

Impact of the international labour migration of married males over the social status of the left behind family

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Introduction

The current state policy in Sri Lanka regarding the labour migration opens up premises for large number of persons to migrate for labour crossing the international boundaries. Accordingly, labour migration in Sri Lanka can be identified as the second largest emanation through which foreign exchange flow in to the country. Annually Sri Lanka receives a large amount of remittances through international labour migration which immensely contribute to the development of the country. Since late 1970's a favourable condition for international labour migration has prevailed in Sri Lanka and during that period male labour migration marked an increasing trend. Even though during the latter part of 1980 decade female predominance could be seen in terms of labour migration in Sri Lanka, in the current situation once again the male labour migration has become dominant. One major characteristic that could be identified is that majority of the male migrants to be married. (ILO, 2013). Also Ram Nath Singh (1989) found that while outmigration has brought about a transformation in both social conditions as well as social attitudes. In this context, international labour migration of married males can affect the left behind families in different aspects.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of married male labour migration over the social status of the family left behind.

Data and methods

The study is mainly based on the primary data collected from the Kochchikade North Grama Niladhari Division which has been randomly selected from the Colombo District Divisional Secretariat to carry out the research easily. This sample has been selected on purposive sampling which comes under non-random sampling method. Sample of the study has been 103 spouses, whose husbands have migrated to a foreign destination for labour. These respondents were selected using the snow-ball sampling method. Data

collection has been done using both primary and secondary data collection methods. Mixed methodology has been used in collecting data. Structured questionnaires used to collect quantitative data while informal interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data. These informal interviews analysed in depth to prepare the background needed to induce conclusions. The secondary data were obtained from the Department of Census and Statistics, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Quantitative data was analyzed with SPSS using univariate and bivariate analysis, while qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis focusing on the main themes based on the objectives of the study.

Results and discussion

The results of the study unfold the effects of the male labour migration on three generations. They are; the parents of both the migrant and his spouse as the first generation, the migrant and the spouse as the second one, and the children of the migrant and his spouse as the third generation.

The spouse can recognize as the most affected person in the case of husband's migration to another country for work. According to study due to male migration the spouse's social status has declined by 42.2 per cent. The present study reveals that women's social conditions have increased as a percentage of 45.6 per cent.

Men's migration leads to higher autonomy of their wives. There is a relationship between men's labour migration and women's autonomy. Women who remain in the sending community while their husbands are away report higher autonomy, independence, and decision-making authority.

According to findings, 36.9 per cent of the wives whose husbands have migrated has increased their social relationships. A woman begins to communicate with a wider network and institutions, unlike prior to her husband's migration (Gulati, 1993). Therefore, this study found that women typically see their autonomy increases when their husbands migrate.

Infants and young children require of care within the home. As a result of the gendered division of labour, this care is usually given by mothers, and thus their mobility is decreased and they become more tied to the home and housework (Sanchez and Thomson 1997). But according to this study mothers have to perform a dual role in the case of the absence of a father. In the absence of men, women are responsible for their own and their husbands' tasks, duties, and roles. This creates a negative effect for women. They

have to make decisions about their children on their own and they became the sole of responsibility of their children. According to this study, it is reported higher strain and stress on women due to the increased management responsibilities. Also, this creates an increasing trend of female - headed households in the society.

The children of the migrant and spouse can be introduced as the last generation who are affected by father's migration. It could be revealed through the studies that 89.7 per cent of the children are communicating with their father. Also, 10.3 per cent are not communicating with their fathers. The men who are not communicating with their family have been identified in the study. As such, the father does not talk to his child and there is no relationship between father and children. In the absence of a father at home, the protection given by the father cannot be given by the mother in the same way. As a result of father's absence, it can be seen as a negative effect for children and identified impacts are bad associates and not being interested in educational activities. The absence of a father has caused mothers to be worried about their children. There are cases where young boys are addicted to use drugs and to watch pornographic videos. In the absence of father's safety, the girls have become more vulnerable to start unwanted relationships.

It could be revealed through the studies that 87.8 per cent of the nuclear families have become extended families. In the case of husband's migration, wives may go to their parents' home or bring their parents to the home for protection. It is effective to increase extended families within migrant's families. Changing structure of the family is resulted from the international labour migration of the male spouse and paves the way to the create security for elders within the family. It is not expected to provide protection for the entire elderly population through the international migration of married men. As a result of changing family structure, it can be seen as a by-product of it, which provides some protection for the elderly, and the family can gain investment from elderly population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be identified that the international migration of men has brought several changes in the social status of the family. On the domestic front, women have become responsible for taking care of children, and the burden of their household tasks too has been increased. Also, it can be seen an increment of freedom and autonomy for the majority. Also, there is a trend to create extended families, which as a result creates elderly care within the family.

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