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## Assessing the Academic Impact of Parental Migration on Children Left Behind: A Case Study of Government Schools in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir

Ehsan Tahir Khawaja<sup>1</sup>, Hamad Khan<sup>2</sup>, Sundas Fiaz Khawaja<sup>3</sup>, Jawad Ullah<sup>4</sup>

1. Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Muzaffarabad, Pakistan.

2. Lecturer, Department of Sociology Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Pakistan.

3. Consultant, EPI Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan.

4. Research Scholar, Department of Rural Sociology, The University of Agriculture, Peshawar, Pakistan.

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### Corresponding Author:

Ehsan Tahir Khawaja

Email: [ahsan.tahir@ajku.edu.pk](mailto:ahsan.tahir@ajku.edu.pk)

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**Abstract:** The large numbers of children worldwide losing one or both parents left to search for work have made migration quite a serious issue. This paper discusses how the parents' migration affects the educational performance, emotional well-being, and social development of children left behind in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The data was collected using structured questionnaires with 162 students under a quantitative research design. Results suggest that the major cause of parents' migration is financial hardships. Thus, remittances enhance the well-being of families; however, this comes at a price that is paid by children in terms of emotional and social health. 62.3% reported an improvement in their academic results as they had more funds; publicly although the majority also stated that there was a disruption of everyday lives and psychological problems; such as lack of confidence in ones self and reduction social contact factors were apparent. The research supported the realization of SDG-4 Quality Education by demonstrating that equity and inclusive access need to be ensured for children with migrant background parents in educational resources. The research contributes to SDG-8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) in that it has: outcomes. The study highlights the need for specifically targeted local government and community initiatives that would have a positive influence on the growth of children, thereby increasing the good effects of migration and at the same time decreasing its social and psychological costs. Basically, parental migration may be included as a cause of economic benefits; yet, the complicated influences of such migration on the subsists of children call for inclusive actions which intend not only at their academic performance but also at their emotional and social flexibility.

### Introduction

Parental migration is certainly one of the major socio-economic challenges that challenge families, communities, and a nation. Economic integration and globalization create labor movement, which then

has transformed as an essential technique for many homes in the entire world (Kotabe, & Helsen, (2022). There are financial services offered by emigrant parents from which families develop a better tomorrow, improve dwellings, and provide education facilities for their kids (Ansari et al., 2020). But such separation goes a long way and, in a very complex way, can impact the academic performance and social well-being of children left behind (Waddoups et al., 2019). In this paper, an attempt is made to probe into how parental migration is affecting the scholastic performance of their children in government-run schools in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Migration is common, especially for fathers, as job opportunities in cities or abroad often are limited compared to the few economic prospects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Though it is very much recognized that economic advantages are good reasons for migrating, social impacts, particularly for children, have to be very carefully considered (Libanova, 2019; De Haas, 2021; Czaika, & Reinprecht, 2022). Children left behind in their countries have problems of emotion, lack of care, and reduced academic input that all hinder the educational progress of the child (Williams et al., 2019; Divecha, & Brackett, 2020). Moreover, Nguyen et al. (2024) and Xu et al., (2019) states that the absenteeism of a parent or the two parents upsets the conventional family system which would mean greater responsibility on one of the absent parents or care-givers of the children left behind. It is also expected that such upsets will determine the social relationships and mannerisms, behavior, play with peers and development of a child (Chen, 2020).

Education is a very important channel for social mobility, empowerment, and national progress. It gives people the basic knowledge and skills to make significant contributions to society and the economy. For children left behind by their parents who migrate, academic success can be complicated by emotional stress, lack of parental involvement, and socio-economic difficulties (Doyle, & Keane, 2019; Tawodzera, & Themane, 2019; Sulima, 2019; Hu, 2019; Zhang et., 2019; Botezat, & Pfeiffer, 2020). Moreover, the quality and availability of education in the rural areas such as Muzaffarabad can exacerbate these problems further, increasing the gap in the educational outcomes of children from migrant families and children from non-migrant families (Siddiqui et al., 2019). Furthermore, Badri et al. (2017) states that academic performance among children depends on factors resulting from migration according to current research investigations. As remittance found to be assistive in stabilizing the income and to produce the extra educational resources and the lower emotional support from the parents often resulted in poor academic performance and less motivation and (Arlini et al., 2019).

The relationship between migration of parents and the educational performance of the children comes out with the diverse perspective to be explored. The children derive various educational advantages from their situation including access to premium educational facilities and top-notch educational resources as well as private tutoring through remittance money, yet they suffer from emotional abandonment and heightened stress because of this lack of parental support (Hussain, 2023; Hubert, & Aujoulat, 2018). Accordig to Krauss et al. (2020), children growing up in an unstable home demonstrate behavior problems which negatively impact their school involvement as well as lower their sense of self-esteem. The strong need for understanding how parental migration impacts children's learning exists because of these observations.

Besides academic performance, this paper seeks to explain how the presence of parents may affect the socialization of their children. Gecas (2017) states that socialization is an important process of learning and gaining societal norms, values, and behaviors, although it is considerably influenced by the family. During migration for long periods, parents are away, and it leads to socialization problems in their children because they are not able to develop those good interpersonal relationships and emotional

regulation in the social setting (Renzaho et al., 2017; Mirabile et al., 2018). The extra stress of discrimination or stigma from their peers further adds to the isolation of such children from their social groups (Ayón et al., 2017). So, the societal dimension of this parental migration should not ignore children.

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, things are even worse as we have peculiar culture and society. The liberal nuclear family in this case believes that its members should be close, support each other and that parents should play an active role in raising children. The absence of parents from home resulted in disturbance in the social stability and mobility of the family and the specifically the children (Baataar, 2023). This change in the cultural setting has a diverse and longlasting effect on the educational performance of the children and their social development, that should be addressed by the policy makers.

There are excessive number of research been conducted on migration and its economic impact but the effect of parental migration with respect to the educational outcome of the family and its social impact seems to remain unaddressed in the State of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The gap is filled through a detailed investigation into how the influence of migration shapes the region's children in both their academic and social interaction arenas. The discussion in this regard contributes to a wider discourse concerning the issue of migration and the human development factor that affects well-being, specifically with regards to children.

The regular occurrence of migration results in family change in areas with elevated migration levels. The worldwide concern about children who remain behind when their parents seek work affects millions of individuals. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2019) defines long-term migrant as a person spending 12 months or more in a different country and short-term migrant as anyone who stays more than three months between two to twelve months in another nation.

Foresti & Hagen (2018), argue that migration is one of the core characteristics of the 21st century. This plays a central role in each and every global economic and social development aspect; therefore, this is an activity that should not be ignored towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs. The connection between migration and development is recognized as such but, at the same time, underexplored.

Bai et al. (2018) state that more than 60 million children in rural China are left behind because their parents migrate to cities to improve their livelihoods and get better employment opportunities. Having higher wages means that they will be able to provide these necessities, which consequently improve their children's performance at school. The study examines the difference in academic performance prior to and after parental migration, with findings indicating such migration has positive effects on academic success of left-behind children. Using heterogeneous analysis, it further shows that the effect on left-behind children is much stronger for those who initially performed worse.

The impacts of migration vary widely across the lines of migrant households, but Khan, Haider & Ali (2020) have particularly focused on the schooling of female children in Khairpur (Mir's) district, Sindh, Pakistan. Selecting only 120 such migrant households, at least where one of the family members abroad and reminds often, says they conclude that father's migration and, consequently the remittances sent significantly increase the school outcomes for female children. In some instances, these remittances lead to notable improvements in their educational performance.

Khan (2016) ethnographic fieldwork revealed that the remittances positively affect both male and female children's education, especially during primary school level. This encouragement is associated with higher enrollment rates, attendance, and academic achievements at this point. However, if the

analysis of enrollment trends, attendance trends, and achievement trends is expanded beyond primary level, female students continue to demonstrate excellent performance while male students drop in all those areas.

Mushtaq, Gul, & Khalily (2016) selected a sample of 800 participants consisting of 400 mothers and 400 children from the districts of Sudhnoti and Poonch in Azad Jammu & Kashmir for a research conducted through a purposive convenience sampling method. The primary aim of this research is to assess the maternal psychological issues and the academic performance of children in both migrant and non-migrant households within the region. The results showed that pupils whose mothers in the migrant families' encountered higher psychosocial problems conducted the lowest academic performance compared to those whose mothers in the non-migrant families encountered lesser psychosocial-related problems. Youths left behind with lesser ages compared to their elder siblings performed better in terms of academic outcomes. The research established a high level of psychosocial problems among the wives left behind in connection with the poor performance of their children in academics.

Azad Kashmir is the northern part of Pakistan, and most of its workers migrate to foreign countries in quest of better economic opportunities. However, this migration generates revenue to the families at home but exposes the children of these families to different challenges, primarily educational. Emotional, psychological, and logistical pressures result from parents' separation with their children in such situations. The main goal of this paper is to discover effects that parental migration holds on academic outcomes of their children left in Azad Kashmir Government Schools in Muzaffarabad in particular. To this end, this research will present a systematic approach to identify such factors and mechanisms that either propel or hinder such children's success in school.

### **Methodology**

The research applied a quantitative design to explore the effect of parental migration on the academic performance of children studying in government schools of Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. One of the advantages of a quantitative approach is that it defines the research problem very clearly by making a distinction between the independent and dependent variables being researched (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). For the systematic and concurrent analysis of all the numerical data, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used.

The study was based on primary data collected from students in government schools in Muzaffarabad. Questionnaires were the primary source of data collection, targeting children whose parents had migrated. The target population consisted of students in grades 8 to 10 who attended six government middle schools; three designated were for boys and three were designated for girls. These students had one or both parents who had migrated for various reasons. The respondents were selected using simple random sampling, a method that comes under the umbrella of probability sampling techniques. The technique ensures that every member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected. The technique was selected because it facilitated the easy production of a whole sampling frame through school enrollment records. A total of 162 students were selected from the six schools chosen by using a stratified random sampling technique, and the sample selected was quite representative of the overall student population. The information of the research was elaborated by using the descriptive statistics technique like frequencies and percentages. Data presentation was made by using descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages. The level of significance has been tested between parental migration as independent variable and academic performance which is dependent variable.

## Results

Significant information has been found from the demographic, socio-economic and educational characteristics of the respondents due to the parental migration. Parents migration has a reasonable effect on all domains of social life most importantly socio-economic status, academic performance and household expenditures. Policy makers can consider these results for making relevant interventions which facilitate the affected children due to parental migration. Among the respondents, 162 participants had consisted of 77.8% being males, where 22.2% included females. Among the ages selected, it stated that 60.5 percent of respondents fell between the ages 13-15 years, then 32.1 percent corresponded to age 16-20, and finally the 8-12 years segment accounted for just 7.4 percent of the sample. The results indicate that 45.7% of the respondents belonged to joint family systems, 38.3% belonged to nuclear families, and 16.0% belonged to extended family arrangements. The findings indicate that the joint family system was the most common family type among the respondents. In addition, 64.2% of the respondents reported that their father was the head of the family, whereas 35.8% reported that their mother was the head of the family. This study examines the migration status of the respondents' families. It was found that 88.3% of the respondents reported having at least one family member who is a migrant, while 11.7% did not. From the total number of each family, 97.5% were found having 1-3 migrants' members; on other hand few around 2.5% were having 4-6 numbers of migrants in the family. In accumulation, 33.3% of the respondents alleged that their paternities had been left for 1-4 years, 34.6% for over 13 years, 17.3% for 5-8 years, and 14.8% for 9-12 years.

The study examines the impression of parental migration on deviations in socioeconomic position and academic performance. As per the information from the data, 76.5% of respondents enhanced their socioeconomic position, whereas 23.5% showed no transformation in socioeconomic status. Meanwhile, 62.3% of the respondents described enhancement in academic performance afterward the parental migration, while 37.7% did not perceive any improvement in academic performance. These results specify that the mainstream of the migrants observed constructive changes both in socio-economic and academic status as result of migration.

Additional results also show that 32.7% of people would choose the private sector as their main source of employment. After that, remittances were at 29.0%, government jobs at 16.0%, farming at 12.3%, and personal property at 9.9%. Moreover, the research indicates that the movement of people is highly dependent on economic crises since 43.2% of the respondents strongly agreed while 35.8% agreed that it was a consequence of financial crises. Nevertheless, 18.5% of the people were neutral and 2.5% disagreed. According to this, money problems seem to be the main reasons that people among the research population move to another place. Moreover, the majority of respondents (53.1%) were in a position to agree, while 29.6% of them strongly agreed that their parents could make more money after migration, so migration is a way to release from financial problems.

The findings also disclose the way an increase in family income changes the respondents' relationships with their friends. While 32.1% of the respondents agreed and 23.5% strongly agreed that their behavior had changed for the better, a significant number of people (25.9%) disagreed with the statement, and 3.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This suggests that a positive effect on social behavior could be both positive and negative. Regarding behavior among teachers, 28.4% agreed and 16.0% strongly agreed that their teachers' attitudes improved while 17.3% disagreed and 11.1% strongly disagreed with the statement. Thus, it would seem that more significant socioeconomic standing may affect what educators think about their students.

The study shows that 25.9% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that parental migration



had adversely affected their performance in school, while 24.7% agreed, and 11.1% strongly agreed. This is a fairly balanced view without a clear majority. Similarly, 22.2% agreed, and 17.3% strongly agreed that their daily study habits were influenced by parental migration, although 25.9% disagreed. This shows that, although migration has some impact on the academic life cycles of most students, the impact differs widely among the students. Conversely, 32.1% of the respondents disagreed that their school attendance was adversely affected by the migration of parents, while 14.8% strongly agreed, and 8.6% agreed. This shows that school attendance may not always be disrupted by parental migration. Other school activities had reportedly been hindered, for which 34.6 percent disagree and 12.3 percent agree on the interference from migration. Parental absence may then need attention on challenges to non-academic extracurricular involvement in schools.

It was found that 32.1% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that their academic performance had declined because of parental migration, and 17.3% of the total respondents agreed with it and 9.9% felt strongly. In contrast, 40.7% agreed and 28.4% strongly agreed that their annual results will improve if their parents were to stay. This proves that the absence of parental support may impede the academic path forward, although not everybody remains without resilience.

The other study found that 44.4% disagreed that their pick-and-drop system was disturbed because of the parents' migration, while 21.0% did not take any stance. However, it was striking to note that satisfaction with caretakers was quite high: 42.0% agreed and 21.0% strongly agreed. These would thus suggest that, despite some logistical problems, the behavior and support of caretakers are generally seen in a positive light.

Moreover, 37.0% strongly agreed, and 30.9% agreed that the same amount of attention towards their education was received from their guardians as that received from their parents. Likewise, 33.3% agreed strongly and 34.6% agreed that the behavior they would display to guardians was comparable to the one toward their parents. The results also suggest the presence of guardians makes it possible for a reduction in the effect caused by the parents' absence.

From the statistics, 25.9% disagreed that they felt hesitant to ask guardians for necessities, while 23.5% agreed, and 14.8% strongly agreed. Concerning socialization, 30.9% disagreed that their social skills were affected, but 24.7% agreed. This means that though parental migration may affect social confidence for some, most do not feel that there are negative effects.

Furthermore, 27.2% did not agree that there should be things to do when parents are away, and 33.3% strongly did not agree that there should be something to do when parents were around; however, 33.3% agreed and 17.3% strongly agreed that they felt inferior every time they saw other peers with parents. The findings indicated the emotional struggles that children of migrant parents undergo.

Moreover, 35.8% agreed and 25.9% strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their parents' migration. Nevertheless, a great number 65.4% strongly approved and 28.4% believed that they want their parents to be there with them. This two-fold standpoint demonstrates the economic compensations of migration while also recognizing the emotional disadvantages. In result there found a equal or balanced belief about the effect of parental migration in the educational performance, emotional stability and other social aspect of family life. Although the parental migration may reinforce one's economic well-being, the greater consequences call for determined efforts intended at enabling children to preserve their performance in academics as well as emotional wellbeing.

Table 01 provides the result of the Pearson Chi-Square test, which has further investigated all the associations of key factors, including parental migration, family structure, socioeconomic status, and students' academic performance. All the relationships have shown the significant association with p-

values less than 0.05. The Chi-Square value of the relation of parental migration with academic performance is 49.426, having a degree of freedom of 1 and the p-value being 0.001. This highly significant outcome shows there is a strong correlation between parental migration and students' academic performances, showing how the absence of one or both parents due to migration can significantly affect educational results in both positive and negative ways.

This would be under chi-square value, showing the relationship between family type and the academic performance of students with a value of 54.845; 2 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.001, a statistically significant finding to indicate that the family structure between nuclear and extended families indeed affects the academic performances of students. In a joint family system, there is more than one caregiver, which may help support the child during the parents' absence and hence reduce the effects of migration by parents. On the other hand, nuclear and extended families might experience different levels of support and thus different results in academics. The Chi-Square value for the relationship of socioeconomic status (SES) with academic performance is 32.221, with 1 degree of freedom and p-value 0.000.

This is a highly substantial conclusion that undertakes the role of SES in defining the academic outcome of students. Those left behind families with stable SES status, due to the security of remittances from emigrant parents, employ more on educational inputs like tuition, school supplies, and other learning assistances and resources. In contrast, lower SES can exaggerate challenges, limiting students' approach to educational prospects.

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#### **Relationship between parental migration and academic performance of the students**

	Chi-square	d.f	P- value
Pearson Chi- Squar	49.426	1	0.001

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#### **Relationship between family type and academic performance of the students**

Pearson Chi- Squar	54.845	2	0.001
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#### **Relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance of the students**

Pearson Chi- Squar	32.221	1	0.000
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#### **Discussion**

Boss (2022) in his family stress management theory elaborated the analysis that parental migration found to be a diverse effect of the family in different form of the stress and specifically on the educational performance of the children left behind. Such a theoretical framework provides an clear understanding of the conclusions, highlighting not only the places of adaptive policies but also those of the vulnerability.

The table above about the relationship between parental migration and the academic performance of the children left behind shows the chi, square value of 49.426 with  $p = 0.001$  indicates this association statistically significantly. The findings reinforced the Family Stress Management Theory, which elaborated that families under pressure, such as those with migrant parents, manage the situation by reorganizing their possessions to achieve balance again. The remittance that migrant parents send home do maintain the economic state of the left behind families, but the parental migration still brings

emotional vacuums, which dampen the children's academic performance.

Many of the respondents found it as the opportunity to improve their academic performance due to the availability of enough economic resource to be utilized so the more assistances can be found such as tuitions and other such activities resulted in enhancement in their school performance. While according, few other respondents, the absence of their parents not only disrupted their steady routines but also discouraged them, yet it specifies the complexity of these aspects.

There was a significant relationship been found in the family ttype and the academic performance as Chi, Square value of 54.845 and  $p = 0.001$ . Accordingly, the statement can be made that in joint families, the protective factors dominated as those children had more caregivers in the case when parents are away. Family Stress Management Theory posits that families with strong support networks find it easier to adapt to stressors. Kids in joint families get divided duties and emotional support, which may buffer them against the adverse effects of parental absence.

SES is clearly linked with academic performance as the Chi, Square value is 32.221,  $p=0.000$ . Families with a high SES and living off remittances have more access to better educational opportunities for their children. This is in line with the Family Stress Management Theory which, among other things, highlights that having enough financial resources is one of the ways to reduce the stresses in the family. Those families that have sufficient financial resources will be able to pay for tuition, school materials, and extracurricular activities that will help create a supportive learning environment. On the contrary, for low SES families, there are even more challenges besides being deprived of certain educational resources and having their stress levels increased.

Besides academic performance, the study elaborated on some of the difficulties children of migrant parents face emotionally and socially. Inferiority complex and lack of social interaction had been expressed, especially when it was compared between them and some of their counterparts whose parents were present for them. Findings from these results support Family Stress Management Theory, which describes emotional support as a vital source of managing stress. It would leave children susceptible to emotional challenges, which can hinder their social and academic growth. The involvement of guardians and teachers who offer emotional support is essential in alleviating these impacts; hence, this underlines the importance of a strong secondary caregiving relationship.

The family stress Management theory truly elaborated that how family members face the stress in absence of the parents. Insufficient researches also highpoint that the family having robust financial holdup can manage any stress resulting from the migration of the parents. For example, children in a joint family or those who are under the care of concerned caregivers have discovered improved academic and emotional performance. These adaptive approaches serve as an example of how families can adjust roles and capitals to keep going with firmness and at the same time, expand their well, being. As an illustration, remittances may create more favorable living conditions, however, Yeoh and Lam (2007) demonstrate that it is still not associated with better school performance; their finding is also confirmed in this study. Similarly, Dreby (2010) emphasized the emotional effects of the parents' absence on the children, particularly in terms of social skills and self esteem. This research goes further to the existing writings by indicating that the family structure and socioeconomic status influence the nature of these effects.

The findings emphasize the need for targeted intervention programs specifically designed for children of migrant parents. Policy, making and decisions of community influencers should not only include the training of caretakers but also facilitating the support provided by them. This will enable them to be of better assistance in providing emotional or academic aid to the children. In addition, counselling



together with academic support should be offered to children coming from different schools. It has been put forward that the establishment of peer support groups and participation in community activities can lead to the increase of interaction and emotional well-being among the children. Moreover, there is a provision of giving subsidies to the deprived families so that they can meet the educational, related expenses that have resulted due to disparities disclosed by the research. Essentially, this document reveals the impact of parental migration on the educational attainment and overall life of their children.

Based on the Family Stress Management Theory, the findings provide the significance of financial stability and family support systems along with the adaptive strategies towards the alleviation of the burdens related to parent absence. The policy makers can purpose such interventions that will assist the stallholders to keep the left behind children to cope the absence of the parents while also make improvements in their social and specifically improving their academic performances.

### Conclusion

The research study focuses on the left behind families, specifically the children of those families and their academic performance, their social psychological stability and their family association in Muzaffarabad Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The finding highlight that the parental migration is usually happen due to the push factors like to main than the economic wellbeing of the family so the remittance can play a huge role to improve their socio economic well-being. However, the economic development, which is done at the children's emotional and social well-being, leaves a side of their academic performances. While 76.5% of participants reported better socio-economic conditions, only 62.3% of them observed an improvement in their academic results. This gap therefore gives a clear understanding of the interaction between financial and non-financial determinants in child development. The research established that the absence of parents often disturbed the normalcy of children's daily life, led to emotional problems such as inferiority complex, and influenced their socialization.

However, supportive guardians and effective school systems were critical in reducing the challenges. Guardians who paid attention like that of parents helped the children to retain their academic performance and emotional well-being. Some schools that created a care-like environment could temper the negative effects that the child is exposed to without the parent. The report emphasizes the requirement to focus the intervention on children with the absent parent and target some of the difficulties specifically. Improvement of school-based support systems; training of caregivers; community-based peer support networks. Although it has many economic advantages for families, parental migration affects the academic and emotional development of children in mixed ways. This is highly dependent on context. There is need to maintain such an social environment by the policy makers for these families so the left behind children can grow and flourish in terms of their academic and social performances in the absence of single or both parents of the family.

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