

Elderly Migrants Adjustment Problems in the Urban Areas

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the factors contributing to the elderly migrants' adjustment in the urban areas. 300 randomly selected migrants were interviewed at destination and source locations using closed and open-ended, questionnaires and four focus group discussions were conducted by the researcher. The resulting data provided descriptive and analytical statistics. Data analysis reveals that 70% of elderly migrants in Faisalabad city have to face the problems of adjustment with respect to loneliness, income, modern way of life, health care, noise and pollutions. Thus, the principal issues of ageing in the region under consideration are likely to revolve around the social conditions of the elderly in isolated urban areas.

Key Words: Migration; Urban areas; Problems

INTRODUCTION

It is commonly assumed that care for the elderly in Pakistani society is a task carried out with respect and sensitivity by adult children and other close relatives. Many of the traditional norms of Pakistani society emphasize respect, care and support for the elderly and there is an assumption that a family will meet the needs of their elders. This traditional pattern of support is given as a reason for the high fertility rates in the region—"old age security is found in having many children". Indeed, this pattern of extended family support for the elderly has been documented throughout the colonial period in Africa, as well as after (Cattell, 1990). Even during the intense periods of labor migration when young men were absent from their home villages, support was sent from these wage earners back to their dependent families in the villages, including mothers and fathers. It is a privilege in our society, as it is sacred and noble duty to look after the parents. In many cases, migrants called their parents and settled with them in the urban areas.

Migration is basically a process of adjustment. For the individual, it represents a personal adjustment to changing life circumstances and opportunities, especially for the aged. Immobility of people often reflects their isolation from opportunities available in the mainstream of society social, economic and political. For the nation as a whole, migration helps achieve a balance between social and economic activities on the one hand and population numbers on the other. As we move about the country, our actions create broad social, economic and political realignments, as well as adjustments in our personal lives. Balance is achieved through two broad types of movement (1) the shift from economically depressed regions, often rural, to areas of expanding employment and higher wages, usually metropolitan (2) the system of migration flows among metropolitan areas by which migrants participate in a nationwide job market, moving to areas offering economic advancement and often personal environmental preferences.

Despite the fact, the elderly are suffering the isolation and that's why they are not going to adjust themselves in the urban areas.

The lack of adequate institutionalized social security programs for the aged suggests that alternative support systems for the elderly in Pakistani society are the standard. The society's strong reliance on adult children and extended family as a major source of old age support has been the most reliable support system. However, our study found that the ability of adult children to provide for their aging parents has been eroded by harsh economic conditions associated with a changing national economy and increased urbanization.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research was conducted in Faisalabad city. Urban area was consisted of eight circle areas. In order to draw the sample from the Faisalabad city, survey lists maintained by Excise and Taxation Department were used as the sampling frame. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to draw the sample (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). At the first stage, Faisalabad city, was selected which had already been divided into three rating zones and thirty-eight circle areas by the Excise and Taxation Department, on the basis of economic stratification. At the second stage, eight circle areas are selected i.e. Ghlum Muhammad abad, Muslim town, Peoples colony No.2, Ayub colony, Gulistan colony and Madina town, Katchi-abadi Raj-wali, Amin abad and Nasir colony, through random sampling to observe the impacts of rural-urban migration on the elderly migrants, adjustment in the urban areas. At the third stage, households were selected with the help of interviewers who had visited the research areas but the required information was collected wherever the migrants were found to have been living. Three hundred households were selected through random sampling technique. The respondents included the urban migrants who had migrated before 1990. Statistical analysis technique is used to draw the inferences. To investigate the problems of the adjustment of the elderly

migrants in the urban areas, four focus group discussions were conducted by the researcher in Faisalabad city.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pakistan is a developing country that has experienced rapid rural-urban migration in the last thirty years. This study examines the impact of internal (Rural-Urban) migration on the elderly migrants, adjustment in the urban areas.

Migration affects all the units the individual, the household and especially for the elderly at the places of destination. Majority of the migrants were from the same district and province, but the elderly have to face many difficulties in adjusting to the new set-up. The findings in Table I illustrate, only 63%, 70%, 85% and 60%, respondents reported that their elderly had to face the problems of loneliness, income, modern way of life and health cares, respectively. Moreover, 88% respondents reported that noise and environmental pollution were the main hurdles to their elderly adjustment in the city. It is empirically concluded that major environmental problems occur due to uncontrolled and mismanaged urban expansion and lead to dramatic shortage of developed urban land and housing, particularly for the economically weak households. Moreover, urbanization is having an increasingly detrimental impact on natural systems and upon the quality of life, in particular safe drinking water, air quality and sanitation. A deteriorating urban environment affects people and nature in a number of areas, lowering productivity, the sense of community, health, safety and ecological integrity. Many cities exceed by several times world health organization minimum standards related to air pollution. In Calcutta, 60% of the residents suffer from respiratory diseases caused by air pollution. Lung cancer mortality is 4-7 times higher in Chinese cities than in the nation as a whole (WHO, 1988).

Focus group discussions with old people. To investigate the problems of the adjustment of the elderly migrants in the urban areas, four focus group discussions were conducted by the researcher in Faisalabad city, from different areas i.e. Ghlum Muhammad abad, Muslim town, Peoples colony No.2 and Nasir colony. Each of the focus groups included only six men 60 years and older. Most of the elderly participants were engaged in some small scale trading in foodstuffs at local markets. Moreover, the participants said that they knew many people their age who lived in their villages and came back to settle in their home villages, because, they may able to move their company. Each of the focus groups provides evidence of the links between rural and urban areas. Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community origin (Massey, 1988).

However, a few participants in the older focus group in Ghlum Muhammad abad and Muslim town said that most urban migrants do not go back to the village, because they

Table I. elderly migrants adjustment at destination point

Migrants Adjustment Scenario at Faisalabad City				
Migrants	No	Percentage	Problem	Percentage
Adjustment Problem	problem			
Loneliness	111	37	189	63
Income	90	30	210	70
Modern way of life	45	15	255	85
Health cares	120	40	180	60
Noise and pollution	36	12	264	88

are going to avail themselves the urban facilities. Only ten of these elderly participants were living with their spouse out of twenty-four, they were living with their children. Participants of all ages agreed that elderly persons are not being well cared for by their families today. The main reason for lack of support for the aged is that adult children have no resources to spare after they provide for their own children and over business activities. While lack of support from children to parents can be seen as a reaction to current economic conditions, it can also be a reflection of changing ideas and ways of living. There were many who suggested that older parents were not considered a part of their adult children’s families, either by their children or themselves. Further, they reported that children did not help their parents much and they showed a sympathetic understanding of the conditions in city, because the high cost of living gives children a safe reason for not giving more assistance to parents. In fact, new attitudes focusing more on the nuclear family are replacing ideas of extended family obligations. Hugo (2002) concluded that the traditional extended family system has changed in to the emotionally nuclear family. This does not refer to the residential arrangement but to the way in which they function and to primary localities and obligations felt by members of the family. In the traditional extended family system, primary localities are upward to parents so that the patriarch controls much of the lives of their families, allocate their work tasks, collect all family earnings, decide on marriage partner etc. Thus, the transition to emotional nuclear family see primary localities and obligations swing toward one’s spouse and children.

Thus, a migrant who is struggling for security in the city, recognizes the benefit of giving gifts to his family at home which secures his right and obligation, as well as adheres to a cultural norm of “supporting one’s elders”, despite the fact that such gifts are most often minimal.

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