotional problems as compared to their peers. These findings further highlighted

that one third of LBC show high level of depression and difficulty in interpersonal relations which in some cases leads to suicidal ideation (Jones et al., 2004).

Study on negative effect of parents' separation on psychological wellbeing of LBC showed that parental migration causes emotional ignorance among LBC. Absence of role model has negative impact on LBC development. LBC further show tendency for introversion and withdrawal from others by making them unwilling to communicate with other people. LBC report feelings of loneliness, abandonment, fear and lack of interest in daily activities of life. LBC most frequently reported feelings of loneliness for describing their mood, LBC didn't consider friends and other family as members as a replacement for closeness of the parents (Jingzhong & Lu, 2011).

5 CONCLUSION

The study can be considered important in many ways, as it measured the behavioural and emotional problems of left behind children of overseas migrants and the results of the study showed that children of overseas migrant parent have more behavioral and emotional problems as compared to children of non-migrant parents. While searching data for the present study a dire need was felt by the researcher to have real facts and figure (calculated by governmental agencies) for knowing actual number of overseas migrants (district wise number), so that an estimate can be done regarding members of left behind families. After getting estimates of left behind families, strategies can be taken for addressing their problems. These findings can also provide a baseline for taking useful measures by policy makers. This research intends to provide basic data to the researchers who are interested in this area. Results of the study can be useful for devising health policies for assuring the mental health facilities in public hospitals for left behind wives and their children. The findings of present study can also be helpful for the counselors dealing with family matters for resolving psychological problems of left behind families.

6 LIMITATIONS

The sample size was limited. Purposive convenience sampling technique was used so it holds limitation in respect of generalizability of the findings. Behavioural and emotional problems of left behind children were explored quantitatively by making use of standardized scale, while qualitative investigation of left behind children's psychological problems could have produced more interesting findings in their socio-cultural context.

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