

INTERNATIONAL FEMALE LABOUR MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON FAMILY MEMBER LEFT BEHIND: A CASE STUDY ON SADARPUR UPAZILA, FARIDPUR

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Abstract: The present study attempts to determine the socio-demographic profile of female labour migrants, causes of their migration, process of migration, dynamics of remittances and the impact of their migration on family members left behind in the study area from 2003 to 2015 when female migration expressed its remarkable existence after withdrawal of the prohibition. Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. According to the survey findings, around 69% of female are illiterate and most of them are married. Contributing factors that help to take decision of migration are mainly poverty, family pressure, better education for children and better earning facility. Regarding migration cost, roughly 44% of female migrants paid above BDT 50,000 for visa. Most of them (62.5%) collect visa through broker and a significant number (nearly 24%) manage it from their close relatives who stay abroad. It is observed that approximately three fourth of the workers remit through Bank. The study gives a mixed image of the consequences both positive and negative impacts on family members of migrants' household.

Keywords: Female Migrant, Labour Migration, Remittance, Impact, Family Member, Faridpur

INTRODUCTION

Labour migration from Bangladesh has increased over the decades. In the last decade, the number of female labour migrants going overseas for employment has gradually risen. Although international migration from Bangladesh started officially from 1976, female migration expressed its notable existence only from 1996 (Islam, 2009 and 2010). Percentage of women migration in the international average is about 49% and

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this figure in the Philippines and Sri-lanka is about 70-90%. Bangladesh and Nepal entered the overseas labour market lately and still cover a very low percentage in comparison to overall migration (Islam, 2009). This is because in Bangladesh, female migration was prohibited up to 2003, with a similar case of female migration to the Middle East countries being banned in Nepal until 2007 (Tan and Rahman, 2015). Women migration from Bangladesh constituted only 1% up to 2004, but achieved the figure of 6.42% of the total migration in 2010 (UN Women, 2014). Female migration seems to be concentrated in and around Dhaka division. The top five districts (Dhaka, Manikganj, Narayanganj, Faridpur, Gazipur) under Dhaka division, accounts for more than half (52%) of the female migrants. Faridpur district stands top fourth position here with 8.18 % female migrants compared to male counterparts (Islam, 2010).

Poverty along with the growing disparity in the living standards of people in Bangladesh has let women to go abroad for better prospects of life. Female migrant, unlike men, tend to have limited access to education and training and limited decision-making power concerning their mobility (GED, 2015). Although the labour migration procession Bangladesh is traditionally male dominated, recently a large number of Bangladeshi women migrants have been managing job in many countries. For example, in the Middle East, migrant women from Bangladesh continue to occupy a major share in the domestic service sector. Official figures show that more than 20,843 Bangladeshi women travelled abroad in search of employment in 2008 (IOM and UNIFEM, 2009). However, this figure does not reflect the overall number of undocumented Bangladeshi women migrant workers abroad, which is believed to be much higher (ILO, 2014).

Migration is a phenomenon that has a multi-faced impact on individuals, families and societies on their economies and cultures, both in the place of origin and destination (Carballo, Divino, and Zeric, 1998). Migration leads to enhancement of the well-being of migrants as well as that of their families (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992; Kahn et al., 2003; Stark and Taylor, 1991). In general the benefits of migration are well documented, predominantly the economic benefits of remittance. It generates significant economic as well as social impacts (IOM, 2009). Studies have confirmed that migration leads to better health among the population left behind (Gulati, 1993; Hadi, 1999; Kuhn, 2003). On the contrary, many studies have found that maternal migration, which is growing, has a strong negative impact on children left behind (UNICEF, 2008; Luecke and Stoehr, 2012). However, women have generally been found to be more responsible migrants, remitting a larger portion of their earnings, keeping in touch more frequently, and staying loyal to their partners and

families. Study suggested that health and behavioral risks are more common among children living in migrant households. The availability of money, peer pressure and low supervision can often lead to substance abuse and related troubles (UNICEF, 2008).

Studies on the impact of left behind family members of female labour migrants of Bangladesh are scant. At present, there are very few comprehensive studies that measure the impact of female labor migration on children or elderly left behind. As such, this study tries to fill up the research gap

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the study are as follows,

- to know the socio-demographic profile of female labour migrants of Sadarpur Upazila;
- to identify the determining factors influencing female migration of the study area ;
- to track processes of migration of female migrants;
- to find out the dynamics of remittances from female migrants;
- to determine the migration impact on family member left behind of the study area.

METHODOLOGY

Sadarpur Upazila of Faridpur district (Figure 1) has been selected as the study area considering the availability of female labour migrants. Both secondary and primary data has been used for the study. Secondary data has been collected from concerned government official documents, books, journal, reports of NGO networks, newspapers clippings etc. and primary data has been collected through questionnaire survey in 2015 from the family members of women migrants' worker who are currently employed overseas for around 15 years. Eighty households have been selected using snowball sampling. Respondents were the husband or adult members of the migrant's family. Statistical information has been processed, analyzed and presented in tables, graphs and maps to present the major findings.

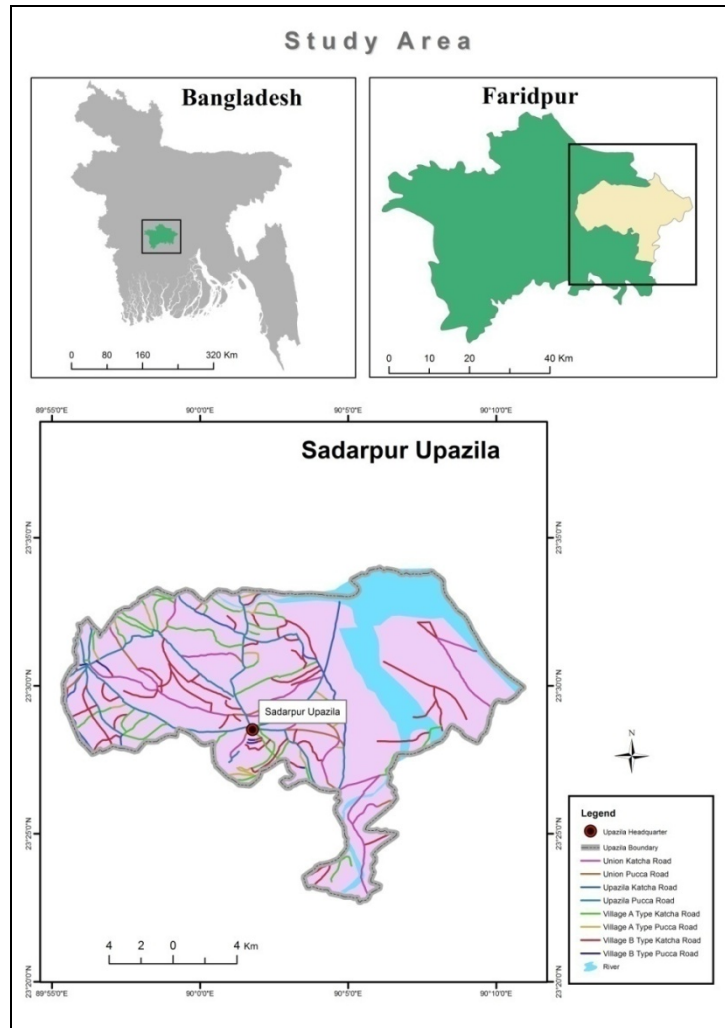


Figure 1: Map of the Study Area

Source: Prepared from Google Map, GIS Laboratory, Dept. of Geography and Environment, JnU, Dhaka

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic Profile of the Migrants

This section shed light on woman migrants' socio-demographic characteristics including age, marital status, religion and educational qualification. In 2007, ministry

re-fixed the minimum age for the female migrant workers as 25 years. Previously it was 35 years. In the study area Almost nine percent female migrant workers age was less than 25 years. More than one third (37.5%) of the female migrant workers were in between the age of 30-35 years, 26.25% were in between the age of 25-30 years, and 20% were in between the age of 35-40 years and only 7.5% migrants' age were above 40 years (Table 1). The marital status of the migrant workers shows that most of the women interested to migrate were married. It accounts for 81.25%. While 5.00% were unmarried and the rest were divorcee and widow. On the basis of this statistics it can be assessed that mostly married women were migrating to ensure their economic emancipation. Table 1 also depicts that almost 97.50% migrants were Muslim which was greater than the number of national average (89.7%) (GOB, 2010). And the rest of them were Hindu. Considering the educational status, it is found from table 1 that among the female migrant workers 68.75% had no formal educational qualifications. Approximately one fourth (27.50%) female migrant workers completed up to primary level of education and remaining 3.75% were able to read only.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Female Labour Migrants

Variables		N (at present)
Less Than 25 Age 25-30 (Years)		7(8.75)
	30-35	21(26.25)
	35-40	30(37.5)
	More than 40	16(20)
	Total	6(7.5)
	Total	80(100)
Marital Status	Married	65(81.25)
	Unmarried	4(5)
	Divorce	8(10)
	Widow	3(3.75)
	Total	80(100)
Religion	Muslim	78(97.5)
	Hindu	2(2.5)
	Total	
No formal education Education	Up to primary level	22(27.5)
		55(68.75)
	Able to read only	3(3.75)
	Total	80(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Note: Figure in Parenthesis Denote Percentage

Causes of Migration

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women Siddiqui (2003) and Islam (2009) explored a number of gender specific factors distinctively affecting the short-term migration of women. Factors such as women's need to escape unhappy social situations, including bad marriages, harassment, violence and idle husbands made these women a socially disadvantaged group who thought migration primarily as a mission for independence and a means of realizing self-reliance.

One main reason of migration is that overseas employment can reduce poverty. The Bangladeshi people have used migration as a poverty alleviation strategy for many decades (Buchenau, 2008). Islam (2009) in this study suggests migration can indirectly help to alleviate poverty by raising the productivity, education and health of the females and their families. Table 2 portrays that most of the respondents (43.75%) have mentioned household poverty as the main driving force of migration because culturally, women would not or would be less likely to migrate if they or their families were not in a dire situation. Sometimes due to their unemployment, their husband inspires their wives to migrate, as female migration cost is relatively less than male. A significant proportion (21.25%) opined family pressure because of large family size and low family income is one of the causes of migration. Approximately 18.75% replied for better education of their children. About 16.25% stated that they opt for international migration because of their limited opportunities for jobs at home. Almost nine percent female migrated because they were rejected by their husband and 3.75% were widows that are why in most cases, they have no alternative helping hand for their livelihood. The rest, 5% have some other social causes for migration, for example unemployed husband, self-containments etc. All these factors act as driving force for overseas female workers migration.

Table 2: Causes of Migration

Causes	Percentage
Alleviation of Poverty	43.75
Family pressure	21.25
Better education of children	18.75
Better earning facility	16.25
Rejected by husband	8.75
Widow	3.75
Others	5.0
Total	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Note: Figure in Parenthesis Denote Percentage

Process of Migration

This section summarizes the process of migration judged by various indicators: the media of getting visa, migration cost, sources of arranging money, country of destination, duration of migration, and sector of employment.

Media of Getting Visa

The study reflects normally the women migrant workers prefer to contact middlemen without contacting recruiting agency directly. It happens due to lack of knowledge in this area and they do not have access to the appropriate information relating to legal channel of migration. Very few aspirant migrants know about the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment and the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) which is the only government office to regulate overseas employment and looks after the welfare of the expatriate workers (Islam, 2009).

It is reported from table 3 that in most cases 62.5% migrants contacted with the brokers for procurement of visa. Due to limited knowledge regarding this issue and appropriate information relating to legal channel of migration they preferred to utilize the channel of broker within the local area, and they thought for any inconvenience they can easily communicate with middleman. Roughly one fourth migrants (23.75%) managed visa by the family members or their relatives, who have been staying abroad. It indicates that the chain of migration proves its success and ensures the protection and safe stay in the countries of destination. And the rest 13.75% arranged visa with the help of Government.

Table 3: Media of Getting Visa

Media	Percentage
Brokers	62.5
Family members or their relatives	23.75
Government	13.75
Total	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Migration Cost

As regards to migration cost, it is indicated from table 4, about 43.75% respondent shad to pay above BDT 50,000 who contacted the broker to arrange visa in the year from 2000 to 2015, though according to Overseas Employment policy in 2006, the recruiting agents are allowed to receive a maximum of BDT 20,000 only for woman migrant workers in housekeeping trade. It is also noticed that about 40% of the migrants managed the migration cost with BDT 30,000 to 50,000 which is also above from prescribed cost. Around 10% fall in between BDT 10,000 to 30,000. And very few (6.25%) got opportunity to go abroad spending up to BDT 10,000 which is mostly possible because their close relatives are staying abroad.

Table 4: Amount of Migration Cost

Amount (BDT)	Percentage
More than 50,000	43.75
30,000-50,000	40.0
10,000-30,000	10.0
Less than 10,000	6.25
Total	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Sources of Arranging Migration Cost

Migrant women managed only small amount of migration cost by themselves. In most cases these individuals arranged money from village *Mohajon*¹, close relatives living abroad, mortgaged land, sold valuable things like ornaments, livestock etc. and land. Nearly 39% borrowed the money from village *Mohajon* with a high interest rate. A good proportion (26.25%) took help from relatives living in the country. Roughly 15% women sold their own valuable things like ornaments; cows etc. About 13% took loan by giving mortgage their land. Almost 5% sold land and house (Table 5). Normally it has become difficult to repay the loan if it is taken with very high rate of interest.

Table 5: Sources of Arranging Money

Sources	Percentage
Village <i>Mohajon</i>	38.75
Help from relatives	26.25
Sell valuable things	15.00
Mortgage of land	12.50
Sell land	5.00
Loan from NGO	2.50
Total	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

COUNTRY OF DESTINATION

The principal destinations of female migrant workers from Bangladesh are the oil-exporting Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Libya. It is appeared from the study that more than one third (36.25%) female migrant workers work in Saudi Arabia. A considerable number (21.25%), work in Oman. Other major destinations among the Middle-Eastern countries are UAE, Lebanon and Jordan which hosted 18.75%, 10% and 7.50% of the migrants, respectively (Table 6).

Table 6: Country of Destination

Country	Percentage
Saudi Arabia	36.25
Oman	21.25
UAE	18.75
Lebanon	10.00
Jordan	7.50
Kuwait	2.50
Bahrain	2.50
Libya	1.25
Total	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

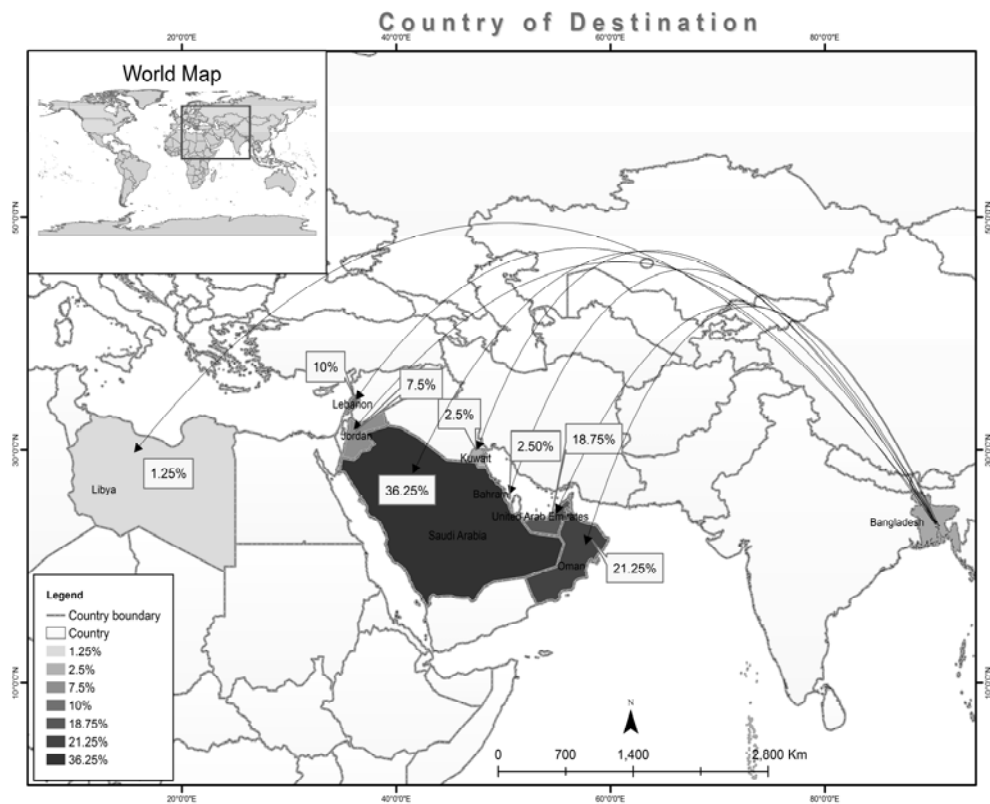


Figure 2: Country-wise flow of Bangladeshi female migrant workers during 2003-2015

Source: Prepared from Google Map, GIS Laboratory, Dept. of geography and Environment, JnU, Dhaka

Duration of Migration

The study notices majority of women (38.75%) migrants found to be staying abroad for about 2 to 5 years. Women workers who have been staying between 5 to 10 years are also significant which is 28.78%. Almost 16.25 % of women workers have been staying for 1 to 2 years. Nearly 11.25% of them have been living for less than one year and it is very surprising to find that about 5% women workers who have been staying for more than 10 years that means they left their country when women migration from Bangladesh started remarkably again after withdrawal of government prohibition in 2003 (Table 7).

Table 7: Duration of Migration

Duration	Percentage
Less than 1 year	11.25
1-2 years	16.25
2-5 years	38.75
5-10 years	28.78
more than 10 years	5.00
Total	100.

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Sector of Employment

Proficiency in language is the prime requirement to work efficiently in abroad. This study found that knowledge and skill regarding vocational and technical is very much absent among migrant workers. According to the survey findings, the women who have been currently working overseas were housekeeper (83.75%) due to lack of vocational and technical training, cleaners (7.5%), industrial labour (6.25%) who are relatively skilled. Lack of communication skill hinders the possibility of migration in diversified occupation (Table 8).

Table 8: Types of Work

Occupation	Percentage
House keeper	83.75
Cleaner	7.50
Industrial labour	6.25
Sales attendants	2.50
Total	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Dynamics of Remittance

This section focuses on the dynamics of remittance including monthly income, sending amount of remittances per year, media of sending remittances, usable sector of remittance etc.

Monthly Income

The earning of a female migrant worker is less as compared to that of a male counterpart, even many female migrant workers have been earning lower than the maid servant working at Dhaka or other cities in Bangladesh. Government has fixed the minimum wage for the migrant workers as domestic aid at US\$ 150. In the study area the wages of overwhelming majority (80%) of the migrants fall between BDT 5,000-10,000 which can be considered less than minimum prescribed wage. It is unfortunate that some 7.50% are earning less than BDT 5,000 per month. Almost 10% have been identified as relatively larger income group having income of BDT 10,000 to 15,000. On the other hand, only 2.5% of the migrants have been classified as the larger income group, with BDT 15,000 who were relatively skilled women (table 9). Consequently, it is clearly revealed that female migrant workers earning are measurably low. This is because of low skills and education.

Table 9: Monthly Income

Monthly Income (BDT)	Percentage
Less than 5,000	7.50
5,000-10,000	80.00
10,000-15,000	10.00
15,000+	2.50
Total	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Sending amount of Remittances per Year

Amount of money remitted by the migrants is the major benefit out of migration. As in most cases, female migrant workers are working as housekeeper they are getting

the opportunity to live in the houses they are serving. So, they do not have to spend any extra amount of money for their maintenances rather the employers bear the cost. Therefore, they can send the entire amount of money as remittance to their respective families. It is evident from the table 10 that 27.5% have been sending BDT 60,000 to 70,000 per year, about 26.25% have been sending BDT 50,000 to 60,000 per year, 21.25% workers have been sending money which is above BDT 70,000. A significant number of women migrant workers (23.75%) have been sending above BDT 30,000-50,000 per year. Around 1.25% have been remitting less than BDT 30,000.

Table 10: Amount of Remittance Received per Year

Remittance Per Year (BDT)	Percentage
Less than 30,000	1.25
30,000-40,000	7.5
40,000-50,000	16.25
50,000-60,000	26.25
60,000-70,000	27.5
70,000+	21.25
Total	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Media of Sending Remittances

It may be noted that approximately three quarters (73.75%) of female migrant workers send their remittances through Bank (Table 11). The majority of married women remit to their husband's bank account and the unmarried women send to their parent's bank account. It is very much encouraging that the workers coming from this less educated section of population are motivated in using Banking channel for remitting the hard earned money. Moreover, 13.75% remit through the returnee migrant workers to Bangladesh. A small section (10%) remit through internal money exchange agencies. The rest of the workers (2.50%) use informal media like *hundi*² for sending money to the family. It is a good image that maximum female migrant workers use formal way such as bank, money exchange for sending remittance.

Table 11: Media of Sending Remittance

Media of Sending Remittance	Percentage
Bank	73.75
Returnee	13.75
Money exchange	10.00
<i>Hundi</i>	2.50
Total	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Usable Sector of Remittances

IOM and RMMRU have conducted two separate surveys on utilization of remittance in 2009. The two studies predicted regarding the use of remittance by the migrant workers for the following expenses: repayment of loan received in paying the migration cost, social ceremonies, community development activities, business Investment, and savings. Study by Omelaniuk (2006), depicted that in some countries, women tend to remit a higher percentage of their salaries than men (although overall less than men, because of low salary levels), and prioritize nutrition, health and education for the family over savings and investments for the future.

In the study area, it is found that most of the women workers have been still repaying the debts in spite of their dire situation abroad. This is because they are mostly engaged in low paid industrial work and domestic work where they are ill paid, which accounts 66.25%. Utilization of remittances in productive venture is not always possible because of repayment of loan which they took during migration. About 62.50% family invested remittance for the construction of their home (Table 12). A good portion of remittances have been also utilizing for food, health care and education which is (51.25%), (47.50%) and (41.25%) respectively. A portion of remittances went to savings which is 28.75%. It is true that remittances are generally treated as income source of the migrant worker's family. During discussion, respondents strongly pointed out that they have been spending major share of the remittances for repaying loans which they took during migration. The remittances are usually utilized by their family members particularly by their husbands and the male members of in laws house. So, the decision making at the household level goes to their husbands and the in laws.

Table 12: Usable Sector of Remittance

Sectors	Percentage (n = 80)
Payment of family loan	66.25
Housing	62.50
Food	51.25
Health care	47.50
Education	41.25
Savings	28.75

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Impact of Migration on Family Member Left Behind Positive Impacts

Luecke and Stoehr (2012), have identified that monetary remittances raise household income and reduce poverty of the family. Households typically spend their extra disposable income on better food, housing, and consumer durables, along with expenses related to their children's education or health care for any household member. This positive impact of remittances on indicators of well-being probably compensates for some of the negative effects of the absence of the migrant.

The section elaborates on the positive impact of remittances. It is illustrated from the study that remittance helped to alleviate poverty (77.5%) by increasing their family income. Educational facilities (better schooling, tutor) have been increased 66.25%. Moreover 46.25% left behind family members have changed their life style (using modern items and home appliances) getting more money from migrants. Economic solvency brought about increase in status and dignity of family members. It is evident from figure 3 that especially the elderly and children were provided better medical treatment which is 45%. More than one third (36%) respondents replied by using remittance they have developed the housing condition. About 23.75% told about better food and there are some others (11.25%) positive impact found from the study like changes in behavior, increase smartness, better clothing etc.

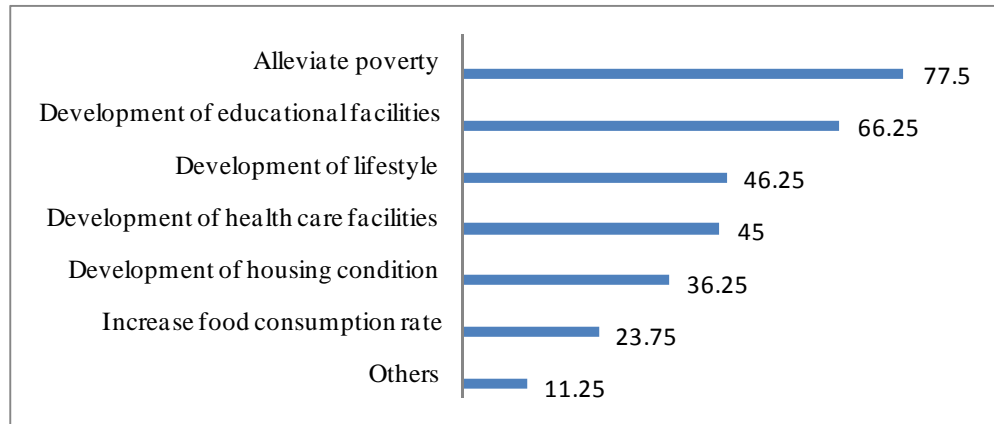


Figure 3: Positive Impact of Female Migration on Family Member

Negative Impacts

Compared to various positive impacts on family members, loneliness, care deficit, mental illness, declining school performance, involvement of anti-social activities due to the lack of proper guidance was the most identified negative impacts. The impacts of migration on households in Eastern Europe in general, and in Moldova in particular have been widely analyzed elsewhere (Yanovich, 2015; UNICEF, 2006). The findings highlighted that while many migrants stay in contact with their family members, children may still lose the care, emotional support and guidance of one parent. The study on Moldova (Luecke and Stoehr, 2012) revealed that the impact of mother's absence on the children emotional and physical well-being and their education may be larger than the beneficial effects of remittances, even in poor households, leaving the children worse-off overall. Figure 4 highlights that most of the respondents (62.50%) mentioned care deficit of children is the adverse negative impacts. Sometimes, women's absence does lead to changes in traditional gender roles within the household, as sometimes fathers look after their children while their wife earns money overseas. However, this is not a norm. Often, the burden of care falls on other women household members, including on those who are too old to look after others and those who are too young to take responsibilities of an adult. In such a situation, the impact of a woman's migration on her household is not positive because of the stereotypical gender role allocations in the household. While 48.75% respondents identified that absence of mother may affect the psychological well being of the children. A good number of care-givers noticed that absence of mother also hampers children's health condition and school performance respectively. Around

17.5% respondents found children's behaviour after their mothers' departure to abroad might be often aggressive. It is originated from the study that being deprived of family care, children are often at risk of physical abuse (5%) and involvement of antisocial activities (3.75%). There were very few unfortunate incidents of divorce of female migrants that are also identified which accounts 2.50%.

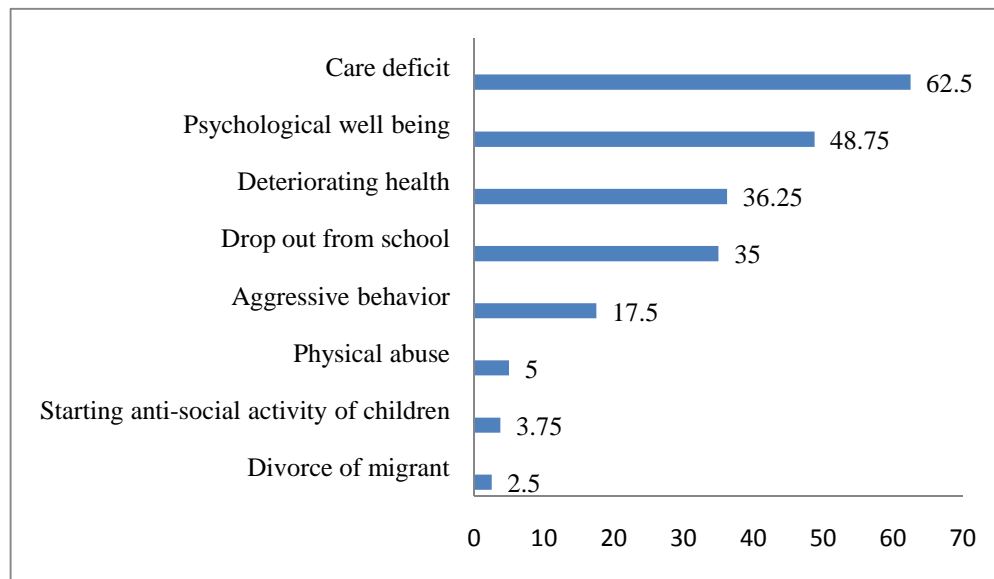


Figure 4: Negative Impact of Female Migration on Family Member

CONCLUSION

Female labour migration has been a recent phenomenon in south Asian region. Employment overseas may offer women an opportunity to feel empowered and the possibility of gaining respect and status due to the remittances they are able to send back home. There are so many underlying influencing factors to be addressed relating to women migration including poverty (43.75%), family pressure (21.25%), better earning facility (18.75%) etc. Sometimes due to lack of employment, low income of family along with large family size their husband inspires them to migrate, because female migration cost is relatively less than male. Bangladeshi workers are employed in 132 countries of the world but recruitment of women migrant workers confined to a few countries only. In the study area, the major destination of female migrants includes Middle East countries for example, Saudi Arab, Oman, UAE, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Libya. In the study area, among female migrants

overwhelming majority (81.25%) are found to be married and most of them are illiterate (68.75%). But owing to lack of knowledge in this area typically most of them (43.75%) paid high cost of migration which was above BDT 50,000.00, who contacted the brokers to arrange visa, though according to Overseas Employment Policy in 2006, the Recruiting agent is allowed to receive a maximum of BDT 20,000.00 only for women migrant workers in housekeeping trade. For arranging this money about 39% of them managed from village *Mohajan* with a high interest rate. Normally it has become difficult to repay the loan if it is taken with very high rate of interest. Vast majority (83.75%) of migrants are employed as housekeeper since lack of knowledge and skill regarding vocational and technical. In the study area the wages of maximum migrants (80%) fall between BDT 5,000.00-10,000.00 which can be considered less than minimum prescribed wage. Government has fixed the minimum wage for the migrant workers as domestic aide at US\$ 150.00. It is observed that just below three fourth (73.75%) of the workers remit through bank. It is very much encouraging that the workers coming from this less educated section of population are motivated in using Banking channel for remitting the hard earned money. Rest of the workers used informal media like *hundi* in sending money to the family. Women prefer investment of remittances in housing, food, health care, education along with savings. Sometimes it is not possible to utilize remittance in productive venture because of repayment of loan which they took during migration. Greater part (66.25%) of remittance have been using for repayment. Migrant households have a tendency to alleviate poverty, improve educational facility, improve lifestyle, and improve health care, housing and food consumption in terms of utilizing remittance transfers from overseas, which may result in higher incomes for the households and consequently more resources for spending on household members. The study claims that migration has also negative impacts on left behind children and families. Left behind children face numerous adverse effects of migration including problems related to care deficit, psycho-emotional problem, health, education, aggressive behavior, physical abuse, involvement of anti-societal activities due to lack of motivation from mother. Divorce is also identified among female migrants account 2.50%.

In this situation, the country needs effective policies that can maximize positive effects of migration and minimize its negative effects on families and communities both at places of origin and destination. To establish and ascertain the sustainability of women migration, it is necessary for the policy makers and all other stakeholders to have a pen picture on the profile of women migrants, the social cost and benefits of the women migration and its impact on their livelihood.

Notes

1. Mohajon : used to describe people involved in money lending with high interest and financial services.
2. Hundi: Hundi is the informal person channel of sending remittance, which is illegal and punishable under prevailing law.

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