



Effect Of Long Term Husbands Migration On Psychological Well-Being Of Rural Left-Behind Wives : An Evidence From Rural Cooch Behar, India

Sonel Som

Asst. Professor

Department of Geography

Cooch Behar College, Cooch Behar, India

Abstract

The study aims to analyse the effects of husbands' out-migration on psychological well-being of rural adult left-behind wives in the district of Cooch Behar, India. A sample of 400 wives has been selected for the purpose of this study through snow ball sampling and subsequently they have been interviewed by a structured schedule. The Psychological Well-Being Index of left-behind wives has been calculated based on the indicators namely, household responsibilities, decision-making, mobility and social relations, life satisfaction and psychological problems. To identify the difference in Psychological Well-being of left behind wives suffering from different levels of husband's absence, One-Way ANOVA has been carried out. The results shows short-term duration of husband's absence brings more psychological well-being than long term absence.

Keywords: Rural left-behind wives; Out-migration; Psychological Well-being; Long-term absence; Loneliness.

I. Introduction

The monsoon-dependent agricultural system in rural India produces seasonal unemployment, especially in non-monsoonal months, due to a lack of native jobs for poor agricultural labourers. To support their families, they must relocate to other states in India to participate in secondary economic activities. The most typical aspect of large-scale male labour movement is the change in rural social scene (Rai, 2018) and their left-behind families (Zacharia et al., 2003), especially their wives. Poor rural wives are economically, socially, and physically disadvantaged (Biao, 2007). Remittances from husbands' migration increase their economic standing and provide their fundamental requirements (Fakir & Abedin, 2021), but they cannot satisfy their lives. Psychologically, they have been on the brink of autonomy and psychological discomfort (Mahapatro, 2018). Migration gives husbands more freedom to make household decisions and strengthen them socially and economically (Gulati, 1995). They become household administrators from lowly, frail family carers (Rajan & Zacharia, 2018). Their empowerment had detrimental effects that could not be ignored. Increased workload, in-law dominance, family adjustment, social or economic independence limits, etc. render them subject to concerns, fears, disputes, loneliness, etc. Their mental health is a mix of good and bad. Rural social cultural norms and setting in India regulate, contribute to, and vary left-behind women's psychological well-being. Different home structures, living situations, and social traits of left-behind women may affect this. Social science academics struggle to identify such components' influence in complex social structures due to their interrelationship and ambiguity.

II. Methods

2.1 Respondents

A total of adult individual rural left-behind wives whose husbands have migrated from Cooch Behar District to other states of India and engaged in secondary sector of economic activities have been included in the study.

2.2 Design

Cross-sectional data of 400 (95% Confidence Interval, 4% Margin of error) (Moore and McCabe, 1989) rural adult left-behind wives have been collected and who were selected by snowball sampling technique from 120 villages of the district during field visit 2019-2022, from the cohort of 18-59 age-group and either nuclear or joint family types. The respondents participate spontaneously with their self-consent in the interview procedure.

2.3 Materials

Instrument that has been used for the survey is a well-structured schedule comprising, 17 items under 5 variables namely, **household responsibilities** (family-size, nos. of dependent, daily workload- **3 items**); **decision-making** (decision in child education, decision in household activities, decision in household regular purchase and expenditure - **3 items**); **mobility and social relations** (mobility and contact for health management, participation in social activity, increase in social contact, autonomy in accessing outside world- **4 items**); **life satisfaction** (improvement in lifestyle, increase in savings, engagement in recreational activities- **3 items**) and **psychological problems** (mental stress, depression, isolation, fear of insecurity - **4 items**). All the items are orderly quantified in a five point Likert Scale. 11 items have been measured as (never=1 and always =5) and 6 items have been reversed as (never=5 and always =1), each item scores range between 5-25. The internal consistency of the items has been measured performing reliability test and Cornbach's Alpha value has been found acceptable (0.621) (Taber, 2018). The item scores are transformed to average scores for computing each variables and Psychological Well-being Index (PSWBI) has been developed from the scores of the variables using the following formula:

$$\text{Psychological Well-Being Index (PSWBI)} = \frac{1}{5} \sum_{p=1}^5 w_p x_p$$

$$= w_1 * x_1 + w_2 * x_2 + w_3 * x_3 + w_4 * x_4 + w_5 * x_5$$

Where, w_1, w_2, \dots, w_5 are the weightages of the indicators (equal weightage considered)

and $x_1 =$ family responsibility

$x_2 =$ decision-making

$x_3 =$ mobility and social relations

$x_4 =$ life satisfaction

$x_5 =$ psychological problems

It has been considered PSWBI has positive relation with psychological well-being of the respondents i.e. higher the index value better the level of psychological well-being and vice-versa.

2.4 Procedure

For statistical analysis, scores of PSWBI is considered as dependent variable and their husband's duration of stay of at their place of destination have been considered as independent variable. To test whether there is significant effect between groups of individual independent variable on PSWBI and any significant interaction of independent variable on PSWBI a full-factorial Two-Way ANOVA has been performed using SPSS (20.0) version. To measure whether there is any difference in the score of PSWBI within group's pair-wise multiple comparison test (Bonferroni Post-Hoc test) was also performed (Field, 2013). The assumptions of Two-way ANOVA i.e. normality of dependent variable has been assumed (Altman & Bland, 1995), homogeneity of variance among the groups of independent variables has been adequately met (Levene's Test 0.235, $p > 0.05$). All the tests were two-tailed and probability of $p < 0.05$ has been considered.

III. Results

3.1 Background of the left-behind wives

Characteristics of 400 rural left-behind wives (independent variables) has been presented in Table 1, showing their Mean and SD values. The Mean age of these wives is 39 years. Duration of their husband's absence have been categorized as Short-term duration (<6 months) (25.75%), Intermediate-term duration (6-10 months) (29.50%) and Long-term duration (>10 months) (44.75%). Short-term duration (Mean= 2.842, SD= 0.40) and Intermediate-term duration of husband's absence (Mean = 2.712, SD= 0.40) seems to be more psychologically well-being than Long-term duration of husband's absence (Mean= 2.61, SD= 0.42). Standard Deviation values are more or less similar so PSWBI within each group is equally spread.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of independent variables on PSWBI

Independent variables	N	Percentage	Mean	SD
Husbands' duration of stay at destinations				
Short-term duration (<6 months)	179	25.75	2.842	0.409
Intermediate-term duration (6-10 months)	118	29.50	2.712	0.404
Long-term duration (>10 months)	103	44.75	2.616	0.425

3.2 Effect of duration of absence on PSWBI

In regard to left-behind adult women's psychological well-being a significant main-effect of independent variables have been observed. Husband's duration of absence is an effective significant variable on left-behind wives psychological wellbeing. Table 2 shows that duration of absence creates a large effect on their psychological wellbeing ($F(2, 398) = 10.325, p = 0.00 < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.12$) (Saha et al., 2019, Cohen, 1988).

Table 2: Effects of Duration of Absence on PSWBI

Indicator	Sub-indicators	Mean	S.D	Df	F	Sig	η^2	η^2	Effect Size
Duration of absence	Short-term duration (<6 months)	2.84	.41	2 (398)	10.325	0.00	.016	.12	Large
	Intermediate-term duration (6-10 months)	2.71	.40						
	Long-term duration (>10 months)	2.61	.42						

3.3 With-in Group Multiple comparison test

The multiple comparison test (Bonferroni Post-Hoc) has been performed for all the three levels of husband's duration of absence. The result shows difference in scores of PSWBI within groups of these independent variables. Young and middle aged adults ($p = 0.000 < 0.001$) are significantly higher in PSWBI scores than older adults (Table 3).

Table 3: Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test

	Age-group	Mean difference	Sig
Short-term duration (<6 months)	Intermediate-term duration (6-10 months)	.2251*	0.000
	Long-term duration (>10 months)	.1292*	0.025

IV. Discussion

In all age groups, dealing with the psychological problems of left-behind wives is a common occurrence in life. The literature has discussed the psychological effects of their actions or the psychological resilience they experience as a result of their empowerment, autonomy, and independence. There hasn't been much research done on this community's psychological well-being. Very little is known about the effects that differing durations of spouse absence have on wives' psychological well-being. The purpose of this study is to close that gap. The study is unusual in that it develops and designs the Psychological Well-Being Index (PSWBI) within the setting of a rural, backward district and compares how specific demographic variables work.

The period of time that wives are left behind is, predictably, a highly significant variable. The duration of time a husband stays at their place of employment affects the amount of money sent from the source location to the destination region. According to Ivlevs et al. (2019), this flow expedites the migrant families' income benefits

and provides left-behind families with financial security, both externally and psychologically (Goldring, 2004). The psychological wellbeing of wives left behind, whose husbands spend shorter stays at their destination than long or intermediate stays, is better. In contrast to other wives who are left behind, they incur lower socio-psychological costs when adjusting to new living situations and overcoming obstacles (Gordon, 2007). This is because they benefit from their husband's quick arrival and partial responsibility sharing in the home, in addition to other benefits like financial management, stress management, and other household management. Furthermore, getting remittances on an ongoing basis keeps the family's income stable and excuses them from taking on additional paid work (Khan & Valatheeswaran, 2016). On the other hand, when their husbands are temporarily absent from the household, left-behind women tend to experience a decline in their psychological well-being. According to Choithani (2020), a brief absence of a husband can somewhat lessen the influence and interference of in-laws in their lives. Additionally, they feel less worn out from handling their family's tasks alone (Thomas & Adhikary, 2012). Because they are not as autonomous as younger left-behind women, the psychological well-being of these wives in any type of dwelling is always more dependent on the husband's short-term migration than on his intermediate- or long-term migration.

V. Conclusion

The study focuses on the psychological wellness of rural women who are left behind in specific social situations, as well as their headship, home organisation, and husbands' duration of absence. Wives who are left behind and whose husbands are short-term migrants have greater psychological wellness than those whose husbands are intermediate- or long-term migrants. This scenario makes it clear that the duration of the husband's absence influences the degree of empowerment, independence, and self-reliance. Wives who are left behind can feel more confident and able to handle the limitations, fears, and hesitations that come with being single. This is made possible by their psychological well-being. Because they are more likely to be independent outside the home, wives who are left behind need more help and guidance from their families and society in order to get past their psychological obstacles. Rather than experiencing marginalisation, they could become a valued member of the larger community.

IV. Acknowledgement

Grateful for the support and collaboration that made this research possible. Sincere thanks to all contributors.

References

- Altman, D. G., & Bland, J. M. (1995). Statistics notes: the normal distribution. *Bmj*, 310(6975), 298.
- Biao, X. (2007). How far are the left-behind left behind? A preliminary study in rural China. *Population, Space and Place*, 13(3), 179-191.
- Choithani, C., 2020. Gendered livelihoods: migrating men, left-behind women and household food security in India. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 27(10), pp.1373-1394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1681366>
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203771587>
- Fakir, A., & Abedin, N. (2021). Empowered by absence: does male Out-migration empower female household heads left behind?. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 22(2), 503-527.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. Sage.
- Goldring, L., 2004. Family and collective remittances to Mexico: A multi-dimensional typology. *Development and change*, 35(4), pp.799-840. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0012-155X.2004.00380.x>
- Gordon, E., 1981. An analysis of the impact of labour migration on the lives of women in Lesotho. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 17(3), pp.59-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388108421798>
- Ivlevs, A., Nikolova, M. and Graham, C., 2019. Emigration, remittances, and the subjective well-being of those staying behind. *Journal of Population Economics*, 32(1), pp.113-151. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-018-0718-8>

Khan, M. I., & Valatheeswaran, C. (2016). International migration, remittances and labour force participation of left-behind family members: A study of Kerala. *Margin: The Journal of Applied Economic Research*, 10(1), 86-118.

Khan, M. I., & Valatheeswaran, C. (2016). International migration, remittances and labour force participation of left-behind family members: A study of Kerala. *Margin: The Journal of Applied Economic Research*, 10(1), 86-118.

Mahapatro, S. R. (2018). Impact of Labour Migration on Socioeconomic Position of Left-Behind Women in Bihar. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 61(4), 701-718.

Moore, D.S. and McCabe, G.P. (1989). *Introduction to the Practice of Statistics*. WH Freeman.

Rai, P. (2018). The labor of social change: seasonal labor migration and social change in rural western India. *Geoforum*, 92, 171-180.

Rajan, S. I., & Zachariah, K. C. (2018). Women left behind: Results from Kerala Migration Surveys. In *Migration, Gender and Care Economy*, pp. 86-102.

Taber, K.S. (2018). The use of Cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in science education*, 48(6), pp.1273-1296. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2>

Thomas, B. and Adhikari, S., 2012. Male migration: Dynamics, issues and difficulties of left-behind families. *Asia Pac J SocSci*, 4, pp.109-30.

Zachariah, K.C., Mathew, E.T. and Rajan, S.I., 2003. *Dynamics of migration in Kerala: Dimensions, differentials, and consequences*. Orient Blackswan

