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**DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES OF
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN RURAL BANGLADESH**

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Abstract

This research examines demographic and socio-cultural consequences of south-north migration in the south at the family level. Using data from a nationally representative sample survey of 1,030 families in Bangladesh, the study argues that temporary migrants from the south to the north influence their left behind families by raising living standard and modifying the cultural behaviours through interacting northern ideas with the southern traditions. The demographic consequences of emigration are felt negligible when people keep moving in a wider span of time from a community. Findings reveal that financial and social aspects of international migration affect health behaviour and mortality, nuptiality and practice of dowry, women's work and seclusion, living arrangement and decision-making role. The study concludes that south-north migration can be an important determinant of social change in the south when financial capacity and modern exposures work synergistically with the traditional values of the south.

INTRODUCTION

The recent international migration has become very different from historical patterns in terms of nature, type and scale. Contemporary migration is largely "south-north" temporary flow of workers compared to earlier permanent moves from Europe to the Americas and Oceania (United Nations, 1985). These changes may have a far reaching effect on both the sending and receiving communities. Policy-makers of the less developed countries have increasingly become convinced that exporting labour to developed countries would stimulate their economic growth although such decisions are not always supported by research findings.

In the past, few studies have been concerned with the role of international migration on the demographic and socio-cultural aspects on the country of origin. The economic impact of large scale migration has received much attention although the non-economic consequences of migration from the perspective of the source countries were not adequately investigated (Shah and Arnold, 1985) probably because the implications of international migration were difficult to measure (United Nations, 1985). International migration, as a result of wars, persecution, climatic changes and economic forces, were reported to have significant impact on both migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries although studies have so far been limited primarily to the developed countries (Bohrning, 1984; Jolley, 1971; Jones and Smith, 1970; Price, 1981; Reubens, 1979).

As there exists enormous variation between societies and cultures, no general approach of the demographic and socio-economic impact of international migration can be developed. Simmons (1984) considered migration as an integral part of socio-economic development and assumed that "migration is both determined by and has consequences for the growth and spatial distribution of socio-economic opportunities". Migration may influence age structure, sex composition, employment size and occupational characteristics of both the sending and receiving communities. Some other studies, however, have found that migration has very weak influence on the socio-economic development (Simmons et al., 1977; Goldstein and Goldstein, 1981; Dasgupta, 1981). Given this context, Simmons (1984) concluded that the effects of migration depend on the context within which it takes place.

Research on the non-economic impact of overseas migration has begun in 1980s. A review of some of these studies has indicated that most of the studies had methodological problems (Shah and Arnold, 1985). Moreover, these studies have failed to estimate the net migration impact on demographic and socio-cultural differences (Shah and Arnold, 1985). The objective of this paper is to assess the impact of international migration on demographic and socio-cultural changes of the left behind families in rural Bangladesh. This study does not claim to be comprehensive but only to supplement the current knowledge and information of the effects of international migration on the sending communities.

EMIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH

The land that consists Bangladesh has witnessed population movement since time immemorial. The land is widely considered to be a major migrant-receiving country of South Asia till the end of eighteenth century when the British colonisers took control of the land. Since then, the flow of migration trends has slowly been shifting in the reverse direction. Official emigration from Bangladesh began in the late nineteenth century when a small group of unskilled labours moved to the British islands and its other overseas colonies (Islam et al., 1987; Mathew and Nair, 1978). Such kind of restricted emigration, although smaller in scale, continued till the end of the World War II. During fifties, a large number of semi-skilled and un-skilled labours had the opportunity to move to Britain when the British government introduced employment vouchers to foreign workers. But the flow of emigration from Bangladesh to Britain fell considerably when the British government tightened the immigration law to restrict the entry of overseas workers to British islands.

Although a small number of Bangladeshis migrated to some Gulf countries during 1960s, it was not until the 1970s when a large number of unskilled and semi-skilled labours moved to the oil-riched Middle East countries (United Nations, 1985). During that period, a significant proportion of migrants moved to Western Europe, particularly to Germany, most of whom ultimately moved to North American countries. The reasons of such accelerated migratory flows have been the socio-political changes in the mid 1970s and attempt to escape from

poverty and mass unemployment after famine in 1974. The pressure for jobs and low incomes resulted in young adults seeking foreign employment opportunities in the hope of quickly acquiring savings to begin family life. As a result, although starting late, overseas migration expanded quickly encompassing a wider range of occupational skills in late 1970s.

During nineties, emigration from Bangladesh diversified and a number of East Asian countries such as South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia became the major destinations of Bangladeshi migrants. The migrants from Bangladesh were primarily men although a significant size of women as part the family settlers of earlier migrants have also moved to overseas. Unlike conventional belief, the Bangladeshi migrants are heterogeneous group of people and are not very selective in terms of age, education or social class.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Sample

Data for this research came from a nationally representative intensive monitoring system known as *Watch*, in 70 villages located in ten districts of rural Bangladesh. The *Watch* was introduced to document the changes in demographic and socio-cultural aspects of the community. All villages in the *Watch* area were completely enumerated in June 1996 where 516 migrant families were identified. A similar number of non-migrant families was selected from the same villages using systematic random sampling technique. The total size of the sample families for the study was 1,030. Information of all sample families was collected through interviews yielding to a total of 6,774 population in June 1996. These interviews provided perception and behaviour about female employment, decision making, educational aspiration, fertility and health care in addition to basic demographic and socio-economic information of the study families.

Analytical Procedure

'Family' is used as the unit of analysis in this research. Migrant families were defined here as families where at least one member either had been living or returned home after living in a foreign land for at least three months. The effects of three dimensions of migration are estimated: i) migration type that categorises the study families into *non-migrant* and *migrant*; ii) duration of migration variable into *non-migrant*, migrant for *<5 years* and migrant for *5 years or more*; and iii) family type into *never migrant*, *currently migrant* and *return migrant*. The measurement of variables is detailed below.

Definition and categories of variables	
Variable	Category
Migrant family	Family member(s) currently living or ever lived in a foreign land for at least three months (Never, Current migrant, Return migrant)
Fertility	Event of birth during last five years in the family (No, Yes)
Mortality	Event of death during last five years in the family (No, Yes)
Morbidity	Event of sickness during last fifteen days in the family (No, Yes)
Health behaviour	Type of health care provider sought if a family member becomes sick (Traditional, Modern)
Marriage	Event of marriage during last five years in the family (No, Yes)
Dowry	Receive or provide dowry during last marriage in the family (No, Yes)
Enrollment	Children (6-15) enrolled in school (Enrolled, Not enrolled)
Women's seclusion	Adult female members of the family generally practice <i>Purdah</i> (seclusion) outside the household (No, Yes)
Joint family	Family members include parents children, brothers, sisters and other in-laws (No, Yes)
Decision-making	Decisions for daily family activities taken (No, Yes)

A census in study villages indicated that international migration was disproportionately distributed among study districts. Based on the concentration of emigration, the study districts are categorised into low and high migration regions. Of the total 49,137 population in the project areas, nearly 56 per cent population were found in the low migration and the remaining in the high migration regions. The analysis begins with a description of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the study regions. Then the role of emigration on selected demographic and socio-cultural variables is examined. Finally, to assess the net impact of emigration on outcome variables, we undertook a multivariate analysis. The logit model is considered appropriate here because the dependent variables used in this research are made dichotomous (Aldrich and Nelson, 1984; Hanushek and Jackson, 1977; Fienberg, 1980). Preliminary analysis of data shows that money sent by migrants is often spent in buying land and building better houses as having more land and good houses raise the prestige among their neighbours. Thus, amount of money spent in buying land and constructing or repairing houses are used as controlled variable in this research.

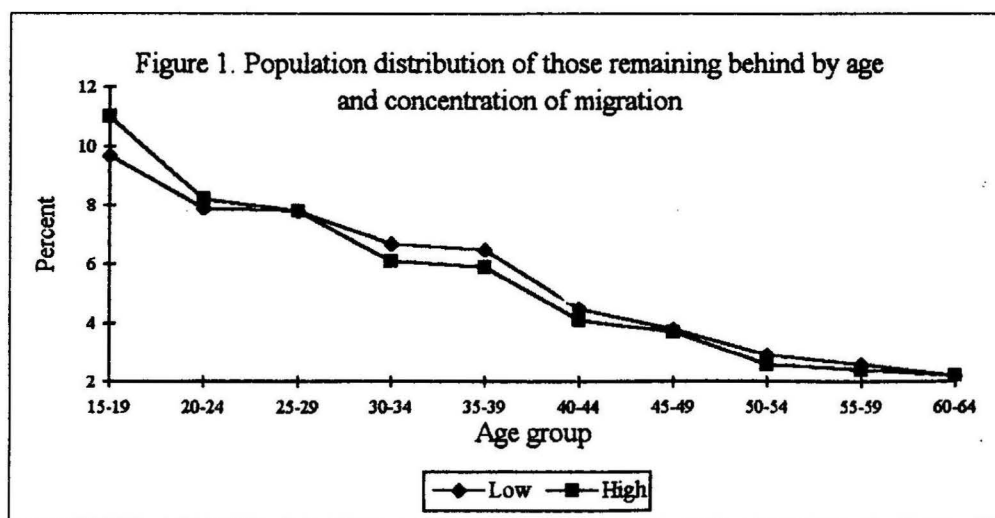
FINDINGS

Table 1 provides the differences in background characteristics of the study population between low and high migration regions. The regional variation indicates some selection bias but, in most cases, the differences between the two regions are not very large. No significant variation in mean age between the two populations is found. Sex

ratio, measured woman as the base, shows a sharp contrast between the two regions indicating a major reduction of male population in the high migration region.

Background characteristics	Region	
	Low	High
Mean age (in years)	23.6	23.2
Sex ratio	1.02	0.98
Mean years of schooling	1.57	1.75
Per cent literate	31.8	28.7
Mean land (in decimal)	87	117
Per cent landless	49.0	62.7
Per cent exposed to media	21.8	23.7
Sale labour	45.9	40.3
Per cent Muslim	90.8	80.4
Number of family	6,064	3,819
N	27,773	21,364

The socio-economic condition appears to be much better in the high migration region as mean years of schooling, literacy rate, land ownership and exposure to media are higher than low migration region. Relatively fewer families depend on selling manual labour in the high than low migration region. Although Islamic faith is predominant in Bangladesh, Muslim population is relatively lower in the high than low migration regions.

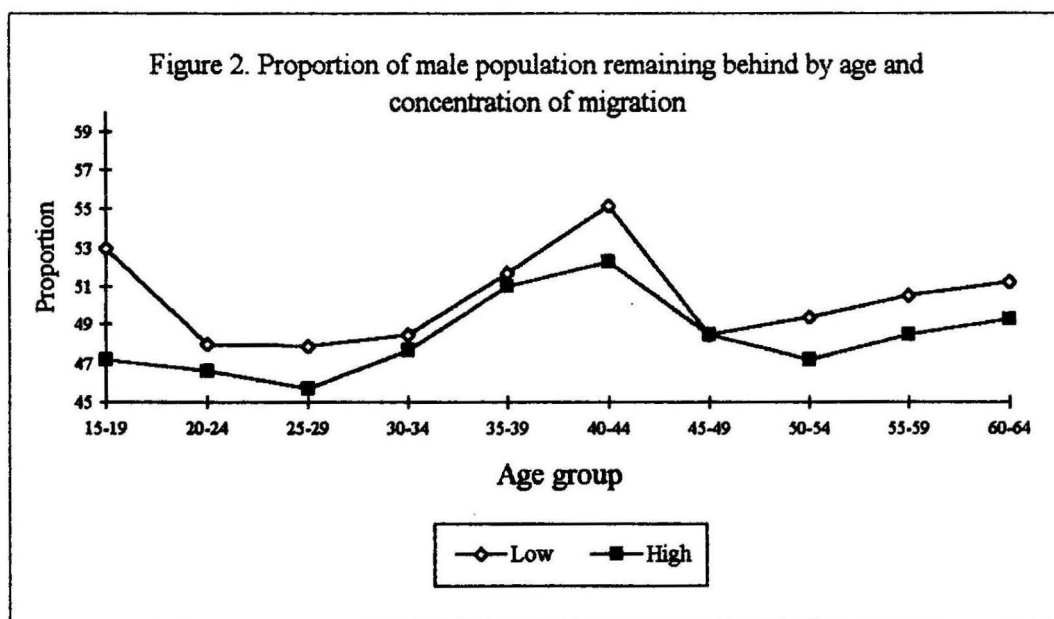


Population Distribution

As have mentioned earlier, the nature and concentration of emigration from Bangladesh have changed dramatically over the past two decades. As a result, the population composition of the sending communities may have changed. Overseas migration is not only expected to reduce the intensity of unemployment in the migrant villages through withdrawal of surplus labour but a large scale emigration can also change the population structure. The emigrant workers would otherwise be residing in their home villages and have exerted a significant pressure on the age-sex distribution of the population had they opted to stay in their home.

Figure 1 shows that emigration from the study communities has not significantly changed the age structure of the population although it is quite possible that migration would have inflated at least some age cohorts had they opted to stay in their villages. The emigration from the study villages has generally been much higher among the older (30-45 years) than younger (15-29 years) age cohorts.

The distribution of the proportion of male population by age for both the low and high migration regions is shown in Figure 2. Based on the assumption that age and sex composition would remain similar had there been no population movement, Figure 2 indicates that the emigration has depressing effects on the age-sex ratios of the population. The effects appear to be similar in all ages except the low propensity of emigration at the very young ages.



Fertility and Mortality

Physical separation of the spouses as a result of international migration exerts downward pressure on fertility and in some cases may modify the demand of children (Shah and Arnold, 1985; Go et al., 1983; Gulati, 1983). Most often overseas migrants remain single longer than those who do not migrate (Perez and Raymundo, 1985). As a result, the birth among migrant families who stay behind is expected to be much lower than non-migrant families. This assumption is not supported by our data (Tables 2 and 3). The propensity to give birth is slightly higher among migrant than non-migrants although the difference is insignificant. Table 3, however, suggests that the fertility rate is lower among the currently migrant than both the non-migrant or return migrants. Relatively lower fertility among current migrant families may suggest that international migration might have a depressing effect on fertility by increasing the length of birth intervals as a result of the separation of spouses (United Nation, 1985). It has been

found that the frequency of visiting home by emigrants increases if the duration of migration becomes much higher. Thus the earlier depressing effect on fertility is largely recovered by raising the fertility level.

Outcome variables	Status	
	Non-migrant	Migrant
Demographic and Health		
Fertility	51.0	51.2
Mortality	16.5	12.8
Morbidity	46.1	41.8
Health seeking behaviour***	46.8	70.4
Nuptiality		
Marriage rate***	29.1	39.7
Event of divorce	2.2	1.9
Early marriage*	12.6	17.8
Practicing dowry***	60.0	30.9
Registered marriage***	70.0	85.8
Socio-cultural		
School enrollment (Boy)***	71.1	85.9
School enrollment (Girl)***	72.5	88.5
Women's seclusion***	21.1	43.4
Joint family***	44.3	59.2
Decision-making***	9.3	26.8
N	516	514
* p < .10 ** p < .05 *** p < .01		

Mortality rate appears to have a negative association with emigration (Tables 2 and 3). While the pathways of the impact of emigration on mortality are not clearly known, it is quite possible that the remittance flown to the families from the migrants may have significantly modified the health seeking behaviour of the left behind members (Brittain, 1990). The decline of the incidence of sickness as a result of better way of living and modified health seeking behaviour may have played an important role in reducing mortality.

Morbidity and Health Seeking Behaviour

As found in other studies (Parasuram, 1986), the prevalence of sickness is lower among migrant families although attitude to seek better health care among them when needed is significantly ($p < .01$) higher than non-migrant families (Table 2). The multivariate analysis also suggests that international migration reduces morbidity among people left behind when demographic and socio-economic background and regional variables are taken into account (Table 3). The effects, however, are not very significant. In the event of sickness, the health seeking behaviour has been very different between migrant and non-migrant families. Migrant families can afford to visit a modern medical care practitioner than the non-migrant families as they are financially better-off than others. Similarly, migrants for prolonged period would be better able to seek modern medical care than others.

Table 3. Log odds ratios of international migration to predict selected health indicators controlling for age, education, land ownership, occupation, religion of the household head, amount money spent in buying land and constructing or repairing house, and regional difference

Migration Variable	Fertility Rate	Mortality Rate	Morbidity Rate	Health seeking Behaviour
Migration Type				
Non-migrant family	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Migrant family	1.03	0.65*	0.84	1.52***
Duration (in years)				
Non-migrant	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
< 5 years	0.89	0.55**	0.73*	1.68***
5 years or more	1.72	1.09	0.88	2.03***
Family Type				
Never migrant	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Currently migrant	0.87	0.69*	0.79	1.82***
Return migrant	1.76**	0.47**	--	0.84
* p < .10 ** p < .05 *** p < .01				
-- Number of cases is very small.				

Marriage, Divorce and Dowry

The differences in nuptiality characteristics show that marriages, early marriages and registered marriages are much higher and the dowry and divorces are lower among the migrant than non-migrant families (Tables 2 and 4). The capacity to spend money for the marriages may have played an important role because the migrant families are financially more capable than non-migrant households (Gulati, 1983). The higher incidence of early marriage ($p < .05$) among migrant families may also reflect their better financial position. And, for the same reason, the registered marriages are higher ($p < .01$) and the practices of dowry are lower ($p < .01$) among migrant than non-migrant families. No significant variation in divorce rate is found between the migrant and non-migrant families. The duration of migration appeared to have intensified the effects on nuptial characteristics in most cases. Evidence suggests that the long absence from home and marital life raises the possibility of divorce and separation (Mathew, 1983). Table 2 suggests that the event of divorce is slightly lower in the migrant than non-migrant families. Table 4, however, shows that divorce, in fact, is higher in the migrant families when background variables and regional difference are controlled. Emigration appears to have an inverse association with the practice of dowry when most other potential predictors are controlled (Tables 4). The incidence of dowry continues to decline as the duration of migration increases.

Table 4. Log odds ratios of international migration to predict selected indicators of nuptiality controlling for age, education, land ownership, occupation, religion of the household head, amount money spent in buying land and constructing or repairing house, and regional difference

Migration Variable	Marriage Rate	Event of Divorce	Early Marriage	Practicing Dowry	Employment Status
Migration Type					
Non-migrant family	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Migrant family	1.34*	1.10	1.74**	0.41***	0.82
Duration (In years)					
Non-migrant	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
< 5 years	1.19	1.78	1.96**	0.51**	1.03
5 years or more	2.15***	0.54	2.16**	0.28***	0.51
Family Type					
Never migrant	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Currently migrant	1.42**	1.47	1.96***	0.37**	0.92
Return migrant	1.31	--	1.19	0.62	0.59
* p < .10					
** p < .05					
*** p < .01					
-- No cases found					

Female Employment

The left behind family members of the migrants, regardless of male or female, may be forced to enter into the labour market until the flow of adequate remittance to the families is assured. Hugo (1997) mentions that in the beginning of the move of men to overseas, women's role and status often undergo change to adjust with situation. The departure of large number of employed persons from a community may create opportunities of employment for both men and women in that community. Table 4 indicates that women in the migrant families are less likely (0.82 per cent) to be employed than women of the non-migrant families at the aggregate level. The relationship between the duration of migration and women's employment clearly suggests that women of migrant families take employment outside home more often than women of non-migrant families during the initial years of migration. As the duration of staying (and probably earning and remittance sent to home) increases, the women of migrant families start leaving the job. Table 4 also shows that while women of currently migrant families are not only less likely to be employed than non-migrant women, the employment status of women among return migrant families is even lower than others.

Family Structure

Left behind members of the migrant families prefer more than non-migrants to live together ($p < .01$) in the extended households (Table 2) as found in other studies (Shah and Arnold, 1985; Gilani, 1983). The multivariate analysis in Table 5 also shows that emigration from the villages, have significantly ($p < .01$) increased the extended family type of living arrangements and familial interdependence rather than nuclearisation of the families (Korale, 1983; Go et al., 1983; Islam et al., 1987). The increased dependence on relatives put pressure to stay in the extended family relationship instead of nuclearising the family type, particularly when the adult male members of the family

migrate. In the absence of male members, the extended living arrangement maintains a degree of security of the left behind family members. The process of nuclearisation again resumes as the migrants return home.

Table 5. Log odds ratios of international migration to predict selected socio-cultural indicators controlling for age, education, land ownership, occupation, religion of the household head, amount money spent in buying land and constructing or repairing house, and regional difference

Migration Variable	School Enrollment		Women's Seclusion	Joint Family	Decision Making
	Boy	Girl			
Migration Type					
Non-migrant family	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Migrant family	1.22	1.70*	1.77***	3.02***	3.80***
Duration (In years)					
Non-migrant	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
< 5 years	1.07	1.63	1.50**	2.74***	4.33***
5 years or more	1.44	1.22	2.19**	3.22***	5.57***
Family Type					
Never migrant	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Currently migrant	1.27	1.69*	1.60**	3.10***	4.41***
Return migrant	1.30	1.50	2.61***	2.35***	1.32
* p < .10		** p < .05		*** p < .01	

School Enrollment

The role of migration appears to be more prominent ($p < .01$) in changing the socio-cultural than other aspects of the family (Table 2). For example, sending children (both boys and girls) to school is much higher in the migrant than non-migrant families (Gilani, 1983). Table 5 indicates that the school enrollment among the migrant household is higher than others indicating that the remittance plays an indirect role in raising educational level of the community (Roongshivin, 1985). The enrollment has particularly raised among girls. The higher growth of female than male enrollment among migrant families suggests that the social aspects of international migration have the potential to reduce gender bias at least in education (Parasuraman, 1986).

Women's Seclusion

Studies reveal mixed effects of migration on women's status and empowerment (Hugo, 1997). No appreciable effect on the status and role of women left behind is reported although socio-economic status of the migrant household is found to improve considerably (FAO, 1984). Table 2 shows that adult women practice purdah (or seclusion) more widely among the migrant than non-migrants families. International migration plays a positive role in raising the status and prestige of the migrant families as they are economically better-off and own more money, land and other material resources. Many overseas migrants visit their families at home on a regular basis. It is expected that migrant family members would have wider exposure through these visits to modify their traditional behaviour than non-migrants. Thus, while women of migrant families are expected to pay less attention to follow traditional women seclusion (Parasuram, 1986), the practice of seclusion of women is, in fact, significantly higher among migrants than others that increases with duration of migration. The practice of seclusion is most prevalent among women where male migrants have return to their home.

Decision-making Process

Women's decision making, measured as the extent to whether women can decide or actively participate in the decision-making processes within the families, is significantly higher ($p < .01$) in migrant than non-migrant families (Tables 2 and 5). In the absence of men, women in the migrant families play wider roles in household affairs and are less under the domination of men (Khafagy, 1982) that would have substantially raises their decision-making capacity (Shah and Arnold, 1985; Shaheed, 1981; Gulati, 1983). The changed position of women in the migrant families may also be viewed as the outcome of the problems of women encountered as a result of separation from spouses and managing the households (Gilani, 1983; Colfer, 1985). Our data suggest that the decision-making role increases as the duration of the absence of male family members becomes longer. While studies report that the prolonged absence of men encourages women to take major roles in managing the household (Gulati, 1983), enhances women to grow independently, helps develop new interest and discover hidden potentials (Go et al., 1983), the cultural systems do not encourage or allow to improve the decision-making capacity among the women of migrant families in some societies (Gulati 1983; Shaheed, 1981). Thus, the women's position in taking family decisions substantially reduces when the male migrants return home (Table 5).

DISCUSSION

In this research we have examined demographic and socio-cultural consequences of south-north migration in the south at the family level. The economic effects of international migration relating to the significance of remittances have been widely debated. As the larger share of remittances is used for non-productive purposes, the role of remittances should also be viewed as a determinant of the non-economic aspects of change. Migrants send remittance to their families left behind primarily for their livelihood but the process of interaction between migrants and their family members influences them to modify traditional values and norms of the families. International migrants, thus, interact with the sending communities in two ways: i) raising financial capacity through injecting remittance; and ii) modifying cultural behaviours through the interaction of newer ideas with traditional values of the sending communities.

Emigration of primarily male population may affect the population composition of the sending communities but the process of migration in a wider span of time may not have significant impact on age structure. Unlike other studies, this study does not support the assumption that international migration has significant demographic impact in terms of depressing fertility. The short-term depressing effect is quickly recovered as the migrants return home. Higher fertility among the return migrants than non-migrants may be explained by the recovery mechanism where long absence from spouse may have depressing effects on their fertility desire. The opportunity to fulfil the unmet need for children may have influenced in raising fertility among return migrants. Long absence from home and having in a very different environment may also have modified the attitudes toward contraceptive use but, at the same time, may have raised the preference for high fertility to compensate for their long absence by preferring more children (FAO, 1984). Fertility has not affected by international migration in our study because the long absence of spouses may have modified the timing of births for the moment. Thus, emigration may not necessarily should have an impact on completed fertility in Bangladesh.

Migrant families can better afford to visit a modern medical care practitioner. They often do so as the flow of remittance modifies their health seeking behaviour. The incidences of sickness among them have also declined as a result of better living standard. These together have reduced mortality in the high migrant communities in Bangladesh.

The flow of remittance is argued here to have links with nuptiality behaviours. The capacity to spend money raises the events of marriages and early marriages. Dowry is in the rise in Bangladesh (Amin and Cain, 1996) particularly in the rural areas. While the migrant families are financially better able to pay the dowry than non-migrant families in general, why then dowry is considerably lower in the migrant than non-migrant families? Does south-north migration or living in a very different culture has radically modified the predominant view of the migrants regarding nuptiality? The answer is that the change of behaviour depends on the context and environment.

For example, the possibility of such a behavioural change is very low if the migrants live in a closed and conservative society compared to living in the western culture. It should be mentioned here that the dowry is not generally acceptable or desirable to the educated and elite families in the rural communities in Bangladesh. The most plausible explanation of the negative association of emigration with dowry is the role of newly gained prestige among migrant families as a result of being financially better-off than their neighbours. Thus, marriage without dowry might be considered to raise their prestige in the community for a large number of migrant families who have not provided dowry in marriages in recent years.

Women's employment outside home and women's seclusion contradicts each other in a typical fashion in rural traditions. Women are not generally encouraged to take job beyond their homestead unless they are forced to do so. We have seen that the women of migrant families start leaving the job once they are getting adequate remittance from abroad. Using veil by adult women while moving beyond the homestead is traditionally practised in rural Bangladesh except the poorest section of the community. International migration facilitates the diffusion of new ideas and thought about family life. The increased practice of seclusion among migrant families may be the conflict between diffusion of new ideas and the traditional social structure which, in fact, may have reinforced traditional pattern of relationship (FAO, 1984).

Migrant family members were more concerned for the education of their children than others (Shah and Arnold, 1985) and thus, the school enrollment among their children has significantly increased than the children of non-migrant families (Abbasi and Irfan, 1983), probably because cultural exchange as a result of international migration raised the aspirations for the education of their children.

International migration encourages de-nuclearisation of families largely to protect their left behind close kin. But the left behind members, mostly women, at the same time maintain an independent entity within the extended chores of the household members by controlling the flow of remittance. As a result, they become able to take decisions by themselves. The south-north migration has created opportunities in taking increased social and economic responsibilities for women that may enhance status of women and decision-making role in managing their household activities.

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