

Role of Women in Absence of Emigrants: A Case Study of Syed Kasran Village, Pakistan

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Abstract

This research focuses on the differentiating roles or status of women during the presence and absence of emigrants. It focuses on whether emigration has a positive impact on women in terms of their empowerment or a negative in terms of the burden of responsibilities. The main focus is on emigration from a village in the Chakwal Rawalpindi. Various studies have shown that when a male member migrates from a family it brings changes to the role of women that can be positive or negative. So, here the focus is on analyzing those changes in various dimensions: decision-making power, financial empowerment, increase in responsibilities of children, and other household activities. This research was done in Syed Kasran, a village of Chakwal, district Rawalpindi. The Snowball sampling method is used to find migrant families. An explanatory research methodology is used for this purpose. For this study the data collected through semi-structured questionnaires. The results suggest that emigration results in having positive and negative impacts on women's life. Their involvement in rural society increases. They have to manage their household activities, children's education, and other outside tasks themselves in the absence of males which leads to empowerment. On the other hand, they have a lot of responsibilities for children and in-laws that result in burdening them. It also depends on family structure. If living in joint family, women are not empowered enough to take decisions about their family and life. So, it has a negative effect on women empowerment. On the other hand, it also has a positive impact for women in terms of shared responsibilities with other family members. Those living in nuclear family system have to face many challenges and have a lot of responsibilities.

Keywords: *Emigration, Women Responsibility, Gender roles, Role reversal, Left-behind women*¹

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1. Introduction

International emigration plays important involvement in changing the role of left-behind wives of emigrants, in rural areas. In Pakistan, this trend is now increasing rapidly due to unemployment; currency devaluation and financial crisis, etc. Currently, there are nearly 272 million international emigrants that are equal to 3.5% of the world population (Edmond, 2020).

Emigration is moving from one's country to another, the reasons can vary. According to IOM, emigration is defined as movement from one's own country to another for the sake of making that country of destination his/her new country of residence. It is done despite of a person's legal status, what are the causes of the movement, whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary and what is the duration of the stay (Alice Sironi, 2019). From the perspective of the study area, emigration mostly occurs in the form of labor migration. Most people of Syed Kasran migrate to Saudi Arabia on a Labor visa. Mostly works as drivers especially those who don't have any skill, on contract bases and the contract duration may vary according to company policies. Their visit to the family also depends on the company's policies or in case of any uncertainty such as death or marriage within the family. The major factor involved in this emigration is higher wages for low-skilled workers. Studies have shown that emigration has together positive and negative impacts on women of migrant families. We can't doubt that the absence of males from the house can have serious social and economic impacts on the women left behind, particularly if emigrant is the family head. Some studies showed that the women of emigrant households became more independent than ever before, in terms of power and authority over remittances and decision-making within the family. On the other hand, some

1.1 Problem Statement

Studies indicate that there are no major role reversals within the emigrant's family and the status of women continued to be the same, or little/more changes seem to have occurred within the family structure (Sekhar). Some studies have also shown that even if the women became the head of the

family, became independent in decision-making about family matters, and have control over remittances and their use but this is not long-lasting and dissipates once the male migrant gets back to his country of origin. Sometimes, males also have control and authority over every matter of the family including remittance consumption, decision making even if they are abroad. After considering various existing research, this paper is trying to study the impact of emigration of male on the left-behind family, especially women within a specific rural area (Adnan Khan, 2016).

1.2. Research Questions

- What are the new roles and responsibilities of women in the absence of male emigrant, and what impact does this have on their social and economic empowerment?
- What are the challenges faced by women in rural areas while dealing with households and outdoor activities in the absence of their male?
- To what extent does the absence of emigrant impact women's access to resources, control over household income and participation in decision-making processes in rural Pakistan?

1.3. Objectives

- To analyze the concept of role reversal; differentiating roles or status of women during the presence and absence of emigrants
- To study the impact of decision-making, whether it is positive in terms of women empowerment and decision-making or negative, in terms of the burden of responsibilities for the left behind women
- To study the role of family structure (joint or nuclear); whether it is helpful for women or not

2. Review of Literature

Koirala (2023) in this study explored “the impact of male out migration on wives left-behind”. This study aim to discover the gendered effects of migration of male on the power dynamics of family types as well as the psychological effects of migration on left behind wives. Unstructured interviews and cross-sectional survey carried out within the three selected areas of Nepal, to collect data from 373 respondents. It was concluded that emigrant’s wives experienced decrease access to information

and increased unpaid workload; together by paying psychological and emotional costs because of the absence of their husbands.

Kumari et. al (2022) discussed about “the impact of male migration on the empowerment of women” in terms of decision making in north-Bihar. Further, the study focused on five domains: asset creation, agriculture production, decisions of children, health care, and leadership. This study was based on primary data and five domains of empowerment were used for estimation. Random and purposive sampling was used for selecting respondents. The study found that women are empowered to changing level in the situation of migration of male from their native places.

Chapaga (2015) stated about “men’s overseas migration and women mobility and decision making in Nepalese families”. This research tries to find the changing capability of women after short-term migration of their husband. Further, it is based on surveys, semi-structured discussions and interviews. Survey was conducted from 130, total of 310 left-behind and randomly selected women. This study showed that migration of husband increased women’s voice in decision-making through networking and exposure.

Sekhar stated about “male migration, changes in family and its impact on female sex roles”. The research study is based on three major factors the residential arrangement, management of major household activities and guardianship of family. Secondary data was used for this study. The study found that instead of family disintegration, male emigration lead to more capable and self-confident women.

Gartaula et. al (2011) stated that this study aims to enhance our understanding about “subjective and objective wellbeing of women left behind” after exploring their experiences. This study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative data was obtained from 277 house-holds through surveys. The study concluded that the subjective experiences are more complex, context-specific, and multi-faceted than an objective that depends on the economic situation, sociocultural disposition, and family situation.

Hjorth (2011) stated about “the impact of male migration on the left behind women” in rural Lebanon. The aim of this study is to examine that how remittances and migration of male affects the

empowerment of women. Empirical data was collected through qualitative interviews and online surveys. The interviews were taken from 5 to 25 individual who experienced this. The respondents were selected by using the sampling method known as purposive. The findings of the study are that the Impact on left-behind women is not uniform and male emigration does not seem to initiate an empowerment process; despite its potential.

Iqbal et. al (2014) stated about “decision making autonomy and changes in roles of women left behind”. This study aims to find male labor migration and its effect on their women left in homes. Qualitative method was used to collect and interpret data in this study. Both primary and secondary data used in the study and semi-structured interview were taken. Convenience sampling, network sampling, and snowball sampling were used for respondent selection. The findings of this study is that family life inevitably influences by the migration of male family member and also that women had to play different roles as their decision-making autonomy gets affected.

Datta and Mishra (2011) stated about “the impact of male migration on the lives of women, in rural Bihar”. The study highlights four main aspects of women daily life that how migration have impact on women’s decision-making power, women work, old fears and insecurity, new roles and mobility, and on patriarchy. It is based on the empirical study, in which three primary data sources were used (household questionnaires, specially designed gender module, and village schedule). Total 88 groups of women from various casts were interviewed. The finding of the study is that there is impact of migration on women decision-making power in household, their work, their involvement in financial management, their mobility, and access to credit.

3. Methodology

The explanatory research methodology has been used because it helps to find how and why something happens. It increases our understanding of a topic when there is limited information available and also explains the “cause and effect” and “causal relationship” of a phenomenon. On the other hand, it is beneficial for the research because I want to find the differentiating roles of those women whose husband are migrants and whose husband are in this country. In addition, I also want to explain the cause behind differences that exist and what effect such migration has on women. The research was conducted in Syed Kasran, a village of Chakwal, district Rawalpindi. Sample is the

family members of these emigrants living inside the village. “Snowball sampling” is used in which references are used to find emigrants. This sampling technique is used because it is difficult to find migrants without references. So, I continued this process by using the snowball method. Semi-structured questionnaires are employed for data collection. These methods are used on a total of 20 women, from which 10 were left behind and the other 10 from non-migrant families. These women are selected on the basis of their interest and availability for this research. The research is carried out within a one-month duration.

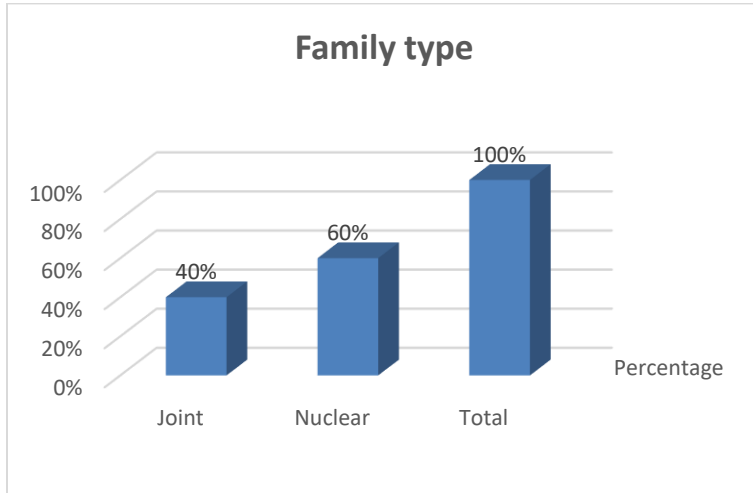
4. Results

- 60% women from emigrant’s family lives in nuclear family system that shows these are empowered enough to deal with financial, medical, social and education matters.
- Emigrant wives are empowered as compared to others. 40% women have decision making authority in absence of husband while those who are living within husband don’t have any authority to take decision themselves.
- Those women whose husband are at home can’t take decision themselves. Their husband take decisions otherwise both take mutually.
- Family structure plays important role in women empowerment. Those women living in joint family are not empowered as decision making authority is owned by In-laws (mother-In-Law, father-in-law or brother-in-law). Women living in nuclear family are empowered because they have exposure to the society and have authority to take decision as there is no one else to take.

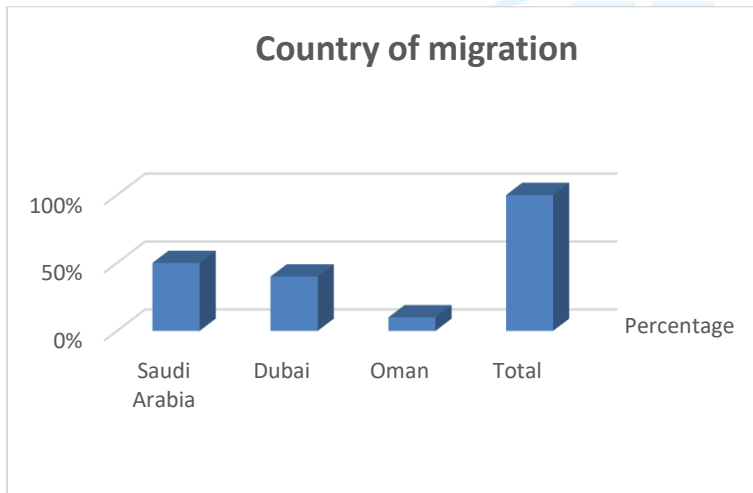
4.1 Discussion

This research is about what impact presence and absence of husband have on their role and empowerment. It is also about how family type affects women empowerment, whether it’s positive or negative for women. First section is about the migrant families and 2nd is about non-migrant families.

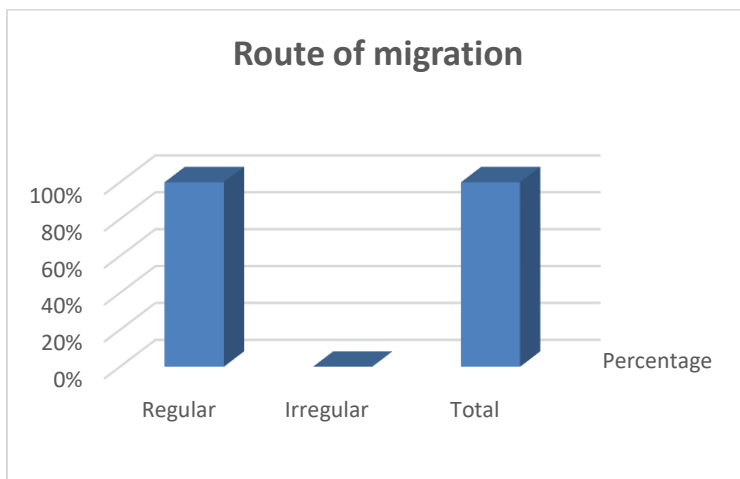
4.1.1 About emigrant:



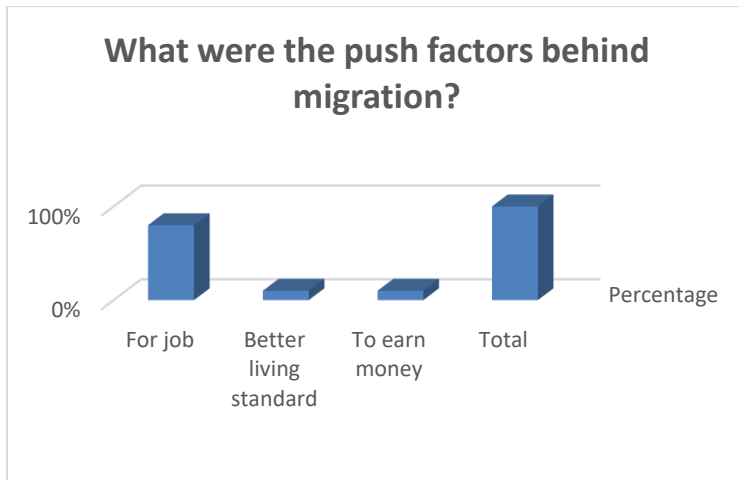
This graph is about family type of women. I found that 60% women were from nuclear family and 40% were from Joint family system.



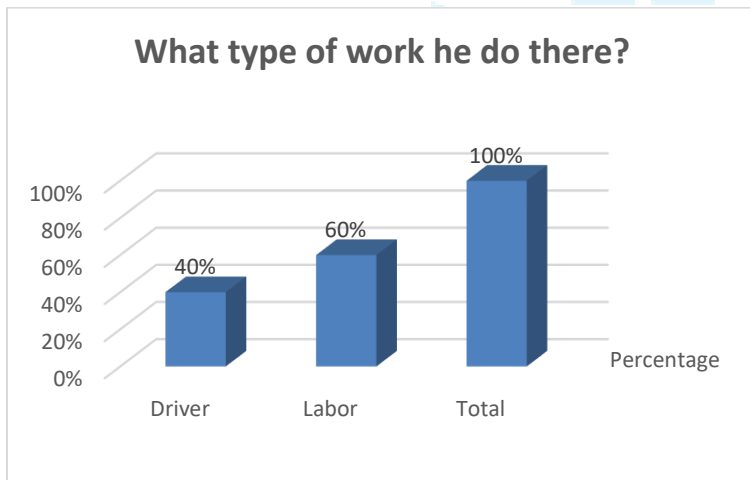
I asked women about country of migration of their husband. This graphs shows that 50% migrants are in Saudi Arabia, 40% in Dubai and 10% in Oman. It means that most of the people migrates to Saudi Arabia.



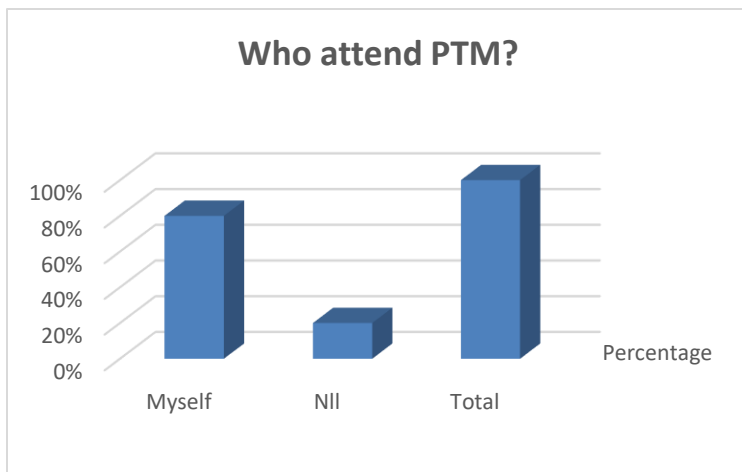
This graph is about route of migration of respondent's husband. It shows that 100% of migrants used regular route to migrate. They didn't go by using illegal route.



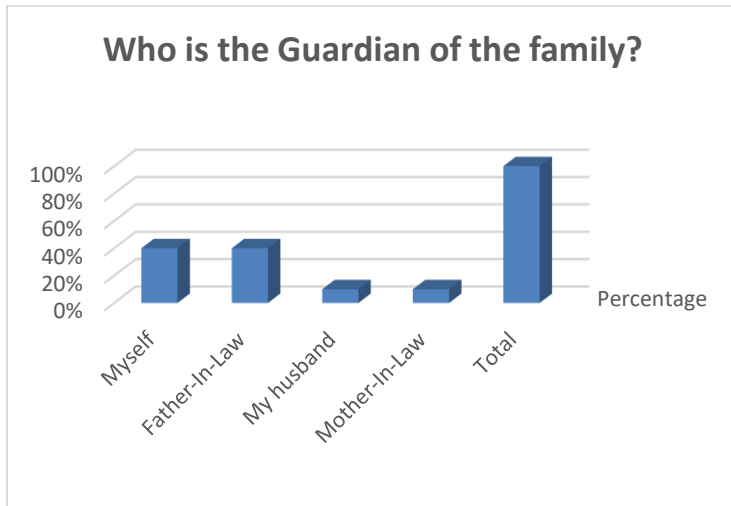
This graph is about what factors lead those people to migrate. The graph shows that 80% migrated for job, 10% for better living standards and 10% for money.



This graph shows that 6 out of 10 means 60% migrants' work as labors and 40% are drivers.



This graph shows the children of migrants. From 10 migrants, 80% have children and 20% didn't.

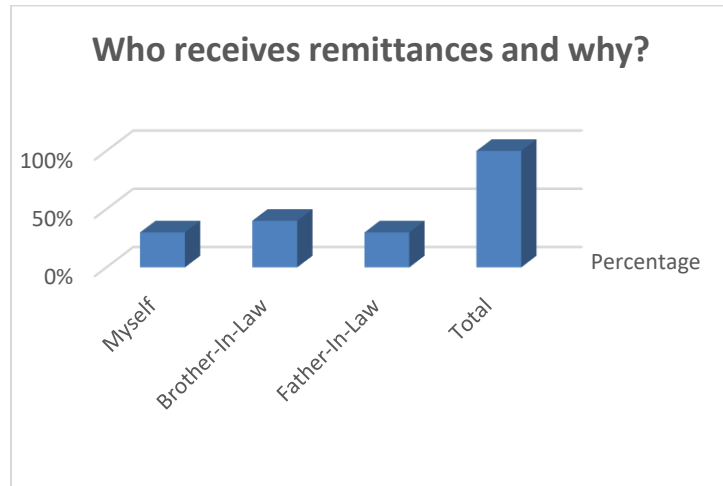


40% women said that they are guardian themselves, 40% said father-in-law, 10% said husband and 10% said mother-in-law. It shows not all women are empowered enough to take guardianship.

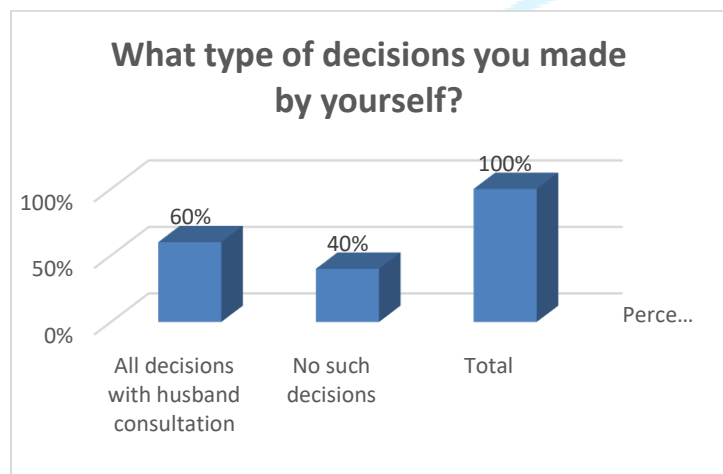


40% women said that they have decision making authority, 40% said mother father-in-law have the authority, 10 said bother-in-law and 10% said both take decisions mutually.

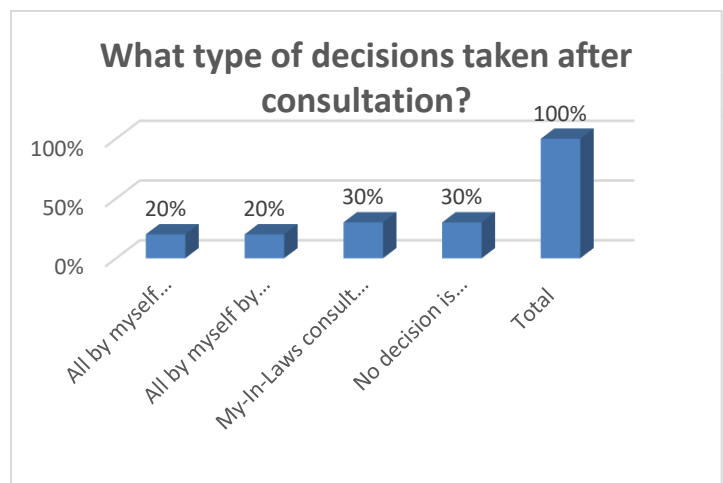
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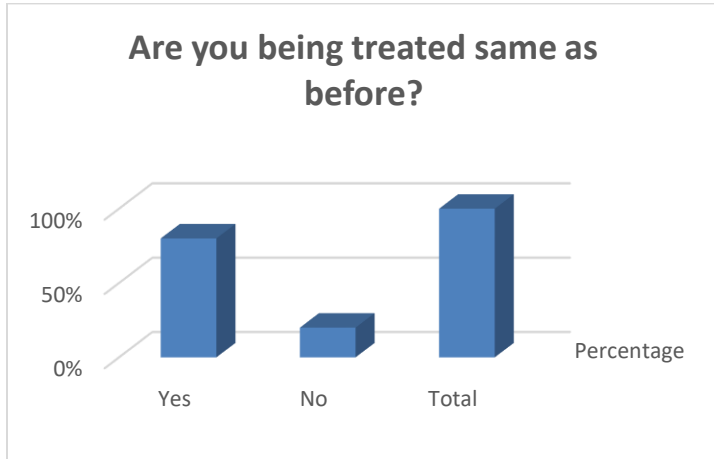
This graph shows that 40% migrant's brother receives remittances, 30% father-in-law and 30% is received by their wives.



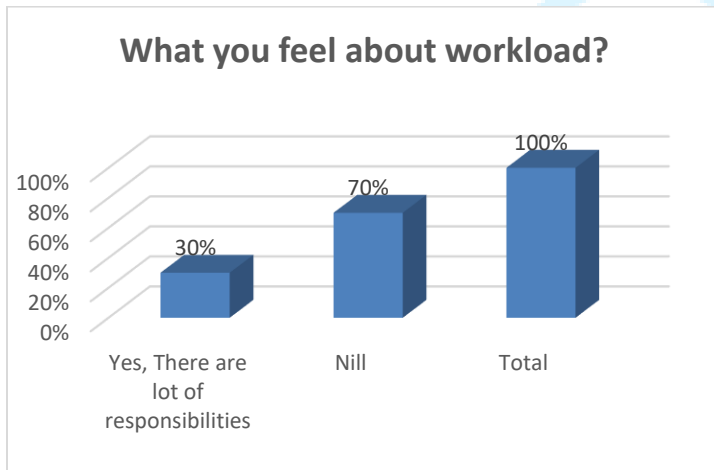
This graph shows that 60% women said that we take all decisions with husband consultation and 40% said that we take no decision.



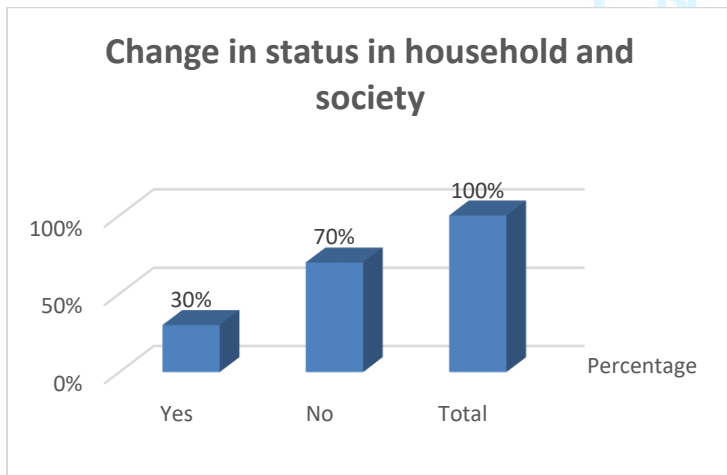
20% women said that we take all decisions by consulting husband, 20 said they don't consult anyone, 30% said our In-laws take all decisions and 30% said we didn't took any decision yet.



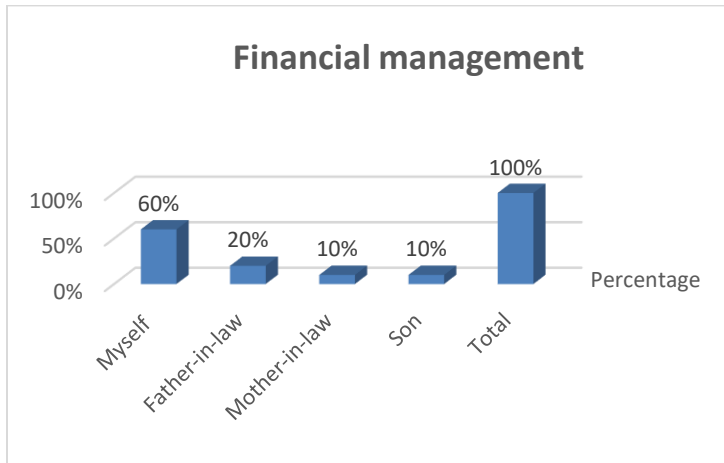
80% women are being treated same as before and 20% feel some sort of change in workload and responsibilities.



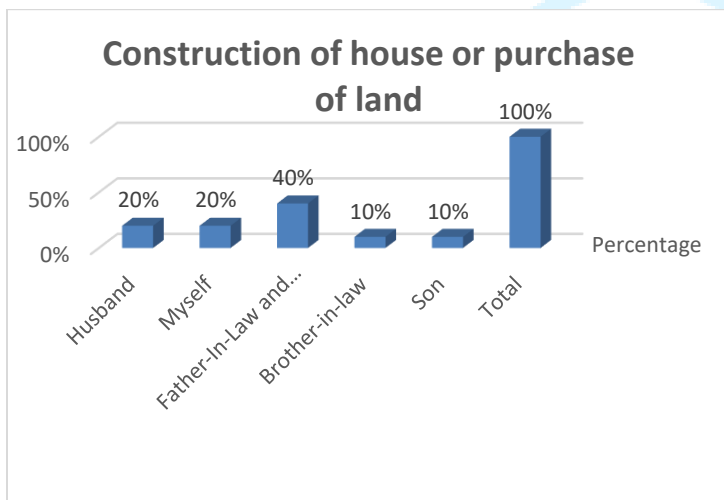
The graph shows that 20% of women feel that there are a lot of responsibilities on them as their husband is not home and 80% said they don't feel workload.



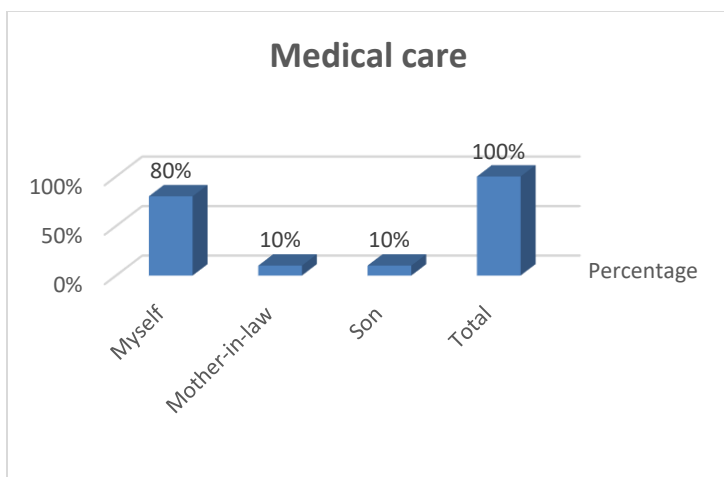
70% of women said that they don't feel any change while 30% said that they felt changes in people attitude and behavior towards them.



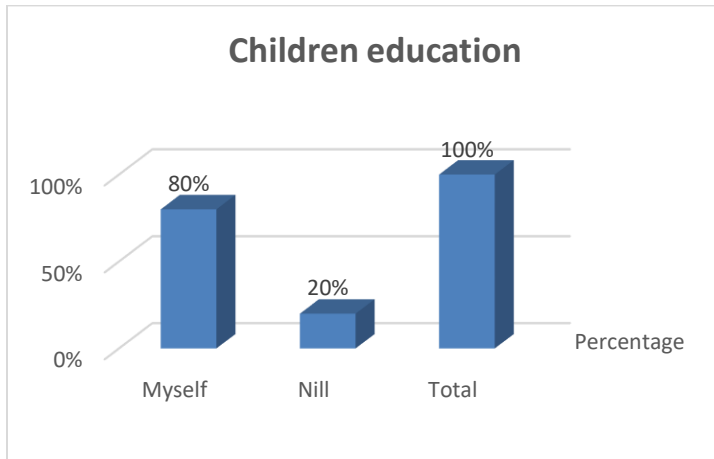
60% women said that they used to manage financial matters, 20% said their father-in-law, 10% said mother-in-law and 10% said their son.



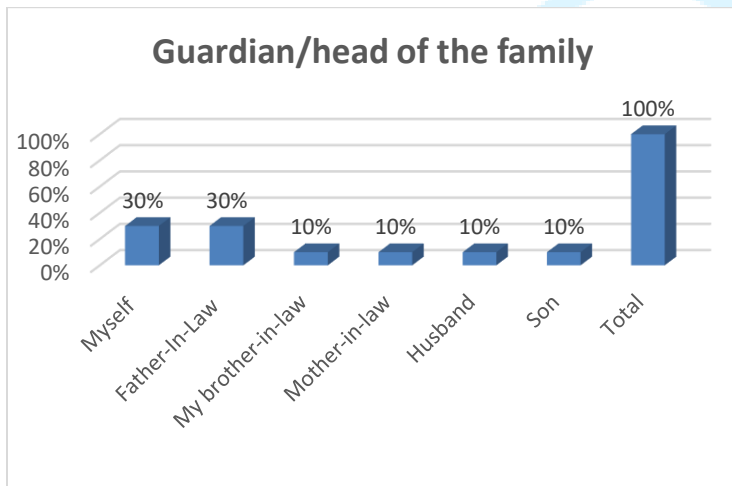
20% women said their husband deals with the responsibility of construction, 20% said they used to manage themselves, 40% said their father and mother-in-law, 10% said brother-in-law and 10% son.



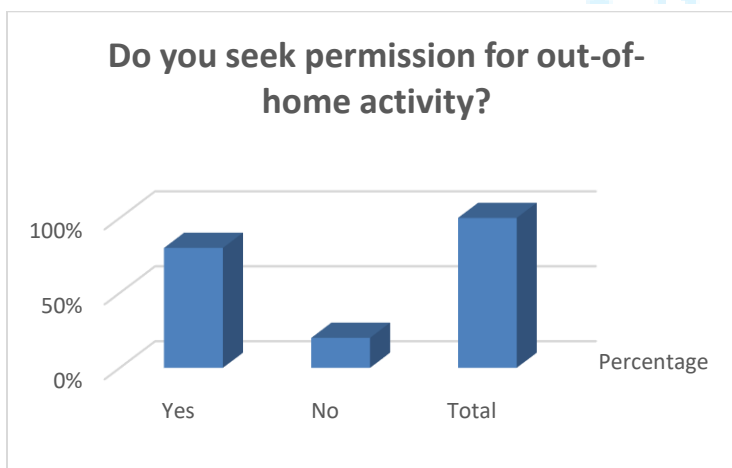
This graph shows that 80% women manage medical care by their own, 10% said mother-in-law and 10% said son.



This graph shows that 80% women have the responsibility of children education and have the authority to take decision about their education while 20% of them don't have children.

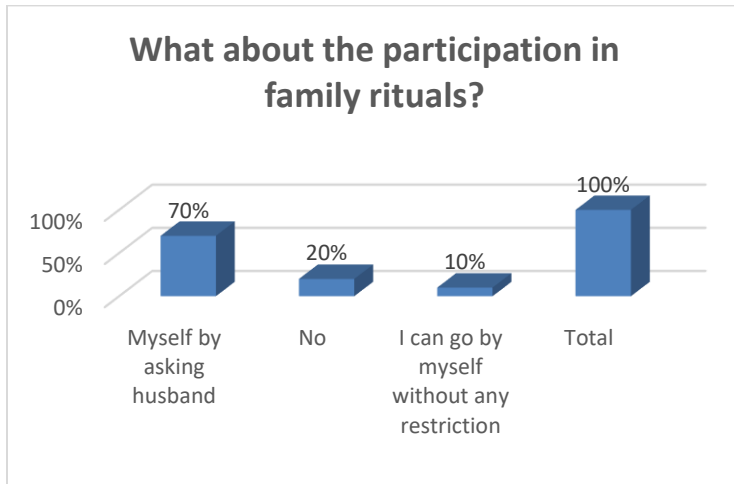


This graph is about guardianship of family. 30% said we are the guardian of family, 30% said our father-in-law, 10% said brother-in-law, 10% said mother-in-law, 10% said son and 10% said husband.



This graph shows that 80% women takes permission from their husband, mother-in-law and father-in-law. In addition, 20% don't need permission for out-of-home activities.

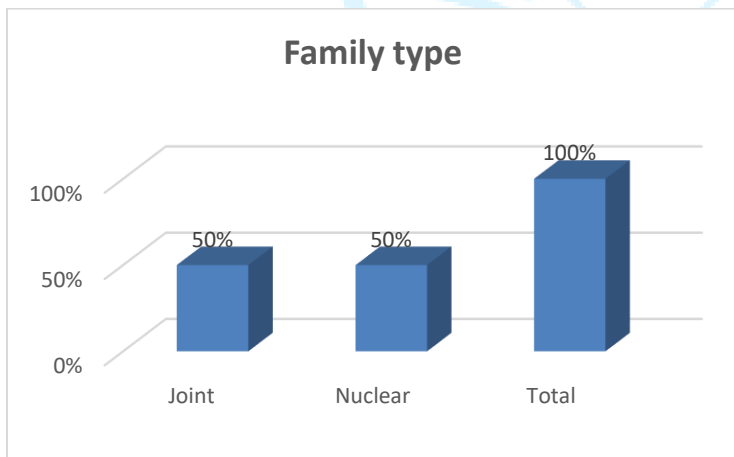
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This graph shows that 70% women participate in family rituals by husband's permission, 10 said they can go without anyone's permission and 20% said we don't participate in rituals.

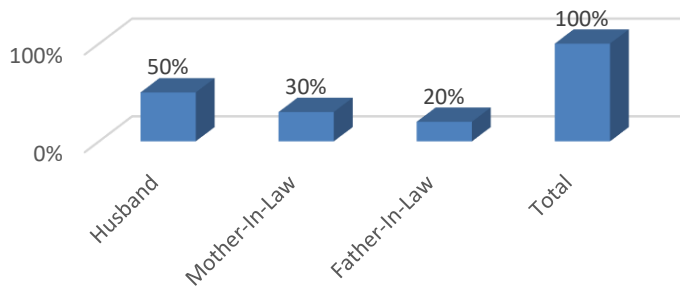
4.1.2. About on-emigrant

This is the second tool that contains various questions for non-migrant wives.



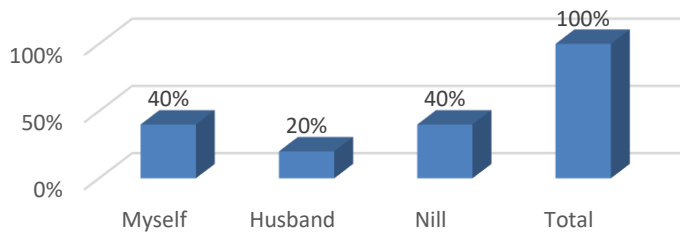
50% women were living in nuclear family and 50% were from joint family system.

Guardian of the family



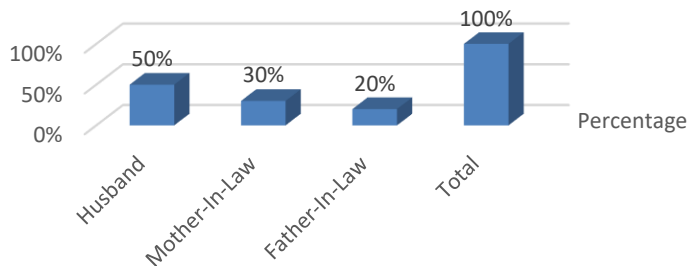
50% of women said that their husband are the guardian of family while 30% said mother-in-law. In addition to it, 20% said father-in-law's are the guardian.

Who attend PTM?



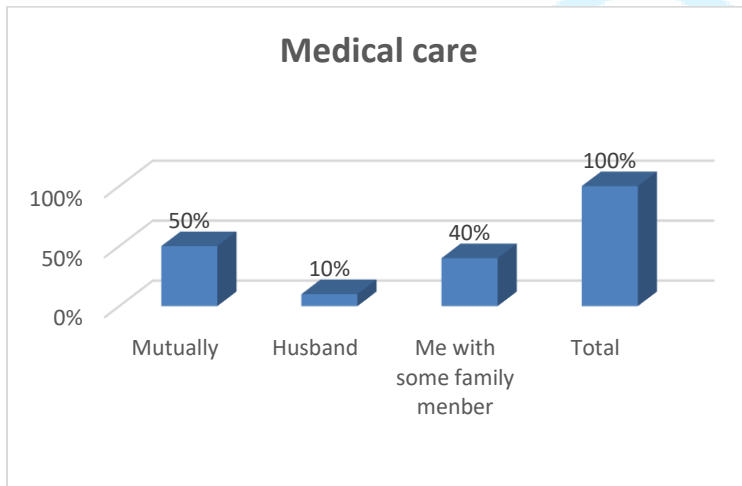
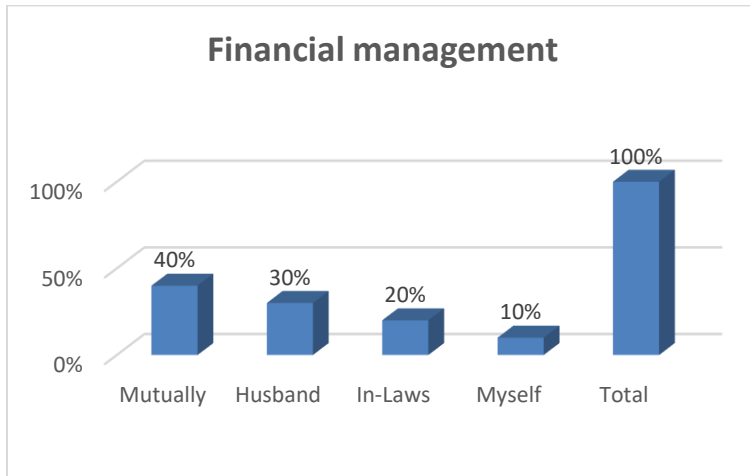
40% of women said that we attend PTM, 20% said husband and 40% didn't have children.

Who have decision making authority?

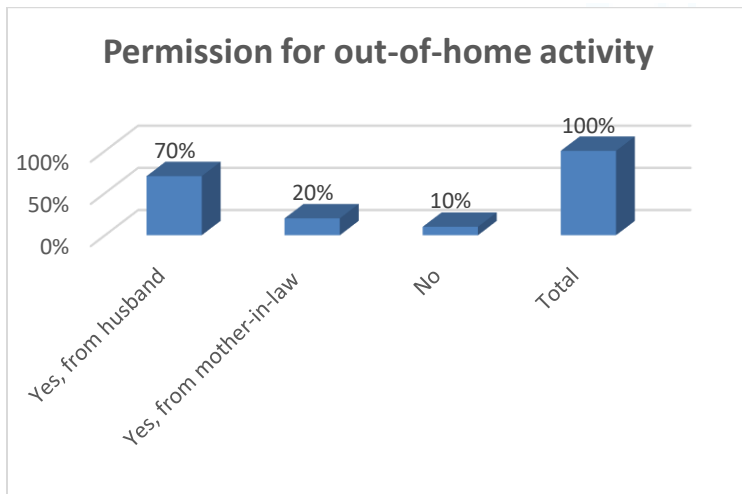


50% women said their husband have decision making authority, 30% said mother-in-law and 20% said father-in-law.

40% women said that they manage financial matters mutually, 30% said their husbands, 10% said themselves and 20% said their in-laws.



50% women said that we manage medical care mutually, 10% said their husband and 40% said me along with some family member.



70% women said they seek permission from husband and 20% said mother-in-law.

4.2. Conclusion

I concluded from my research that emigration have both positive and negative impacts on women's life. Their involvement in rural society increases. They have to manage their household activities, children's education, and other outside tasks themselves in the absence of males which leads to empowerment. On the other hand, they have a lot of responsibilities for children and in-laws that result in burdening them. Women empowerment also depends upon family structure. If living in joint family, women are not empowered enough to take decisions about their family and life. So, it has a negative effect on women empowerment. On the other hand, it also has a positive impact for women in terms of shared responsibilities with other family members. Those living in nuclear family system have to face many challenges and have a lot of responsibilities.

4.3 Recommendations

- In rural areas, there is a need to promote education and awareness programs so that they are empower enough to use their rights and make decisions by themselves.
- There is need to develop some mechanism for women to access the financial services and achieve economic empowerment.

ADVANCES AND ISSUES

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