

Internal Migration and Livelihoods of Female Domestic Workers in *Noagaon Sadar* of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Internal migration is increasing day by day and over the world, the nature of this migration is splitting into various dimensions. Female domestic workers work in urban areas coming from rural areas and face many problems with the newly working environment. The main purpose of this study was to assess the causes and effects of domestic worker's migration on their life style. Survey method was carried out to conduct the research in Noagaon Sadar, Noagaon, Bangladesh during September to December, 2017. Random sampling technique was used to collect data and total sample size was 100. The study showed that eighty percent workers had to work four to seven hours a day to maintain their families. Both income and saving had been increased significantly after their migration ($p < 0.001$). Age, religion, educational attainment, types of families, marital status, number of family member and having relation with close relatives had an impact on their choice of internal migration. Univariate analysis showed that marital status, duration of working hour and number of working houses played a part for their monthly income. An association between female domestic worker's age and her leisure time passing was found as a member of non-governmental organizations. From multinomial logistic regression it is seen that age, educational attainment, monthly income and position in the family of the respondents had an effect on their voting behavior ($\chi^2-187.781$, $df-54$ and $p < 0.001$).

Keyword: Migration, Effect, Domestic Worker, Life Style, Working Environment

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Introduction

Migration from one area to another in search of improved livelihoods is a key feature of human history (Nguyen, 2015). Among its classification, the affairs of internal migration are keeping its salient social and economic aspects with the fast rate of urbanization having both risks and opportunities (World Migration Report, 2015). Internal migration is the movement of people between usual residences within national states (Rees, 2001). Rural to urban migration is a multifaceted phenomenon (Alaluusua, 2017). There has been a large-scale movement of the population for a very long time and this huge population is not the only factor responsible for rural-urban migration but also help predict overall lack of opportunities and lack of development associated with the rural areas (Begum, 1999). Those who migrate rural to urban areas are to perform a variety of household services from providing care for children to cleaning household. They are called domestic household worker.

Domestic work is one of the oldest and most important occupations for millions of women around the world. A domestic worker works in the employer's household. These are of two categories i.e., live-in and live-out workers. In this study, the live-out worker is the subject of our research. Their responsibilities may also include cooking, doing laundry and ironing, food shopping and other household errands (Rashid, 2013). As domestic work is not yet a well-regulated profession (Nguyen, 2015); its appointment is verbal where terms and conditions of work are not protected by laws. Pains and pleasures of domestic workers depend on mind set of the house owner. Workers also have positive attitude on house owner. Even some house owners do not torture them physically and mentally rather give medicine, cloths (sometimes old cloth), food and other supports (Rashid, 2013). One of the matters of increasing internal migration everywhere is the creation of employment and involvement of all gendered people with it (Nguyen, 2015). Relatively a little has been written about the phenomenon of rural to urban migration in this context. And even fewer studies have assessed the causes and impact of internal migration of female domestic workers in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, men become the household head and take major decisions on family matters, incomes and expenditures in particular. Even in the 'patriarchal' system, implying a set of rules for women and men in line with gendered norms and values (Rouf, 2013); women have progressed a lot over the years (Mahan and Kamruzzaman, 2016).

Economic necessities were undoubtedly the most common push factor for migration. Unequal regional development and the state's withdrawal from the provision of basic needs such as healthcare, childcare and

education leave the majority of rural households in a precarious position, having to fend for them while job opportunities are few and far between (Nguyen, 2015). Another process is commonly referred to as global care chains (Hochschild and Machung, 2012) in which women from economically disadvantaged regions migrate to offer domestic services and undertake care work. Their labor is in high demand due to the double burden shouldered by their female employers who hold full-time jobs while being charged with domestic responsibilities though they are at risk of mental and physical abuse by male domestic worker (Nguyen, 2015). The movement of urban to peripheral areas coincides with the increasing demand for low wage labor in the core (Sassen-Koob, 1988). For some migrants, their decisions to migrate results from responsibilities that their husbands failed to bear (Nguyen, 2015).

Despite of range of vulnerabilities, women's internal migration is important from women's empowerment perspective because migration takes them to outside for paid work for pursuing incomes (Kabeer et al., 2011). They don't have prior knowledge about city life; even they are not capable of speaking properly-they go out in the name of hope and aspiration (Rashid, 2013). Migrating to cities can produce vulnerability i.e., informal employment, decent housing, and the basic services needed for a decent life; the migrants face various legal, cultural and social barriers, and obstacles to accessing the full range of resources, services and opportunities in cities (World Migration Report, 2015).

Domestic violence throughout the majority of rural married woman select migration a way out of the situation without breaking the norms too drastically; it is indeed considered a relief (Nguyen, 2015). It's like silent social thundering to save them. For women whose husbands were abusive, alcoholic or addicted to gambling, going to the city is a way to avoid conflict, stay safe and protect their earnings because divorce was considered an undesirable, even they may wish to travel and explore life in another place as an aspiration to realize what they remained in their home villages (Nguyen, 2015). This study aimed to investigate the causes and effect of internal migration upon their lives i.e., reasons of migration, effect of socio-demographic and economic factors on their income, voting behavior and involvement with non-government organization.

Materials and methods

The study was conducted through the use of survey method. The Study area was *Noagaon Sadar* under *Noagaon*-a district of Rajshahi division in the extreme northern part of Bangladesh. As developed life style has increased the demand for domestic servants; it is difficult to gauge the exact number of the women in the occupation. However, there is no government organization in Bangladesh which keeps the record of the

female domestic workers. Random sampling technique was carried out for the study. This study collected data only from those females who had migrated from rural areas of Noagaon district to *Noagaon Sadar* and worked for at least three months as a *live-out* domestic worker. An interview schedule was prepared having both open and close ended questions to collect data from field. A pilot survey on 15 respondents was executed to modify the questions. After modification of the interview schedule, it was finalized and used for face-to-face interview. Two research assistants collected data from 100 female domestic workers during September to December, 2017. Most of the cases, respondents were communicated for several times because they were busy with their work. For some cases, research assistants collected data from them at night. After collection of data, data were coded and entered into a database and have been interpreted using software like Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive (tabulation, and percentage) and inferential statistics were used for univariate analyses, chi-square and regression.

Results

Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics

Data presented in Table 1 shows that sixty one percent female domestic workers aged 20-39 years migrated more from rural to urban areas. Most of them were from Hindu community and more than half of the respondents of this study completed their primary level of education.

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by the socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Variables	%	Variables	%	Variables	%
Age(year)		No. of working houses		Expenditure for dress (a.mig ¹) (tk)	
≤29	35.0	≤2	42.0	≤399	24.0
30-39	26.0	3-4	57.0	400-599	37.0
40-49	18.0	5≥	1.0	600-799	15.0
50≥	21.0	Slow work		800≥	24.0
Religion		Yes	30.0	Having bank account	
Sanatan	72.0	No	70.0	Yes	47.0
Islam	28.0	Types of payment		No	

¹ a.mig means after migration

Education		Daily			
Illiterate	22.0	Weekly	26.0	Saving after migration (tk)	
Primary	54.0	Monthly	69.0	≤300	27.0
SSC	24.0	Extra payment		301-500	41.0
Types of past family		Yes	64.0	501-700	15.0
Nuclear	25.0	No	36.0	701≥	17.0
Joint	75.0	Income before migration (tk)		Having Past resources	
Marital status		No income	48.0	Yes	15.0
Unmarried	30.0	≤300	8.0	No	85.0
Married	49.0	301-500	0.0	Past resource type	
Divorced	14.0	501≥	24.0	No Resource	85.0
Widow	7.0	Income after migration (tk)		Land	4.0
Family member		≤1499	19.0	Ornament	4.0
≤2	9.0	1500-1999	15.0	House	7.0
3-4	43.0	2000-2499	18.0	Having Close relatives	
5-6	42.0	2500-2999	15.0	Yes	35.0
7≥	6.0	3000≥	33.0	No	65.0
Working hour		Expenditure for dress (b.mig ²) (tk)			
≤3	1.0	≤299	18.0		
4-5	44.0	300-499	40.0 40.0		
6-7	36.0	500≥	8.0		
8≥	19.0	No expenditure	34.0 34.0		

Two-third of them lived in joint family and eighty five percent of the respondents had three to six family members. Almost all the workers worked between single to four houses and eighty percent of them worked between four to seven hours a day. They received their payment monthly

² b. mig means before migration

more and sometimes they got extra payment. Forty eight percent respondents had no income before their migration but sixty six percent respondents had income tk.2000 and above after their migration. Fifty eight percent women spent only tk. 100-499 for the purpose of buying dress before migration, while seventy six percent of them spent tk.500-800 in the same purposes. Though half of them had no bank account, seventy three percent saved tk. 300 and above. Eighty five percent women had no resources before their migration and sixty five percent of them had no close relatives in the migrated areas.

Reasons for migration

Table 2: Age, religion, education, types of family, marital status, number of family members, past resources and having close relatives of the respondents with reasons for migration

Variables	Searching Job (%)	Better life style (%)	High income (%)	Better education (%)	Others (%)	Fisher's Exact Test	p-value
Age							
≤29	8.3	43.6	40.0	0.0	85.7	43.971	0.000*
30-39	33.3	18.2	40.0	43.8	14.3		
40-49	8.3	10.9	20.0	56.2	0.0		
59 ≥	50.0	27.3	0.0	0.0	0.0		
Religion							
Sanatan	33.3	81.8	0.0	100.0	100.0	43.281	0.000*
Islam	66.7	18.2	100.0	0.0	0.0		
Educational attainment							
Illiterate	41.7	16.4	25.0	40.0	0.0	17.427	0.013**
Primary	50.0	61.8	37.5	60.0	28.6		
SSC	8.3	21.8	37.5	0.0	71.4		
Types of family							
Nuclear	33.3	14.5	0.0	43.8	85.7	21.296	0.000*
Joint	66.7	85.5	100	56.2	14.3		
Marital status							

Unmarried	0.0	38.2	40	0.0	71.2	51.008	0.000 *
Married	50	47	0.0	100	14.3		
Divorced	33.3	7.3	60	0.0	0.0		
Widow	16.7	7.3	0.0	0.0	14.3		
Number of family member							
≤2	33.3	5	20	0.0	0.0	23.155	0.007 **
3-4	16.7	40	80	56.2	28.6		
5-6	50	45.5	0.0	37.5	71.4		
7≥	0.0	9.1	0.0	6.2	0.0		
Having past							
Yes	33.3	0.0	40	43.8	0.0	30.333	0.000 *
No	66.7	100	60	56.2	100		
Having close							
Yes	25	23.6	80	56.2	28.6	14.998	0.003 **
No	75	76.4	20	43.8	71.4		

* Significant at 0.10% ** Significant at 0.05%

Table 2 reveals that half of the total respondents aged 50-59 years migrated for searching a job; forty four percent did the same work for a better life style whereas forty percent of them aged 20-39 years migrated for higher income. More than half of the female domestic workers migrated to get better atmosphere for their children's education. So, a statistically significant association between age of the female domestic workers, their religion, types of family, marital status, having resources and their reasons for internal migration was assessed from the study ($p < 0.001$). Educational attainment, number of family members and having close relatives were also positively associated with the reasons of internal migration.

Monthly income and some related issues

Table 3 asserts that there is an overall effect of respondents' marital status, duration of working hour and number of working houses on the monthly income of the respondents. From Univariate analysis, it is seen that respondent's marital status and duration of working hours had a positive relationship with their monthly income (where $F=7.047$ with $df=3$

and $p < 0.001$ and $F = 7.268$ with $df = 3$ and $p < 0.001$ respectively). Again, number of working houses also had a positive impact on their monthly income.

Table 3: Effect of socio-demographic and economic factors on workers' monthly income

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Source	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	31.18	1	31.18	18.30	0.000*
Educational attainment	1.78	2	0.89	0.81	0.446
Marital status	24.34	3	8.11	7.40	0.000*
Duration of working hour	23.88	3	7.96	7.26	0.000*
Number of working houses	8.32	2	4.16	3.79	0.026**
Family member	2.30	3	0.76	0.70	0.554

*Significant at 0.10% ** Significant at 0.05%

Socio-demographic factors and membership of microcredit program (MCP)

Table 4 illustrates that more than half of the women from different age group became the member of microcredit program and there remained an association between those two variables ($p = 0.001$). Thirty six percent respondents who passed their leisure time by watching T.V and gossiping with others became the member of microcredit program. From Fisher's Exact Test it is seen that passing leisure time had an impact on their becoming membership of microcredit program ($p < 0.001$).

Table 4: Socio-demographic factors of the respondents and getting membership of microcredit program

Variables	Membership of MCP		Fisher's Exact Test	p-value
	Yes (%)	No (%)		
Age (year)				
≤29	22.0	13.0	16.569	0.001*
30-39	9.0	17.0		
40-49	15.0	3.0		
50 ≥	6.0	15.0		
Marital status				

Unmarried	19.0	11.0	66.56	0.080
Married	21.0	28.0		
Divorced	10.0	4.0		
Widow	2.0	5.0		
Educational attainment				
Illiterate	8.0	14.0	2.803	0.237
Primary	31.0	23.0		
SSC	13.0	11.0		
Passing leisure time				
Watching TV	10.0	32.0	26.782	0.000*
Gossiping	26.0	14.0		
No response	16.0	2.0		

*Significant at 0.10% ** Significant at 0.05%

Multinomial logistic regression of voting behavior with respondent's socioeconomic and demographic factors

From the multinomial regression analysis, it is seen that age, education and monthly income of the female domestic workers were positively associated with their voting behavior.

Table 5: Effect of socio-demographic and economic factor on voting behavior

Effect	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
		χ^2	df	Sig.
	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model			
Age	12.64	12.64	3	0.005**
Educational attainment	50.81	50.81	6	0.000*
Monthly income	28.22	28.22	12	0.005**
Position in the family	12.98	12.98	6	0.043**
Model Fitting Information χ^2 -187.781, df-54				

* Significant at 0.10% ** Significant at 0.05%

Their position in the family had also an effect on the aforesaid issue. Moreover, model fitting information asserts a statistically significant

relationship between socioeconomic factors of female domestic workers and their voting behavior (χ^2 -187.781, df-54 and $p < 0.001$).

Discussion

Migration is gradually being considered as the development alternative to the family level of women workers particularly the illiterate and unskilled workforce (Islam, 2013). In this study, comparatively young married females from Hindu community migrated more. Alaluusua (2017) found the same result where young females tend to leave their rural hometowns and communities at an early age, searching for better future perspectives for themselves in the urban areas. As they had three to six family members, they had to work up to four houses from four to seven hours a day which is consistent with Alaluusua's study. To Alaluusua, a normal working day of the female domestic worker was pictured starting very early in the morning and ending in the afternoon; they were to work six days a week even they got tired caused by long working hours. Another study conducted by Ukwatta (2010) mentioned that the young married women who migrated from distant places with higher number of children gave preference to domestic work to support their families.

While a large portion of female domestic workers had no income before their migration, a significant amount of income increased after their migration. They started spending more money for buying dress after their migration even their savings became increased. Working in paid domestic work enabled them to save more money (Alaluusua, 2017). Though they had no close relatives in the migrated areas, they moved from their rural areas to *Naogaon Sadar*. But in some cases, networks have been an important household strategy to migrate rural to urban areas (Crivello, 2011; Leinaweaver, 2008).

They migrated for numerous purposes i.e., getting a job, pursuing a better life style, having higher income, even for reaching better education atmosphere. There were some socioeconomic factors behind their migration. For example, their age, their family type, marital status, lack of resources helps them migrate from their villages. All internal migration, rural-to-urban, has been largely driven by economic necessities and prevalent, perpetual unemployment in rural areas (Nguyen, 2015). Alongside these societal factors, family structure, violence, gendered norms regarding labor in rural communities, death of a parent and poverty in general have also produced migration inside the country (Chaney, 1985; Radcliffe, 1986). Girls and boys from rural areas account for an important share of domestic workers in urban households, sent by their families to "help out" in the homes of relatives or friends so

that they could access better schooling, secure their subsistence, or earn an income for their families (ILO, 2013).

Some socioeconomic factors i.e., marital status, duration of working hours and number of working houses played a part for their monthly income. Those who are economically insolvent are found to be involved with microcredit program. In this study, from different age group, they became the member of various microcredit programs. Women who passed their leisure time by watching T.V and gossiping with others became members of microcredit programs. Voting is a political right of every human and this right is considered relevant to empowerment. In this study women's age, educational attainment, and their monthly income were positively associated with voting behavior. Their position in the family also played a vital role in their voting behavior.

One of the limitations of this study was to determine the sample size as their real statistics is not available. So, this study suggests a wide scale survey to divulge the actual situation of the migrated female domestic workers. All the problems found in the study can be addressed in the national policy formulation.

Recommendation

- a. Still there are no exact statistics of migrated female domestic workers in national labor bureau of Bangladesh. State intervention regarding their conditions should be started so that they should be given priority to their rights
- b. New employment sectors can be created for the migrated female women
- c. Special education program should be launched to make them literate
- d. Special subsidy from government can be provided for the vulnerable female domestic workers
- e. There should be flexibility to be a member of microcredit program so that they can easily avail the benefit from it
- f. For passing quality leisure time, various recreational facilities should be increased for the migrated female domestic workers

Conclusion

In rural areas, women suffer from various problems. They move from rural to urban areas for numerous causes i.e., lack of employment, disruption in education. Though this is not an easy journey, they gradually become a significant economic partner for family expenses. Their conditions in the family in general are improved after their migration. After migration their monthly income went high and

consequently, they can spend enough money to purchase many things. Even they can involve themselves with MCP where they get a loan access. Their voting right can be considered as a part of national development. Governments as well as non-government organizations should be concerned about their actual conditions.

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