

Our Daughters and Wives Are Gone: Examining the Socio-Economic Impact of Female Internal Migration on the Left-Behind Family in the East Mamprusi District of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

People move out of their areas of domicile for various reasons, including work, study, relaxation and reuniting with their families. Northern Ghana has witnessed a paradigm shift in its migration history, as an increasing number of women and young girls engage in rural-urban migration, either independently or by family decision, due to widespread poverty emanating from limited arable land and high female unemployment rates. The rise in female migration (feminization) results in a considerable number of left-behind population in the rural areas, including children, elderly parents, spouses (husbands) and other household members. Despite the gravity of the number of left-behind, the numerous scholarly kinds of literature on female migration have tended to favor the vulnerabilities of migrants in urban destinations at the expense of the socioeconomic effects on those left behind. Hence, the implications of out-migration cannot be glossed over. The primary objective of the study was to explore the impact of female rural-urban migration on migrants' left-behind family members in the East Mamprusi District in Northern Ghana.

The study adopted a qualitative research design. The methods of data collection included in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, key informant interviews and document review. The field research tools included the interview guide, a semi-structured questionnaire, a voice recorder and a field notebook. Data analysis was through thematic and content analysis. Descriptive tools such as frequency distribution, tables and diagrams (bar charts, pie charts) were used to ensure clearer and comprehensive interpretation and discussions.

The study revealed that caregivers, especially for the left-behind children, were overburdened with domestic responsibilities and could not provide adequate motivation and supervision, let alone meet children's psychological, emotional and physical needs, resulting in behavioral problems. Also, daily activities among children increased, resulting in child labor and girls have been more severely affected than boys. Interestingly, the left-behind had better clothes and learning materials due to the positive effect of remittances compared with non-left-behind children, but the academic performance of the two groups is relatively the same. Also, large shares of remittance income were committed to household consumption, which improved health, education, food and nutrition of both children and elderly parents. Additionally, remittances helped relax household budget constraints. The study demonstrates that female migration brought about change in gender roles for males and females, as traditional gender roles of men as breadwinners also involve domestic caregiving responsibilities and female migrant's attained economic independence by remitting for household consumption. It also shows limited and ineffective communication between spouses due to spatial separation, which created a strong sense of psychological/emotional imbalances such as loneliness, sexual repression and extramarital affairs, resulting in marital instability and marriage breakdown. The research recommends the official recognition of the left behind population with corresponding social support services to ameliorate the negative effects of migration, establishment of cottage industries in the rural areas to help reduce the rate of forced internal migration, land tenure reforms and inheritance to allow women and girls unfettered access to land and family properties to ensure social and economic parity.

Keywords: Left-behind, family, caregiving, responsibilities, Labor, Remittances

INTRODUCTION

Study Background

Rural-urban migration is a common phenomenon in developing countries, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Female migration is shaping Ghana's development discourse, but its wide-ranging implications on the left-behind family (children, elderly parents and husbands) have received little attention over the years. The movement impacts not only the migrant but their household members left behind at home. The campaign on female migration has existed for years, but its impact on the left-behind population remains an unanswered question. The critical questions to ask are, "Who is left behind, and why is the left behind left-behind"? Were they people who missed out on the opportunity to migrate, and could not be brought along or were abandoned? (Yeoh, Brenda and Fong, 2007). Africa is gradually drifting to an urbanized society as thousands of rural people are migrating to the urban centres in search of better living conditions and escaping the quagmire of social and economic ills, such as unemployment, poverty, forced marriages, unequal opportunities, and climate change, among others. This assertion is corroborated by (Dao, 2002; Service, 1998), who reported that urbanization in many African countries and cities, including Ghana (Accra), Nigeria (Lagos), Kenya (Nairobi), among others, has reached an astounding rate of 6%. Moreover, women and young girls engage in rural-urban migration, mostly from the underdeveloped Northern regions of Ghana to the more developed and well-resourced south, mainly to escape from poverty emanating from unemployment and low livelihood opportunities.

A study conducted by (Yeboah 2010 and Obeng-Odoom 2012) found that government inability to create employment and livelihood opportunities in rural areas followed by removal of subsidies on agricultural inputs due to the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in the 1980's led to low productivity in the farming sector, the lack of livelihood opportunities for people of the north pushed many young people especially girls to the cities in search of new livelihood opportunities.

The movement over time created an avalanche of social, economic and psychological ruptures in the rural origin, as some family members are left behind. There is, however, little information on the socioeconomic dimension of Ghana's internal migration in the 2010 population and Housing Census (PHC). Though the rural and urban population in 2016 was 12.8 and 15.4 million, respectively (World Development Indicators 2018), the report fails to provide details on the male-to-female ratio of the left-behind population. The 2010 Population and Housing Census contends that over 4 million socially excluded people are in the rural areas (PHC, 2010). Rural-urban migration causes separation from family and loved ones, and other places of interest. Despite the gravity of the number of left-behind, the many scholarly kinds of literature on female migration has tended in favor of vulnerabilities, including inadequate social protection for the migrants and the economic challenges it poses in the destination (Heintz and Pickbourn 2012; Elgin and Oyvat 2013), decision-making process before migration (Chant, 1998; Willis and Yeoh, 2000) and the risks associated with the livelihood strategies and the potential dangers they find themselves (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf 2008; Oberhauser and Yeboah 2011). What is of concern to scholars, development practitioners, and policymakers is the perceived effects of the separation of migrants from the nuclear and extended families, since the left-behind is a bigger group than the migrants, but often overlooked or forgotten. Findings addressed the lacuna identified.

Problem Statement

The prevalence of female migration is partly due to limited job opportunities in Northern Ghana, as the majority of the livelihood is dependent on seasonal agriculture and agriculture-related activities, which is a recipe for migration. That means that more women migrate today compared to their male counterparts. Also, data from the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS 5) and the 2010 Population and Housing Census suggest that internal migrants accounted for over 50 per cent of the population. Of these, more than 50% are women (Ackah & Medvedev, 2012). Ghana Statistical Services (2013) confirmed that the number of women and girls moving independently or by family decision has been on the rise, and that "feminization" of migration is said to be underway, since over 50% of the populace mostly female were either born outside of their current places

of domicile or have lived outside their origin for a year or more, teenage girls and women moving from rural to urban as a means of livelihood diversification and risk aversion (Berg, 2007).

Inadequate job opportunities, inaccessible to community resources, socio-cultural discrimination and lack of social and economic safety nets are the compelling or push factors responsible for the female migration trend. Studies by (Agyei, Kumi, & Yeboah, 2016) indicate that 75.6% of female migrants were married, while 24.4% were teenage girls and are unmarried. The destination for migrants includes: Accra, Greater Accra region, Kumasi, Ashanti region, Sekondi-Takoradi, Western region and lately Tamale, Northern region (PHC, 2010). The East Mamprusi District, according to (Wouterse, 2010), and has the highest prominence in terms of incidence of female migration, recording 23% closely followed by 18% for the West Gonja District.

Generally, most cities in Ghana are associated with high cost of living, driven by expenses such as housing, healthcare, education, food, clothing and transportation. As a result, entire households often cannot migrate together; some family members particularly children, the elderly and spouses (especially husbands) have to remain in rural areas. This leads to family separation, with children, elderly parents, and spouses often left in rural areas (Shen 2006).

Unlike in China, where the majority of internal labor migrants are male and policy on migration, such as the household registration system, where people are identified either rural or urban resident (hukou) with the accompanying benefits (Zhan, 2005). Migrant workers in China have never been recognized socially and institutionally as urban citizens or workers, migrants usually stay temporary (Sun 2003; Chen 2005; Zhao 2007), since they have been assigned socially as 'peasant' and 'citizen', that is to say. 'Peasant workers' known in Chinese as nongmingong (Chen 2005). Rural laborers consider the urban areas as merely workplaces, not homes, and do not consider making the urban area a permanent abode, because rural and urban areas have long been segregated socially and economically. In contrast, internal labor migration in Ghana presents female as the most migrant population, since over 50 percent of the internal migrant population in 2009 were female, and the absence of migration policy like that of the Chinese household registration system makes it difficult to control rural-urban migration, therefore, most migrants have turned the urban centres as permanent homes (GSS, 2010).

The drift away from the rural areas was, however, accompanied by noticeable implications in the rural origin and urban destination, with a huge number of people, including children, elderly parents, children, husbands of the female migrants and other family members seen to be left-behind, though the benefits cannot be overlooked. Given the above, the study examined the impact of female rural-urban migration on left-behind families in rural Ghana, with Evidence from the East Mamprusi District. Rural-urban migration is a common phenomenon in developing countries, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, among others.

Research Objectives

The objective of the study was to determine the social and economic effects of migration on the left-behind households

Research Question

What are the social and economic effects of female internal migration on the left-behind households?

Theoretical Framework

The oldest concept propounded in an attempt to explain and understand migration dates back to the 1880s when Geographer Ernest George Ravenstein formulated the 'laws of migration.' In the seventh law published in the Journal of the Statistical Society in 1885, he posits that females are more prone to migration than their male counterparts, and engage in short distances as opposed to the males (Ravenstein, 1885). Interestingly, it was not until the 20th and 21st centuries that literature on female migration began to emerge. Mirjana Morokvasic (1985) published the first literature on women's migration (volume 18), bringing attention to women's migration nearly a hundred years after Ernest George Ravenstein's publication. Morokvasic argued that, migration cannot be fully understood by focusing on the movement of young male adults responding to

formal employment opportunities. Women's migration, though historically an understudied phenomenon needs to be included in any analysis of migration patterns.

The New Economics Labor Migration

Many theories on internal migration have been espoused, including that of Neoclassical Macro and Microeconomists of (Lewis 1954; Sjaastad 1962; Borjas 1990), who underlined the causes and effects of migration. They explained that once it begins, migration flow continues to grow over time. However, a key weakness of Neoclassical Macro and Microeconomist models of rural-urban migration is their assumption that migration decisions are made solely by individuals, based on the perceived wage differences between urban and rural areas. This perspective however overlooks the role of household decision-making, especially in context where family operates as a unit with income-generating activities being done for the collective good of the family. In the rural areas, land and farming systems are controlled by the household head who allocates parcels of land to the male household members, and often excludes the females. Both adult male and female in general require permission from the family head before migrating. However, in practice, men often have more freedom and social acceptance to migrate for work, while women and young girls encounter stricter cultural restrictions and greater scrutiny when seeking permission to migrate. Therefore, the decision to migrate is more of a family collective decision rather than an individual one. The New Economics Labor Migration becomes relevant in this study. The NELM model assumes that rural-urban migration decision-making is more of a household than an individual decision and suggests migration is an alternative household livelihood strategy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Migration and Left-Behind Population

According to (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000), an estimated 35% of the internal migration flows are rural-urban. Of these, 18% are seasonal migrations, 14% are rural-rural, and 23% are urban-urban migrations. However, there are no official data on the left-behind population, as this phenomenon is largely unrecognized. This is partly attributed to the fact that, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, internal migration was skewed towards male, able-bodied individuals drifting to the urban south to work on cocoa farms, gold mines, and plantain farms. These resources are abundant in the southern half of the country. The movement was either seasonal or permanent (Brydon, 1992).

Migration and the Left-Behind Children

Just like in other developing countries, rural-urban migration is one of the ways through which the lives of rural dwellers are enhanced. This however often leads to the departure of the agricultural labor force to the urban centres in search of better livelihood opportunities. To this end, many family members left behind, including husbands (in the case of female migration), wives, the elderly and children. In the case of left-behind children, for example, the All-China Women's Federation reported that about 58 million children were left behind in rural areas in 2009 (Cao 2007). This was partly due to the China's population policy of geographical segregation between rural and urban areas, with a strict residential and household registration system introduced in the 1958's. This policy which was aimed at controlling the exodus of people from the rural areas into cities (Hao 2007). The household registration system allows both rural and urban dwellers to enjoy social security in their respective geographical areas. Urban dwellers however receive preferential treatment over rural labor migrants working in the cities, particularly in area such as salaries, rent, education, and other social services. Therefore, rural migrants are compelled to leave their children and relatives in the rural areas, as migrant families are typically excluded from the urban social welfare system. This exclusion helps them avoid high cost of education and living expenses in the cities. Labor migration has both positive and negative effects on the well-being of children. Greenman and Xie (2008) assert that migration can benefit children's wellbeing, it can also have harmful consequences.

It is widely recognized that, the remittances from migrants living in the urban areas improve household income, ease financial constraints and reduce poverty. These improvements in turn contribute positively to

children's education and overall well-being (Chen et al. 2009; Du, Park and Wang, 2005; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn and Klebanov 1994; Edwards and Ureta 2003). However, the financial benefits of migration often come with significant social costs. Left-behind children in rural areas whose parents migrate to cities are deprived of parental care, supervision, and emotional support. As a result, they are at increased risk of suffering from psychological and behavioral problems. In a clinical psychology study comparing the left-behind and non-left-behind children, left-behind children, left-behind children were found to be more likely to be diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, anxiety, and paranoia (Huang 2008). Additionally, these children were more likely to drop out of school in the early stages of education due inadequate parental supervision and control., Most of them are burdened with activities such as petty trading, farming and household chores that would have been handled by the migrant parents (Battistella and Conaco 1998; Chang et al. 2011; Liang and Chen 2007; Liang et al. 2008; McKenzie and Rapoport 2011)

Children's Emotional Affection

Childcare and responsibilities within the family set up shifts when parents migrate, and children are left behind. According to (Ye and Pan 2011): When fathers migrate, the primary caregivers of the left-behind are the grandparents and the mothers, however when mother migrate childcare is shifted to Grandparents only. Children often complain about the treatment meted out by guardians and caretakers, yet they develop strong emotional attachments to them during their time together. In addition to family members, teachers, friends, and neighbors play crucial roles in providing emotional support to left-behind children. Table 2.1 shows, by rank, children's affection towards various caregivers, including biological parents.

Table 2-1: The ranking of Children's affection towards Caregivers

	Father (%)	Mother (%)	Both Parents (%)	Grand Parents (%)	Teachers (%)	Friends (%)	Other (%)
Before	35.9	35.2	16.2	9.1	2.1	0.0	1.5
Current	28.2	29.6	16.9	19.0	2.8	2.8	0.7

Source: Ye and Pan, 2011

From Table 2-1, it is evident that parents remain the most important figures in children's lives even though they may be physically distant. The emotional and psychological bond between them however tends to weaken over time, especially in the absence of regular physical contact.

Effects of Migration on the Elderly Population

In many instances, scholars studying the left-behind population, particularly the elderly, tend to adopt a more pessimistic view. For them, labor migration exacerbates the challenges associated with ageing, as older adults no longer benefit from the traditional family-based care systems, leading to a decline in their welfare (Sen 1994). Most argue that youth migration poses dire consequences for ageing rural parents, such as inadequate care, loneliness, isolation, and depression which are exacerbated during ill health., The widened distance between the migrants' children and their parents is grave concern (Rossi and Rossi 1990). For instance, international migration, which involves crossing national borders, deprives older people of consistent care as internet calls and mere remittances are insufficient in meeting their emotional and physical needs (Vullnetari and King 2008).

Furthermore, some scholars warn that modernization contributes to the abandonment of elderly family members (Aboderin 2004). Contrary to this view, some studies focussing on migrants and the receiving urban cities found that international and internal migration do not necessarily have negatively effects on the left behind elderly. Support including regular communication and financial assistance received from migrants keeps the elderly emotionally balanced, and prevents depression in their ageing parents (Knodel and Saengtienchai 2007; Abas et al. 2009). They posit that the aged left-behind in the rural areas who receive remittances are economically and socially better off compared to non-recipients. Additionally, these aged get access to new information about urban areas from their children in cities (Stark and Lucas 1988; Van Wey 2004). Other scholars also argue that cash remittances and other tangible material goods such as clothes, medicine, food, radio, and television, inter alia, elevates the social status of the left-behind elderly individuals in their communities provides entertainment, and reduces feelings of fatigue and loneliness (Du et al. 2007).

These optimistic views are however challenged by, (Zheng 2004; Wang 2007; Ye and He 2008) who argue that remittances from migrants are often irregular, insufficient, and unsustainable. In most instances remittances received by elderly parents frequently go toward supporting grandchildren, leaving the elderly with unmet economic, social, and health needs, and lead to persistent poverty and low standards of living among the elderly. Though migration of the youth creates a care vacuum, filial piety and intergenerational transfers continue to be the primary basis of systems for supporting the elderly (Ofstedal, Knodel, and Chayovan 1999).

Regarding communication between migrants and their left-behind elderly. Telephone or mobile calls are the principal means of contact as majority of the elderly have little or no access to other modern tools such as email or fax. According to (Du and Du 2002; Du 2004), much of the phone communications are directed towards migrants' children rather than their elderly parents, which further deepens the sense of separation, and the resultant feelings of loneliness, depression, and emotional neglect among the left behind elderly. What is more disturbing is the absence of a robust social security system for the aged in many developing countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria. Therefore, the absence of caregiving especially from adult children leaves the left-behind elderly vulnerable to disease, economic imbalances and emotional discomfort (Xie 2007).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research methodology refers to procedures by which researchers conduct their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena (Rajasekar; Philominathan; Chinnathambi, 2011). Regarding qualitative research, it involves a data generation process characterised by intellectual, analytical and interpretive activities (Jennifer, 2002). Furthermore, qualitative methodology is often described as a set of detailed procedures encompassing data generation, analysis, and interpretation.

Population

The study was conducted done in the East Mamprusi District; it is located in the north-eastern part of the Northern Region. The capital is located at Gambaga. Gambaga is a historic town lying next to the seat of the Nayiri, king of Mamprugu, and also the first headquarters of the Northern Territories, now the Northern region. It is one of the oldest districts in the Northern Region. To the north, it shares boundaries with the Talensi and Nabdam Districts, Bawku West and Garu-Tempane Districts, all in the Upper East Region and to the east is the Bunkpurugu-Yunyoo District. It is bordered in the west by the West Mamprusi District and to the south by the Gusheigu and Karaga Districts; it covers a land mass of 1,706.8 square kilometres, representing about 2.2 per cent of the total land mass of the region. The district has some elementary, primary and secondary cycle schools, including Gambaga Girls Senior High, Nalerigu Senior High, Gambaga Teachers College of Education, Nalerigu Nursing and Midwifery Training College and Nalerigu Youth Training and Leadership Training Institute (EMDA, 2017). The district is known for its tourist sites, such as the Naa Djerenga Walls (which were built without water, but only milk and honey in Nalerigu), the Gambaga Witches Camp, and the Moshe chief's ancestry grave sites in Gambaga.

Research Design

The research employed a qualitative and case study design. Qualitative research is a systematic, subjective approach to describe life experiences and give them meaning (Burns and Grove 2009). This is because the qualitative method relies on verbal reports of emotional, cognitive, and overt behavior, and as such, interviews permit observations as well. The qualitative design also helps in the generation of rich and in-depth information about the complex phenomenon of migration and the effects on the left-behind population (Creswell, 2006).

Qualitative and case study approaches help to gain in-depth insights into the information and the personal feelings or perceptions of the respondents, since the interviews were conducted in the respondents' natural environment, which allows them to express their feelings without the feeling of being forced to do so. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were employed in the analysis of left-behind household biographical information and the impact of female internal migration on the left-behind families. The relevant question the study attempted to provide an answer to includes, but is not limited to what is the social and economic effect of female migration on left-behind households?

Sampling

Huge study population with limited time and resources means researchers could not reach out and also easily identify the subjects, particularly households with a migrant history in the study area. Therefore, the study adopted purposive and snowball techniques, which helps in the identification of the subjects to be interviewed. The underlying idea behind using the snowball technique is that it would be easy to have access to the desired respondents, for members of a rare or unique population often know each other (Henry, 1990). The technique was appropriate for this study, given that not all households in the study area have female migrants. Initially, one migrant was identified by the Assembly member; this was because he knew families with immigrant backgrounds. In turn, the newly identified members named other members and households. Hence, the sample increased.

Researchers engaged a total of 70 respondents, including 25 return migrants, 25 left-behind and 15 non-left-behind children. Also, 4 females focus group discussions were held in four locations. In addition, 5 officials and non-state actors relevant to the study were interviewed as key informants due to their knowledge and role regarding women's empowerment and rural development before saturation was reached. Seven communities within the district were involved. The criterion for selecting respondents was purposive; this ensured that relevant subjects were represented.

Data Collection Instruments

In-depth Interviews

Household heads, left behind individuals, return migrants were recruited from migrant households. Non-left-behind households, In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face with the aid of an interview guide. Interviews took the form of informal conversations with the researcher reading out questions in the local dialect, guided by the research objectives and topic guide. Researchers also participated in various community activities and collected relevant data as the study population went about their daily activities

Participant Observation

Migration and its effects are best studied by examining real life situations and experiences. Therefore, researchers closely observed key developments, events and key issues during the study. In line with (Silverman, 2007) argument about qualitative research, participant observation in data collection technique helps the researcher to generate their own insights. Observations were documented daily in the field notebook.

Key Informants Interviews

Key informants from both official institutions and non-state actors were interviewed. A semi-structured, open-ended question was employed to gather data on the impact of female rural-urban migration on the left-behind family members in the study area. Respondents were purposively sampled based on their background knowledge and the roles they play towards women's empowerment. Some of them include: the district coordinating director, Planning officer, Ghana Education Service gender officer, District Campaign for female education (CAMFED), Women association leaders locally known as 'magazia', two youth Chiefs (Nachin naa) and two Opinion leaders in the Nalerigu and Gambaga townships.

Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involved groups of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on a specific topic based on their personal experiences (Powell et al., 1996). The purpose of choosing focus group discussions over other data collection techniques is their interactive nature (Morgan, 1997) which facilitates deeper insights into participants' feelings, beliefs, attitudes, experiences and shared understanding of the phenomenon being discussed. In all, four (4) FGDs were conducted; including: the left-behind household heads, non-left-behind household heads, return or returnee migrants and youth group. Each group consisted of nine (9) to eleven (11) participants. This was to ensure effective group management and provide participants with the opportunity to freely express themselves without fear or hindrance.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data from the in-depth interviews, tape recordings, and field notes were transcribed and analyzed. Content and thematic analysis were employed as well. Audio recordings and field notes were transcribed verbatim with responses grouped, compared and examined based on narratives (stories and cases) relative to the topic under study. For the thematic analysis, data were categorised into key themes by using flat notes to interpret responses to present logical findings. It must be noted that descriptive tools such as frequency distributions, tables, diagrams (e.g., bar and pie charts) were used to ensure clear and comprehensive interpretation and discussion.

Research Findings

Structure and Composition of the Left-behind Household's Population

The study identified a total of 528 individuals within the left-behind population. Of these, 212 are children, constituting 40% of the total. The elderly accounted for 171 individuals (32%), while 51 (10%) were spouses or husbands. The remaining 94 (18%) represented other household members, such as siblings, guardians, among others. The data shows that children were the majority of the left-behind population. Table 4-1 below presents the number and percentage of left-behind.

Table **Error! No text of specified style in document.**-1: Number and Percentage of Left-behind Population

Left behind population	Number	Percent (%)
Children	212	40
Elderly	171	32
Spouse	51	10
Other	94	18
Total	528	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Coping strategies and Sources of livelihood of Left-behind Households

This section focuses on the livelihoods of households with members who have migrated, leaving others behind. Households are engaged in diverse economic activities as coping and survival strategies. As a rural community, the main livelihood activity is agriculture and its related activities. However, the study found other households engaged in off-farm activities such as petty trading and formal employment in the formal service sector. The survey found that of 70 (68.6%) households are peasant/smallholder farmers who cultivate crops, and tubers, including maize, sorghum, millet, cowpea, cassava and yams. Most of these farmers practice mixed cropping and livestock production. Additionally, 14.3% benefit directly from migration through remittances, which supplement farm income and help reduce household budget constraints. The remaining 10% percent and 5% respectively rely on off-farm income and living wages. The off-farm activities include the sale of groceries in small shops along the streets, processing groundnut cake (Kulikuli) and oil, and general Agri business, among others. In almost every household interviewed, elderly women and young girls who stayed behind earned cash income from harvesting and selling shea nuts, shea butter, Groundnut paste, food vending, sale of fresh vegetables, among others. Although income from these sources is reportedly low, it still contributes to their livelihood.

Box 1: Household coping strategies and Livelihood Source

I have been cultivating cereal crops for the past 15 years, I grew up going to the farm with my late parents, this piece of land was inherited from my parents and I farm here to feed my wife and four children. There is no other job opportunity for me because I haven't been to school and have no skills for other employment opportunities especially in the service sector. Apart from crop farming, I have livestock such as birds, goats, and sheep. We use the livestock to complement our family income. Our daughter working in the city sometimes sends us money, but very little though. (Neindoo, a smallholder farmer in Nagboo village)

I am a single mother, my husband left me with three children several years ago, his family didn't come for the children, nor assist in their care and upbringing, so, I have been doing so all alone, I used to work as a cleaner at Nalerigu Senior High School in my youthful days, but now on retirement. My daughter and son migrated to Accra and work as waitress and Mason (constructional firm) respectively. They send money every two months for my upkeep, while I take care of my daughter's three-year-old son whom she left with me (Asibi, female household head)

Table **Error! No text of specified style in document.-2**: Coping Strategies and Livelihood Activities of the Left-behind Households

Household Livelihood Activities	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid percent
Peasant/Smallholder farmer	48	68.6	68.6
Wage Earner	5	7.1	7.1
Off-farm activities	7	10	10
Migration	10	14.3	14.3
Total	70	100	100

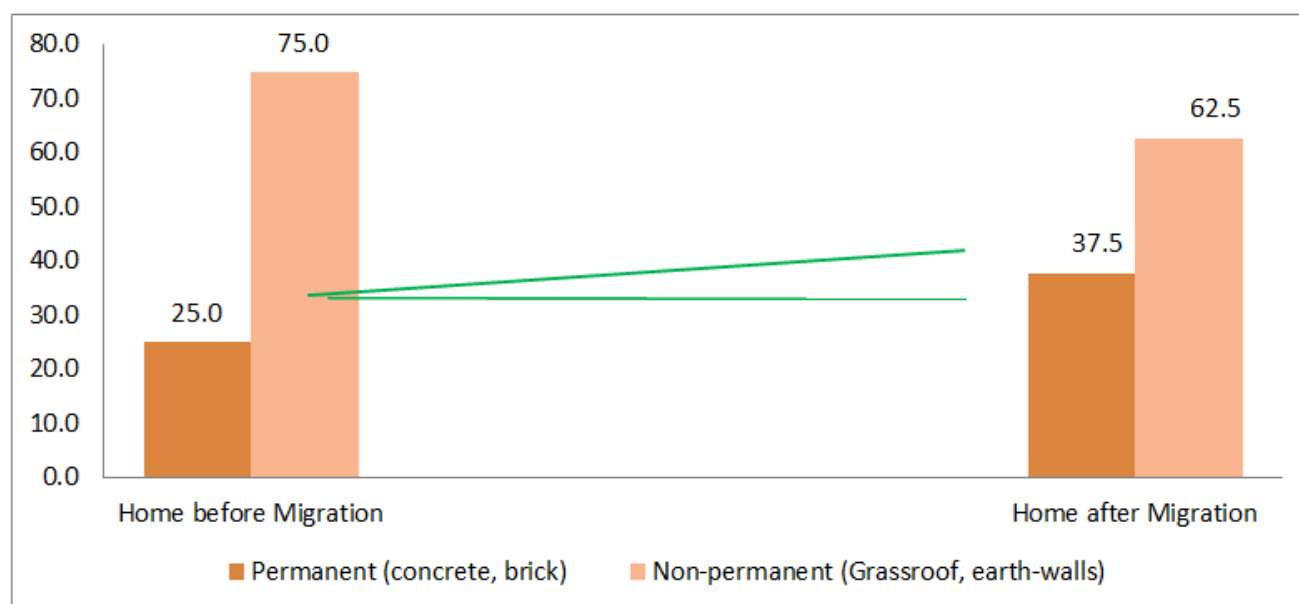
Source: Field survey, 2017

The results suggest that the majority of left-behind households are peasant/smallholder farmers, and migration the second largest source of income in the area.

Household Living Accommodation Before and After Migration

In rural communities in Ghana, the housing system is usually in a deplorable state, with most structures made of mud and thatch. The state of household economic status is measured based on the type of housing structure. Rural people often prioritize constructing improved housing as soon as their income improves. To ascertain the value of remittances on home construction. The results show that, before migration, about 75% of the migrant houses were locally built with materials as grass roofs, mud-walls), which are deemed non-durable; 25% built with improved (concrete-brick, Aluminium roof) permanent materials and hence durable structures. In the light of this, there was noticeable improvement in the housing structures after migration as 37.5% of households had upgraded to durable/permanent housing structures as against the previous 25%, while the less-durable housing structure (grass roof, mud walls) reduced to 62.5% (see Figure 4-1) from the previous 75%. The results of in-depth interviews show that remittances from migrants have led to considerable improvement in housing structures, although the majority of remittances went into the household consumption budget.

Figure **Error! No text of specified style in document.-1** : Housing Situation of migrant's households before and after migration



Source: Field Survey, 2017

Maternal Migration and Left-behind Children

A total of 212 children were identified as left-behind from 70 households; of these 54 % are male (boys) and 46% female (girls). Two hundred and two (202), representing 95.3% had the mother or female guarding migrate, while 10, representing 4.7% had both parents migrate. Responses from 34 left-behind and 15 non-left-behind children, as in Table 4.3, show that the majority were in the 7–12-year-old age group, and in terms of gender, the majority of them were females. Table 4-3 presents information on the age and gender of left-behind and non-left-behind children.

Table 4.3: Age and gender distribution of child respondents

	7-12 years old		13-16 years old		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Left-behind children	9	11	6	8	34
Non-left-behind children	4	3	3	5	15
Total	13	14	9	13	49

Source: Field Survey, 2017

In traditional social structures and caregiving arrangements in Ghanaian societies, the majority of women takes care of children and elderly parents coupled with household responsibilities, while men take charge of external responsibilities, such as providing shelter, clothing, food, healthcare, and education. This traditional division of labor is disrupted by female migration. The study found that female migration altered and modified the generational household division of labor. This is consistent with previous research by (Entwisle & Henderson, 2000; Yu & Chau (1997), which noted gendered division of labor within the household in rural China, where women are expected to handle domestic tasks, while men provide for the family through activities outside of the household. For example, women devote more time than their male counterparts with respect to domestic responsibilities and are less involved in local off-farm work compared to men.

The study found that left-behind children are cared for by their fathers, grandparents, or guardians, whilst non-left-behind children live with both parents (father and mother) and, in most cases, grandparents within the same household as in Table 4.4 below. The majority (53.9%) of the left-behind children live with their grandparents, while 32% are with their fathers. Guardians such as sisters and other relatives of the paternal and maternal extended families serve as caregivers and thus constitute the remaining 14.7%. This is the direct opposite for the non-left behind children, as the majority (73%) were living with both parents, while 13.3% are cared for by their grandparents. This is a testament of relevance of grandparents with respect to childcare especially in the absence of mothers.

Table 4.4: Distribution of caregivers for the left-behind and Non-left-behind Children

	Left-behind Children		Non-Left-behind Children		
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Frequency	Percent (%)
Father	11	32.4	Both parents	11	73.3
Grandparents (elderly women)	18	52.9	Grandparents	2	13.3
Guardians	5	14.7	Guardians	2	13.4
Total	34	100	Total	15	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The educational status of primary caregivers in the case of migrant households shows low educational attainment, as the majority 55% had no formal education, 35% primary education, and 10% secondary education. (Li and Lao, 2005; Ye and Pan, 2011) found that left-behind elderly, particularly women, are commonly constructed as unqualified guardians, who are unable to offer proper nutrition, care, instruction,

supervision, and guidance for grandchildren. However, due to the lack of time and childcare skills of left-behind husbands, the grandmothers are compelled to take over the responsibilities of childcare duty.

Communication and General Activities of Left-behind Children

The main livelihood of rural dwellers in Ghana is agriculture. Therefore, the peak of farming is usually between April- October. Migration usually occurs after the farm harvest. The period preceding the harvest is when women and girls move to the cities and towns to engage in off-farm business to augment family income. They move as seasonal/short-term migrants and return in the ensuing season. However, upon reaching the city majority become permanent migrants.

Of the 34 interviewed, 22 children have no idea of the return date of migrant mothers, whilst 8 expect their return every six months (half a year), and the rest expect the parents to visit the community to attend important social or cultural activities, such as festivals, weddings, funerals, among others. The data suggest that female migrants hardly visit home, implying that the majority have turned into, permanent migrants. Some of the children add;

“My mother left the village one and a half years ago and has not visited home. I have no idea when she will come home. I asked my grandmother, and she said soon, but she is not forthcoming. I truly miss her” (Jay, left behind in Jawani village)

“I am living with my father and senior sister since my mother is a migrant worker. My mother visits home at least once a year; she left the village last week; however, I can’t remember quite clearly the months involved. She buys new clothes and books for me whenever she comes. I wish she would come and live with us permanently” (Rukaya, Kolivai village)

“My mom visited when I was in class four (3), now I am in class five (5), thus almost two years ago, but I am not thinking about when she will return, so I haven’t found out from Daddy, but it’s not a problem if she comes or not. I always help my grandmother to prepare my younger sibling for school” (Rahma, Kulgona village)

Sir! (Referring to the researcher), my mother went to the city and came back only last week, but I have no idea if she will go back or not. (Issah, daughter of a return migrant in Nagboo village).

The narratives from the left-behind children suggest mixed results; some of the children have no idea when the migrant parents will return, and others have full information, while others are indifferent and care little about their migrant parents’ return.

Communication of left-behind children and Migrant parents

Communication is an essential component in the lives of people; it is a way of staying in touch with family, friends and relatives, it is a necessary tool for child upbringing, especially when parents are away from children. In the case of permanent migrants, telephone calls were found as the main source of contact with children. However, contact minutes were on a short-term basis. Table 4-5 shows the frequency of contact hours with family members and children.

Table 4.5: Frequency of Migrant workers’ contact with the left-behind Households

	Number	Percentage (%)
3-7 days	3	8.8
8-14 days	5	14.7
One month	4	12.0
6+ months	7	20.5
No contact	15	44.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The contact hours of the left-behind children and the migrant parents is shallow, as the majority 44% have no connection with migrant parents; these constitute the category of permanent migrants, while 20.5% visit and have at least a telephone conversation with their children 6 months or more in a year.

Daily Activities of Left-behind Children

In the case of daily activities of left-behind children, inferences have been made between left-behind and non-left-behind children as regards to daily work they do, and comparisons have also been drawn before and after parents' migration. In the case of left-behind children, the study found that the daily activities of children vary considerably between boys and girls. As mentioned, the gender division of labor is deep-seated in most households, as boys and girls play different roles as the case for women and men. Figure 4-2 below shows the daily activities of left-behind children before and after parents' migration, while Figure 4-3 presents a comparative analysis of the daily operations of migrants and the non-migrants' children.

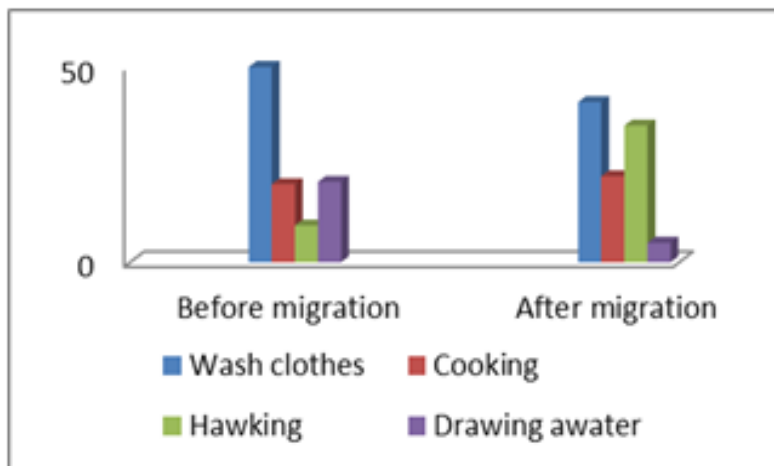


Figure 4-2: Daily Activities of Left-behind Children behind

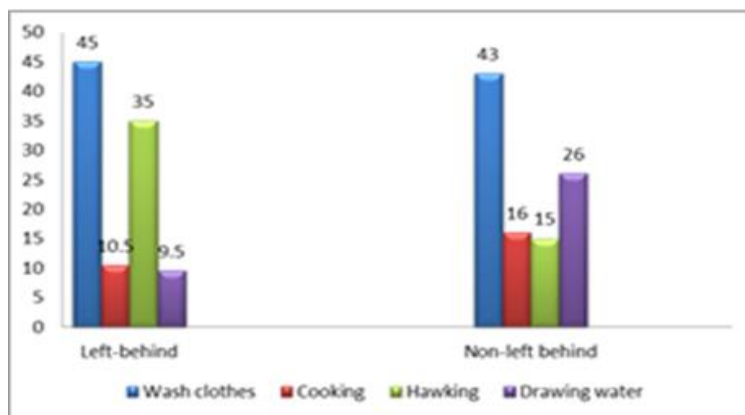


Figure 4-3: Daily Activities of Left- & Non-left-behind Children

Source: Field Survey. 2017

Children at age 7 and above help with household duties as daily routine activities. In some cases, adult children in rural areas as part of upbringing, assist parents in household duties such as washing, sweeping, and drawing water where necessary. Therefore, in the event of maternal migration, the burden was shifted to elderly/grandmothers and elder sisters within the household. In many cases, grandparents and sisters were overburdened in that some of these responsibilities had to be done by children.

With regards to the burden of household duty, some respondents posited as follows;

“Pupil attendance at school during the peak of the farming season is affected due to what one would call the ‘temporary withdrawal’ of children from school by parents to help in farm work. The most affected is the male.

Interestingly, both left-behind and non-left-behind children are involved. Therefore, school attendance rates lower in the farming season compared to the lean season. What is more worrisome is that most of the children do not come back after farming activities are over and continue to be home for good” (Headmistress, Nalerigu D/A Primary)

“After school, children stay home and fight among themselves; this is due to idleness. This is one reason my children sell groceries after school is also an avenue of enhancing family income, but honestly, I do not think it is child abuse, it is rather a form of training” (John, father of a hawker in Kolinvai village)

“We make money from the sale of dry fish within the neighborhood, and part of the income is used in providing her school needs such as books, pens, school clothes (uniform), and even pocket money. (Jango, father, left-behind girl, Nalerigu).

Considering the above narratives one can justifiably conclude the prevalence of child labor and how badly children are exposed to kidnappers and child trafficking, considering limited supervision and care, children. Most parents are ignorant of child rights and subject them to child abuse.

Educational performance of Left behind Children

Being left behind in rural Ghana is not only a challenge for migrant households and families, but government and development practitioners alike. The phenomena are partly related to institutional arrangements that favor the urban over the rural, considering the unbalanced development between the rural and the urban. The institutional arrangements explain the problems faced by the left-behind population, considering the vast differences in welfare status between urban and rural residents. In the area of education, the research shows that children’s academic performance was affected. The study found a positive influence of remittances sent by migrant parents, as it helps relax the household budget constraint, leading to an enhanced condition of living, including clothing, learning materials and improved health conditions among others. On the flipside, parent migration reduced child monitoring and supervision, which affected school or academic outcomes.

Study Monitoring and Care Provision

Research results have shown that a child’s learning is heavily influenced by parents, especially when they stay together. Parents take children to and from school daily and continually assist them even at home. The study shows mothers’ cardinal role in the child’s general upbringing. Therefore, the absence of parents, particularly the mother, child care duties turn to elder sisters and grandmothers, who hardly fill the void left by biological parents due to the excess burden and their low level of educational attainment. For instance, of the 34 children interviewed, the results show that 25 were found living with their grandmother, while the remaining nine live with their biological parents. Tutoring and mentoring of children were noted to be affected among the left-behind children partly due to the low level of education of guardians; children involved had to rely solely on their teachers for assistance, which rarely occurs only during instructional hours, which is insufficient to deal with their learning difficulties. Respondents revealed that their academic performance is affected in one way or the other following the mother’s outmigration.

“I have not had enough pocket money to go to school since my mother left the village; grandmother gives less money, which is usually not sufficient to buy food, sometimes I go to school without the pocket money, hunger makes it difficult for me to concentrate in class, there are days I don’t go to school at all. But it used to be so when my mother was home, life was good for me. I genuinely miss my mother and hope she will come back sooner than later (Amina, Sakogu village).

I rarely go to school these days, i was sacked from class for non-payment of school fees. I like my school, because we have all the needed facilities for learning, but the school fees are beyond the capability of my parents, my mother left for the city 7 months ago but my elder sister says she hasn’t sent money to her yet to pay my fees, and my father too is still on his farm, my father will get money money after harvest. (Joana, Nalerigu).

The narratives show that children's school attendance is mostly affected when parents are incapable of meeting children's study needs, especially school fees and study materials, as outlined above. With regards to study motivation, the majority of children interviewed have the zeal to pursue education to the highest level, except for a few. The study found that, left-behind children have the motivation to further education with the hope of finding good jobs to look after themselves and their parents, and are often reminded by parents to work hard whenever contact is made.

"I concentrate on my studies because my mother has to migrate to the city to look after me, my father is a farmer and makes little money on the farm, and they both try their best to provide for my needs. Therefore, I am looking to lessen the burden on them by getting a good job after school" (Adisa, class 3, Kulgona village).

"I miss my mother almost every day. Now living with my elder sister in her marital home, I would have wished to live together with my parents, but unfortunately, my mom migrated to the Accra, and my father is busy on the farm, which reason I was taken to live with my elder sister. I know my parents stay apart because of poverty, which alone is motivating enough for me to work hard to support them in the future" (Memuna, class 5, Kolinvai village).

The narratives serve as motivating factors for left-behind children; most of the reasons for maternal migration have to do with chronic poverty within the household, and children are fully aware and working to turn the tide by lessening the financial burden on parents.

Box:6 Children Experiences on mothers' migration

"When I went to Kumasi (city), my children were left in the care of my mother, though, I wasn't making enough money, but I used to remit every two months to take care of their needs, especially clothing, pocket money, school fees, and other needs, this is because I prioritized their education over other family needs, I have lots of regrets for not being able to go to school, this is one reason I can't find a job in the formal sector. I would not want a repeat of that, therefore, doing everything possible to ensure that my children do better in school" (Mama, return migrant).

"I don't feel confident when I appear before my colleagues in school, especially whenever my classmates dress better than I does, or possess books and other study materials my parents can afford, my parents promised to buy for me though. I hardly do class exercises and homework for lack of study materials, especially, textbooks, pens, pencils among others, I hope to get them sooner than later" (Atia, Non-left-behind child).

Table 4-6 below confirms the above narratives and show clearly the variety of clothing and study materials between left-behind and non-left-behind children.

Table 4.6: Comparison of clothes and educational materials between left-behind and non-left-behind Children

	Left-behind children	Non-left-behind children
	Percent (%)	Percent (%)
Very Satisfied	55.9	11.8
Relatively Satisfied	36.2	41.2
Highly Unsatisfied	5.9	41.2
Relatively Unsatisfied	2.0	5.9
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The study shows majority of left-behind children, 55.9 percent, are satisfied with school uniform and learning materials compared with 11.8 per cent; also, 5.9 per cent are highly unsatisfied compared with 41.2 per cent. In all, it indicates that the left-behind are better to look after regarding clothes and study materials.

Children's Academic Performance before and after maternal migration

The study found significant differences in the academic performance of left-behind children before and after migration (see Figure 4-5). Of the 34 left-behind children investigated, 17 children's performances remain relatively unchanged; 10 witnessed decline, due to inadequate supervision and motivation to study, and 7 relatively good

In short, mothers' out-migration was found to have both negative and positive effect on children's academic performance. Comparative analysis of the academic performance of left-behind and non-left-behind children shows no significant difference between the two. Therefore, the proportion of children with excellent, average and good academic performance remains relatively the same over time. The study found that migrants households spend fewer resources on boys relative to girls in education, and the reverse is true. However, the findings make sense in light of the growing evidence that increasing women's bargaining power results in improvements and empowerment in girls' health and educational outcomes, but not in boys.

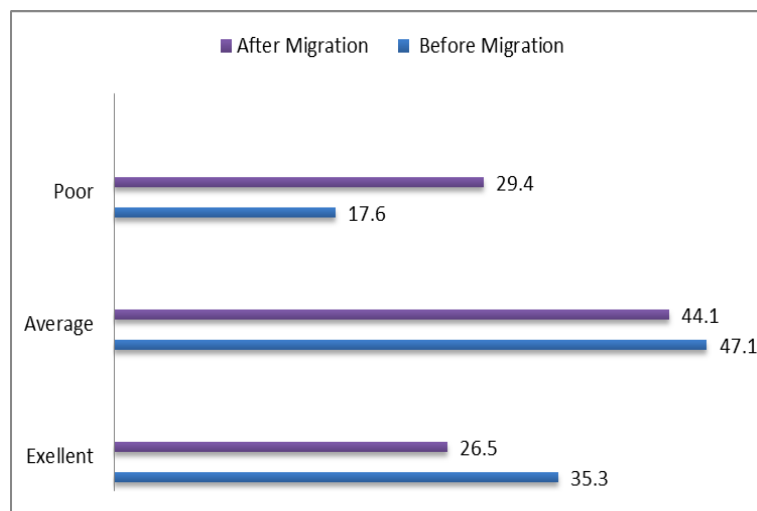


Figure 4-2 : Comparison of academic performance: between Left-behind and non-left-behind children

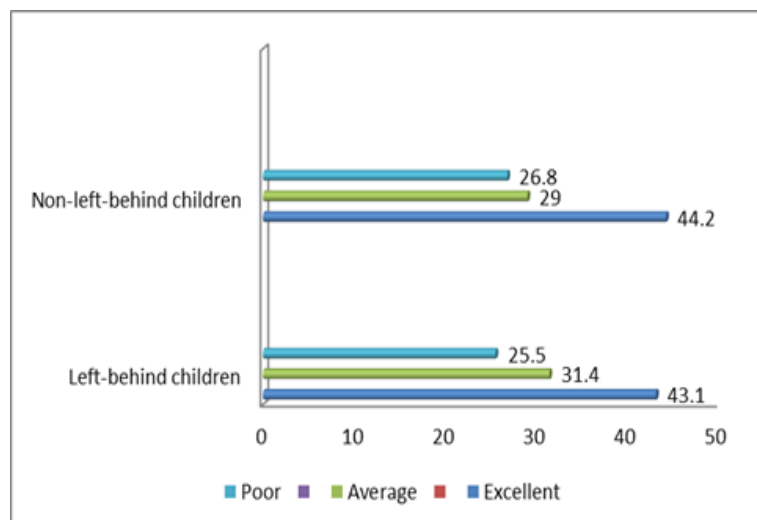


Figure 4-5: Comparison of academic Before and After Migration

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Food, Health, Psychological effects on children

Children of school age, 78% were found living with grandparents, while 22% with other family members, some of whom are elder sisters. It is imperative to add that the said caregivers were found to be saddled with the house keeping roles, for which reason, maternal parental care and supervision of left-behind children have been reduced, thus making them susceptible to psychological and behavioral problems. Moreover, children

interviewed expressed dissatisfaction as regards to food, nutrition, health care, and general wellness. The narratives below summed up the feelings of left-behind children concerning health care and nutrition.

"I have not been satisfied with meals from my grandmother; sometimes I tried cooking considering the weak nature of my grandmother due to her old age, I used to blame her for preparing tasteless meals, but I now realized she has no ingredients such as fish, meat among others, to prepare good meals, my mother doesn't often send money and my father too is on sick bed" (Wunimi, Left-behind child, Gambaga)

"Generally, poverty in this village is one reason children are not properly fed balanced, nutritious meals; we are peasant farmers, and the income we make from the farm is not sufficient to provide good meals for the children. Nurses in the village clinic have always told us to improve the meal content, especially for children, since most children are anaemic (insufficient blood due to a low, unbalanced diet). The problem is faced by both left-behind and non-left-behind children. We wish to improve" (Assembly member, Jawani)

The narratives show the emotional and psychological trauma left behind go through. Findings show that the trauma leads to children becoming antisocial, reticent and timid, which negatively affects their progress in education and general wellness.

Out-migration on physical health and daily care of left-behind elderly parents

In the Ghanaian context, elderly members are cared for by their adult children as part of satisfying the filial piety enjoined by culture. It is supported by the local adage "parents look after the young ones to grow teeth and young ones must look after them to lose their teeth at old age" (implying that parents have the responsibility of caring for children in their prime age, reciprocate the gesture by caring for them in old age when most of them would have gone on retirement and are out of the income generating bracket). The impact of female migration is felt compared to that of males. The study found a positive impact of adult male migration on health and nutrition on left-behind elderly parents due to remittances, which helps provide health care needs and good nutrition compared to their female counterparts, who invest remittances in child welfare.

Nearly 65 of the 70 respondents, consisting majority, attested to the challenge women's migration pose to the family provision of care for the rural elderly in Ghana.

Case 1: Elderly woman's responses on the effects of her daughter's migration

My name is Mariam (pseudo name). I am 55 years old and a widow. I live with my son who is 30 years old and married at 26 years old women. We are a household of 5 including two children. My son's wife (daughter-in-law), migrated to the city and left us two children to care for. I miss my daughter-in-law for household work because I am now very old, she used to take care of the children and me, sadly, inadequate job opportunities in the village have compelled her to migrate to the city to look for work to make money to support the husband to provide the necessary care. Though I used to assist her to prepare my grandchildren for school as she prepares breakfast, now the workload has more than tripled because she left two young children behind under my care, I wash their clothes, prepare meals, clean home among others. I am only lucky the father cares; he helps in most times by drawing water for the household when he comes back from the farm. In this village, water is the hardest commodity as there is only one bore hole serving the population of more than 600 inhabitants.

He uses a bicycle; some of his colleagues find it unacceptable and tells him to call the wife back to the village. I overworked even at old age when I should be taking a rest, but times are hard in the village and we need money to meet the basic needs of the household. For this reason, it is better for me to get used to my hardships than for her to come back home to live in perpetual poverty and misery.



Figure 4-3 : Rural women and young girls drawing water for household use

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Impact on elderly, emotional and psychological wellbeing

With regards to the emotional and psychological effects on the elderly parent, the study found that, the frequent use of modern communication tools, such as telephone helps bridge the communication gap between elderly parents and adult children, particularly women. Elderly parents are often worried when the daughter stay away from home compared to the adult male. To maintain their emotional support, distant care-based communication technologies, such as regular phone calls is essential; this allows them to be in constant touch with the migrant children. Although elderly parents admitted receiving material benefits, such as clothes, television, among others, however, the items are enough compensation to replace their presence and convey both love and guilt during the parents' migration.

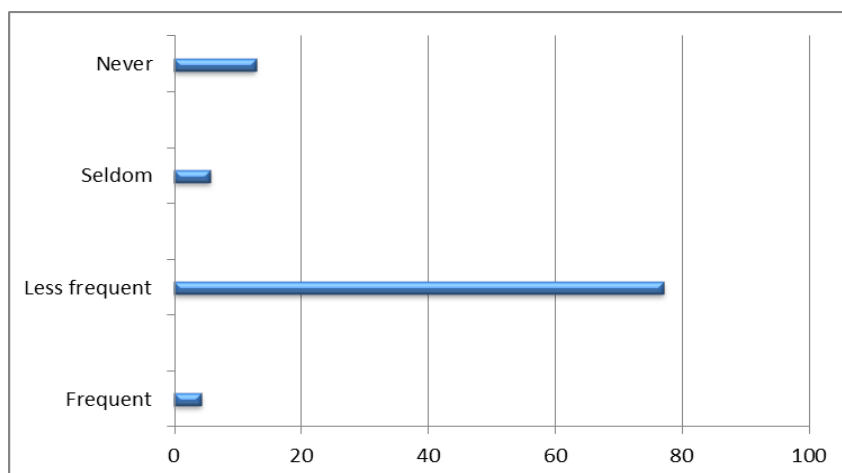


Figure 4-4 : Elderly telephone contact with migrant children

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Figure 4-6 above shows the rate at which migrants communicate with the left-behind elderly parents. The figures suggest less frequent contact and, at worst, no telephone contact with adult children in the city, which often resulted in loneliness, isolation, depression. Less physical and telephone communication keeps the elderly in perpetual darkness as regards the safety of their revered older female children. Some elderly parents had this to share regarding inadequate physical and telephone contact and how they are affected psychologically and emotionally.

Box 2: Experiences on Elderly Caregiving

“Two of our daughters are migrant workers, the elder one got married and lieft with the husband to the city, she visited home recently and went along with the younger girl of 17 years old who is Junior High School

graduate. We are left alone, our problem isn't necessarily about material gifts, but the safety of the younger daughter in the city, considering the busy nature of the cities. There are reports of rampant vehicular accidents, army robbery cases, rape and defilement among others" (Aduna, household head, Sakogu village)

"My wife is a migrant worker; she left behind our 7 year old girl, who is being looked after by my grandparents' whiles I go to the farm. My wife's absence is causing a lot of discomfort to them, they often feel lonely and depressed as there is no one at home, farm work keeps me busy almost every day, elderly people need to be cared for most often, but this is lacking. The care and support for them was very good when she was home; they fall sick more often these compared to the past when the family was intact" (Male Caregiver, Jawani village)

"Elderly care is very important, we all appreciate their unflinching role in our upbringing, and there is the need to reciprocate it when they get old. We know women, and young girls are better caregivers compared to men, some of us returned from the city to provide care for our ageing parents, it is very difficult to contact them regularly while in the city because most of them don't have access to telephones or mobile handsets. However, that incentive according to them falls too short to compensate the physical contact and usually call for our return" (Responses from FGD).

The responses show migration has a huge impact on ageing parents as it deprives older people of social care. Migrant children paid attention to the economic contribution of remittance and material benefits to compensate for the physical dispersion at the expense of day care provisions, such as daily interactions, which reduce elderly abandonment with the tendency of curbing loneliness and emotional ills (trauma), which affect their general wellness.

The influence of Migration on Marriage and Gender roles

The spatial separation of wives and husbands due to women's migration altered the embedded traditional gender division of labor in the study area. When a household needs cash income, the man is expected to honor. When a woman marries into her husband's family, she will achieve her position as wife, mother, and daughter-in-law with her new family. For this reason, households diversify their livelihood sources by resorting to out-migration for paid-up jobs in the urban areas to supplement family income. Women's engagement in labor force provides them with independent access to economic resources, which in most cases are lacking in rural areas.

Case 2

Mariam (pseudo name). She is 32 years old and a mother of two children, she migrated to the city specifically Accra (National capital) and worked as a head porter locally known as 'kayayei.' She lived and worked in the city in the two and a half years before her return. As she was away, the husband who is a smallholder farmer and a carpenter was left behind to take care of the two children. The household has five acres (30.3 mu) of arable land which was inherited from the husband's late father. The husband couldn't cultivate all the land because of the carpentry work (part-time job), he offered part of the land to the wife, which she had used for a few years after marriage, but the returns from the farm were woefully inadequate to meet her needs as well as the children. She attributed lower crop yield or failure to persistent draught the community experiences on a yearly basis due to the erratic nature of rainfall, since farming in the area depended on rain-fed agriculture. The husband is very hard working, working as a farmer and a carpenter; one would have thought that the income he earns would be sufficient enough for the household, but strangely not the case. She migrated to look for work in the city by consensus. Before she left, she suggested taking the children to her maternal grandparents, but the husband declined and promised to stay together and to care for them as well as his elderly mother. The husband and the children are emotionally attached, the reason for which the request was refused. True to his words, he did provide the necessary child care by doing the household chores as was done by me. He combined the home care with both the farm work and carpentry. The wife too realizing the sacrifices of the husband remitted money, clothing and other valuable gifts to the family in the village. For the two and half years she worked as migrant labor, she paid an average of GHC 4000 (\$ 830), part of the said money was then used to provide children educational needs and also established a small shop in the Gambaga township with

some resources from the husband where they sell groceries. The husband asked her to come back and manage the shop as he was busy with farming activities.

From the case above, what is clear is that husbands and elderly, children take up the social and domestic roles of wives when they migrate, but not in all cases, because some left-behind males are still refuse to do so, since it has the potential of changing the status quo leading to men losing their traditional manly status within the household.

Impact of women's out-migration on the marital relationship

Marriage is bonded on effective communication and continuous interaction between spouses. However, women's out-migration does not allow couples to enjoy any of them. Spatial/geographical separation of wives living in the urban areas (cities) and husbands in rural areas (villages) limits effective communication and interaction. The study found that more than 65% of female labor migrants return to the village after two years and spend approximately two weeks before they go back. The study found only one-quarter of migrants return once in a year. Over 50% of left-behind spouse have been living without their wives for two years or more.

This poses a greater threat to the union. This breeds grounds for marital collapse as a result of long separation. Though communication take place, however, was not effective as, the duration of conversation normally lasts a minimum of 10 minutes and maximum of 15 minutes, which is insufficient for wives and husbands to maintain personal and emotional contact. The content of telephone conversations, according to respondents, centred on child welfare and less on expressions of love and emotions. The situation created a strong sense of loneliness and sexual repression among left-behind spouses, with the associated risks of extramarital activity, resulting in family breakdown. Of the 30 left-behind interviewed, nearly half, 37% of the left-behind husbands suffer from loneliness, evident in the wife's migration, while 30% expressed their sexual repression due to the apparent wife's absence from the village.

Table 4.7: The emotional feelings of left-behind spouses

	Left-behind husbands	Percent (%)	Valid percent (%)
Lonely	11	37	37
Sexual repression	9	30	30
Mental stress	6	20	20
Depression	4	13	13
Total	30	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Left-behind spouses (men) expressed emotional and psychological feelings they go through, resulting in marriages falling on the rocks or marital collapse. The cases below summed up the impact of women's migration on marital stability.

Case 3

Mahami (pseudo name) is a 43-year-old farmer; the wife migrated to the city three-and-half years ago, and she left behind eight-year-old son and 4-and-a-half-year daughter. Mahami has not had any form of contact with the wife for almost two years after her departure. He has always managed to work in the farm and assist the grandparents in taking care of the left-behind children, though the elder son assist in farm work during school holidays as well as perform household chores as one of the child responsibilities. Recently, Mahami heard a strong rumor that his wife was dating another man in the city through an informant (name withheld), he made countless efforts at authenticating the story, but all efforts proved futile. He reported the matter to the father-in-law in the village. To his surprise, the in-laws broke the news that another man impregnated the wife in the city. The father-in-law told him to be calm as they were making efforts at getting to the bottom of the matter

for which reasonable efforts were made to her home for further inquiry on the issue. But in rural Ghana, is a taboo for a married woman to engage in extramarital activity much more get pregnant for another man. The penalty for that is outright divorce and monetary compensation to the husband's family. In effect, this singular sexual misconduct on the part of Mahami wife led to divorce.

Case 4

John (pseudo name) is 38 years old. His wife has four years migration experience working in the city as migrant labor. The wife visits home every year's traditional Damba festival, though the wife remits money and other gifts for the family upkeep, John was reportedly suffering from loneliness and sexual repressions due to the wife persistent out-migration. He appealed to the wife not to return to the city considering his sexual and emotional trauma he goes through in her absence. But the wife, unfortunately, paid death ears to his plea and continue to live in the city while the husband continuously suffer from loneliness and sexual repression as mentioned earlier. From the fact that John couldn't withstand being alone, he started a romantic relationship with another woman in the nearby village, the news of his relationship got the wife in the city who became upset and came to the community and fought with the husband John for not being faithful and patient enough to wait for her. Six months after the return of the wife, John got married to a second wife. News of his marriage got to the wife, lo and behold the wife went to the village and divorce with John.

CONCLUSION

- Grandparents and guardians of left-behind children have been overburdened with additional child care and household duties or roles, which resulted in less caregiving arrangements as grandparents and guardians have not been able to meet their psychological and physical needs. This resulted in children suffering from psychological, emotional and behavioral problems leading to being reticent.
- Daily activities of left-behind children increased after the mother's migration. As in-depth interviews show an increase in domestic and farm work, older children, particularly boys are intermittently withdrawn from school to assist in the farm during the peak of the farming season, while girl took up part of the responsibilities of migrant mothers engaged in sale of farm products such as vegetables and other petty trading after the close of school.
- The study found a positive impact of migration on elderly parents' health and nutrition through cash and material remittances. Concerning health and nutrition, adult parents have been registered on comprehensive national insurance, which increased access to health care. However, cash material remittances could not compensate for the physical, psychological and emotional trauma, elderly parents go through following the break in traditional child support for elderly parents. Elderly parents are denied direct access to the social reciprocity of caring for children in the early years of their formative upbringing.
- Women, migration has altered the traditional gender roles in migrant sending households, as men have to take up domestic and childcare giving responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, among others, with grandparents and guardians, especially where children live in the same compound with grandparents and fathers. And migrant women assumed the responsibility of wage earners and partly remittance recipients. Domestic responsibilities as well as farm work put an increased workload on stay-behind spouses and older male and female children.
- The marital relationship is bonded and cemented by constant intimate communication and continuous interaction between spouses. The study revealed a limited and ineffective communication between spouses due to spatial separation created a strong sense of loneliness, psychological/emotional challenges and sexual repression, resulting in marital instability, leading to marriage breakdown. This was evident in the narratives where the stay-behind husband engaged in illegal amorous extramarital affairs with other women.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the evidence of the huge number of left-behind population in rural areas of the north, arising from internal female rural-urban migration, the time has come for the government to officially recognize the

phenomenon of left-behind population as seen in China and other developing countries. The recognition should be accompanied by deliberate, specific policies to account for disparities in the structures of migrants and the left-behind families in order to improve existing or implement new programs to enhance the quality of education and health care to mitigate the detrimental effects of migration on human capital.

The government and other development partners, such as NGOs, should institute counselling units in schools to offer timely counselling services to left-behind children who, in one way or other suffered from psychological, emotional stress, including lack of maternal love and affection and neglect, which are inalienable rights of children following mother migration. Same counselling units should be instituted at the community level to offer services to left-behind elderly parents and other vulnerable people, such as orphans and people with disabilities. This will reduce the level of loneliness among left-behind children and elderly parents who feel abandoned.

To improve the educational performance of children in rural communities, the government should look into reducing the large class sizes as witnessed during the survey and employ more qualified and competent teaching and non-teaching staff to improve learning and mentoring for children. Concerning left-behind children, policy makers should consider establishing a boarding school system for the left-behind children, which will offer them the opportunity to be looked after the same way maternal migrants and offer them the necessary counselling, care and supervision needed to enhance their confidence and academic performance.

Labor markets and educational systems should be egalitarian (equal access regardless of gender) in comparison to household-level power relations, which remain traditional and male-dominated. The change in traditional gender power relations within households will reduce different forms of inequality which affect gender and migration.

The government should strengthen social safety nets for elderly parents with proper pension schemes and affordable health care for the elderly, such as health insurance. An adequate social security system should be provided in the rural areas. The existing ones should be expanded to reach the rural poor.

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