

PLEASURE AND PAIN OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS: FACT FINDINGS FROM BANGLADESH

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Abstract

This study is an endeavor to unearth the positive and negative impacts of migration on the Bangladeshi migrants and their left-behind households. The analysis is based on a field survey among 303 migrants and their households. The findings have been presented in pictorial and cross-table forms. The findings reveal that unemployment or low wage is the dominant reason of migration from Bangladesh. Labor migration from Bangladesh predominantly brings positive economic impacts for the migrants and their left-behind households. It improves their financial condition, standard of living, and asset holding of the family. But migration brings debt-burden for many of the debt-financed migrants who eventually fall into a debt-trap. Most of the households of the migrants utilize remittance in non-productive sectors like land, house-construction or repair, or ornaments. Though migration increases women-empowerment in the households of the migrants, the other social impacts of migration is not that promising. It brings family nucleation, class-differentiation, insecurity, loss of life and health.

Keywords: Migrants, Households, Pleasure, Pain, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Labor migration from Bangladesh started from the year 1976. During that period of time, only male migrants were migrating. From the year 1991, female migrants also started to migrate from Bangladesh. Unemployment and low wages in home country (Bangladesh) remain the most dominating reasons of migration of Bangladeshi migrants. Such push factors have driven the migration movement of citizens in many other under-developed and lower-income or lower-middle income countries. But there is a country-specific scenario of the impacts of migration. Most of the Bangladeshi migrants are low-skilled. They migrate with debt-financing. They fall into debt-trap once they start migrating which even deteriorate their household's financial condition. To repay their previous debt, they have to take new debt. Consequently, many Bangladeshi migrants accept the fate: "Once a migrant, always a migrant." In Bangladesh, earning remittance is a challenge, but its proper utilization is even a bigger challenge. Bangladeshi migrants and their households invest their hard-earned remittance predominantly in unproductive sectors. The government is interested in a migrant as long as he or she is remitting foreign currencies to the country. The anecdotal returns of ill-fated Bangladeshi migrants are seldom tallied, questioned, and followed within the country. Returnee migrants become a forgettable memory. The left-behind households of Bangladeshi migrant have to sustain debt-burden, family nucleation, insecurity, loss of life and health,

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derailment of their kids due to lack of parenting, break ups, and so on due to migration.

2. Literature Review

By adopting a counterfactual framework, Romano and Traverso (2019) indicated that migration has a positive impact on per capita expenditure and represents an important vehicle of social mobility, but may also be a source of inequality in Bangladesh. Their results also suggested that pro-migration policies might not be effective in lifting those most in need out of poverty since most of the characteristics which seem to influence the migration decision cannot be shaped by policy interventions. Nguyen, Grote, and Nguyen (2017) found in Vietnam that migrant households without remittances spend more on food, health care and other non-food items, but less on education of their children, while migrant households with remittances spend more on housing and other non-food items. The results indicate that migration and remittances bring a good opportunity for rural industries and services such as construction and health care. However, migration and remittances do not influence rural education. Mahapatro, Bailey, James, and Hutter (2017), using propensity score matching technique, found in India that remittances enhance household well-being. In Nepal, Thapa and Acharya (2017) conducted their study and found that migration signals the prospect of a sustainable long-term welfare gain among the remittance-receiving households. Hasanah, Mendolia, and Yerokhin (2017) found in Indonesia that having at least one migrant in the family increases the composite index of Food Consumption Score, as well as the family's food security. In their study conducted in the northern region of Ghana, Pickbourn (2016) showed by using regression analysis that gendered social norms of household provisioning influence the intra-household flow of remittances. Migrant women are more likely to send remittances to other women, creating female-centered networks of remittance flows even within male-headed households. Their study results show that regardless of the gender of the household head, households in which women are the primary recipient of remittances spend more than twice as much on education as households in which men are the primary recipient. Using an instrumental variable (IV) approach, (Jena, 2018) found in Kenya that remittances have a positive and significant effect on the decisions by households to purchase physical investments. Mergo (2016) studied the causal effects of emigration on the well-being of the migrant sending families in Ethiopia and concluded that migration contributes positively to the welfare of the source families. Overall, migration increases consumer expenditure, but has no effect on savings and business ownership of the senders. Ajaero, Nzeadibe, Obisie-Nmehielle, and Ike (2018) showed that having an international migrant and receiving of remittances significantly increases household welfare in Nigeria. In Vietnam, using fixed-effects regressions and panel data, Cuong and Linh (2018) concluded that the effect of migration as well as remittances on employment of remaining members of home households is small. People in households with migration and remittances tend to

work less than people in other households. Cao, Li, Wang, and Liu (2017) conducted a survey in 12 major cities of China and argued that migrant worker families with high educational levels and those who intend to settle permanently in cities are likely to allocate substantial expenditure to status and hedonic consumption. By using nationally representative micro-data of Sri Lanka and applying quasi-experimental methods, Samaratunge, Kumara, and Abeysekera (2020) remittances have initiated positive behavioral changes via increased allocations for basic needs, human and physical capital investment. Using face-to-face structured surveys in rural communities in Northern and Central Malawi, Kangmennaang, Bezner-Kerr, and Luginaah (2018) concluded that households with migrant members were ($\beta = -0.157, p = 0.01$) less likely to be food insecure and has an average treatment effect of ($\beta = 0.151, p = 0.01$) on household asset levels, indicating a positive effect on household asset accumulation. Rural households employ migration as a major investment and livelihood strategy to mitigate the effects of adverse economic conditions, climate variability and food insecurity. Taylor and Mora (2006) conducted their study in rural Mexico and found that migration reshapes rural economies in ways that may go beyond the contribution of migrant remittances to household income. Using propensity score matching methods, Clément (2011) conducted a study in Tajikistan. The results do not provide evidence of a productive use of remittances since neither internal nor external remittances have a positive effect on investment expenditures. Migration and remittances are therefore interpreted as short-term coping strategies that help dependent households achieve a basic level of consumption. Adams Jr and Cuenca (2010) found in Guatemala that remittances can help increase the level of investment in human and physical capital in remittance-receiving countries. Castaldo and Reilly (2015) found in Albania that households who receive remittances from abroad spend, on average and *ceteris paribus*, a lower share of their expenditure on food and a higher share on consumer durables compared to households who do not receive any type of migrant remittances. The results of the study conducted by Randazzo and Piracha (2014) showed a productive use of international remittances in Senegal. However, the impact of remittances disappears when the marginal spending behavior is considered, i.e., households do not show a different consumption pattern with respect to their remittance status.

3. Methodology

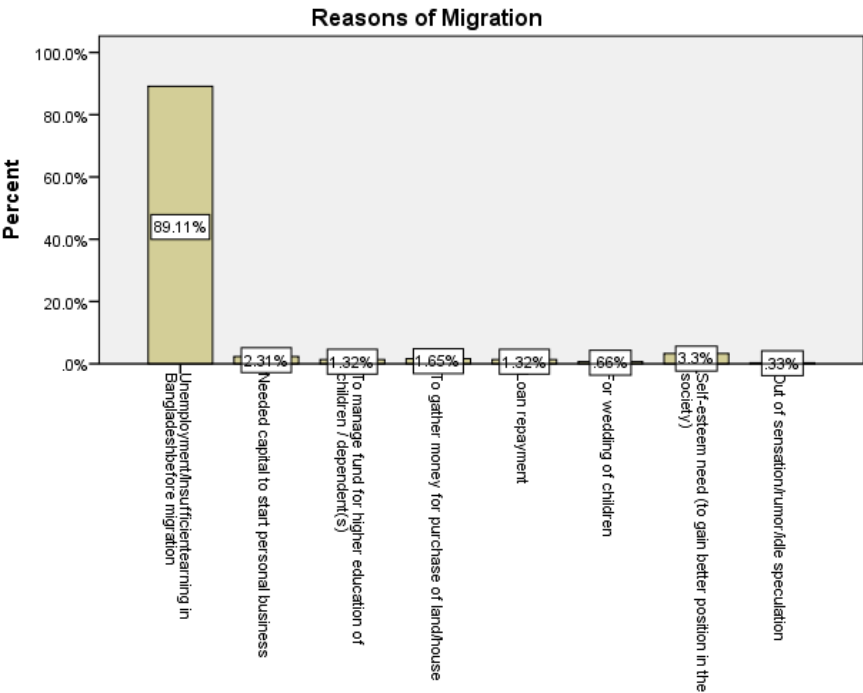
This is a primary data-based study. Relevant data have been collected through a field survey. In order to conduct the survey, a well-designed questionnaire has been used. It contained both open-ended and close-ended questions. Stratified sampling has been used with snow-ball sampling technique. Seven upazilas under six districts of four divisional headquarters namely Chattogram, Dhaka, Mymensingh and Khulna have been covered. The respondents were either returnee migrants or household-heads of current migrants. Total number of respondents were 303.

4. Findings

4.1 Migration Decision, Challenges, and Problems of Bangladeshi Migrants

International labor migration cannot be considered out of the context of the society. People take migration decision within a social framework. The challenges our migrants and their households face and the problems they encounter during and after their foreign migration must also be studied from social point of view. For a family, migration of any of its members abroad may or may not be a win-win game altogether.

Figure 4.1: Why did the Bangladeshi Migrants Decide to Migrate Overseas?



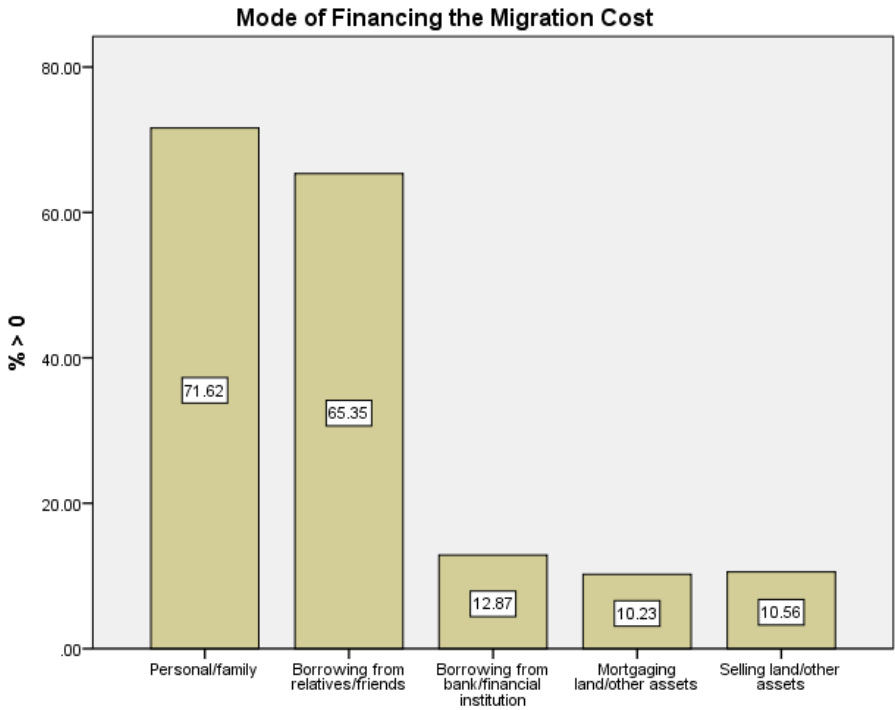
Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

The field survey shows that more than 89 percent of the total migrants from Bangladesh decide to migrate abroad for either the reason of unemployment or insufficient wage earnings within Bangladesh. It is a logical consequence of the present scenario in the Bangladeshi labor market and labor force structure. The Labor Force Survey 2016-2017 of Bangladesh disclosed that 26,77,000 people remained unemployed in Bangladesh during 2016-2017. It includes 80,000 newly generated unemployment in absolute term within the span of one year. Among those unemployed people, 11.2 percent are highly-educated job-seekers. At the same time, the survey revealed that about 37,00,000 new employment generation for

Bangladeshi labor force in 2016-2017, 10,00,000 came through international migration. It implies that to most of the Bangladeshi migrants, migration has become a survival strategy.

As the field survey shows, the second most important reason of migration is to satisfy the self-esteem need in the society. However, its ratio is only 3.3 percent. Unfortunately only 2.31 percent of the respondents have mentioned that they have decided to migrate in order to amass start-up capital and eventually start own business in Bangladesh. This picture also exemplifies that for the biggest chunk of Bangladeshi migrants, migration remain a way to survive or to make ends meet and not a way to generate a sustainable income source within the home country in future.

Figure 4.2: Mode of Financing the Migration

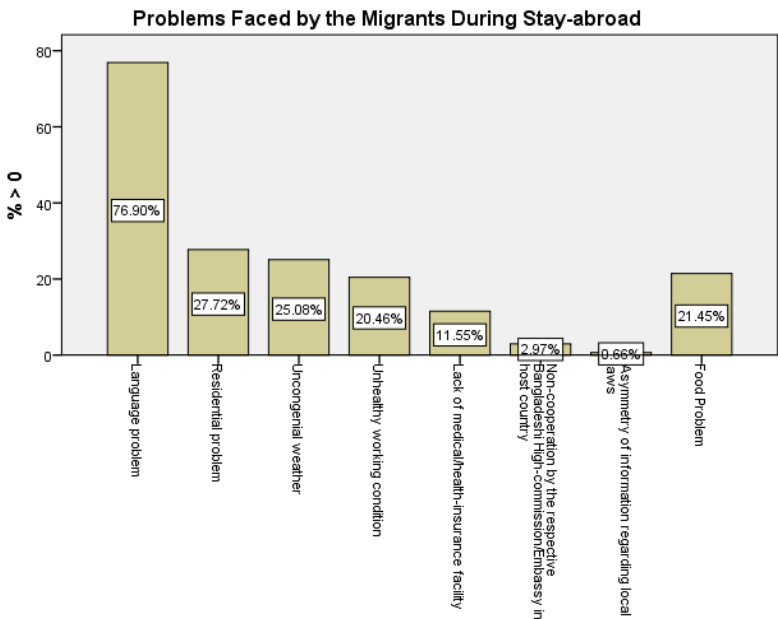


Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

The survey result reveals in cumulative percentage form that almost 72 percent migrants financed their migration-related costs from their personal or family savings. It suggests that many of the Bangladeshi migrants are from lower-middle income or middle-income family having family saving to finance the migration cost. 65.35 percent migrants financed their migration-related costs from borrowing.

However, the personal interviews and case-studies conducted during the field survey showed that most of the migrants borrow from relatives, friends and private money-lenders in the village. In such borrowing, the interest rate traditionally remain unbearably high which sometimes touch even 30 percent to 40 percent. Almost 13 percent respondents opted for formal borrowing from banks or other financial institutions to finance their migration costs. Such debt-financed migration brings interest burden on the family and prolongs the time period needed to touch the break-even in their migration venture. In some cases, it has also been observed that migrants take second or even third time loan to repay their original debt taken during their first migration. In the process, they fall in an uncalled for debt-trap. This sometimes makes the ill-fated migrant-families financially disabled in the long run. Some debt-financed migrants feel shy returning to Bangladesh just to avoid their money-lenders. This, in many cases, brings permanent loss of creditworthiness of their families back home.

Figure 4.3: Problems Faced by the Migrants During their Stay-abroad



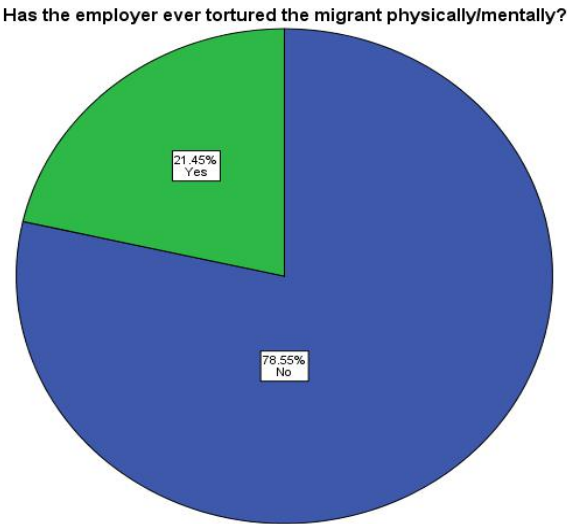
Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

Though the migrants of countries like Bangladesh dream and believe to have a smooth and better life abroad, the reality, more often than not, is far different from their expectations. As the field survey discloses in cumulative percentage form, the stand-out problem faced by most of the Bangladeshi migrants abroad is lack of communication skill. Almost 77 percent of the Bangladeshi migrants surveyed

chalked out language problem as one of the main obstacles in their foreign life. It has been historically observed that most Bangladeshi migrants take no language training or a very little training for a period of 1 to 2 weeks on the language of native language of their respective host-countries before migrating there. And eventually it becomes one of the most vital reasons of their getting comparatively lower wage in the host-country against their foreign counterparts.

Around 28 percent of the Bangladeshi migrants have faced residential problem in their foreign life. It has become the second most important problem for Bangladeshi migrants abroad. 25 percent of the Bangladeshi migrants have faced uncongenial weather problem during their migrant life abroad. 21.45 percent Bangladeshi migrants have faced food problem in foreign countries. However, it can either be related to the quality or quantity of food they get in foreign countries. 20.46 percent of the Bangladeshi migrants have encountered unhealthy working condition in their respective work-places in foreign countries. Lack of medical facilities is another problem faced by 11.55 percent of the Bangladeshi migrants surveyed.

Figure 4.4: Has the Employer ever Tortured the Migrant Physically or Mentally?



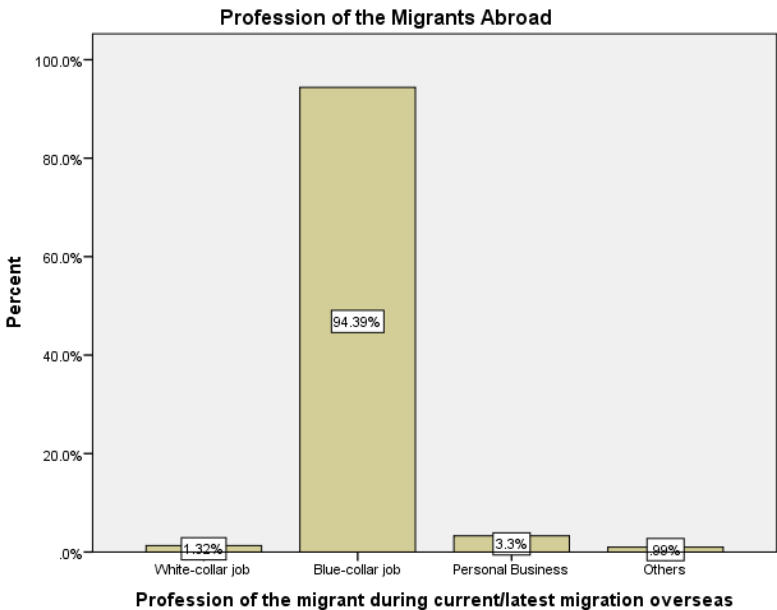
Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

One of the dark sides of international labor migration is physical or mental torture by the foreign employer. In many different countries and in many different cases, migrants have been physically assaulted by their employers abroad. Coercion, rape cases are common for female migrants. The field survey endorses this globally observed scenario. Almost 22 percent Bangladeshi migrants surveyed have reported to have been tortured either physically or mentally during their stay abroad by their employers and agency personnel. Torturing Bangladeshi female migrants have

increased alarmingly in Saudi Arabia. This scenario is more common in the rural areas of Saudi Arabia than the urban areas of the country. The other more significant negative side of this harsh truth is that when the tortured or raped Bangladeshi female migrants eventually manage to return to Bangladesh, their families become reluctant to accept them in the family any more. In the process, their survival in the society become vulnerable and next to impossible. This also injects the previously uncommon broken family culture in the rural area of Bangladesh. Such trend will have magnified negative consequences on the next generation of the country.

4.2 Work Experiences of the Migrant Labor

Figure 4.5: Professions of the Bangladeshi Migrants Abroad



Source: 1. Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019
2. Author’s Calculation

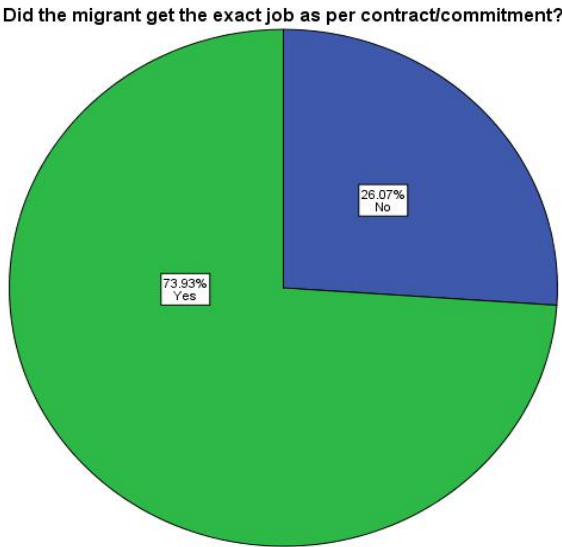
Another interesting finding of this study is the profession that the Bangladeshi migrants could obtain during their overseas stay. Figure 4.5 clearly reveals that almost all the Bangladeshi migrants could manage only blue-collar jobs when they migrate abroad for their livelihood. Blue-collar workers usually perform low-paid laborious jobs and typically work with their hands. The skills necessary for blue-collar job vary by occupation. Cleaner, home-maker, driver, painter, petrol-pump assistant, salesman, gardener, etc. typically fall under this category of profession.

White-collar workers usually perform job duties in an office setting. They are highly skilled and formally trained professionals, and consequently are highly paid as well. Unfortunately, the ratio of Bangladeshi migrants who could manage a white-collar

job during their stay abroad are miniscule. At the same time, only a little more than 3% Bangladeshi migrants are found to be engaged in their personal business abroad.

The significance of this finding is that though the Bangladeshi migrants could manage a better-paid job abroad compared to that in Bangladesh, they could hardly improve their social position in terms of their self-actualization need when they return to Bangladesh. They may be able to earn higher wage in foreign jobs but categorically speaking, they predominantly perform similar kinds of jobs which they had been doing in Bangladesh before migrating abroad. And the reason of getting higher wage abroad for similar jobs in Bangladesh is not due to the migrants' higher skills but due to higher wage rate in foreign countries. Thus, through migration, they could improve their economic conditions, but not their social positions.

Figure 4.6: Breach of Contracts with the Bangladeshi Migrants regarding Overseas Jobs



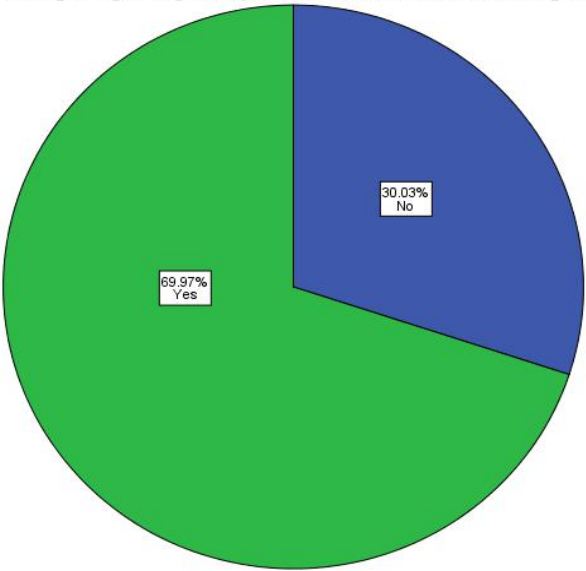
Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

Contemporary scenario of labor migration from Bangladesh is characterized by frequent breach of commitment and terms of job contracts. Within the home country (Bangladesh), such breach is conducted by the recruiting agency or the native middlemen in the locality, and in the host country (the respective foreign recruiting country), such breach is conducted by the employer or their local agents. The empirical findings of this study portray a similar scenario. More than 26 percent of

the respondents have confirmed that they did not get their committed jobs abroad. In many of the cases, they have been tempted with better jobs but eventually been offered with inferior ones once they landed in their respective host countries. On the other hand, even when they are offered with their committed jobs, breach of the terms of their job contracts remain a common phenomenon. Some of the Bangladeshi migrants were given commitment for one kind of job, but eventually are offered with another kind for which the migrant may not be that fit or which may not be a job of their liking. A full-time (as per original contract) worker, in some cases, is offered with a part-time position. Some of their contracts contained overtime for overstay in their overseas job. But in reality, though their overstay has been confirmed, their respective overtime remained elusive, and sometimes, are never paid, and even when it is confirmed and paid, the amount is, at best, less than commensurate. Breach of contract is also common regarding the migrants' job-locations. Some of them are originally committed to have jobs in urban areas before migration but ended up landing in rural-area jobs.

Figure 4.7: Breach of Contracts with the Bangladeshi Migrants regarding Wage-payment

Did the migrant get wages as per commitment made before migration?

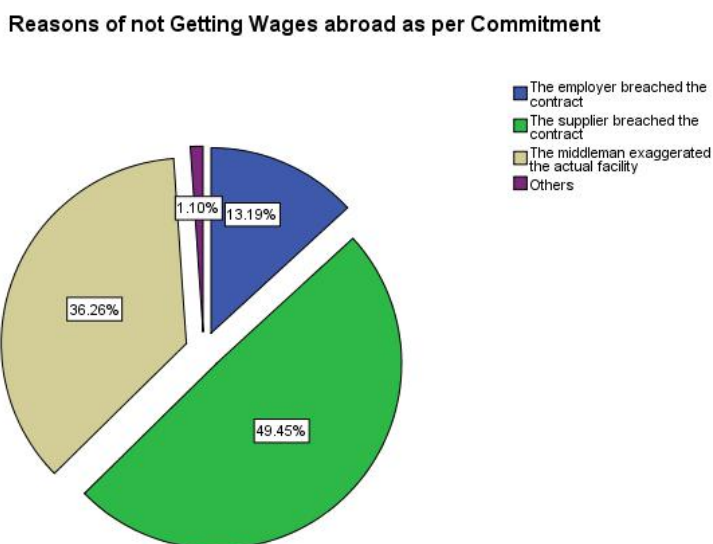


Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

Another commonly observed breach lies with the amount and mode of payment of wages to the Bangladeshi migrants abroad. The empirical finding reveals that more than 30 percent Bangladeshi migrants have encountered breach regarding their

wage payment in their overseas jobs. In an effort to dig a bit deeper into this scenario, a multidimensional breach of contract regarding wage payment has been observed when it comes to paying Bangladeshi migrants abroad. Under-payment is a common breach of contract regarding wage payment to Bangladeshi migrants. In many instances, it has been observed that before migrating, Bangladeshi migrants have been offered with handsome wages for their overseas jobs, but when it comes to paying once they land and continue their committed jobs abroad, they end up getting far less amount than originally committed before migration. The frequency of wage payment also, is not followed as per commitment. A daily-basis worker is sometimes paid monthly, a monthly-basis worker is paid quarterly or once in two months. In some cases, the payments are withheld for unstipulated period or for unknown reasons, or reasons which are at best unjustifiable for withholding wages. Their increment and promotion are also denied when it becomes due.

Figure 4.8: Reasons behind not Getting Wages abroad as per Commitment



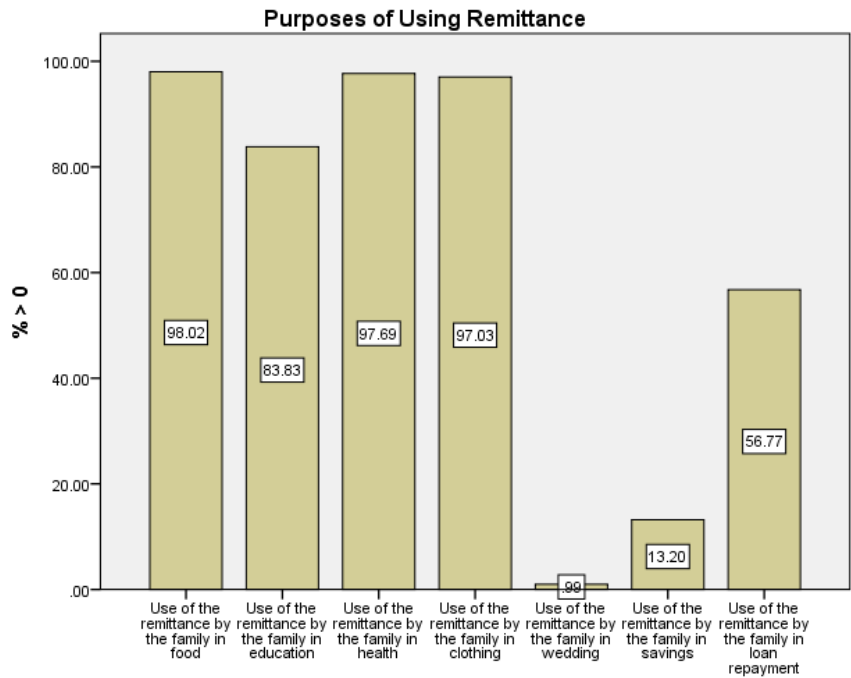
Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

When the reasons of breach of contract regarding wage payment to Bangladeshi migrants abroad is focused, the findings become ominously unfortunate. It is not the foreign employer, but the native countrymen of the migrants in Bangladesh who are the masterminds behind most of the breaches. As the finding of the study suggests, almost 50 percent respondents have identified the Bangladeshi supplier of the migrants to be the main cause of breach of their overseas job-contract. Almost

37 percent respondents mentioned that the middlemen who helped them migrate exaggerated the actual benefits of their overseas job. To provoke their migration, the local middlemen often overstate the types of job, salaries and wages amount to be received abroad, and the incentives to be enjoyed there by the migrants. The middlemen often utter one country’s name as the destination country to the migrant whereas eventually they bring the migrants to a completely different country. Most of the migrants do not even know their destination as their passport containing their respective visa remain with the recruiting agent. The migrants can have their passport at their disposal only on board their aircraft when they can know their actual destination. In more than 14 percent cases, the foreign employers were found to breach the contracts with the migrants.

4.3 Utilization of Remittances and Social Impacts of Migration on the Households of the Migrants

Figure 4.9: Purposes for which Remittances have been used by the Migrants’ Households



Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

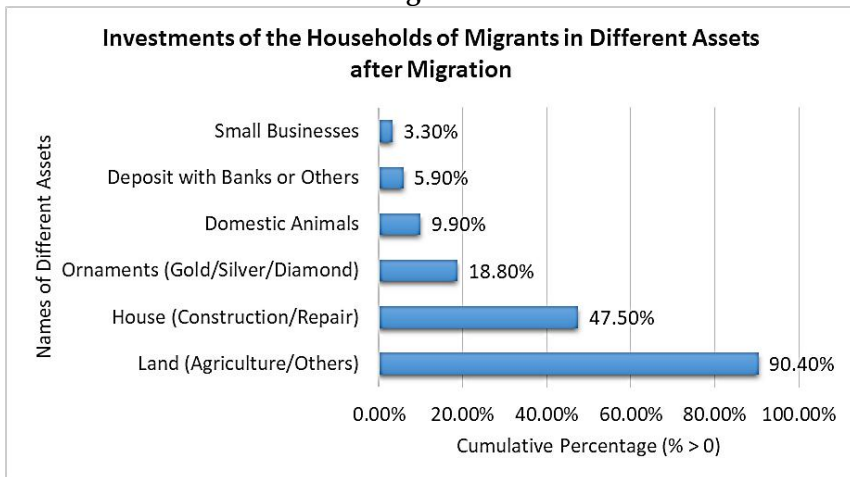
The direct impacts of migration of a household member primarily flow to the household of the migrant by the way they utilize the remittance sent by the migrant

member. Similar other studies have revealed that Bangladeshi migrants' households predominantly use the remittance in unproductive items. This study has reached almost the same conclusion. The bar diagram show in cumulative percentage form that more than 95 percent of the households use remittance in food, health-care and clothing. More than 80 percent households use remittance for education purpose of the children. It is an optimistic sign that households of the migrants are investing remittance in human capital like health-care and education.

Another noteworthy finding is that almost 57 percent households of Bangladeshi migrants utilize the remittance to repay loans. And a significant chunk of such loan is usually taken to finance the migration cost earlier. So, for more than half of the migrant families, migration remains irrelevant as far as the household's financial wellbeing and welfare is concerned since for those households, the benefits acquired through migration is drained out to reimburse the migration cost.

When the savings of the migrants' households is focused, the scenario is not bright at all. Only 13.2 percent of the migrants have mentioned that they could save a part of their remittance receipt. What it also implies is that a very few households of Bangladeshi migrants can invest their remittance earnings in productive sectors. When light has been put on the investment structure and pattern of the households of the migrants after migration, the following picture unfolds:

Figure 4.10: Investment of Migrants' Households in Different Assets after Migration

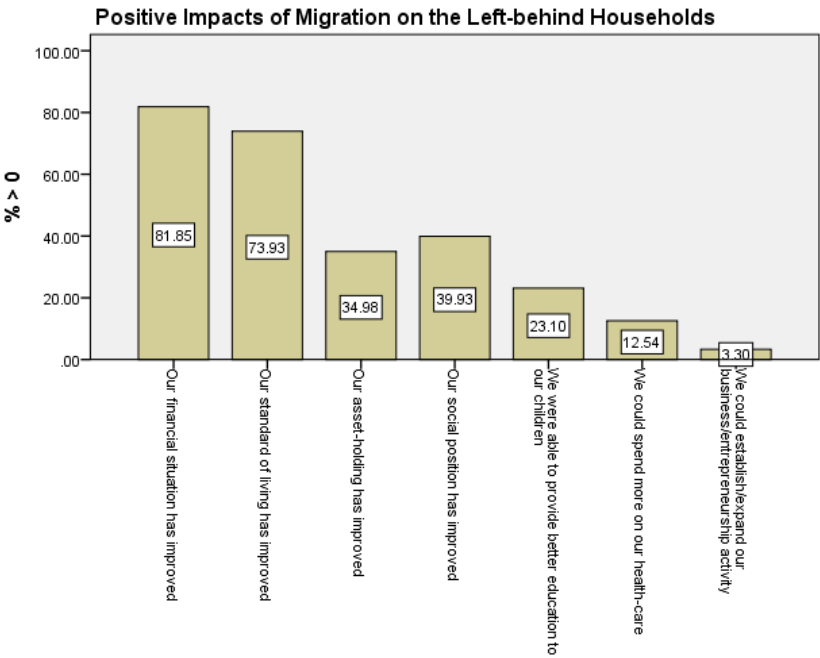


Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

It clearly shows the temptation of migrants' households to invest in land and house construction or repair. And the personal interviews also revealed that in most of the cases, the purpose of investing in land was to have capital gains, not commercial

farming. More than 90 percent households have mentioned that they invested their savings in agricultural or other lands after their family member has migrated and sent remittance. More than 47 percent households have invested in construction of new houses or in renovation and repair of existing house once a family-member has migrated and sent remittance. Almost 29 percent households have invested in ornaments, and this tendency was found to be higher where the migrant was unmarried. But when it comes to investing the remittance in entrepreneurial activities, the picture looks dismal. As the survey results reveal, only 9.9 percent households have invested in domestic animals and 3.3 percent have invested in small businesses. Almost 6 percent households have just kept their savings with banks or other financial institutions and cooperative societies as it is. It clearly suggests that migration could not generate long-term sustainable income sources for most of the households of Bangladeshi migrants after migration. So migration could at best solve their short-run financial problems.

Figure 4.11: Positive Impacts of Migration on the Households of the Migrants

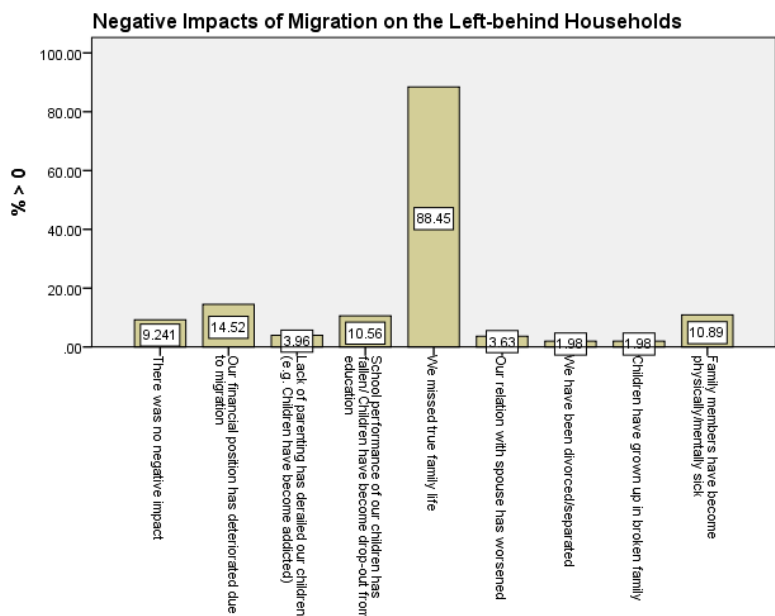


Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

For migrants’ households of countries like Bangladesh where the living standard is very low and unemployment problem is intense, it is expected that migration will bring diverse positive impacts on the households of the migrants. According to the

survey result, in cumulative percentage form, almost 82 percent respondents have mentioned that their financial position has improved due to their household member's migration. As a logical consequence to this response, almost 74 percent respondents have mentioned that they could improve their living standard after their household member's migration. It is suggestive that not all whose financial position has been improved due to migration were able to lift their standard of living. It implies that in some cases, the improvement in financial position was not counterbalanced by a commensurate increase in standard of living of the migrants' households. One possible reason of such mismatch is that though the financial position has improved due to migration, the extent of this improvement is not substantial enough to lift migrant-households' overall standard of living by any significant margin. Improvement in social position of the households has remained the third most preferred positive impacts of migration as answered by the survey respondents. Almost 40 percent respondents have answered that their position in the society has improved due to migration of their family-member(s) abroad. Almost 35 percent respondents have mentioned that their asset-holding has improved due to migration of their family-member(s). However, as has been observed from figure 4.11 that most of these assets were in the form of land, house, or ornaments, and hence, by and large, unproductive. Only 23 percent of the respondents have mentioned that they could spend more on education and consequently, were able to provide better education to their household members due to migration. In comparison to the other positive impacts of migration as mentioned earlier, this is a sorry picture. Ideally this should come in a higher order in the preference list of positive impacts of migration. What it does suggest is that, households of Bangladeshi migrants lag behind in investing in human capital. Again, only 12 percent respondents have identified as being able to spend more on health-care of the household members when one of their family-members migrate abroad. This picture also is not very optimistic. It implies that migration could make no difference in the health-care expenditure of around 88 percent migrant-households. Only a little more than 3 percent households have mentioned that they could establish their own businesses when one of their household members have migrated abroad and sent remittance.

Figure 4.12: Negative Impacts of Migration on the Households of the Migrants



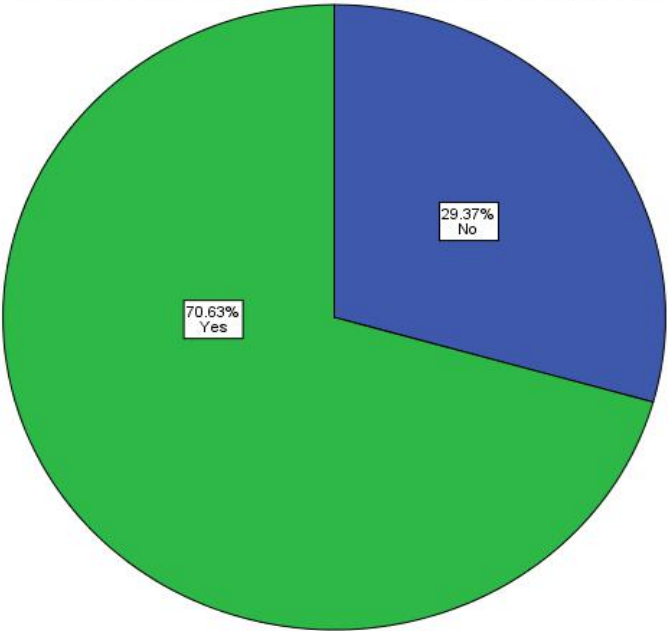
Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

It is not that easy identifying the negative impacts of migration through formal questionnaire as it is for the positive impacts. So, during the questionnaire survey, the stand out negative impact as mentioned by more than 88 percent of the respondents was that they missed true family-life due to migration of their household members. Around 15 percent respondents have identified that migration of their household members have deteriorated their financial position. It is particularly true for households of those migrants who opted for debt-financed migration. Excessive interest burden, especially in case of informal loan where the interest rate is unbearably high, has put the households of the migrants in dire stress. In many cases, to serve the existing loan, they have taken another loan, and thus, have put themselves into debt-trap. Consequently, their financial position, without being improved, has deteriorated further. Around 11 percent respondents have mentioned that the household members of the migrants became physically or mentally sick due to the long detachment with the migrant member of the family. Another astonishing finding is that school performance of children for more than 10 percent migrant households has fallen due to migration of father or mother of the children. It happens due to lack of parenting which also fosters derailment of

children. And sometimes migration of one generation instigates next generation to be reluctant in education. They love to believe that they will also be brought to foreign countries and they will also perform odd-jobs like their predecessor. However, around 10 percent respondents have mentioned that there were no negative impacts of migration on their family.

Figure 4.13: Migration and Woman-empowerment

Do you think that migration has fostered woman-empowerment in your family?

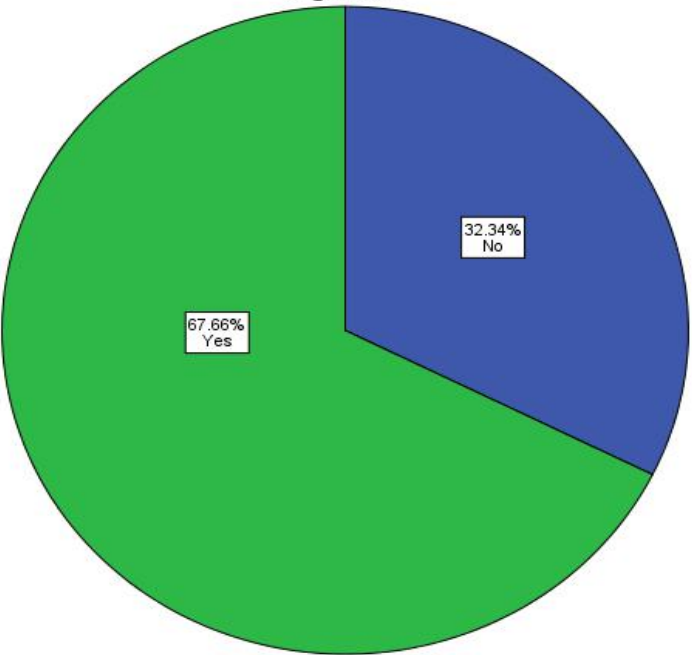


Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

Irrespective of the gender of the migrant, migration abroad is expected to foster woman empowerment. As long as the migrant is a female, she can get the independence of spending her own earnings. And even when the husband or father of a family is the migrant, the wife or the daughter can have the chance of spending a portion of the remittance by themselves. Moreover, women get the chance of taking investment and expenditure decision. According to the survey result, more than 70 percent respondents have mentioned that migration has fostered woman empowerment in the family.

Figure 4.14: Do you think that the migrant could achieve what he/she expected from migration?

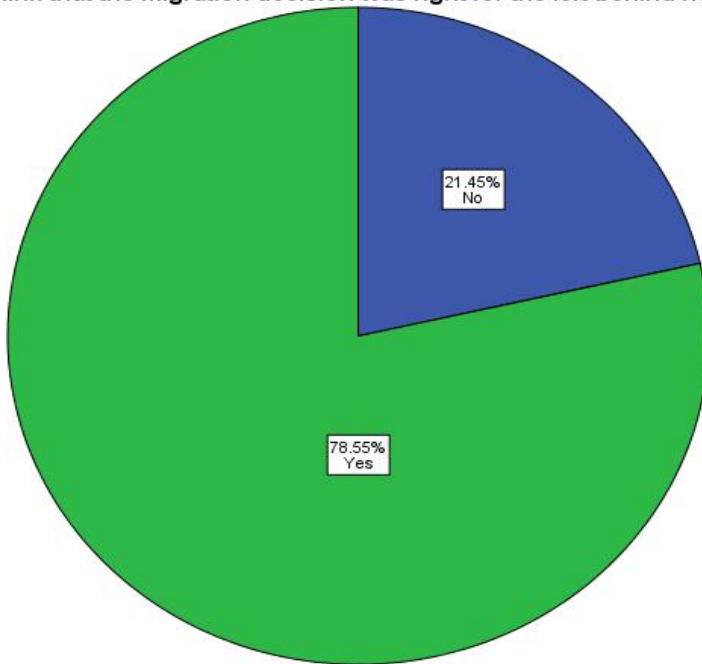
Do you think that the migrant could achieve what he/she expected from migration?



Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

As far as the goal achievement is concerned, almost 68 percent respondents have mentioned that migrants could achieve what he or she expected from migration. The other side of this coin highlights that a little more than 32 percent Bangladeshi migrants could not achieve for which they travelled abroad. The increasing trend of returnee migrants especially the returnee woman migrants from Saudi Arabia justifies this response.

Figure 4.15: Do you think that migration decision was right for the household?
Do you think that the migration decision was right for the left-behind household?



Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

When asked whether the migration decision was right for the households of the migrant who were left behind in Bangladesh, almost 79 percent responded positively. On the other side, 21 percent respondents think that the decision to migrate was unwise for the households of the migrant who were left behind in Bangladesh.

4.4 Analysis of Different Cross-tabulations

Table 4.1: Relationship between period of future stay abroad and receipt of committed wages

For how long is the migrant planning to work abroad?	Did the migrant get wages as per commitment made before migration?		Total
	No	Yes	
Less than 1 year	9	14	23
	39.1%	60.9%	100.0%
1-3 years	13	30	43
	30.2%	69.8%	100.0%
More than 3 years	48	138	186
	25.8%	74.2%	100.0%
No longer want to work abroad	21	30	51
	41.2%	58.8%	100.0%
Total	91	212	303
	30.0%	70.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

According to the field survey, 91 out of total 303 respondents have mentioned that they did not get wages as per commitment made to them before migration. That is, in 30 percent cases, there was breach of commitment regarding wage payments for Bangladeshi migrants abroad. However, such commitments sometimes were made by the Bangladeshi middlemen and sometimes were made by the foreign employers.

The above Table 4.1 shows the relationship of Bangladeshi migrants’ motive of future period of work abroad with their getting wages as per commitment made before migration or not. It exemplifies logical response. Almost 40 percent of the respondents who do not want to work abroad even for one year were unable to get the wages committed to them before their migration. It implies that breach of commitment with regard to wages demotivates migrants to work abroad. Similarly almost 42 percent respondents who do not want to work abroad any longer were unable to get their committed wages. It implies that for almost 42 percent migrants, migration is no longer an option for their livelihood once they become dodged by their recruiter or middlemen regarding their wage payments.

On the other hand, almost 70 percent of the respondents who want to work abroad for 1 to 3 years got wages as per commitment. Again, almost 75 percent of the respondents who want to work abroad for more than 3 years got wages as per commitment. It clearly shows that as migrants get committed wages, their desire to stay abroad generally increases.

However one startling finding is that almost 59 percent of the respondents who did not want to stay abroad any longer actually got wages as per commitment. It

indicates that just getting wages as per commitment sometimes may not motivate migrants to stay abroad for longer period. Rather, it may, at best, be one of many motivating factors of staying abroad for longer period. There may be other motivating factors such as family-bonding, loneliness, cultural gap, etc. which may act as catalysts of not staying abroad longer even when getting committed wages. Another possible reason may be that such migrants have already got what they originally expected from migration and hence feel no fascination to stay abroad by being detached from their core family for any longer.

Table 4.2: Relationship between plan of future stay abroad and Debt-migration

For how long is the migrant planning to work abroad?	Did the migrant take any loan to finance the migration cost?		Total
	No	Yes	
Less than 1 year	15	8	23
	65.2%	34.8%	100.0%
1-3 years	14	29	43
	32.6%	67.4%	100.0%
More than 3 years	74	112	186
	39.8%	60.2%	100.0%
No longer want to work abroad	21	30	51
	41.2%	58.8%	100.0%
Total	124	179	303
	40.9%	59.1%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

Taking loan to finance migration cost may influence the period of stay and work abroad for the migrants. The survey result reveals that almost 35 percent of the respondents who want to work abroad for less than 1 year took loan to finance their migration cost. Almost 68 percent of the migrants who want to work abroad for 1 to 3 years took loan to finance migration cost. And more than 60 percent migrants who want to work abroad for more than 3 years took loan to finance their migration cost. Hence, it can be said that the tendency to work abroad for longer period increases when migrants take loan to finance their migration costs.

However, almost 59 percent migrants who do not want to work abroad any longer were found to take loan to finance migration costs. It seems a bit contrary to the previously drawn conclusion. However, the possible reason of this finding may be that such migrants have apprehended well that debt-financed migration can only bring debt-trap for them which ultimately deteriorate their financial condition, asset-holding and consequently the living standards of their family than when they were non-migrants. In many cases, debt-financed migrants were found to take second time or even a third-time loan to repay their original loan taken previously for migration. At the end of the day, they find that they were well-off when they

were non-migrants than when they become debt-financed migrants. Hence, many debt-financed migrants find migration a loss-loss game to say the least.

Table 4.3: Relationship between employment status of the migrant before and after migration

Profession of the migrant in Bangladesh before his/her first migration overseas	Profession of the migrant during current/latest migration overseas				Total
	White-collar job	Blue-collar job	Business	Others	
Government job	1	0	0	0	1
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Private job of at least officer level	1	3	0	0	4
	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Private job below officer level	1	30	0	1	32
	3.1%	93.8%	0.0%	3.1%	100.0%
In agriculture	0	60	0	2	62
	0.0%	96.8%	0.0%	3.2%	100.0%
In personal business	0	83	4	0	87
	0.0%	95.4%	4.6%	0.0%	100.0%
Was unemployed but in study	0	42	0	0	42
	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Was unemployed and not in study	1	48	6	0	55
	1.8%	87.3%	10.9%	0.0%	100.0%
Others	0	20	0	0	20
	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	4	286	10	3	303
	1.3%	94.4%	3.3%	1.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

The above Table 4.3 reveals a comparative analysis of the employment status of Bangladeshi migrants before and after their migration abroad. With regard to the improvement in employment status of Bangladeshi migrants, the above table shows a sorry picture. Among the 303 migrants surveyed, only a little more than 1 percent migrants could manage white-collar jobs in foreign countries during their migration. However, if the categories “Government job” and “Private job of at least officer level” are considered as “White-collar jobs” within Bangladesh, then only 1.65 percent of the respondents were in white-collar jobs in Bangladesh before their migration abroad. Almost 95 percent of the Bangladeshi migrants could manage only blue-collar jobs overseas. Before migration, almost 29 percent migrants were in personal business or entrepreneurship activities in Bangladesh. But in this regard, a significant change has been observed once they migrate abroad. Only a little more than 3 percent of the Bangladeshi migrants could remain in personal business abroad once they migrate. Others opted for blue-collar jobs there. It is a significant shift and structural change in the employment status of Bangladeshi businessmen.

People who are supposed to create jobs for fellow Bangladeshi become job-seekers once they migrate abroad. With regard to agriculture, more than 20 percent Bangladeshi migrants were found to be in agricultural activities before they migrate abroad. But almost 97 percent of them get involved in blue-collar jobs once they migrate abroad. These all exemplifies loss of human capital for Bangladesh once its citizens migrate abroad.

The survey also found that almost 14 percent Bangladeshi migrants were in study before their migration abroad. It implies that for 14 percent Bangladeshi migrants, migration caused temporary or permanent break of study. It also is a potential loss of human capital for Bangladesh. However, 55 migrants were unemployed and not in study in Bangladesh before migration. 87 percent of them managed blue-collar jobs, 11 percent managed personal business, and 1.8 percent got involved in white-collar jobs abroad. These are obviously positive signs for Bangladesh economy. Truly speaking, migration could become a win-win game for these 55 Bangladeshi migrants. But they comprise only 18 percent of the total migrants surveyed in this research. A dismal figure to say the least. For the remaining 82 percent Bangladeshi migrants, migration is a matter of comparative cost-benefit analysis as they all had to sacrifice something in Bangladesh to grab the foreign job. Though some vacancies were created by them through their migration abroad, it remains to be seen whether such vacancies were commensurately fulfilled in Bangladesh after their departure. Scenarios were found where such vacancies were less than optimally fulfilled resulting lack of income generation within Bangladesh due to their migration abroad. Even in many cases, after their return from abroad, they found it hard to manage the same stepping in their left out professions when they left Bangladesh for a foreign profession. Failing to settle down and succeed in Bangladesh after their return from migration, they again opt for migration to somewhere else. This makes them once a migrant, always a migrant. This simulates the concept of “circular migration” found in contemporary migration literature.

After all, it can be safely said that for less-skilled Bangladeshi migrants who comprise more than 50 percent of the total Bangladeshi migrants globally, it remains next to impossible to improve their employment status abroad. They, by and large, do, what they had been doing in Bangladesh before their migration abroad. Though they may become financially well-off, their social status remains more or less the same. So, migration, though may improve their financial position a bit, fails to improve their social status and position.

Table 4.4: Relationship between employment status of the household-head before migration and migration decision

Was the household-head employed before migration?	Do you think that the migration decision was right for the family?		Total
	No	Yes	
No	21	109	130
	16.2%	83.8%	100.0%
Yes	44	129	173
	25.4%	74.6%	100.0%
Total	65	238	303
	21.5%	78.5%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

The total column shows that almost 43 percent household heads of the migrants was unemployed before migration. The total row of the table shows that more than 21 percent migrants thought their migration decision to be wrong for their households in Bangladesh.

The employment status of the household heads of the migrants before migration may have a bearing on the migration decision of the migrants. The above Table 4.4 shows this relationship. Table 4.4 also discloses that for 83.8 percent cases where the household heads of the migrants remained unemployed before migration of their family-member, the migrants thought that their migration decision was right for the family. On the other hand, more than 25 percent migrants who's household heads were in employment before migration believe that their decision to migrate was not right for their family.

So, when the household heads remain unemployed before any of their family-member's migration, only 16 percent migrants believe that migration decision was wrong for their family. But when the household heads remain in any sort of earning within Bangladesh before any of their family-member's migration, more than 25 percent migrants find their migration decision to be wrong for their family in Bangladesh. One thing that can be generalized from this finding is that when the household heads remain in any earning job, it generally reduces the impetus to migrate for other members of the household. For many rural Bangladeshi migrants, decision to migrate abroad is more of a matter of compulsion than of discretion. For households with no earning member in Bangladesh, migration decision is fostered to fulfill their ends meet.

However, even when the household heads remain in earning before their family-member's migration, more than 74 percent migrants believe that their migration decision was right for their household in Bangladesh. The possible reason behind such response may be that they want to improve their living standards. On the other hand, even when the household heads remained unemployed before their family-member's migration, more than 16 percent migrants mentioned that their migration decision was not right for their household. This may be due to the fact that for most of them, migration related costs came as an extra burden for the family which was less than counterbalanced by their corresponding remittance earnings resulting in undermining their financial position before their migration.

Table 4.5: Relationship between getting job of the migrant as per commitment and migration decision

Did the migrant get the exact job as per contract/commitment?	Do you think that the migration decision was right for the family?		Total
	No	Yes	
No	34	45	79
	43.0%	57.0%	100.0%
Yes	31	193	224
	13.8%	86.2%	100.0%
Total	65	238	303
	21.5%	78.5%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

The total column in Table 4.5 shows that more than 26% Bangladeshi migrants (79 in absolute number) did not get their expected jobs abroad as committed to them before migration. The reasons may be diverse. Exaggeration by the middlemen in Bangladesh, breach of contract by the Bangladeshi recruiters or foreign employer, etc. are some of the common reasons.

Usually there is an expected positive relationship between gaining the expected or committed job abroad and the correctness of migration decision on the part of the migrants. The above Table 4.5 has been constructed to find the validity of this generalization for Bangladeshi migrants. The table shows that when migrants get the expected or committed job abroad, more than 86 percent of them believe their migration decision to be right for their household back home. But when migrants fail to get the expected or committed job abroad, only 57 percent of them believe their migration decision to be right for their household back home. Actually getting the expected job acts as a precondition of justifying the correctness of their migration decision. Hence, when Bangladeshi migrants fail to get their expected jobs abroad, 43 percent of them believe their migration decision to be wrong for their household in Bangladesh. Even when they get their expected jobs abroad, almost 14 percent of them believe that their migration decision was not right for their household. The probable reasons for such response may be that though they could manage to get their expected jobs abroad, they could not get their expected wages and benefits, or they might be denied their regular promotion, increment, and overtime, or they might be terminated from their preferred jobs before the stipulated tenure as per their original job contracts. Even sometimes, they are coerced, physically or mentally tortured on the job, or deported to their home country before completing their designated job tenure.

Table 4.6: Relationship between the migrant being tortured abroad and migration decision

Has the employer ever tortured the migrant physically/mentally?	Do you think that the migration decision was right for the family?		Total
	No	Yes	
No	37	201	238
	15.5%	84.5%	100.0%
Yes	28	37	65
	43.1%	56.9%	100.0%
Total	65	238	303
	21.5%	78.5%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

Suffering from physical or mental torture has become a common phenomenon especially for female Bangladeshi migrants. Even the severity of such torture is so pervasive that some of them are returning to Bangladesh only within seven days of their migration in foreign countries. The Table 4.6 represents that when there is no physical or mental torture on the migrants, more than 84 percent migrants believe that their migration decision was right for their household back home. But when they face physical or mental torture abroad, only 56.9 percent migrants think that their migration decision was right. Table 4.6 also shows that even when there is no torture or coercion, more than 15 percent migrants believe that their migration decision was not right for their households back home. The possible reason may be that long-term detachment from their family put mental stress on the migrants abroad. It exemplifies that even if there is no torture on the part of the foreign employers, long-term detachment from core family itself acts as a distress for the migrants.

Table 4.7: Relationship between getting wages as per commitment and migration decision

Did the migrant get wages as per commitment made before migration?	Do you think that the migration decision was right for the family?		Total
	No	Yes	
No	39	52	91
	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
Yes	26	186	212
	12.3%	87.7%	100.0%
Total	65	238	303
	21.5%	78.5%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, December 2018-February 2019

The above Table 4.7 shows the relationship between getting wages abroad as per commitment by the Bangladeshi migrants and the correctness of their migration decision. It clearly depicts that when Bangladeshi migrants get wages as expectation or commitment made to them before migration, almost 88 percent of them believe

that their migration decision was right for their household back home. But when it comes to not getting expected or committed amount of wages in their foreign job, only 57 percent Bangladeshi migrants answered affirmative to the question whether their migration decision was right for their family in Bangladesh. That means, when there is breach of commitment regarding the committed wage, almost 43 percent Bangladeshi migrants become dissatisfied with their migration decision. However, it is still interesting that even though they did not get their committed wages, 57 percent of such migrants mentioned that their decision to migrate was right for their family. Probably it is due to the fact that for most of those migrants, there was no other better option in Bangladesh that may refrain them from going abroad and getting less than expected wages. In fact, their fate have been sealed in migrating abroad and doing anything for any amount what so ever.

5. Conclusion

Labor migration from Bangladesh is not an unmixed blessing for the Bangladeshi migrants and their left-behind households. Though there are many positive economic impacts of migration on the left-behind households of migrants, its social impacts are not that encouraging. The macro-level impacts of migration and remittance on the national-economy of the country may look positive, but the micro-level impacts of the same seems, at best, underexplored in Bangladesh. Addressing the challenges that our migrants and their households face due to migration is the key to long-run success of this sector. In order to get sustainable benefits from this sector, the government needs to formulate proper laws and give needed policy-supports to our migrants and their households in order to grasp the best outcome.

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