

Association between Absence of Father and Deviancy among the Children of Overseas Workers from Buner, Pakistan

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Abstract

This article is based on the field data collected for a PhD work on the socio-economic impacts of overseas labour export. These impacts also included the impacts of the overseas labour induced absence of fathers from families resulting in delinquency of male children. Associated with affluence and abrupt heavy remittance to the family, the male children in particular astray the norms.

Data was collected from children of the overseas workers, mostly working in Malaysia. Sociologist and psychologists are of the opinion that there is a definite relationship between absence of the patriarch from the family for a long time and defective socialization and disciplining of the adolescent's male children in particular.

Keywords: Overseas labour export, remittance, absence of the patriarch, children of the overseas workers, deviance

Introduction

Pakistan has a long history of labour migration since its creation and overseas employment component of Employment Policy makes it a major exporter of labour force. Under the overseas employment component of the policy Government of Pakistan has signed MOUs with Gulf countries including UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia and, Asian countries including Malaysia and Korea. It is planned that Government of Pakistan will annually send 600,000 workers to these countries (Govt. of Pakistan, 2012-13). According to Govt. of Pakistan (2017) international migration from Pakistan for the years 1971-2004 was 3.5 million migrants. It is worth to mention that 60% of the overseas workers from Buner prefer to go to Malaysia.

Foreign remittance sent by the overseas workers has a far better impact on the living standards of migrant families. The remittances are used to cater different needs of families including children education, health facilities, construction of houses, communications facilities, debt payments, real estate, business, ceremonies, vehicles purchase and repair (Khan, 2010). According to Yang (2006) remittances can play a

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significant role in supporting migrant's family in hard times which may include hard times like financial crises and natural calamities etc.

Migration can also have negative impacts on education, attitude and behaviour of children. In absence of patriarch, the mother brings up the children but within societies like Pakistan where mobility and cultural constraints exist for female and such factors may prevent her from stopping her children from bad companies and immoral activities (Iqbal et al., 2014). This article explains this aspect of the overseas migration in Buner District.

It is generally believed that in poor, closed and traditional societies a father or patriarch is the sole controller of the family affairs including disciplining the children and the youth of the family. It is not only the social responsibility of a father to discipline the sons but it is his privilege and even prerogative to do so.

In societies like Pakistan, a mother is confined to the four walls of the house and it is the father who is responsible for the overall control and supervision of the youth particularly the son, outside the home. What a youth does outside the home during his leisure time, with whom he is associated and have company, what kind of company and group of peers the youth is associated with, and in Pakistani Buner culture, the relationship of the family and the clan as a whole with whom the child is accompanying and plays, is considered in detail.

The heavy income from the overseas labour and the absence of the patriarch in connection with the overseas labour, the control over sons by a mother is always tenuous and the youth can astray easily to indulge in drugs addiction, spendthrifts, truancy, school dropout, even police cognizable offenses and so on.

Statement of the Problem

As elsewhere, the labour export has resulted in bringing up significant changes in social and economic structures of individuals, families and the society at large. Remittance by overseas workers has remarkable impacts and can be observed on the whole structure of the society. The impacts can, both, be positive as well as negative. The negative impacts are not only on educational attainment, physical and psychological health of the children but are also on the morality and ethical brought up of the children in particular. In absence of father the children are vulnerable and are exposed to psychological and emotional risks including violence, abuses and corruption etc (UNICEF, 2007).

Literature Review

Iqbal *et al.*, (2014) in their study examined the impacts of the absence of the father or male head of the families left behind particularly on the male children and found that children get effected in the shape of lower grades and truancy etc.

Salah (2008) examined the socio-economic impacts of overseas migration on families and children left behind. According to the study the negative impact included *inter alia* negative impacts on children and indicated that children of migrant's families are likely to be more exposed to risks like maltreatment and abuse.

Démurger (2015) examined the impacts of migration on families left behind due to overseas migration. According to the author the negative impacts on children included increased drop out and high rate of psychological issues.

Asis (1995) studied the impacts of overseas employment on communities of Philippines. The articles found that overseas migration carries besides positive impacts, negative impacts on the families left behind. According to the author the negative impacts included extra marital relation of spouses, drug addiction of the male children in particular, and spoiled behaviour of children.

Viet Nguyen (2016) studied the impact of parent's migration on physical and mental health of children in four developing and under developed countries including Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam. According to study parent's migration was negatively associated with physical and mental health of children and the study revealed that increase in income dose not improves the health and mental abilities of the children. In India, Peru and Vietnam a visible decreased in health indicators and cognitive skills was observed among the children of migrants. Pakistan is no exception and this field study reveals many facts.

Objective of the Study

The current research study carries out an in-depth investigation of the involvement of the children of overseas workers in deviant activities including drug addiction, truancy and other cognizable offenses due to absence of the patriarch and the affluence earned by the overseas workers abroad. The central objective of this research is

- to explore the negative impacts of father's absence on the children of overseas workers

Method and Material;

This is a descriptive, exploratory & explanatory study of cross-sectional character and is based on field data collected for the PhD study of the first author during 2016-17, titled “Socio Economic Impacts of Overseas Labour Export on Families in District Buner, Pakistan*.”

The data basically consisted of three strata of respondents including overseas workers, the family head during absence of a father and the male children of the overseas workers at home. Equal number of respondents i.e. 90 was selected through a multi stages sampling strategy including stratification, area/clustering and randomization of the sampled persons, households and children of the overseas workers. This study is about the male children at home of the overseas workers.

A Semi-Structured Interview schedule for data collection was chosen keeping in view the low literacy rate of district Buner. “A *Semi-structured interview is a discussion in an informal and conversational way using a flexible guide of questions to obtain general and specific information, to analyse problems and opportunities and to discuss plans, etc.*” (Gilbert, 2008).

BUNER Its History, location and Socio-Economic Indicators

Buner is situated between 34-9 and 34-43 N latitude and 72-10 and 72-47 E longitude at a distance of 120 km from Peshawar. In North it is bounded by the districts of Swat and Shangla across the Mora, Illam and Durmai range of mountains having an elevation of 2, 911 meters. The Elevation in north and south varies from 366 meters in *KhaduKhel* and 2,911 meters of *Dosara* peak. In the West of Buner, are situated the districts of Malakand and Mardan, and in South it is separated by the Sinawar range from Swabi District and the Guru mountains from the Mardan Valley, while on the East edge is flowing the mighty Indus river and the districts of Haripur and Manshera Districts of Hazara division. The total area of district Buner is 1,865 square kilometres,

Due to its location and geography of mountainous temperature zone, the climate of Buner is sub-tropical and remains mostly pleasant throughout the year.

*Details of the sampling can be found in the authors PhD thesis entitled “Socio-Economic Impacts of Overseas Labour Export on families in District Buner KPK”.

The duration of Winter season is about 4-5 months and snowfall on mountains peak is common. (Center for Public Policy Research, 2009). The temperature in summer steadily raises up to 44 degrees Celsius and in winter it drops below freezing point. The average annual rainfall is approximately 30 inches.

Verbal tradition of the local elders suggests that the word 'Buner' originated from Sanskrit word 'Ban'(forest.) and 'Banr' in Pushto) even now used for a forest. or lush green thick forest. Buner has been a thick forest in the past but due to ruthless deforestation now most of the area gives a deserted look.

Historically, Buner is known since 327-326 BC, when the armies of Alexander the great entered the area via *Ambela* pass. Since than the *Ambela* pass has been of great historical importance and is used as a main entry route to the area by Akbar the Great in 1587 and finally by the British armies in 1863 and both missions failed.

The literacy rate of Buner district is estimated as 22.60%, nearly the lowest in the country. Male literacy rate is reported 38.20% and female literacy rate 7.70%.

Health facilities are nearly inadequate for a population of over 0.9 million. Buner has the only tertiary health facility in the shape of 1 DHQ Hospitals, 3 THQ or civil Hospitals, 2 Rural Health Centres, 20 Basic Health Units and 8 Dispensaries with nominal or no medicines, even beds and medical staff. As per government reports of 2013, the total no. of beds in the district is 335 which shows the population per hospital bed is 3432, the highest in the Province as compared to 1609 for the province (Government of KP. 2014;59).

Major communication sources from and to Buner, are the two land routes from Swat and Swabi, in the north via Karakar and in the south via Ambella pass. The total length of Buner's road network is 462 kilometres. This includes 346 kilometres of metaled network and 116 kilometres of jeep-able roads (Center for Public Policy Research, 2009)

In terms of economy, no authentic figures are available. Sporadic survey conducted by various Government and Non-government agencies are the only source of information. The entire Buner is rural and there is no notified urban area in the district. According to a survey of MRDP (Malakand Rural Development Project) in 2005, agriculture sector had absorbed a maximum no. of people (58,162), Mining and construction sector had absorbed about 6744 persons through 192 marble factories, marred by frequent power cut, trade and business, sale sector and service works had a number of 6074 workers and the government jobs were provided to 2604 persons mostly school teachers or other white-collar jobs in offices as clerks

Under these condition, the only option left with the people to earn a respectable livelihood is overseas. Consequently, there is hardly any household in the area where at least one person is not abroad. It is interesting to note that there are some villages in Buner where Malaya language is spoken as families from these village are working in Malaysia. A survey conducted by the US AID reveals that local employment opportunities are negligible and 86% of the population is dependent on remittances.

Buner has a total of 1, 72,431 hectares land out of which 116,974 ha are uncultivated. Less than one third of the total land, about 55,457 is regularly cultivated while 98,749 hectares has been cultivated intermittently and rain dependent. More than 50,530 hectares is cultivated consistently with an almost 5000 hectares of fallow land. 40,983 hectares of Buner's land comprises forest. (US AID, 2006;3). The overseas labour and migration is practiced by those poor who have no other source of livelihood in the area except the subsistent agriculture which even cannot meet the needs of the family one square meals. The families are big enough and due to joint family system and the land holdings are small as well as unproductive to the maximum as the lands are rain fed mostly. The earnings from the overseas labour is several times more than working locally or in the country. The income from remittance is the economically necessary means through which the locals narrows the gap between income and expenditures

Results

Table-1: Age and marital status of the respondents

Respondent Age (years)	Frequency	Marital Status		Total
		Married	Unmarried	
15-20	62 (68.8%)	07	55	62
21-25	15 (16.6%)	05	10	15
26-30	08 (08.8%)	06	02	08

31-35	05 (05.5%)	05	---	05
Total	90 100%	23 25.6%	67 74.4%	90

Average age of the respondent = 20.2 years

Table 1: Age and marital status of the respondents;

Table-6.3.1 shows the age distribution and marital status of the respondents. 62/90 (68.8%) respondents were the youngest of the age group of 15-20 years, mostly sons of the overseas workers. 15/90 (16.6.0%) of the respondents belonged to age group of 21-25 years. 08/90 (08.8%) of the respondents belonged to age group of 26-30 years. 05/90 (05.5%) of the respondents belonged to age group of 31-35 years and all were married.

The marital status shows that 23/90 (25.6%) of the respondents were married and 67/90 (74.4%) were unmarried. In the first age group or among the youngest (15-20 years age) 7/62(11.3%) were married and the remaining 55/90 (88.7%) were unmarried. In the second age group of 21-25 years age 05/15 (33.3%) were married and 10/15 (66.7%) were unmarried. In the third age group, 06/8 (75%) were married while 02/8 (25%) were unmarried. In the last age group of 31-35 years all were married. This shows that the trend of early marriages exists in the area or we can assume that parent get marry their sons earlier to avoid any untoward incidence known as 'Honour Killing' as a result of the extra marital relations.

Table-2: Age and level of education of the respondents

Respondent Age (Years)	Frequency	Respondent Level of Education						Total
		Primary	Middle	Metric	F. A/ F. Sc.	B. A/ B.Sc.	M.A/ M.Sc.	
15-20	62 (68.8%)	01	05	27	29	0	0	62
21-25	15 (16.6%)	---	03	02	03	06	02	15

26-30	08 (08.8%)	03	02	0	01	02	0	08
31-35	05 (05.5%)	01	03	01	---	00	00	5
Total	90 100%	05 05.5%	13 14.4%	30 33.3%	33 37%	07 7.7%	02 02.2 %	90 100%

Table-2: Education level and age of the overseas workers; In the previous table I have explained the age structure of the children of the overseas workers. From this table I shall explain the educational status of the respondents.

The education of the respondents shows that 05/90 (05.0%) were primary level educated, 13/90 (14.4%) were middle level educated, 30/90 (33.3%) were matric level educated, 33/90 (37%) were F. A/ F. Sc. level educated, 7/90 (7.7%) were B. A/B.Sc. level educated and 02/90 (02.2%) of the respondents were M.A/M.Sc.

Table-3: Pre- and Post- migration Income of the families.

Status	Freq	Pre- and post- migration annual Income levels							Total
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	
Pre-Migration	90	65	25	0	0	0	0	0	90
Post-migration	90	0	02	30	32	09	12	05	90

Denotations for Income level=

A= up to 250,000. B= up to 500,000.C= up to 750,000.D= up to 1,000,000. E= up to 1,250,000. F= up to 1,500,000. G= 1,500,000 and above.

Post migration Average annual income of Rs. 913,889.

Pre- migration annual income =319, 444

TABLE-3: The table shows the annual income of the family before any person migrated abroad. The monthly income of 65/90 (72.2%) families was up to 250,000, and 25/90 (27.8%) families had an annual income of up to 500,000. The average

family income per annum was rupees 319,444 or per month income was 26,620 rupees.

In the after math of the migration the conditions abruptly changed and the income level enhanced. Those earning up to half a million annually were only two families, 30 families earned up to 750,000, rupees, 32 families made up to one million annually, 09 families reported an income of 1,250,000. 12 respondents reported an annual income by his father up to one and half a million rupees while 05 respondents reported that their fathers made more than half a million rupees annually.

This shows an average annual income of Rs. **913,889/=** and **monthly Average income of Rs. 76,157/=** while annual income of the families before immigration of family member was rupees 319,444 /= or per month income was 26,620 rupees, or 300% more income than at home country.

Table-4: Possession of moveable and immoveable property

Movable and Immoveable property	Pre-migration		Post- Migration		Total
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Vehicle	04 (04.4%)	86 (95.6%)	41 (45.6%)	49 (54.4%)	90 100%
Irrigated land	13 (14.4%)	77 (85.6%)	13 (14.4%)	77 (85.6%)	90 100%
Barani land	15 (16.6%)	75 (83.4%)	75 (83.4%)	15 (16.6%)	90 100%
Commercial land	---	90 (100%)	01 (01.1%)	89 (98.9%)	90 100%
Livestock	41 (45.6%)	49 (54.4%)	23 (25.6%)	67 (74.4%)	90 100%

Table-4: Pre-and Post-migration possession of moveable and immovable property

The table shows pre-and post-migration possession of vehicles, land, commercial property and, livestock by the families of overseas workers. Before overseas work 04/90 (04.4%) of the families possessed vehicle while 86/90 (95.6%) did not. After overseas migration this number increased from 04 (04.4%) to 41/90 (45.6%) of the families who owned vehicle. An increase of 41% or ten times more than before immigration.

As for as land possession was concerned, 13/90 (20.0%) possessed irrigated land before overseas work and after overseas migration no increase in ownership of irrigated increased was observed. Similarly, 15/90 (16.6%) owned rain dependent land and no change in ownership was observed after overseas work.

The table also shows livestock possessed by the households of migrants. The number decreased from 41/90 (49.0%) to 23/90 (25.6%) after immigration.

Table-5: Impacts of Remittances on Social Status for the family

Has remittance resulted in achieving good status for the family	Frequency	Types of status achieved				
		A	B	C	D	E
Yes	84 (93.4%)	02 (02.3%)	06 (07.1%)	79 (94.8%)	15 (17.6%)	---
No	06 (06.6%)	88 (97.8%)	84 (93.4%)	11 (12.2%)	75 (83.4%)	90 (100%)
Total	90 (100%)	90	90	90	90	90

Denotations for impacts on social status; A= Participation in Politics, B= Local/Jarga Membership, C= Prestige/Honour, D= Central Position in Community and E= Any Other

Table-5: Impact of overseas remittances on status of the families; the table shows the impacts of overseas remittances on socio-cultural status of the families. After

overseas work and becoming rich, 84/90 (93.4%) of the youth agreed that due to overseas remittances the families have achieved good status while 06/90 (06.6%) responded negatively means they had still the subordinate status within their communities or villages.

The table further shows the way how their status changed culturally. 02/84 (02.3%) household's heads responded participation in politics or local body politics, 06/84 (07.1%) responded that they could now take part in local Jarga or could become a community elders, 79/84 (94.0%) responded prestige/honour and 15/84 (17.8%) responded central position in community.

Table-6: Negative Impacts of Father's absence on Children

Negative Impacts	Frequency	Incidences reported	percentage
Drop Out	90	11	13.0
Spoiled Behaviour	90	8	09.0
Drug Addiction	90	8	09.0
Involvement in Crimes	90	1	02.2
Exposure to Abuse	90	0	00
Lavish Expenditure	90	36	44.0
Poor Academics	90	22	25.0
Bad Company	90	8	09.0
Psychological Problems	90	6	07.0
Low Confidence	90	8	09.0
Loneliness/Deprivation	90	6	07.0
Any Other	90	0	0

Table-6; Negative Impacts of Father's absence due to Overseas work on Children;

Besides many positive impacts, prosperities, achieving high status, good education and health for each member of the family and many other good impacts of overseas labour, it has certainly some negative impacts on the children at least.

The negative impacts upon children (here by children I mean only male children/ sons) varied from weak performance in school to drop out from school,

truancy, smoking and drug abuse (*char* only), spend thriftiness (loafer in local terminology), cheekiness, contacts with juvenile delinquents, feeling alone among agnates etc.

It was reported by 11/90 (13%) respondents that some youth has left schooling and were doing nothing. Rather they were pressurizing parent to get them visas and be sent abroad for earning.

8/90 (09%) respondents believed the youth have become cheeky and spoiled. They do not behave in accordance with the norms of the area nor do they respect the elders and parents and relatives.

8/90 (09%) elders or heads of the house hold reported that they had heard about the *chars* habit of their grandsons. Heroin powder is not common but present everywhere in KP, but *chars* is everywhere available and abused. One (2.2%) respondent reported that his younger has been reported by the community as involved in crimes.

36/90 (44%) respondents reported that their sons are 'loafers' and spend money on irrelevant activities. They go to the cities and stay in hotels.

22/90 (25%) complaints about the youth were of their poor performance in schools and colleges. As mostly they stay out of schools, their academic performance was poor.

09% respondents reported that in absence of the fathers, their children sit in bad companies. By bad companies they probably meant the group of *Chars* addicts, and loafers, watching films etc.

06 % reports were about the psychological problems of the children in absence of their fathers as they had become aggressive '*lewani*' or loony.

08/90 (09%) elders responded that in absence of their fathers, the children have become courage-less and depend upon others for the duties they are supposed to do. Similarly, 16/90 (07.0%) reports were about the feelings of loneliness or alone ness and avoid their agnate cousins *tarboors* instead of competing with them.

Discussion:

This study revealed that overseas labour fetch heavy income causing affluence and economic independence in traditional societies like Buner at the cost of continuous absence of fathers. But at the same time the supervision and disciplining of the male children in particular, become a serious problem.

Two variables were taken for this study namely the absence of father / patriarch from the family for a long time in connection with overseas labour as

independent variable and deviance of the children as dependent variables.

The results revealed that both the variables have deep co-relationship and causes tremendous social damage to the adolescents as well as the family. The study reveals that the negative impacts included not only physical health deterioration because of drug abuse but also other social stigmas.

The study shows that the worst affect was on the uncontrolled and lavish spendthrifts (44% cases) causing financial losses to fathers who are busy in building the future of their children but they themselves spoil it. Craving for new model vehicles and now mobile phones, habit of alcoholic drinks, unsafe and unprotected aimless excursions, and even extramarital relationships.

The second most affected aspect of youth deviance was their academics where 25% youth had poor academic performance leading to 13% drop outs of the children from schools and colleges.

The other three impacts can be correlated and dependent upon each other. Drug addiction, for example can lead to joining bad company and misbehavior with family members particularly the mother and the children become cheeky, verbally aggressive, using abusive language, and mostly shameless to speak before elders and youngsters slang language. 9% reported drug addiction and a similar number reported a spoiled behavior, and joining bad company. The worst was that 2.2% were involved in crimes and police had taken them in custody, as was reported by the respondents. 7% male children had psychological problems due to absence of fathers ranging from insomnia to mild melancholia like talking to self, fear fullness and low confidence in their selves. This was very common among those who had familial animosity in the surrounding villages or within among cousins.

Conclusion

Fatherhood is a social institution and includes the rights, duties, responsibilities, and statuses associated with being a father (Dermott, 2016).

Fathers have a decisive role in disciplining and socializing the children particularly male children. In a tribal society, especially male children and father have extreme interdependence and this relation last long till the death of father or son. Absence of father for along time in connection with earning an honorable livelihood, have definite impacts on male children in various forms mentioned above.

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