Impact of Male Migration on Left-behind Female Members Autonomy: Insights from IHDS Data

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Abstract: - **Migration is considered as a third component of population growth after fertility and mortality. A common pattern characterizing migration of men in developing countries is that they leave their wives and children in the place of origin while they migrate in search of work. As most of the male migrate without their family, their departure has some affect on the left behind female member. With the process of male migration, workload on left behind female member increased. Again in their daily life women have to cope with problems related to children, other members of the family, financial breakdown and complication regarding employers, neighbours, relatives etc. There is a dearth of studies in Assam, particularly regarding the impact of male migration on female autonomy. With this backdrop, this study aims to fulfill the gap by analyzing the impact of male migration on the autonomy of the left behind female members. Assamese women enjoy inferior status in case of women empowerment than the national average. Although they enjoy inferior status it is often found that autonomy in case of decision making is quite good compared to the other parts of the country.**

Keywords: **Migration, population growth, female autonomy, left behind female.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Migration is considered as a third component of population growth after fertility and mortality. People move from one region to another region to get better inhabitant. Although people move from one region to another region for better opportunities, the reasons for movement are different. People can choose to migrate for various reasons. The history of movement of people from one place to another tells that people can migrate for a better employment opportunity, to escape domestic violence, lack of better education, health facility, etc. A common pattern characterizing migration of men in developing countries is that they leave their wives and children in the place of origin while they migrate in search of work(Desai & Banerji, 2008). Since most of the male migrate without their family, their departure has some affect on the left behind female member. After male migration workload on left behind female member increased. Again in their daily life women have to cope with problems related to children, other members of the family, financial breakdown and complication regarding employers, neighbours, relatives etc.(Gulati,1987).It has been found that as a result of male migration the gender division of agricultural labourer is also changed i.e. women have to do some male specific work after male migration(Paris et al.

2005). Along with this increaing responsibilty women may also get some freedom in case of decision making in case of production, marketing etc.

Nayak & Mahanta (2009) found from the NSSO data that women from Assam enjoy an inferior status as compared to the average women in India. Although it enjoys an inferior status then all india averages, women in Assam enjoys a better autonomy in case of decision making. Various researches have been done to study the empowerment of women in Assam and about its various determinant. Some how male migration may also be the reason behind this higher autonomy in case of female in Assam.There is a dearth of studies in Assam, particularly regarding the impact of male migration on female autonomy. With this backdrop, this study aims to fulfill the gap by analyzing the impact of male migration on the autonomy of the left behind female members. We aim to fill up the gap in this study. In this paper, we will study whether male migration increases the autonomy among the left behind male or not.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section a brief review has been done on male migration and autonomy of left behind female member. The absence of the migrant from the household, especially if he is 'the head of the family', can have serious implications for the women left behind, both socially and economically (Sekhar, 1997).However, there are diverse views regarding the change of women's status in the family due to male out-migration. On the one hand, it is believed that women should attain more authority and power in decision making whereas, on the other, it is remarked that male out-migration does not substantially change women's decision-making powers. Women may gain autonomy through the absence of men; however, they are left with greater stress and vulnerability, an increased workload and a high chance of extended family intervention. Agasty and Patra (2014) found in Odisha that male outmigration increases the women workforce participation and reduces the women labour market participation. But in their study, they also analyze the role in decision making of migrant's wife. In case of decision making, they found that although the power of decision making increases, there is some heterogeneity in the result such that power of decision on making in case of health is higher than education since health issues cannot be compromised. Decision making in case of assets purchasing or selling is less than decision making in education. Another

favorable evidence for female workforce participation among lower caste female is found in Bihar which is studied by Singh et al (2012). They found that although the workload increases, women are getting difficult in case of marketing, use of agricultural input like fertilizer, pesticides etc due to some socio-cultural norms. Maity et al (2018) studied the impact of male migration on empowerment of left behind female members in West Bengal. They found that as a result of male migration work participation of left behind female member decreased because the female had to take more responsibility regarding their children health and education, maintaining household etc. Although their responsibility increases, male departure does not effect on the empowerment among the left behind female member. This may be because of some prevalent rules in the society. Desai and Benarjee (2008) found that women with migrant husband are more likely to participate in household decision. But if women live in extended family after male migration their empowerment does not increase. Because if a women lived in an extended family they are embraced with a family circle and bound by the same rules and customs as their peers whose husband resides within the household. So, the effects of male migration depend on the nature of the family whether it is extended family or not. Kakati (2014)also found that after male migration women have to depend on other for decision making. They have to discus major decision either with the old member left at house or the member who has migrated. So, male migration does not affect female autonomy.

Objectives: On the basis of above reviews of literature, the following objectives are set in accordance with the existing literature gap.

1. To identify the socio-economic difference of female among migrant and non-migrant household.
2. To examine the impact of male migration on the autonomy of left behind female members.

III. DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

This study is completely based on secondary data. The source of data is the Second India Human Development Survey (2011-12). The India Human Development Survey-II (IHDS-II), 2011-12 is a nationally representative multi-topic survey of 42,152 households in 1,503 villages and 971 urban neighborhoods across India. These data are mostly re-interviews of households interviewed for IHDS-I (ICPSR 22626) in 2004-05. Total numbers of sample household collected from Assam are 991 which include 4651 individuals. In addition to the household information, this round of IHDS survey collects information about eligible women (one ever-married woman aged 15 – 49 in the household). Information about 39,253 women is collected from migrant and non-migrant household from all India.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In order to show the status of women in migrant households of Assam, various characteristic of women are studied with the

help of IHDS 2011-12 data. Table 1.1 shows the various characteristic of women between migrant and non-migrant family in percentage.

Table 1.1 Descriptive Variables

Characteristics	In Percentage	
	Migrant	**Non-migrant**
Age of the women		
15-20	7	4
21-30	25	30
31-40	25	42
41-49	42	24
Women education		
Illiterate	30	27
1-5 grade education	12	12
6-9 grade education	33	35
Matriculation	9	12
HS	7	11
Graduate and above	9	3
Social Group		
General	54	51
OBC	24	14
SC	14	18
ST	9	13
Others	0	4
Religion		
Hindu	59	60
Muslim	41	38
Others	0	2
Primary Activity Status		
Cultivation		0.8
Agriculture wage labour		0.5
Nonagricultural wage labour		1
Artisan/independent work		0.4
Small business		0.3
Salaried	5	3
Retired	2	0
Housework	93	94
Autonomy		
0-2	9	8
3-4	79	87
4-6	12	9
Source : Indian Human Development Survey, 2011-12		

To compare the age distribution of women members between migrant and non-migrant family it is observed that among family with migrant members, maximum percentage of women fall under the age category 41 to 49, whereas for families with non-migrant members maximum women belongs to the age group 31 to 40. Percentage of women is lowest for category 15 to 20 for both the group. Education is an important criterion for development. But the level of education is lower for both the category of female. Table 1.1 reveals that maximum percentage of women has an education level of 6 to 9 grade level. The lowest percentage of education of women is from the category graduate and above. In case of social group most of the women are from the general category i.e. 54 percent of women from the migrant family and 51

percentage non-migrant families. Hindu religion is the dominant religion of women for migrant and non-migrant family. After Hindu the next religion from which there are large numbers of women is Muslim. Due to low level of literacy among women most of the women works as a housewife. Between migrant and non-migrant family women from migrant family 5 percent salaried, but for non-migrant family it is only 3 percent.

Second Objective

To fulfill the second objectives the autonomy of female member of the households is calculated first on the basis of role in decision making in case of household activities. Here we get the score of autonomy index in between 0 and 6. If the value is 6 or close to six then the female has high autonomy and the value is 0 or close to zero then the autonomy in case of decision making is absent or less. Further for our convenience in case of analysis again score are divided into three categories i.e. low autonomy, medium autonomy and high autonomy. This is categorized on the basis of the following intervals.

Low autonomy= score between "0 to 2"

Medium autonomy= score betweeen " 2<score ≥4

Higher autonomy= score between " 4<score ≥6

Since the dependent variable (Autonomy) is a categorical variable and expressed it in scale so here we have to use the ordinal regression. In this analysis, ordinal logistic regression is used.

Variables used in the model:

Dependent variable: Autonomy score is the dependent variable

Independent variables: Independent variables are discusseed as follows

Migration status: Here migration status means whether the husband of the female member is lives with her at home or not. This is taken as a dummy variable in our model. If husband is migrated then it takes value 1 other wise zero.

Place of residence: Whether the women is a residence of urban area or not. It is also a dummy variable. If she is residence of urban area then it takes value one other wise zero.

Extended family: Here extended family implies if a women lives with her mother in law. This is also a dummy variable. Ifwomen lives with mother in law then it takes value one other wise zero.

Per capita inome: Per capita income of the household member may also effect on the female autonomy. In our analysis it is taken as a continuous variable.

Education: Level of education of the female member can effect on the women autonomy. Here the level of education is

taken as a categoriacal variable and it is categorised as illiterate, 1-5 grade education, 6-9 grade education, matriculation, higher secondary and graduate and above .So five number of dummy variable are taken in the model where graduate and above are taken as based category. Thus the dummy vaiable are as follows

Education dummy 1 takes value 1 if women are illiterate and 0 for other.

Education dummy 2 takes value 1 if women have 1-5 grade education and 0 for other.

Education dummy 3 takes value 1 if women have 6-9 grade education and 0 for other.

Education dummy 1 takes value 1 if women have matriculation education and 0 for other.

Education dummy 1 takes value 1 if women heve education upto higher secondary and 0 for other.

Caste: In most of the literature it is found that in case of india women empowerment mostly depends on caste where the women belongs to. Here this variablesare also taken as a categorical variable. Caste are categorised in 5 category i.e. general, OBC, SC, ST and other. Other category is taken as the based category in our study. So four dummy variable are taken which are given as folows.

Caste dummy 1 takes value 1 if women are from general caste and zero for other.

Caste dummy 2 takes value 1 if women are from OBC caste and zero for other.

Caste dummy 3 takes value 1 if women are from SC caste and zero for other.

Caste dummy 4 takes value 1 if women are from ST caste and zero for other.

Religion: Religion are categorised as hindu, muslim and other. So two dummy are taken as follows.

Religion dummy 1 takes value 1 if women are from Hindu religion and zero for other.

Religion dummy 2 takes value 1 if women are from muslim religion and zero for other.

Tbale 2.1: Estimation of the model

Characteristic	Coefficient (β)	S.E of estimate (β)	Wald	Odds ratio Exp (β)
Migration Status : Migrant® Non-migrant	-0.042	0.491	0.84	1.000 0.867
Sector : Rural® Urban	-0.469	0.279	2.76	1.000 0.625
Extended Family: Mother in law absence® Mother in law present	1.276	7.124	20.893	1.000 3.582***

Per capita Income:	-7.334	7.124	1.060	6.529
Religion:				
Others®				1.000
Hindu	-1.247	0.831	1.508	2.775
Muslim	0.261	0.877	0.088	1.298
Women education:				
Graduate and above®				1.000
Illiterate	-1.247	0.599	4.33	0.287**
1-5 grade education	-1.362	0.633	4.624	0.261**
6-9 grade education	-1.336	0.550	5.910	0.262**
Matriculation	-1.015	0.569	3.183	0.362*
HS	-0.743	0.574	1.675	0.475
Social Group				
Others®				1.000
General	-1.360	0.479	8.005	0.256***
OBC	-1.878	0.601	9.774	0.152***
SC	-2.226	0.596	13.94	0.107***
ST	-1.370	0.611	5.022	0.254**
Pseudo R^2	0.117			
Log Likelihood	92.322			
Prob of chi^2	0.00			
Observations (N)	830			

Source : Indian Human Development Survey, 2011-12
*Notes: *, **, *** represents significance at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively.*
® Reference Category.

In table 2.1 the effect of explanatory variables on dependent variable has been presented with their corresponding standard error (S. E.), significance level and odds ratio. According to the fitted model, the variables extended family, women education and social group have appeared as significant predictors of autonomy. Here chi^2 is significant at 1 percent level of significance. This implies that the influence of all factors on female autonomy is not equal to zero. This is the overall significance of the model.

Conclusion: Assamese women enjoy inferior status in case of women empowerment than the national average. Although they enjoy inferior status it is often found that autonomy in case of decision making is quite good compared to the other parts of the country. There are various contributing factors which enhanced the power of women. In some existing study it is also found that women empowerment increased as a result male outmigration. But in this study there is no significant effect of male outmigration found on their left behind female members. These finding is similar with the study of Maity et al (2018) which has done on Bangalore. These may be due to the prevalent rules of the society i.e. the other male member of the family may not allow the women to take decision.

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