

FEMALE MIGRATION: A BOON OR BANE TO THEM?

Abstract

It is very common to view every incident, phenomenon and every matter in a gender perspective. In the modern era it is essential to analyze the gender equality, gender justice, gender related matters etc...The women, the half of the society from whom a family, society, state, nation, begins must be considered equal as men. Their role in development and progress of an economy must not be underestimated. From ancient period itself women engage in economic activity. But it was negligible as compared to men. With the emergence of industrialization and globalization their focus was completely shifted to job and career. They were started to work as men. They were willing to work as men as their health permits. They were contributing to the development of economy. They became an important part of labor force. Migrant women are an integral part of women workforce. Their role could not be underestimated. The reasons, advantages and disadvantages, the problems faced by them should be addressed. Here I am trying to explore the significance of women migrant workers and their contribution, their problems and remedial measures for the same.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the differences in economic growth, social norms, education levels, fertility rates and access to child care and other supportive services, women's participation in labor market differs greatly across countries. Sustainable Development Goal lays emphasis on gender equality. Female labor force participation is a necessary condition to promote inclusive growth and achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Household's income increases with the increase in supply of women labor force which helps families to escape from poverty and to increase their consumption of goods and services. Women's capabilities typically improve when a country move along the path of development.

Migrant workers are an important segment of labour force. There is no concrete data on their numbers. The government agencies estimate ranges from 70 million to 194 million migrant workers. Among these women participation is significant. The migration of women is a significant component of international migration. Migration as livelihood strategy of masses inevitably led many women as workers. Some of them were compelled to migrate with spouses and do jobs and sometimes they are voluntarily ready to move with family.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the role of women migrants in an economy's development.
- To identify their problems and suggest corrective measures for their wellbeing.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is exclusively relies on secondary data. Various articles, research reports and newspaper reports are used for the study.

1. Female labor force participation: Labor force in every economy composed of both men and women. Women account a major portion of labor force in recent days. Female labor force participation is an important driver of growth and development. Their role in development path of an economy is vital. They provide sufficient labor force. In developed countries their participation is the result of social progress and empowerment. Women participation in labour market may be regarded as a coping mechanism in responses to shocks in different countries particularly in developing countries. Various economic and social factors are responsible for women migration. Female labor participation trend is extremely diverse across countries.

The global female labor force participation rate (age group 15+) has declined within 20 years despite strong growth in emerging and developing countries, from 51.3% in 1998 to 48.5% in 2018 (ILO modelled estimates, <http://www.ilo.org/ilostat>). Though more than 307 million women have joined the labor market in the past 20 years, women still account for just 39.2% of the global labor force). Fall in the labor force participation of young may be linked to the higher enrollment in education. Thus, despite falling female labor force participation rates, the gender gap has narrowed slightly, from 27.5 percentage points in 1998 to 26.6 percentage points in 2018 (ILO modelled estimates, age group 15+).

2. Countries Ranked by Female Labor Force Participation

| Rank | Country | Percentage | Year |
|------|------------|------------|------|
| 1 | Rwanda | 84.16% | 2019 |
| 2 | Madagascar | 83.70% | 2019 |
| 3 | Nepal | 81.69% | 2019 |
| 47 | China | 60.64% | 2019 |
| 49 | Singapore | 60.37% | 2019 |
| 70 | UK | 57.12% | 2019 |
| 78 | US | 55.78% | 2019 |
| 166 | Pakistan | 24.10% | 2019 |
| 171 | India | 23.41% | 2019 |

Source: ILO ,ILOSTAT Data Base

- 3. Women migrant workers:** The number of women migrants increasing year by year. As of 2000, the UN Population Division estimates that 49% of all international migrants were women or girls, that proportion of women among international migrants had reached 1% in more developed regions. Most of the women migrants became the principal wage earners of their family and they are contributing a major part of migrant workers. The social factors that affect migration include are social roles of women, their autonomy and capacity to make decisions, their access to resources, and the existing gender stratification in countries of origin and destination affects migration of women whether it is international or internal. Migrant women are an important source of remittances which can be used to increase the well being of the family and thereby a society as a whole. The remittances of women migrants mostly spend on welfare of the family. They always wish to spend on health, education, and family and community development. This led to fostering of economic growth and development. It is reported that migrant women are responsible for half of the World Bank's estimated \$ 601 billion in global remittances sent through formal channels. In countries such as Nepal, women migrant workers – contribute about 50% of migrant workers' remittances or around 23% of GDP. Women migration can be seen from a feminist view point as more women accept migration for their own well being and they expect empowerment through migration.

Not only are the economic remittances major benefits of female migration social remittances also playing a key role. The social remittance include the transfer of knowledge, ideas, skills and technologies. Migrant workers also bring human capital, supplementing the stock of knowledge and skills without costing the destination country in terms of investments in education and human development.

- **Advantages of female migration:** The advantages associated with female migration are similar to general migration. Even though one important benefit attributed to female migration is women empowerment. Women are acquainted with new culture, life style, work experience and status. Through their adoption of these new and advanced way of life, their decision making power is improved. Their progress is trickling down to the society as well as they transfer this to their children. This way they contribute to the upliftment of society culturally and socially. This will in turn lead to the economic development.

Another advantage of migration is the social cultural and political changes and norms that are brought by the migrants to their destination .Women migrants can influence positive social change across households and communities in origin and destination countries.

Even though they receive less remuneration as compared to their male counterpart, they frequently send lion share of their remittance to households. In providing a reproductive labour force, women migrant workers benefit host countries by freeing up more of their workers to engage in the productive labour market, which in turn contributes to growth in the host countries.

- They provide sufficient labor force to the destination.
- Availability of cheap labor.
- It closes gaps in skills and job vacancies.
- It leads to integrated development.
- It pushes for inclusive policy making.
- Women empowerment.
- Enhances their confidence level.
- Enrichment of cultural diversity
- Sustained economic growth

- **Disadvantages**

- Low wage may induce employers to ignore productivity, training and innovation.
- Exploitation of migrant women.
- Population increase and associated pressures on resources.
- Unemployment. Unrestricted numbers of incomers may grab the job opportunities and local workers may get unemployed.
- Collision and lack of integration with native people.
- Large movements of people lead to more security monitoring.
- Ease of movement may facilitate organized crime and people trafficking.

- **Problems of women migrants:** Migrants face problems ever. For migrant workers cultural barriers, competition with local workers, racism, legal status, immobility that might accompany their lack of documentation are all key problems they must contend with. Particularly women migrant face challenges and vulnerabilities than men migrants. For them sexual harassment and gender related discrimination is an added

risk. They face social, cultural as well as economic challenges and problems. Whether they are internal or international migrants, they almost face similar problems.

- **Face difficult life in cities:** Though there may be an immediate improvement and well being in migrants' life, problems often continues to be part of their lives. Some of them have no choice other than to live in unhygienic crowded and dangerous slums (UN habitat 2004). Some of them have no access to take treatment or reproductive health care services from cities.
- **Barriers to access health service:** Health of the migrant workers is not exception to the effects of migration. Inferior social status as well as by their unique biological characteristics accentuates their problems. It is well recognized that the migrant women who do not speak native language and those from less affluent parts of world are at increased risk of high maternal morbidities, mortality and poor pre natal outcomes. As they are migrants, they often excluded from health care systems.
- **Gender Discrimination:** Migrant women face gender discrimination in its worst form. They receive lower wages which is under the minimum baseline and are victims of fraudulent practices, excessive working hours and illegal confinement by their employers. Sometimes they are rejected in promotion and wage hike only because of their gender. They are often denied the most basic labour protections, personal securities, due process guarantees, health care and education for their children.
- **Sexual Harassment:** The female migrants are vulnerable to discrimination, assault and harassments. The violence and attack against them are increasing. Sexual harassment; threats and intimidation against migrant women are rampant. Meanwhile the suicide among migrant women is increasing. They often face abuse and harassment. And often they risk being trafficked, enslaved or sexually assaulted. They are not safe at factories and their working sites. It is reported that women migrant workers face sexual harassment from owners and agents both in factories and in the worker dormitories and there are some reports of women being asked for sexual favors in exchange for work promotion. Domestic workers are most vulnerable group among them. According to ILO 53 million women are employed as domestic workers in private households. Their work is not quantified in financial terms and therefore not adequately compensated.

4. Difficulties in Recruitment Process

Gender discrimination is seen in their recruitment and employment conditions. In some cases they are forced to migrate with their spouse, father or other relatives and they do not enjoy any right or freedom to decide their destiny. If they migrate voluntarily they often depend on their agents for security. It may lead to abuse in some cases.

- **Face inferior status:** The migrant often considered as minors and inferior to locals. They are denied some basic services because of their migration status. As outsiders in new community migrant women find themselves facing specific challenges all of them which are compounded by separation from family and lack of a support network.

- **Limited access to formal financial services:** Whether migrants are men or women they often remain an unbanked population. Since they lack original identity proofs and other documents they are ignored by banking services. Therefore they are unable to open bank accounts and be deprived out of formal financial channels.

The problems and vulnerabilities of the migrant women should be properly addressed and to be solved soon. It is necessary for the upliftment of the society as a whole. Without resolving their issue no economy can move on to the path of development. So many countries adopted measures and initiatives for the welfare of women migrants. Here I am pointing out some measures which should be taken by the authorities for the satisfactory life of migrant women.

- **Measures to be taken**

- Ensure the accessibility of food, water, shelter and other basic needs of migrant women. Ensuring of free provision of essential food and medicine for migrant women is to be enacted irrespective of their entitlement or registration status.
- Take necessary legal steps to curb violence, discrimination and abuse against them. Provision of mechanism and appointment of personnel at each level of administration is necessary to ensure welfare of migrant women workers.
- Incorporate right based approach in policies regarding their welfare.
- Provide social and economic security to migrant women.
- Help lines to be setup or publicized widely with adequate number of counselors to help women in distress.
- Ensure availability of local grievances redressal mechanisms for the migrants especially women migrants that are accessible and inclusive in terms of language and distance.
- Ensure women migrants' access medical care including mental healthcare, medical care and other health care services, depending on their health situation.
- Registration of workers and enable them with programs of local authorities are needed.
- Ensure coordination between government authorities at all levels within State government, amongst States and between States and Central governments on all aspects of the protection of women migrant workers.

From the view point of economy's growth and development, it is crucial to address the problems of migrant women. By recognizing their importance to the economy they should be treated well and should be provided every basic necessity as the local workers. The authorities should be vigilant to ensure their well being. Hope a world which considers them as a key player in labor force.

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