



A Comparative Study on Educational Attainment of Migrant and Non-Migrant Households in Rural Areas of Tangail District in Bangladesh

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Abstract

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It is usually believed that there is variation in educational attainment between migrant and non-migrant households. Therefore, the objective of this study was to find out the differences in educational attainment of the households in terms of migration status. Primary data were collected through structured interview schedule from 100 non-migrant and 100 migrant households of four villages under two upazilas in Tangail District, Bangladesh. Various indicators of educational attainment were analyzed by using descriptive statistics with a comparison between migrant and non-migrant households. Findings revealed that the number of school going children is lower in migrant households than that of non-migrant households. However, in migrant households, the percentages of primary and secondary levels of education are higher whereas, the percentage of tertiary level of education is higher in non-migrant households. The educational expenditure is comparatively lower and the percentage of total dropout is bit higher in migrant households than that of the non-migrant households. It can be concluded that remittances do not always trigger the educational attainment of the left behind children. Therefore, proper investment of remittances on education should be ensured in order to improve the educational attainment of migrant households.

1. Introduction

International migration has increased in recent years and this trend is expected to increase further in coming years (World Bank, 2014). The increase of international migrants around the globe has urged considerable attention among policy makers, and this has also led to new research attention on the development impacts of migration and remittances (Mozumdar and Islam, 2013). For many low income- and developing countries, including Bangladesh, remittances are one of the most important and promising sources of external fund, next to exports and foreign direct investment (BMET, 2017). Remittances are such a source of outside income, which could serve as a cushion or back up for the developing countries against their economic and political instability. Remittances may also have a positive impact on economic growth, and financial- and social stability in these countries. Living standard of migrants' families may also depend on the quantity of remittances sent by the migrants (BBS, 2014). Many households rely upon remittances to pay for tuition, healthcare, food and clothes. An important debate over international migration and remittances concerns their effect on educational attainment in the migrants' countries of origin (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2011).

One of the most important factors of growth in a country is the extent of human capital that is attained through schooling and the schooling expenditure is so often controlled through the remittances dispatched through the worldwide migrants. From a macroeconomic perspective, schooling expands labor productivity and generates sustainable growth, which helps poverty reduction (Begum, 2018). From a microeconomic perspective, schooling may

increase the opportunity of being in employment and thereby to improve earning capability. Although developing countries have educational institutions, many households do now no longer have the monetary capability or incentive to send their children to school.

They perceive it as an opportunity cost that is either send the children to school or use them to work and make greater monetary gain (Kalaj, 2015). Remittances have turn out to be a very essential pillar for Bangladesh economy and it supports to reduce poverty to a large number of rural and urban households. Throughout the past years, remittances were a vital supply in contributing to external financing for migrants' households in Bangladesh. A number of studies have investigated the macro and micro level impacts of remittances in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2014; Alam, 2017; BMET, 2017; Islam, 2010; Mamun and Nath, 2010). Nevertheless, very few researches (Alam, 2016; Tiza et al., 2019; Mannan et al., 2015) have been found that addresses the worldwide migration of Bangladesh via the lens of educational attainment of the left behind children. This study fills this gap by comparing the educational attainment of the children of migrant and non-migrant households. Therefore, main motivation of the research is to find out the variation in educational attainment through a comparative study between migrant and non-migrant households. The findings of this research will offer valuable information to the social workers, policy makers, and researchers for further study.

2. Literature Review

Education and educational attainment of the children who are left behind in the migrant households have become an important and emerging issue broadly. Because most of the migration is happened by adult males rather than their entire households. The school-aged children in such cases are left in the village to care of mothers and grandparents when their fathers move to abroad for work (Wu, 2004). The literature on this issue is largely diverse with some pointing to a positive relationship between the educational attainment and remittances, whereas, some others observed a reverse relationship.

2.1 Positive relationship between migration status and educational attainment

Bryants' (2005) research work on Asia finds that remittances are used to send children to private schools and such children have a higher probability of attaining better grades in comparison to children of non-migrant households. Bouoiyour and Miftah (2015) estimate the effects of migrants' remittances on household investments in children's human capital.

They find that children in remittance-receiving households are more expected to attend school and less likely to drop out compared with individuals in non-remittance-receiving households. More importantly they ascertain that remittances are connected with significantly lower level of no schooling for girls. These findings support the growing view that remittances can assist rising the educational opportunities, especially for female children.

Hassan and Jebin (2018) aim to determine the level of capabilities attainment by the rural households of Bangladesh through temporary international migration. Evidence from the matched sample indicates that migrant households have a higher level of food and non-food consumptions, better housing, and higher education expenditure, higher health expenditure, better access to communication and social acceptance, and higher participation of women in household decision-making compare to non-migrant households. Perera (2017) reveals that migrant households spend a higher proportion of remittances on primary education than non-migrant households. Moreover, Agasty (2016) finds that enrolment-wise children of migrant households are ahead of those of non-migrant households.

2.2 Negative relationship between migration status and educational attainment

McKenzie and Rapoport (2011) illustrate from their study in rural Mexico that children of migrant households are less likely to be attending schools and complete few years of schooling than those of non-migrant households. The negative effect of father's migration is being very strong among 16-18 year old girls. They interpret it as substitution of schooling by work. Chowdhury (2014) analyses that remittances lead to socio-economic development among family members and improve living standards compared to families of non-receiving remittances in Bangladesh. However, the opportunity cost of building the children go to work to receive more income is bigger than using that money for education, which may not benefit the family very much in a rural area. Again, Agasty (2016) finds that in the case of school attendance, continuation in education and educational attainment children of the migrant households lag behind the children of the non-migrant households.

Kalaj (2014) analyses decision-making about human capital investment in remittance-receiving households and non-remittance-receiving households in Albania. In his analysis, household incomes are measured separately from remittances in order to identify whether income from remittances have the same effect as other types of household non-labor income in the decision to invest in more years of schooling for household members. The estimation of the survival function indicates that receiving remittances increase the hazard of leaving school after the end of secondary

education. The negative relationship between education and remittances is more obvious for males living in rural areas. Pihlainen (2010) explores how remittances affect a household's tendency to invest in education. He recommends that remittance-receiving households face a weaker incentive to invest in their children's human capital and don't value education as highly as those that do not receive remittances. This may be the reason that children living in remittance-receiving households are more expected to migrate themselves, and thus attain only enough education as they need to be successful migrant workers.

Above reviews reveal that a few studies have dealt with the impact of international migration on educational attainment through comparison between migrant and non-migrant households in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, there is a necessity to assess the variation in educational attainment in terms of migration status in Bangladesh.

3. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in purposively selected Sakhipur and Ghatail upazilas of Tangail district of Bangladesh. These upazilas were selected as the study areas, because these areas are considered as the migration-prone regions (BMET, 2017). Since the sample population is scattered in a broadly dispersed geographical area, few migration-prone villages had been purposively selected. Therefore, four villages particularly Akander Baid and Baila under Ghatail upaizla and Sakhipur Sadar and Kaharta under Sakhipur upazila had been chosen. These villages were selected because of the large number of migrant households in those villages, which were observed during the preliminary visit in the areas.

Two different target population - migrant and non-migrant households - were used in this study. One target population of the study was the remittance-recipient families (father of the children is the migrant) who obtained remittances for a minimum of one year and the migrant family has at least one school going children. It has been anticipated that minimum one year was essential for observing the effect of remittances on recipient families. Furthermore, it's been assumed that migrants wanted few months to settle in another country and additionally the effect of remittances could be negligible at some stage in the early duration of remittance receiving (Hye, 2017). Another set of target population comprises the non-migrant households of the chosen villages in order to make comparison with the migrant households.

One hundred non-migrant families had been selected randomly from four villages. Similar number of migrant households were chosen from the same villages for drawing comparative scenarios. It is noted here that one hundred sample migrant households cover most of the migrant households of the four villages. This study was mostly based on primary data which were collected through face to face interview with the heads of the households using a pre-tested structured interview schedule. The interview was conducted with the respondents individually in their respective home. Ethical issues related to this study were maintained properly during the different phases of this research. The interview schedule incorporates a few large questions in conjunction with others associated with socioeconomic profile of the households; overall income, overall expenditure, and educational expenditure; information regarding children's education and parental expectation on children education; information related to productivity of remittance investment on education; etc. The collected information was analyzed through descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS software.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Basic differences between migrant and non-migrant households

There are some basic differences in terms of socioeconomic background between migrant and non-migrant households, which are presented in Table 1. Average number of family members is almost five in non-migrant households, which is slightly higher than migrant households. Average years of schooling of the parents' of migrant households were slightly lower compared to non-migrant households. It is obvious that migrants' year of schooling is comparatively lower than that of their counterpart as most of the Bangladeshi migrants are low skilled with low education background. As expected income of the migrant households is higher than non-migrant households.

Though non-migrant households spend more amount of money, share of education expenditure is slightly higher for migrant households. Number of children in both the households are on an average almost same. However, number of school going children is bit higher for non-migrant households. Number of children in tertiary education is lower for migrant households as children of the migrant households might prepare themselves for migration after secondary education. This result is consistent with the findings of Pihlainen (2010), Kalaj (2014), and Perera (2017) who find that the children of the migrant families usually attain only enough education which prepare themselves for becoming successful migrants.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of migrant and non-migrant households

Particulars	Migrant (mean)	Non-migrant (mean)
Number of family members	4.21	4.96
Fathers' years of schooling	5.17	8.43
Mothers' years of schooling	5.47	7.49
Income (Tk./year)	353,940	316,930
Education expenditure (Tk./year)	65,644	81,738
Other expenditure (Tk./year)	184,560	230,860
Total expenditure (Tk./year)	250,204	312,598
Share of expenditure on education (%)	26.24	26.15
Number of children	2.38	2.39
Number of school going children	2.00	2.12
Number of school going male children	0.96	1.07
Number of school going female child	1.04	1.05
Number of children in primary education	0.87	0.92
No. of children in secondary education	0.82	0.71
No. of children in tertiary education	0.31	0.49

4.2 Educational background of parents of migrant and non-migrant households

Highly educated parents are likely to have higher incomes and can afford to send their children to school. These parents are more aware of the value of education, in particular the future (monetary) returns to education. Literatures on intra-household allocation and human capital investment indicate that investments in child education increase significantly in contexts where mothers are more educated (Liu and Leight, 2015). McKenzie and Rapoport (2011) also suggest that mothers' education can be served as a predictor of the parents' earnings potential that could be invested in the siblings' schooling. This suggests that mothers' education represents the household's ability to support the children's education. For this reason, we categorize the level of education of parents. The categories are illiterate, primary, secondary, higher secondary, tertiary level of education. About thirty percent of the migrants are illiterate, whereas this percentage is almost half for non-migrants parents. In primary level, migrant households' parents have higher education than non-migrants' parents. In secondary, higher secondary and tertiary levels, migrant households' parents have less education than non-migrant households (Figure 1). On the other hand, migrant households' mothers have more tertiary education than mothers of non-migrant households. However, the difference is very much low between the two households.

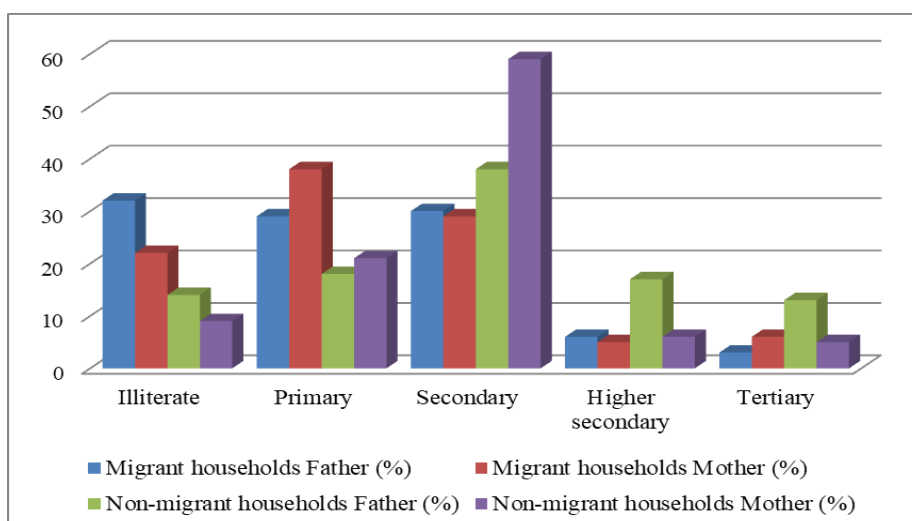


Figure 1. Educational status of parents of migrant and non-migrant households

4.3 Income and expenditure of migrant and non-migrant households

Financial condition of the respondents influences their family decision making in case of child education. Households who have better economic status, they are more likely to spend for child education. So, the sample respondents were asked about their yearly income and expenditure.

Table 2. Yearly income and expenditure of migrant and non-migrant households

Categories (Tk/year)	Income		Expenditure	
	Migrant (%)	Non-migrant (%)	Migrant (%)	Non-migrant (%)
Up to 100,000	1	3	15	15
100,000-200,000	18	33	53	37
200,001-300,000	30	22	24	25
300,001-400,000	21	10	5	13
400,001-500,000	16	18	0	7
>500000	14	14	3	3

Table 2 explores the yearly amount of income and expenditure in six categories. In migrant households, 30% of income is at the range of Tk200,000-Tk300,000. In non-migrant households, 33% of income is at the range of Tk100,000-Tk200,000. In migrant and non-migrant households, 53% and 37% of expenditure is at the range of Tk100,000-Tk200,000 respectively. It is notable that 51% of the migrant households have income of more than Tk.300000. However, among them only eight percent spend those amount of money. On the other hand, among the 42% non-migrant households having more than Tk.300000 income, 23% spend the same amount. That means, migrant households may save more amount of money than that of non-migrant households.

4.4 Category-wise educational expenditure in both types of households

To analyze the impact of remittances on children education, it is very important to know about the educational expenditure. So, the educational expenditure of migrant and non-migrant households for a year is shown in Figure 2.

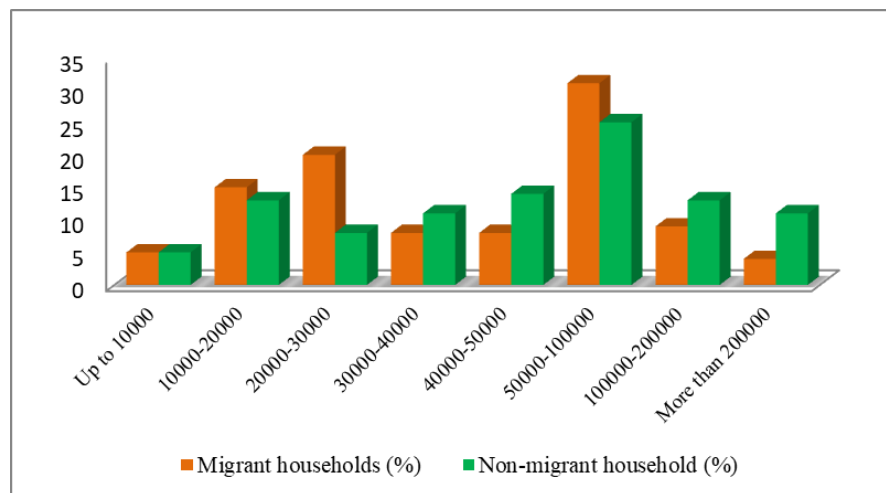


Figure 2. Educational expenditure of migrant and non-migrant households

In order to gain better reflection, the educational expenditure is categorized into eight ranges. The maximum and minimum ranges of educational expenditure are more than Tk 200,000 and up to Tk 10,000, respectively. In migrant households, 31% of educational expenditure is at the range of Tk 50,000-Tk100,000 and the four percent of educational expenditure is at the highest range of Tk 200,000 and above while five percent of educational expenditure is in the minimum range of up to Tk 10,000. In non-migrant households, 25% of educational expenditure is at the range of Tk 50,000-Tk100,000 and the 11% of educational expenditure is at the highest range of more than Tk200,000 while five percent of educational expenditure is at the minimum range of up to Tk 10,000. No clear sequence of difference in educational expenditure between the two types of households was observed, rather there was fluctuating pattern perceived in this study.

4.5 Distribution of school going children

To compare the educational attainment it is very important to know the information of the school going children of the study area. The number of school going children in migrant and non-migrant households are 200 and 212, respectively. The percentage of male school going children is lower in migrant households but comparatively higher in female school going children than non-migrant households. It is because of the comparatively higher number of female children in migrant households. (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of school going children classified by migration status

Particulars	No. of male	No. of female	No. of school going children
Migrant	96 (48%)	104 (52%)	200
Non-migrant	107 (50.47%)	105 (49.53%)	212
Total	203	209	412

4.6 Educational attainment at different levels by the children

Table 4 shows the number of children in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in migrant and non-migrant households. In migrant households, the percentage of primary and secondary levels of education are higher than non-migrant households and lower in tertiary level of education. It may be due to the unwillingness of the migrant households to attain higher education, which is bit expensive. Rather they want to migrate in order to share the family expenditure. This result is supported by Chowdhury (2014) who found that the opportunity cost of preparing children for income earner is bigger than using that money for education and also by Perera (2017) who mentioned that migrant households spend a higher proportion of remittances on primary education.

Table 4. Distribution of children based on educational attainment at different levels

Households	Primary level	Secondary level	Tertiary level	School going children
Migrant	87 (43.5%)	82 (41%)	31 (15.5%)	200
Non-migrant	92 (42.39%)	71 (33.49%)	49 (23.11%)	212

4.7 Children's dropout related information

It is anticipated that children in migrant households are less likely to drop out compared with individuals in non-migrant households (Bouoiyour and Miftah, 2015). However, number of dropout of children is same for both the households. On the other hand, if we compare it based on percentage, then it is bit higher for migrant households. But in migrant and non-migrant households, number of female children's dropout is higher than that of male children (Table 5) as the rate of completing education after sixteen years is comparatively lower for female children in rural areas of Bangladesh. Same result was found in the study of McKenzie and Rapoport (2011) in case of rural Mexico where the rate of attending schools of 16-18 year old girls is low.

Table 5. Children's dropout in migrant and non-migrant households

Households	Male	Female	Total dropout
Migrant	12(6%)	24(12%)	36 (18%)
Non-migrant	9 (4.5%)	27(12.74%)	36 (16.98%)

Migrant households' total dropout in percentage is higher than non-migrant households. It may be the reason that the parents wanted their children should get some basic education. Once they are grown up and had their basic education many of the children moved with their fathers to the different countries for the sake of employment. In some cases because of the low academic performance they were not able to complete the secondary level of education and hence dropped out to search for some jobs. These are the two most important reasons for which the dropout rate is the highest among the children of migrant households. The relatively higher dropout rate of migrant households' children is due basically to lack of supervision, care and early marriage of female children, which is also found in the study of Agasty (2016).

4.8 Parental expectation on child education

Parental expectation on child education from primary to tertiary levels of education was investigated for both migrant and non-migrant households, which is presented in Figure 3. It indicates that the parents of migrant and non-migrant households expect their children to be educated up to tertiary level education. In migrant households, parental expectation of children's education up to higher secondary level is higher when compared with non-migrant

households. However, parental expectation on tertiary education of children is slightly higher for non-migrant households than migrant households.

Therefore, it can be assumed that parental expectation on children's education for tertiary level of education is higher in non-migrant households than the migrant households, because of inadequate guidance due to parental absence as a result of migration and early marriage of female children in migrant households found in the study of Perera (2017). Parental expectation on child education in male children, in general, is higher than in female children.

4.9 Perception of parents on importance of remittance in education

In order to examine the productivity of remittance investments on education, parental perception on children education improvement in seven criteria was investigated based in five-point Likert scale ranges from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. In this five point continuum, weights of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 are assigned. Perception index (PI) for each statement (Table 6) was calculated by using this equation: $PI = \text{Summation} (\text{Score} \times \text{Number who checked that score})$.

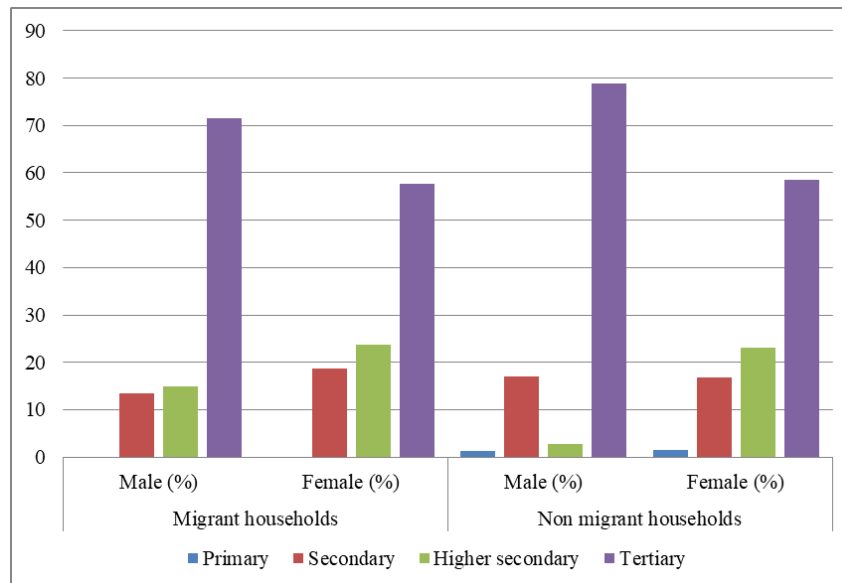


Figure 3. Parental expectation on children's education

Table 6. Perception of parents on importance of remittance in education

Parental perception on children's education	Perception Index (PI)	
	Migrant households	Non-migrant households
Improvement in children's academic records	464	343
Increase in children's participation to extracurricular activities	301	292
Improvement in children's encouragement to education	442	349
Improvement in children's participation to the tuition classes	468	375
Difficult to continue children's education without remittance	497	471
Migrant households spend more on education	286	302
No gender discrimination regarding education expenditure	434	307

From Table 6, we can see that parental perceptions regarding the importance of remittances on improvement in children's academic records, participation to extracurricular activities, encouragement to education (irrespective of level of education), participation to the tuition classes and gender parity are comparatively higher in migrant households than non-migrant households. But parental perception on educational expenditure is higher in non-migrant households. Therefore, overall educational performance of children would be improved with a combination of remittance receipts and involvement of parents (Perera and Wijeratne, 2017).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Remittances have become a very important pillar of Bangladesh economy by providing a way to move out of poverty to a large number of rural and urban households. Moreover, it is acknowledged as the most stable and prominent private source of foreign currency of Bangladesh. It is clear that migration matters for the education of children. Even though enrolment-wise children of migrant households are not ahead of those of non-migrant households, in case of primary and secondary levels of education they are in better position than the children in the latter category of households, but lower in tertiary levels of education. Migrant households' expenditure on education of children is lower and dropout is higher compared to the children of non-migrant households because after completing their basic education many of the children moved with their fathers to the different countries for the sake of employment. The lower levels of their educational attainment are due to lack of supervision and mentoring. In migrant households, parental expectation of children education up to higher secondary level is larger when compared with non-migrant households but lower in tertiary level of education. So, the researcher finds out that educational attainment of migrant households is less than non-migrant households. Finally, it can be said that more research should be undertaken to understand remittances' contribution to human resource development. The remittance-education nexus should also be explored with greater interest. Since the present study covered only two upazilas of Tangail District, a similar study covering different areas of the country could be done for better policy initiation.

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