

## **Impact of Migration on Children in Developing Countries**

**Hadiya Habib**

Research Scholar

Department of Education, University of Kashmir, India

Email: [hadiya.scholar@kashmiruniveristy.net](mailto:hadiya.scholar@kashmiruniveristy.net)

### **Abstract**

*Over the past few decades, migration both internationally and internal has increased dramatically. Easier travel, greater access to information about distant places, relatives and friends who have migrated and the opportunities for improving living standards all have fuel movements for individuals and families. Evidences indicate that around 40 percent of migrants leave a developing country to go to another developing country. Migration also occurs within countries and contributes to urbanization and both formal and informal sectors. Migration presents both opportunities and challenges for societies, communities and individuals. Migration alters the structure of families. Experience has shown that children are affected by migration in different ways and can have both positive and negative effects. The migration experience affects children's academic performance, children's serial integration and emotional wellbeing. The present article serves the purpose of discussing the impact of migration on the children in terms of health, education, labour and psycho-social effects. The article further seeks to explore the available professional literature and discusses the different potential ways in which social work practioners can play a pivotal role in the issues faced by migrant children.*

**Key Words:** *Developing Countries, International Social work, Migration, Non-governmental organizations, Social work practitioners.*

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### **Introduction**

In modern times, many factors have intensified migration. Advances in communication and technology increased trade between countries, political instability, poverty and unemployment in economically disadvantaged countries are some of the important factors that contribute to this phenomenon. Many families from low income countries pursue migration in an effort to diversify risks and resources (Stark and Taylor, 1991). As well as secure household economic stability. (Massey et. al., 1993).

Migration can have impact on the mental, physical and emotional health and well-being of migrants themselves and on those left behind in the place of origin, and on those at the destination (Carballo, Divino and Zeric,1998). Some research shows that out-migration of young adults have severe negative consequences for ageing parents, namely loneliness, isolation and the loss of basic instrumental and economic support. (Abas et al, 2009).

The Whitehead and Hashim (2005) report estimate that the percentage of children living in migrant households is between 18 and 40 per cent in rural Bangladesh, 50 to 60 percent in rural Tanzania, and 80 percent in Mali. One study in Bangladesh discovered that an overwhelming 91 percent of the 5, 930 children between age 5 and 14 have one migrant parent (most often the father) who is away, and another 2 percent of the sample has neither parent living in the household (Kuhn,2006).

### **Effect of migration on health and education of children left behind**

Globally, a growing number of children and adolescents are left behind when parents migrate. In labour sending countries, a growing number of children is left behind by one or both parents. Since 2000, about 300000 children and adolescents have been left behind by one or both parents in Ecuador. Data from Moldova, EI Salvador, Jamaica and Albaria show similar trends. Results form case studies conducted by UNICEF and SU-SSCA indicate that the absence of fathers, often results in increased household responsibilities for woman and children left behind. Adolescents from left behind households may face pressure to become labour migrants as part of their transition to adulthood. UNICEF's research conducted in Maldora suggested that the increase of the juvenile crime rate between 1993 and 2000 is positively correlated to the rise in the number of left behind children, who accounted for nearly 60% of the offenders (UNICEF, Children and Migration, 2019).

A very important aspect of migration is the mindset of the migrants that are used to their particular health services and coping with their country specific maladies. The habits may have to change when moving to a host country and the language barrier causes constraints and thus to greater risk of poor health outcomes of children. Migration also has a serious effect on mental health of the children regarding the process of migration, which causes stress due to the loss family , friends and habitual surroundings. Questions about their identity and sense of belonging, the fear of deportation and discrimination cause problems that are taken into adulthood. (Effects of migration on child well-being, *wikiprogress*).

The socio-economic background and family situation, problems of integration, language difficulties, social segregation, process of selection of migrants, level of parents' education and time since migration are crucial factors that affect the education of migrated children.

Being from a different country oftentimes creates problems of acceptance and being subject to racism between children. The lack of the possibility to communicate with teachers about questions hinders the learning process. Lower educational achievements among the migrants explain the dense concentration of migrant employees in certain job sectors. In Germany, a large set of migrant students are found in the so called *Hauptschule*. Participation rates in after school programs are also substantially lower for immigrant children than for natives. Thus, as a result of low income, lack of language proficiency and low parental education places immigrant children at high risks that affects their well being intensively that tends to persist over generations.

### **Effects of migration on psycho-social wellbeing of children left behind**

Prolonged separation following migration often disrupts parent-child relationship and results in psychosocial difficulties in left behind children. Research in developmental psychology provides some reasonable expectations of the impact of immigration induced maternal separation in children. Immigration brings many physical and social changes, in addition to cultural differences and sometimes language barriers. As a result, child migrants sustain multiple disruptions, changes and transitions, all of which have been linked to adverse cognitive (Fomby and Cherlin, 2007) and socio-emotional (Evans and Wachs, 2010) development outcomes.

The qualitative study carried out by Zha, Wang and Hesketh (2018) on impact of parental migration on psychosocial well being of children left behind showed that despite the original purpose of benefitting children, parental migration resulted in challenges in child psychosocial well-being, due to the emotional impacts from prolonged parent child separation. Parental absence also led to inadequate care and support for left behind children.

### **Role of Social work practioners in the adjustment of migrants**

Thousands of people migrate seeking safety, education and economic prosperity or simply put a chance at a better life. These immigrants and their families face various challenges form language and cultural barriers to economic realities associated with starting a new in a foreign country.

Social workers who specialize in working with refugees, immigrants and their families can alleviate some of these challenges by providing counselling and connecting immigrants to valuable resources.

Social workers play key roles in addressing the mental health issues of forced migrants in a variety of settings. In Jordan, for example, many school counsellors lack basic knowledge regarding Iraqi refugee children behavioural needs (Al-Qdah and Lacroix, 2010). ; in these

cases, social workers are called to become educators to the teachers and counsellors , imparting best practices for addressing the specific needs of this population.

### **Conclusion**

This paper primarily serves the purpose of introducing the effect of migration on health and education of children left behind and how the migration effects the psycho-social well-being of the left behind children. The paper further discusses how the social work practioners can play a vital role in the issues faced by the migrants.

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