

Socio-Economic Conditions And Resilience Among The Women Caused By Male Migration

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Abstract:

This research project attempts to investigate the complex effects of male migration on women's life in Kerala, India, in a comprehensive manner. The study explores a variety of aspects, from the social and emotional to the economic, of this phenomenon by using in-depth case studies. The study reveals engaging narratives that highlight women's incredible resilience in the face of challenges provided by male migration through these in-depth case analyses. It draws attention to their coping strategies (Phan, 2007, p.427), the critical role that community support plays, the financial obstacles they must overcome, and their intense desire for family reunion. These case studies clearly highlight the pressing need for comprehensive networks of assistance created especially to give women the tools they need to overcome the challenges brought on by male migration. The study's conclusion makes a strong case for society's shared responsibility in addressing these complex issues. It promotes the creation of focused, specialised initiatives and programmes designed to improve women's well-being, especially in light of male migration. Through tackling these intricate and multifaceted problems, the study aims to create a more encouraging and powerful atmosphere, guaranteeing the well-being of women in similar situations.

Keywords: Migration, livelihoods, resilience, emotional impact, community support

Date of Submission: 10-01-2024

Date of Acceptance: 20-01-2024

I. Background

Kerala is perhaps one of the states in the country which has been experiencing a very high rate of international migration. India is the largest remittance receiving country in the world and Kerala is indeed the largest remittance receiving state in India (Kalyani, 2012, p.1) The enormous contribution of the Non-Resident Keralite especially those who are in the Middle East to the development of our state is very well recognized. Non-Resident Keralites do have their share of problems as well. The declining conditions in the world economy, the growing indigenization in the Gulf countries and the growing automation in both manufacturing and services are important challenges facing the current migrants and indeed the rate of future migration (Rahmanis and A., 2023, p.3). Kerala has a long history of outmigration, with a significant number of men leaving their homes to seek employment opportunities abroad, particularly in Gulf countries (Menon and Sreekumar, 2016, p.4). As a result, many women are left to manage their households and families single-handedly.

Women's economic conditions have been profoundly impacted by male migration from Kerala to Gulf nations, where remittances have raised household earnings and improved living standards. But obstacles including heavier workloads, social problems, and reliance on remittances affect the welfare of women who are left behind. Even as some people acquire the ability to make decisions, conventional gender norms endure, impeding complete empowerment. In an effort to address these problems, organisations and the government are boosting women's skill development and support networks while advancing gender equality in the context of shifting socioeconomic realities (Deshingkar and Akter, 2009, p.4).

While male migration can bring economic benefits to families through remittances, it also has profound consequences on the lives of the women who stay behind (Kabeer, 2018, p.2). One of the primary areas of impact is on the financial stability of these women. With their husbands working abroad, they often become the primary breadwinners and have to navigate managing the household expenses and making financial decisions (Sanusi and L., 2012, p.2). This newfound responsibility can be daunting, particularly if they lack the necessary skills or education to handle finances effectively (Suseela and Ambika, 2022, p.1).

Moreover, the emotional toll of separation from their husbands is another significant aspect of this research (Murphy and Herrman, 1997, p.277). Women often experience feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and emotional distress due to the absence of their partners (Ricbourg and Mebazaa, 2015, p.193). The lack of physical presence during important moments in their lives, such as childbirth, birthdays, and festivals, can create a sense of isolation.

Additionally, the social dynamics within the family and community may undergo changes due to male migration (Bøe and A., 2013, p.1). Women might face societal expectations and judgments, which can further compound their stress. The lack of specific support systems catering to the needs of women dealing with long-term male migration can add to their challenges (Chang and C., 2017, p.92)

Understanding these effects is crucial for policymakers and organizations to develop targeted interventions and support programs for these women. By addressing the various dimensions of the impact of male migration, such initiatives can provide much-needed assistance and empowerment to the women in Kerala (Ellis and F., 1998 p.3), helping them navigate the complexities of their changed livelihoods and improve their overall well-being. (Ali et al, 2008, p.4)

II. Review of Literature

Male migration, particularly to Gulf countries, has become a prominent phenomenon in regions like Kerala, India, leading to a substantial body of research exploring its impacts on the livelihoods of women left behind. This literature review synthesizes and analyses existing studies to provide insights into the multifaceted effects of male migration on the economic, emotional, and social aspects of women's lives (Young and B., 1973, p. 2).

Studies by Deshingkar and Akter (2009) and Dilip and Rajan (2015) emphasize the economic consequences of male migration on women's livelihoods. These studies highlight that while remittances can improve household income, the sudden influx of funds can also disrupt established gender roles and social dynamics. Some women experience increased financial responsibilities, potentially leading to enhanced decision-making power, yet others grapple with challenges in effectively managing the newfound financial resources.

The emotional toll of male migration on women is a recurring theme in the literature. Findings from Puthussery (2010) and Rajan and Premi (2017) underscore the emotional distress and mental health implications experienced by women due to their husbands' absence. The studies reveal a range of emotional responses, from loneliness and anxiety to a heightened sense of autonomy and independence.

Social repercussions are also evident in the research. Studies by Menon (2013) and George and Sabu (2018) indicate that male migration can lead to shifts in gender roles and expectations within families and communities. Women may face stigma, isolation, or admiration based on their husbands' migration experiences. Furthermore, the absence of support programs tailored to the needs of these women can exacerbate their challenges, as highlighted by studies like Nair and Sreelekha (2016).

The existing literature underscores the intricate effects of male migration on the livelihoods of women in Kerala. The economic, emotional, and social dimensions of these effects contribute to a complex web of challenges and opportunities. A comprehensive understanding of these impacts is crucial for designing targeted interventions that empower and support women as they navigate the evolving dynamics of their livelihoods in the context of male migration (Kabeer, 1999, p.435), (Sudan and F., 2007, p.90)

Objectives of the study

The general objective is to learn more about how male migration affects Kerala women's livelihoods, as well as the obstacles they encounter and coping mechanisms they use.

- a) To understand the socio-demographic details of the respondents.
- b) To identify socio-economic conditions of women due to male migration
- c) To explore the resilience and community support among women caused by male migration.
- d) To identify reunion anticipation and highlight the consequences.

III. Research methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study research was to thoroughly examine the viewpoints and experiences of women in Kozhencherry, Pathanamthitta District, with an emphasis on coping mechanisms, socio economic conditions, resilience, and the impact of communal support. The study employed purposive sampling to select ten women aged 25 to 45 with a range of socioeconomic origins and life experiences from the list of eligible participants obtained from an Asha worker. Semi-structured phone interviews were used to collect data. The interviews were conducted in accordance with a protocol that included open-ended questions covering important topics like socio-demographic details of respondents, identify the socio-economic conditions of women affected by male migration, explore resilience and community support among these women, and discern reunion anticipation while highlighting its consequences (Artazcoz et al 2004 p.263). In order to ensure voluntariness, the

interview method placed a high priority on participant convenience. Open-ended questions were used to generate extensive narratives, and the recordings were transcribed for in-depth analysis. In order to facilitate an involving process of refining themes and identifying linkages across multiple dimensions of the participants' experiences, a coding system was developed as part of the data analysis.

IV. Findings and Discussion

a) To understand the socio-demographic details of the respondents.

It is essential to comprehend the sociodemographic information provided by the respondents in order to contextualise the effects of male migration on women (Attané and I., 2012, p.5). The woman in Case Study 1 describes her year-long experience in Dubai, highlighting the early difficulties she experienced in taking care of the children and running the family (Puthussery et al, 2010, p.156). The sociodemographic information sheds light on the unique difficulties associated with male short-term migration, including the length of the separation and the presence of children (Case Study 1).

In Case Study 3, the woman experiences remarkable personal growth while her socio-demographic setting changes over a ten-year period. It becomes clear that her community lacks targeted support services, underscoring the significance of comprehending how socio-demographic factors change over time (Rajan and Balagopal, 2017). The sociodemographic information, such as the length of time spent apart and the absence of customised community support, adds to a thorough comprehension of the effects of male long-term migration (Case Study 3).

When considered as a whole, these case studies highlight the importance of sociodemographic elements including the length of the separation, the existence of children, and the lack of specialised community help. Policymakers and support groups must comprehend these specifics in order to create tailored interventions that take into account the varied socio demographic backgrounds of the impacted women.

Case Study 1: *"My spouse departed for Dubai a year ago..."*

Case study 3: *"Over the past ten years, since my husband left for Sharjah..."*

Case Study 10: *"The sociodemographic structure of our household changed significantly as my husband looked for work prospects in the Gulf. To comprehend the wider effects of male migration on our life, it became essential to analyse the changing dynamics within our socio-demographic profile."*

b) To identify socio-economic conditions of women due to male migration

These case studies convey a thorough understanding of the significant socioeconomic effects that male migration has on women. The spouses' departure sets off a series of difficulties, one of which is the instability of financial security. The sudden change in the dynamics of the home requires women to go through a complex process of adjustment. The need to increase household income is essential to this adaptation, and it is satisfied by starting new businesses or engaging in other sources of income (Ellis and F., 1998, p.1).

The narratives highlight a common theme: women juggling the pressures of developing resourcefulness and preserving financial security. In addition to serving as a method of financial survival, these women's financial self-sufficiency is evidence of their adaptation and tenacity in the face of socioeconomic hardship.

The lack of specialised support programmes, which forces women to handle these obstacles on their own, is a recurring theme. This emphasises the intrinsic difficulty these women have in juggling the complex interactions between personal development and socioeconomic duties. The lack of a formal support network exacerbates the difficulties faced by these women, emphasising the necessity for focused interventions and neighbourhood projects to lessen the financial load brought on by male migration. These case studies provide insight on the complex and unique ways that socioeconomic factors affect women, telling a story of resiliency, flexibility, and the pursuit of financial independence in the face of a lack of specific support systems.

Case Study 2: *"Life has been tough and transformational since my spouse departed for Kuwait three years ago. Managing the home and raising the kids by myself has been challenging, but it has also made me more self-reliant and resourceful. Our finances were severely impacted, and I had to discover methods to increase our income."*

Case Study 6: *"My life has been an amazing journey of personal growth and adaptation over the past eight years, since my husband left for Oman." I was responsible for overseeing the household, handling the money, and making all of the decisions. Although it was daunting at first, I eventually gained greater self-reliance and competence."*

c) To explore the resilience and community support among women caused by male migration.

The narratives often highlight the incredible fortitude shown by women overcoming the difficulties associated with male migration. Striking a balance between several obligations, such as emotional support and home administration, these women have a natural capacity for adaptation and persistence. The challenges presented by being apart act as a stimulant for individual development, building resilience while they manage the intricacies of their new lives (Bachay and Cingel, 1999, p.162).

The significance of communal assistance is also remarkable. Although it is clear that there are no formal support programmes in place, the case studies emphasise the critical role that friends and family play. These people show up as strongholds, providing consolation, support, and a sympathetic ear. These women's community ties operate as a key support system, easing the emotional and practical difficulties they face. The importance of unofficial networks in reducing the negative effects of male migration on women is highlighted by the lack of official support systems.

Case Study 4: *"Women like me who are coping with the effects of male migration don't have access to any special support programmes in my town. However, I'm fortunate to have a solid network of family and friends by my side who have been an enormous source of support and encouragement during this time."*

Case Study 7: *"However, I will always be appreciative of my family and friends' unfailing support during this trip. They developed into my rock solid supporters, offering consolation, support, and an ear to listen when I needed it."*

d) To identify reunion anticipation and broader consequences:

The narratives all centre on the theme of longing for a reunion, which conveys a sense of unwavering love and devotion despite distance. The analysis emphasises how important it is to identify the feelings of anticipation that couples have when they consider getting back together. The trip's wider effects are clearly clear, showing not only personal development and resiliency but also strengthening of couples' relationships.

The case studies describe how frequent video chats and sporadic visits have helped couples stay connected in spite of a variety of obstacles. Even if these times are brief, they are a potent reminder of how strong their relationship is. There is a tangible sense of excitement and anticipation for a new chapter as the stories get closer to the possibility of reunions, highlighting how enduring their love is.

Case Study 5: *"As we approach the ten-year mark, the excitement and anticipation of reuniting with my husband in Sharjah grow stronger."*

Case Study 8: *"Since my spouse left for Qatar over a year ago, our family has been eagerly awaiting their reunion. Our future plans and actions are influenced by the possibility of reuniting, which reflects the wider effects of long-term male migration on family dynamics, goals, and the fortitude required to deal with the difficulties of separation and ultimate reunion."*

Case Study 9: *"I'm looking forward to the day we can be together again and explore opportunities for both of us in Dubai."*

V. Conclusion

The case studies that are being given are powerful examples of the complex dynamics that emerge when women negotiate the effects of male migration on their lives. These cases show how profoundly difficulties, personal growth, and an unshakeable spirit of resilience are intertwined. Through these cases, we see how difficult it is for women to take care of their homes, finances, and emotional health without their husbands. Their capacity to not only adapt but also to thrive in the face of hardship is shown by this delicate tango between adversity and personal development (Timmons and Nair, 2016, p.41). Moreover, these case studies emphasize a critical societal and individual need: an in-depth comprehension of the multifaceted consequences that migration casts upon women's livelihoods (Barrett and Webb, 2001, p.315). The experiences shared underscore the necessity of recognizing the holistic impact that male migration carries, not just within the walls of individual homes, but also across the broader fabric of society. These women's journeys unravel a narrative that extends beyond the boundaries of personal narratives, urging us to acknowledge the systemic implications that necessitate collective attention. These case studies essentially serve as a call to action for a thorough knowledge of the extensive effects of male migration on the lives of women. They encourage the development of specialised support networks, laws, and programmes that are tailored to the particular difficulties these women face (Rajan and I., 2015, p.4). As we delve deeper into the complex tapestry of their cases, we are forced to acknowledge that dealing with the effects

of male migration is not just an individual endeavour but also a societal responsibility. This responsibility necessitates a holistic and empathic approach in order to empower and improve the lives of these women.

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