



An Exploration of Socioeconomic and Psychological Impacts of Migration on Hazara Household left behind, Quetta, Balochistan

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Abstract

Migration has profound socio-economic and psychological impacts on the families left behind, especially the Hazara community in Quetta, Balochistan. This study explores the multifaceted impacts of migration on Hazara households, focusing on economic dependence, social restructuring, and psychological well-being. This study uses a simple methods approach, including quantitative data from 400 a survey with a structured questionnaire, Personal interviews, will all be utilized to gather primary data. The results show that households rely on remittances as their primary source of income, leading to both financial stability and economic dependence. However, respondents reported an increase in household expenses due to the absence of the main earning member. Additional, children from migrant households face barriers to education due to financial uncertainty and emotional distress.

Psychologically, respondents reported feelings of loneliness and social isolation, while women in migrant households reported increased stress due to additional responsibilities. The study also highlights a rise in mental health concerns, with respondents experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Despite economic benefits, the breakdown of traditional family structures and the lack of social support systems further exacerbate psychological stress. These findings emphasize the urgent need for mental health interventions, financial literacy programs, and community support mechanisms tailored to the Hazara households left behind.

Keywords: Migration, Hazara community, socio-economic impacts, psychological impacts, remittances, family separation, Quetta, Balochistan.

Introduction

As globalization and technological progress continue to enhance human mobility to an unparalleled degree, it has become increasingly crucial to comprehend migration, which involves the movement and flow of people. Migration influences countries, regions, and the

economic and policy structures of societies. Consequently, international migration has garnered significant focus in academic research. Although international migration draws considerable interest, it is essential to recognize that internal migration within a country involves a greater number of people compared to cross-border migration. In 2014, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 34 million people relocated domestically within the United States, while only 1.6 million individuals migrated internationally. Furthermore, the economic impact of internal labor migration and the remittances sent by migrants have played a crucial role in driving economic development globally. In countries such as Bangladesh, China, Vietnam, and the Philippines, internal migration has been a significant factor in promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, and enhancing overall well-being. Remittances sent by internal migrants to their families and relatives can alleviate poverty and enhance well-being by providing greater access to necessities such as food, education, healthcare, housing, and land. Remittances can also create multiplier effects, as they are used to purchase consumer goods like bicycles, motorbikes, or televisions, which in turn boost income, or invested in agricultural inputs, such as hired labor or improved disease control, leading to better farming practices and higher crop yields. Therefore, although internal migration is frequently overshadowed by international migration, it is an area of study that deserves closer attention (Williams & Jobes, 1990,). Migration is one of the most pressing challenges affecting both the economy and society. For this reason, the 2009 Global Human Development Report highlights the issues surrounding migration and its impact on human development. According to the report, many individuals migrate from their hometowns to other regions in search of survival or better life opportunities. Migrants typically relocate to areas with higher levels of human development, with income, education, and health being key factors driving this movement. Consequently, reducing barriers to international migration is seen as crucial for enhancing human development and promoting global welfare (Kandemir, 2012,).

Migration is a global phenomenon shaped by various factors, including economic, political, and security conditions. In conflict-ridden areas like Quetta, the Hazara community has faced numerous challenges, including targeted violence, social exclusion, and marginalization. As a result, many Hazaras have migrated to safer areas within Pakistan or abroad, seeking better opportunities and protection for themselves and their families. However, these migration patterns have also led to significant consequences for the families left behind, who face a variety of socio-economic and psychological impacts. In the case of Hazara households left behind in Quetta, the effects of displacement can be particularly complex. While some migrants benefit from remittances sent by members, others face increasing uncertainty and hardship. Migration has long been a survival strategy for the Hazara community in Quetta due to socioeconomic struggles, security threats, and political instability. While migration provides economic opportunities for individuals seeking a better life abroad, it also leaves behind families who face financial uncertainty, emotional distress, and altered family structures. The Hazara community in Quetta, Balochistan, has long faced persecution, economic

marginalization, and security threats, leading to significant migration, particularly to countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States. While migration provides economic benefits through remittances, it also disrupts household structures and affects those left behind. This study examines the socio-economic and psychological impacts of migration on Hazara households living in Quetta, focusing on economic dependency, changing family roles, and mental health conditions. The multifaceted impacts on these families, looking at both the tangible and intangible consequences of migration, are multifaceted.

Problem Statement

Economic migration from Quetta, especially among Hazara families, often provides significant remittances that alleviate immediate financial hardship, making it easier to access the basic necessities of life, but it also increases some challenges. Women's responsibilities increase as they take on household responsibilities in their husband's absence. Children of relocating parents face emotional instability, behavioral challenges, and academic difficulties compared to their peers with current caregivers. In the broader context of Quetta's sectarian violence and targeted extremism, such challenges are magnified - taking an emotional toll on entire communities living in fear and marginalization.

Hypotheses of the Study

H1: There is a positive correlation between the frequency of remittances sent by migrants and the economic well-being of families left behind.

H2: There is a strong relationship between migration and increased psychological distress, feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression, among Hazara families left behind.

Research Questions

1. What are the socioeconomic consequences experienced by families left behind in Quetta, Balochistan, as a result of economic migration?
2. What are the psychological effects experienced by families left behind in Quetta, Balochistan, due to economic migration?

Research Methodology

The empirical aspect of this study is founded on primary field data that was gathered in Quetta, Balochistan, using a survey employing descriptive and analytical research methodologies. The sample population for this study is the residents of two areas, Hazara Town (Union Council Chiltan Town) and Mariabad (Union Council Zarghun Town). The group included the socio-economic characteristics of the area in the survey as required to achieve the set objectives. 400 respondents from Mariabad (Union Council Zarghun Town) and Hazara Town (Union Council Chiltan Town) formed the sample size of the study despite the specific sampling procedure. To provide more reliable and respectable results, this number has been selected to include a wide variety of participants with different experiences. The study methodology has been specifically quantitative, in-depth interviews or focus groups, which enabled the researcher to focus on trends in the observations of the respondents' stories. This method guarantees more comprehensive and complete information, and can include in-depth information about experiences in a particular field of study. This may help improve future practice.

Literature Review

The First Phase of Migration of Hazara Shias

The first phase of mass migration of Hazara Shias from Afghanistan to Pakistan occurred 150 years ago, in the 1880s, due to persecution during the reign of Shah Abdur Rehman (European Asylum Support Office, 2015). The second phase of migration to Pakistan took place during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 and the third phase in 1996 when the Taliban came into power (National Commission for Human Rights, 2018). The Hazara Shias are found in various provinces of Pakistan after migration, including Punjab, Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan, but the majority live in Balochistan. Migration is a relative phenomenon that involves movement away from masses, either individually or collectively, from one geographic location to another. Internal and external migration is the two categories of migration, to put it broadly. The process of deciding to leave one's home country is extremely complicated since it involves a variety of socio cognitive patterns, such as household stress, poverty, limitations, ambitions, inspirations and feelings that are experienced in the main institutional spheres at the origin country, along with the perception of anticipated opportunities to be there in the destiny country planned to be migrated in. As Zahid Hussain et al. (2018) rightly mentioned in his research work that the phenomenon of decision making to migrate or not is dependent on both aspects of human life, i.e., socio psychological and psych-sociological in respect of the interaction process (Muhammad Irfan et al, 2017).

Living Area of Hazara Shias

Hazara Shias are mainly found in two neighboring areas of Quetta, (the provincial capital of Balochistan), Hazara Town and Mariabad. Hazara Shias are forced to live in the ghettos of Quetta due to targeted and random attacks (Goodall and Hekmat, 2021) These neighborhoods are characterized as low-income areas with poor housing quality and inadequate access to schooling, health services, and employment opportunities (Majeed 2021).

Many Hazara Shias are not given jobs, not allowed on public transport, or entertained as customers in shops, for fear of being killed in random attacks against them (Siddiqi, 2012). Overall community support is low, as people fear imminent victimization due to their association with Hazara Shias. This social discrimination adds to the hardship and exclusion faced by the community. Many Hazara Shias family members in Pakistan have migrated to other countries in search of better opportunities and thus can remit financial support to their families (Ali et al., 2016; Tan, 2016; Radford and Hetz, 2021) for instance, lack of work opportunities, unemployment and underdevelopment, poor economic condition, lack of opportunities, exhaustion of natural resources and natural calamities. On the other hand, pull factors indicate the factors which attract migrant to an area (area of destination), like, employment and higher education opportunities, higher wages facilities, better working condition etc. (Haider, et al., 2010).

Research and Academic Works

There is lack of research and academic work related to the Hazaras. In one of the few available works, Poladi (1989) addresses the Hazaras in terms of the people, the land, culture and religion, the effects of different Afghan rulers and wars on the Hazara population, their political and social organization and their economy. Moreover, Mousavi (1998) has explored the lives of the Hazaras from historical, cultural, economic and political outlooks. Literature on the Hazaras locates them in several places in Afghanistan and Pakistan: in the former North West Frontier Province of the former British colony of India (the province has recently been renamed to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa); On the border of China in the northeast of Pakistan; in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province of Pakistan; in Iran; and, finally, the majority live in Hazarajat in Afghanistan (North-Western Frontier Province, 1914; Qasi, 1977; Harpviken, 1996; Mousavi, 1998; Monsutti, 2005; Farr, 2007). The Hazaras form the third-largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, although the actual number is contested (CIA Factbook, 2009; Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2009).

Financial Instability

The socioeconomic impact on families left wing families are often linked to financial constraints. In most cases, the migrant family members are often the primary wage earner, and their absence leads to a considerable loss of income for the family left behind. According to Azam & Iqbal, (2019) migration from rural areas like Mariabad often leads to both immediate and long-term economic hardship for families who remain in rustic environment. Without a stable source of income, left-behind families may face increased poverty and dependence on informal or subsistence agriculture, which is often inadequate to meet their needs.

Psychological Impacts on Left behind Families

The psychological impact of migration on left-wing families is intense, as they often experience emotional distress and anxiety due to separation. In many cases, families face the uncertainty of not knowing when their loved ones will return or whether they will be able to send remittances. According to Khan & Latif, (2018) leftist women in particular, face increased stress as they bear the dual burden of managing family affairs while dealing with the emotional strain of separation.

Finding

Socioeconomic Impacts

While many migrants reported improvements in areas such as social status (44.8% positive), satisfaction with remittances (52%), access to healthcare (52.3%), and quality of life (55%), significant challenges remain. In particular, financial stress is high (44.3% dissatisfied), and only 14% expressed satisfaction with increasing job opportunities for household members, indicating barriers to permanent employment. A significant number of migrants also experienced a strong sense of isolation (40% dissatisfied) and a decreased sense of security (49.9% felt less safe).

Although remittances have played a positive role in domestic stability, their use in business development shows more dissatisfaction (30.4%) than success (26%), indicating obstacles to economic self-sufficiency. Furthermore, improvements in education and housing were modest, and cultural changes elicited mixed reactions.

Overall, while migration has offered tangible benefits to some, particularly in access to healthcare and social mobility, data indicates that many migrants face emotional, economic, and social hardships, highlighting the uneven and complex nature of the impacts of migration.

Reliance on remittances: In some households, remittances play a central role in sustaining the family, especially in the case of young children or elderly people. However, the irregularity of these funds often results in uncertainty and tension, with families dependent on the constant migration of their male relatives.

Social isolation and lack of support networks: Women and children left behind often report feelings of loneliness, as the departure of the family's men disrupts traditional social structures. Without adequate community support, these individuals face difficulties in coping with both their economic hardship and social isolation.

Psychological Impacts

The main consequences are the psychological and emotional impacts experienced by people affected by migration. While some areas reflect positive progress such as a decrease in feelings of loneliness (44.7%), improved social connections, and a sense of cautious optimism about the future (50.5%) other areas show significant distress. Specifically, the majority of respondents reported increased family conflict (54%), stronger symptoms of depression (65.3%), and feeling less connected with family members who migrated (57.6%). Although 55.8% felt less socially isolated and 50.8% observed positive effects on the mental health of others, more than half (52.5%) reported a decline in their overall health. Dealing with daily stress and maintaining motivation for daily tasks also emerged as major challenges, with 44.3% and 45.3% struggling in these areas, respectively. Dealing with daily stress and maintaining motivation for daily tasks also emerged as major challenges, with 44.3% and 45.3% struggling in these areas, respectively. Communication with displaced relatives was largely considered insufficient for emotional support (50.3% dissatisfied), and access to or satisfaction with professional psychological support remained low.

Overall, while some respondents demonstrate resilience and adaptability, the data highlights the widespread emotional stress, mental health challenges, and the urgent need for improved psychosocial support and intervention strategies in post-displacement contexts, especially in vulnerable areas like Quetta.

Perceptions of Migration

These important findings paint a complex and important picture of the impact of displacement, particularly on families in the Hazara community. While there is cautious optimism regarding migration as a potential solution reflected in slightly more respondents agreeing that migration is necessary for their family's future (43.3%) and many reporting satisfaction with their

migration experience (56%) the data also reveals significant doubts and concerns. The majority believe that migration causes more harm than good (57.3%), is not a long-term solution (55.3%), and does not provide better opportunities than life in Quetta (51.3%).

Opinions about future migration, community perceptions, and emotional resilience are almost evenly divided, indicating that the effects of migration are highly individual and context-dependent. Notably, more than half believe that Hazara families have been disproportionately affected, highlighting the vulnerability of this group.

In summary, while some view migration as a successful coping strategy, broader concerns highlight the need for better support systems, policy interventions, and solutions that address the root causes of migration.

Discussion: The migration of Hazaras from Quetta has created a complex web of socio-economic and psychological challenges for those left behind. Although remittances provide some financial relief, they cannot fully alleviate the emotional and social costs. Furthermore, the lack of employment opportunities for women and the erosion of traditional support networks create significant barriers to community cohesion and individual well-being.

The psychological impact on women, in particular, illustrates the gendered nature of the effects of migration. As primary caregivers and homemakers, women face emotional and financial challenges associated with displacement, often without the resources or support to effectively manage these hardships.

Conclusion: The migration of Hazaras from Quetta has far-reaching effects on the families left behind. Socioeconomic stress, social isolation, and psychological distress are significant issues, but they are also countered by the resilience and coping strategies that characterize the strength of the Hazara community. Addressing these challenges requires not only economic and social interventions, but also mental health support to help families with the emotional impacts of displacement. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of migration on Hazara communities and examine potential solutions for the well-being of those left behind.

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