

Migration of Labour and its Impact on Education of Left behind Children: A Case Study of Rural Odisha

Mahendra P. Agasty, Ph. D

Asst. Professor of Economics, Silicon Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar, Silicon Hills, Patia, Bhubaneswar Odisha

ABSTRACT

Number of studies have shown that adult male migration from rural areas for harnessing better employment opportunities, assist in achieving financial stability to the migrants family but research shows that the absence of parent can be detrimental to a child's social and psychological development. Migration of adult household members can affect the education of the Children who are left behind in several ways. On the basis of a sample survey of 200 households spread over six villages in three blocks of Kendrapara district in Odisha, India, this paper analyses the educational status of the children left behind. The results indicate that migration matters for the education of children. It is evident from the study that enrolment-wise children of migrant households are ahead of those of returned migrant and non-migrant households, in the case of school attendance, continuation in education and educational attainment they lag behind the children in the latter two categories of household

Keywords: migration, migrants, non-migrants, Children's education

JEL classification: J16, J61, I19, I21

INTRODUCTION

Adult male rural out-migrants are an important labour group in all the urban areas in India. Many of them live in the urban destinations as singles leaving their wives, children and parents in the native places. They maintain links with their kith and kin left behind through visits, communications and remittances. Such links are important threads although they are not enough compensation for the emotional deficiency and care vacuum created by their absence for those left behind. Despite sincere endeavour by migrants to improve the quality of their children through remittances funded education, the learning outcomes and educational attainment may fall short of the expectations due to absence of father care and guidance and the children left behind may be left further behind.

REVIEW OF LITIRATURE

Education and educational attainment of the children who are left behind in the migrant households have become an important and emerging issue broadly because most of the migration is by adult males rather than their entire households and in such cases the school-aged children are left in the village at the care of the mother and grandparents when their fathers move to the urban areas for work (Wu,2004).The literature on this issue is largely diverse with some pointing to a positive relation between adult male migration and education of the left-behind children and others indicating an inverse relationship. Looking at the relationship as a complex one, McKenzie and Rapoport (2006) argue that migration influences educational decisions through three distinct channels: the positive income effect brought about by remittances providing resources for education, the negative substitution effect in terms of demand for child labour and a prospective effect indicated by the desire to invest in education to increase the prospects of migration of future adults. From their study in rural Mexico, they found that migration being a survival strategy, the migrants may not be able to send remittances. Children of migrant households are less likely to be attending schools and complete few years of schooling than those of non-migrant households, the negative effect being very strong among 16-18 year old girls. They interpret it as substitution of schooling by work. Hu's study (2013) in north-east China points to remittances having a positive effect and parental migration having a negative impact on educational performance of left behind children.

**Address for correspondence:*

mpagasty@gmail.com

A study by Acosta et al. (2007) revealed that remittances do not raise educational attainment of children in migrant households in the Dominican Republic. The studies by Lee (2011) and Meyerhoefer and Lee (2011) in respect of China also point to the negative impact of migration on children's schooling. Lee and Park's study (2012) in the context of China found that migration of father has a negative effect on enrolment rate of boys while the performance of the girls has improved. Children of migrants may have to work and more so when remittances are invested in small family business that use child labour thereby affecting their education (Khoudour-Casteras, 2007 in the context of Columbia).

Left-behind children are left in the care of the mother and grandparents who find it difficult to care for them. Lack of desired supervision and the consequential psychological problems have a negative effect on children's education (Dorantes and Puzo, 2010 concerning Dominican Republic.) Hansen and Woodruff (2004), from their study in Mexico, observed that migration of the father resulted in significantly less supervision and loss of positive influence through learning at home. Left-behind children are more likely to abandon schools and this is truer in the case of girl children who take over the domestic work to the detriment of their education. Bakker et al. (2009) found that children of migrant households, no matter whether they move with their parents or are left behind, are at increased risk of interruption of schooling and poor academic performance and are vulnerable to child labour.

Against this pessimistic outlook, Desghingkar and Aktar's study (2005) in Uttar Pradesh shows that migration of the father enabled the children to access better schooling. According to Byrants' research work concerning Asia (2005), migrant remittances are used to send children to private schools and such children have a higher probability of attaining better grades in comparison to children of non-migrant households. A study by Chen et al. (2009) in respect of rural China reveals no significant negative effect of migration on school performance; rather it finds improvement in educational performance of left-behind children. The results of many studies point to the positive impact of migrants' remittances on school enrolment and attendance (Cox and Ureta, 2003 in the context of El Salvador; Glewwe and Jacoby, 2004 in respect of Vietnam and Amuedo and Puzo, 2012, concerning the Dominican Republic.

Lopez (2005), from a study of Mexico, found that a 5 per cent increase in the fraction of households receiving remittances improved school attendance by 3 per cent and for Yang (2008) a 10 per cent increase in remittances in terms of initial income by the migrant Philippines raised school attendance by more than 10 per cent.

The Research Problem

The above review points to a number of blind spots in existing research. First, the findings are mixed and diverse obviously because they are context and area specific studies. Second, the literature survey exposes the limited attention of researchers to the vital dimensions of migration such as links with kith and kin and education of children. Third, these issues have been totally neglected by the scholars in whatever limited works they have done in respect of rural-urban migration in the Odisha context. There is thus a need for filling these research gaps and hence the present study.

Objectives, Data Base, Methodology and Plan of the Study

Against this backdrop, the present paper seeks to analyse the educational status of the children left behind on the basis of a sample survey of 200 rural households in a coastal district in Odisha, India. Data for this study were collected by the authors by canvassing a structured questionnaire in person among the migrant workers at their worksites and place of living at the destination and other respondents at their native village during June-October, 2014. A five stage simple random sampling procedure was adopted for the purpose. The district, the blocks, the grampanchayats, the villages and the households constitute the five stages in the process. Respondents of 100 migrant households, 50 returned migrant households and 150 non-migrant households from six villages in Patamundai, Rajnagar and Marshaghai blocks of Kendrapara district in Odisha were interviewed to elicit the required information. The 139 migrant workers from 100 selected migrant households were contacted directly by us at the destination and some of them were also interviewed at their native village on their visits during the Raja and Puja festivals of 2014. Simple statistical tools were used to summarize the information in quantitative forms and discuss the findings of the survey

EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

The United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (1989) envisages a host of rights of children including their right to care protection and develop to their full potential. Developments of children as human resources are conditioned by their access to education and learning outcomes. Enrolment and attendance in schools and supervision and addressing psychological problems of children are the keys in this regard. The financing and caring roles of parents are the vital aspects.

Enrolment

In India elementary education is free and mid-day meals are provided to children at schools for which enrolment at the preliminary level is high. Hence no difference in enrolments between children in migrant households and non-migrant households may be expected. But the difference in enrolment arises at the higher level of education and at a relatively higher age-group when children/adolescents can work for wages. The table -1 shows the enrolment rate for various age groups of children in the households surveyed by us.

Table1. School Enrollment by Age and Category of Household

Age	Migrant Households		Returned Migrant Households		Non-Migrant Households		All Households	
	No of Children	Children Enrolled	No of Children	Children Enrolled	No of Children	Children Enrolled	No of Children	Children Enrolled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4-8 years	74	71(95.94)	33	31(93.33)	111	105(94.59)	218	207(94.95)
9-13 years	66	59(89.39)	29	25(86.20)	100	86(86)	195	170(87.18)
14-17 years	39	31(79.48)	20	15(75)	61	46(75.41)	120	92(76.67)
All age Groups	179	161(89.94)	82	71(86.58)	272	237(87.13)	533	469(87.99)

Source: Primary Survey

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to respective total no. of children in the age group.

The table shows that the primary and basic enrolments rate in the study area are very high. Within the age group of 4-8 years the enrollment has been found to be about 95 per cent. In the case of migrant households it is 95.94 per cent as against 93.33 for the returned migrant households and 94.59 per cent for the non-migrant households. Even though the migrant households have slightly higher enrolment in comparison to the other two, it will not be right to say that migrant households have advantages over the later two. In the age group of 9-13 years the enrolment is little lower than that at the preliminary level. The enrolment in this age group is 87.18 per cent. The enrolment rate of the children of migrant households (89.39 per cent) is higher than that for the non-migrant households (86 per cent) and returned migrant households (86.20). Within the age group of 14-17 years the enrolment has been relatively lower. The enrolment at this stage is 76.67 per cent with migrant households sending more children to school (79.48 per cent) followed by non-migrant households (75.41 per cent) and returned migrant households (75 per cent). There is lower enrolment in this age group because some of the children help their family members in different domestic works and some migrate with their family/father to different urban destinations for work. It may be summarised that migration status does not affect the enrolment significantly for the reasons already stated. The motivational schemes like mid day meals, free reading materials, free dresses and other popular benefits helped in increasing enrolment in the school. The motivational factors are the key forces determining enrolment in basic and upper primary level, rather than migration status.

School Attendance

Education is multidimensional. It encompasses enrolments, school attendance and learning outcome or educational attainment. School attendance is a fundamental pre-condition for effective learning. Table 2 shows the overall school attendance by students in the study area over one year.

Table2. School Attendance by Age and Household Type

Age group	No of School Days	No of Days Attended by Children			
		Migrant Households	Returned Migrant Households	Non-Migrant Households	All Households
1	2	3	4	5	6
4-8 years	228	220(96.49)	220(96.49)	222(97.36)	220(96.78)

Mahendra P. Agasty “Migration of Labour and its Impact on Education of Left Behind Children: A Case Study of Rural Odisha”

9-13 years	228	214(93.85)	215(94.29)	216(94.73)	215(94.28)
14-17years	228	145(63.59)	177(77.63)	183(80.26)	168(73.83)
All age Groups	228	193(84.65)	204(89.47)	207(90.78)	201(88.29)

Sources: Primary Survey

Notes: The total number of school days was 228 days in the academic year 2013-14.

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to col.2

The table shows school attendance by children of different age groups across the three categories of households over a year. The numbers of school days in the 2011-12 academic year were 228 in the study area. As can be seen from the table, the overall attendance is 96.78 per cent within the age group of 4 to 8 years as against 94.28 per cent for the age group of 9-13 years and 73.83 per cent for the 13-17 years age group. The average attendance is estimated at 88.29 per cent. If we analyze the school attendance by household types in the sample we find that it to be high and more or less similar for the age groups 4-8 and 9-13 years for all the households. Even though the non-migrant households' children have little higher attendance the percentage value is very close to that for other two categories. But the school attendance has been observed to have declined after 13 and here the influence of migration may be more evident. The household wise comparison reveals that children of migrant households miss the school most within the age group of 14-17 years with very low school attendance at 63.59 per cent .On the other hand, within the same age group, the children from non-migrant households attended 80.26 per cent and those from the returned migrant households attended 77.63 per cent of total school days. From the table it is also found that the overall attendance of migrant households was 84.65 per cent as against 88.29 per cent and 90.78 per cent respectively in the case of the children of non-migrant and returned migrant households. Thus the children from non-migrant and returned migrant households attended more number of school days in comparison to those of migrant households. . Most children from non-migrant and returned migrants households reported that they tried not to miss the school, and that their parents enforced school attendance. But this did not take place in the case of the migrant households. Because of the absence of father, the mother and grandparents failed to give required importance to school attendance. From the table it is evident that within the age group of 14-17 years more students missed the classes across all categories of households and it is severe in case of the children of migrant households. Table 3 shows the reasons for missing schools.

Table3. Reasons for Missing School by Household Type

Reasons	No of Responses				
	Migrant Households	Returned Households	Migrant	Non-Migrant Households	All Households
1	2	3	4	5	
Illness	30(13.95)	16(19.54)		65(18.30)	111(17.02)
Paid Work	81(37.67)	30(36.58)		131(36.90)	242(37.12)
Household Work	97(45.12)	34(41.46)		150(42.25)	281(43.09)
Stress at Home	07(3.25)	02(2.43)		09(2.53)	18(2.76)
Total	215(100)	82(100)		355(100)	652(100)

Source: Primary Survey

Notes: As there are multiple responses, total number of responses is greater than the number of respondents

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

Children reported missing school largely because of illness, paid work, and household work. Illness accounts for 17.02 per cent of non-attendance of classes. Paid work, household work and stress at home have shares of 37.12 per cent, 43.09 per cent and 2.76 per cent respectively in non-attendance. A more or less similar pattern is observed across the three categories of households. If we compare the three household types, we find that the children of returned migrant households missed more classes than those of non-migrant and migrant households. Illness was the major reason for missing classes within the age group of 4-8 years and for the other age groups household work and paid work have been the important reasons. Children of migrant households suffered from more emotional stress and this is where migration seems to play a role.

Dropout

Even though we have achieved almost 100 per cent access to school for the children at the primary level, the dropout rate is very high. Students are found to have dropped out of school at a little higher age for various reasons. The table 4 shows the schools drop out at various age groups.

Table4. School Dropout by Age and Household types

Age	Migrant Households		Returned Migrant Households		Non-Migrant Households		All Households	
	Children Enrolled	No of Drop out	Children Enrolled	No of Drop out	Children Enrolled	No of Drop out	Children Enrolled	No of Drop out
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4-8 years	71	8(11.27)	31	3(9.68)	105	11(10.47)	207	22(10.63)
9-13 years	59	11(18.64)	25	5(16.00)	86	14(16.27)	170	30(17.64)
13-17years	31	16(51.61)	15	5(30.33)	46	17(36.95)	92	38(41.30)
All age Groups	161	35(21.73)	71	11(15.49)	237	42(17.72)	469	90(19.19)

Source: Primary Survey

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages to no. enrolled.

The table shows that about 19.19 per cent of children discontinued their studies after enrolment. The dropout rate is lower in the age group of 4-8 years (10.63 per cent) and has increased with the increase in age. 17.64 per cent of children discontinued their study in the age group of 9-13 years as against 41.30 per cent in the 14-17 age group. The school dropout rate is the highest in the case of children of migrant households followed by non-migrant and returned migrant households in that order. The school dropout is more or less the same in all the three categories households in the age group of 4- 8 years. Even though it is little higher in the case of children of migrant households, the difference is negligible. In the age group of 9-13years, 18.64 per cent of the children of migrant households dropped out of school while 16.27 per cent of children of non-migrant households discontinued and in the case of returned migrants the dropout rate is 16 per cent. But there is a greater deviation in the age group of 14-17 years. So far as the children of migrant households are concerned the dropout rate is 51.61 per cent. The dropout rates are 36.95 per cent and 30.33 per cent in the case of the non-migrant and returned migrant households respectively.

The dropout rate is less in the lower age groups because education is free. The second reason is that the parents wanted their children should get some basic education. Once they are grown up and had their basic education many of the children moved with their fathers to the different urban destination areas for the sake of employment. In some cases because of the low academic performance they were not able to complete the secondary level of education and hence dropped out to search for some jobs. These are the two most important reasons for which the dropout rate is the highest among the children of migrant households. The relatively higher dropout rate of migrant households’ children is due basically to lack of supervision and care and the lure of paid work in urban areas.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is the most vital aspect of education. It reflects not only whether children are enrolled, attended and continued school, but also how they performed. Table 5 shows the educational achievement of the children in the study area. We have taken here the final results of the students for 2011-12 academic years.

Table5. Educational Achievement

Household Category	No. Appeared	Number Passed					No. Failed
		60% +	50%-60%	40%-50%	30%-40%	All	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Migrants	43	2(7.14)	09(32.14)	12(42.85)	5(17.86)	28(65.12)	15(34.88)
Returned Migrants	11	1(12.5)	4(50.00)	3(37.5)	0(0.00)	8(72.72)	03(27.28)
No-Migrants	76	16(24.62)	25(38.46)	20(30.76)	04(6.15)	65(85.53)	11(14.47)
All	130	19(18.81)	38(37.62)	35(34.65)	9(8.91)	101(77.69)	29(22.31)

Source: Primary Survey

Note: Figures in parentheses at Col.3-6 indicate percentages to total at col.7 and those at col. 7 and 8 indicate percentages to col.2.

The overall pass-fail percentages are estimated at 77.69 per cent and 22.31 per cent respectively. The pass percentage of children of non-migrant households is higher (85.53) than those of migrant (65.12) and returned migrants (72.72) households. Percentage score wise, the performance of the children of non-migrant households is also far better than those of migrant and returned migrant households. It has been found that from the 28 children belonging to migrant households who cleared the examinations (7.14 per cent) passed with 60% and above, 9 (32.14 per cent) with 50%-60%, 20 (30.76 per cent) scored 40%-50% and 4 (6.15 per cent) scored 30%-40%. Similarly out of the 8 returned migrant's children 12.5 per cent passed with 60% and above marks, 50 per cent with 50%-60% and 37.5 per cent with 40%-50%. From this we can conclude that performances of the children of non-migrant households are better than those of returned migrant and migrant households. There are indications that children in migrant households lack support with regard to the education from their parents and that is the most vital reason which affected their performance. So migration of male members or the head of the family affected the academic achievement negatively through reducing parental supervision and assistance, through children becoming de-motivated or behaving worse, and through children becoming distracted by other duties.

Migration seems to have no serious adverse effect on enrolments in schools at the lower level and lower ages. But when it comes to school attendance, dropout and learning outcomes particularly at higher levels and age-groups, the children of migrant households are some steps back because of lack of supervision and mentoring.

CONCLUSION

It is thus clear that migration matters for the education of children. Even though enrolment-wise children of migrant households are ahead of those of returned migrant and non-migrant households, in the case of school attendance, continuation in education and educational attainment they lag behind the children in the latter two categories of household. In the case of children of migrant households school attendance is lower and dropout is higher at higher age groups compared to the children of other household categories because the girls are required to help their mother at home and the boys do domestic and outside work in the absence of the father and sometimes migrate with father to work in cities. The lower levels of their educational attainment are due to lack of supervision and mentoring.

REFERENCES

- [1] Aberman, N. (2005) *The Impact of School Enrolment in Secondary Schooling in Nicaragua*, American University, Substantial Research paper.
- [2] Agasty, M.P and R.N.Patra (2014) “The Economics of Migrant Remittances: Insight From a Primary Survey in Odisha, India, *Man and Development*, XXXVI (3).37-64.
- [3] Agasty, M.P and R.N.Patra (2014) “Migration of Labour and Left Behind Women: A case Study of Rural Odisha”, *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (AIJRHASS)*, 7(1).28-33
- [4] Amuedo-Dorantes, C and Puzo, S. (2006). Remittances and Insurance. Evidence from Mexican Migrants. *Journal of Population Economics*, Vol 19(2), pp. 227-254.
- [5] Amuedo-Dorantes, C and Puzo, S. (2010). Accounting for Remittances and Migration, Effects on Children's Schooling, *World Development*, Vol, 38, pp 1747-1759.
- [6] Battistella, G and Conaco, C, G (1998) The impact of labour Migration on the children left behind: A study of elementary school children in the Philippines, *Sojourn: Journal of issues in Southeast Asia*, Vol 13(2) pp 220-241.
- [7] Bryant, J (2005) *Children of international migrants in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines; a review of evidence and policies*, Innocenti Working papers inwopa 05/31, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre
- [8] Cox Edwards, A and M. Ureta (2003) International Migration, remittances, and schooling: Evidence from El Salvador. *Journal of Development Economics*. Vol.(72), pp 429-461.
- [9] Deshingkar, P. and Akter, S. (2009): *Migration and Human Development in India*, Human Development Research Paper 13, UNDP.

Mahendra P. Agasty “Migration of Labour and its Impact on Education of Left Behind Children: A Case Study of Rural Odisha”

- [10] Glewwe, P and HG Jacoby (2004): *Economic Growth and the demand for Education : Is there a wealth effect ?* *Journal of Development Economics*, Vol. 74 ,pp 33-51.
- [11] Hanson, G, H, and Woodruff, C (2003) *Emigration and educational attainment in Mexico*. Working paper, University of California, San Diego.
- [12] Lee ,M (2011), Migration and Children’s welfare in China: The Schooling and health of children left behind. *Journal of Developing Areas* Vol.44 (2): pp 165-182.
- [13] Lee, L.A. Park (2010) *Parental Migration and Child Development in China*. PA University of Pennsylvania, Working paper
- [14] Li, Y (2012). Education of the children left behind in rural China, *Journal of Marriage and Family* Vol.74(2) : pp328-341
- [15] McKenzie, D and H. Rapoport (2006) *Can Migration reduce educational attainment? Evidence from Mexico*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No 3952.
- [16] Meyerhoefer, C.D. and Chen, C.J. (2011). The effect of parental labor Migration on Children’s educational progress in rural China. *Review of Economics of the Household*. Vol. 9(3): pp.379-396.
- [17] Schapiro K. (2009) *Migration and Educational outcome of Children*, Human Development Research Paper, UNDP.

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY



Dr. Mahendra Prasad Agasty, works as an Assistant Professor of Economics at Silicon Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar Odisha, India. He holds Ph.D in Analytical and Applied Economics from Utkal University, India .He has more than 16 years of teaching experience in the areas of Economics and Entrepreneurship. He has more than 20 research publications in reputed national and international journals. He has also published one text book on Engineering Economics.