

# International Migration of *Adult Children* and '*Instant*' Problems of Elderly Parents in Kashmir with Special reference Srinagar District: A Sociological Study

**Tarif Hamid**

PhD Scholar

Department of Sociology

University of Kashmir Hazratbal, Srinagar-India

**Email:** bebrave000@yahoo.com

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.8.10.2018.p8283

<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.8.10.2018.p8283>

## **Abstract**

*International migration is an economic process which involves and affects individuals who move to other countries or choose to migrate and who stay behind (particularly elderly parents) left behind in origin country. It is considered as an increasingly global phenomenon. It is a well-accepted notion that overseas international migration along with different causes which have certain consequences and effects for those who particularly stay behind in origin countries. The focuses of attention in this study are elderly parents who are affected by their migrating adult children. The size, magnitude, composition and direction of the effects of this process of migration may differ and it needs to be further investigated and understood in a more enlightened manner and deeply studied. This is evident from the various studies carried out in the area of sociology of ageing. Based on a sample of 50 respondents and using an intensive approach through interview schedule, the study has been carried out in Srinagar district of the Kashmir valley and aimed to trace the problems faced by elderly parents in Srinagar city due to the international migration of their children and its impact on their health and psychological wellbeing. The author found that there has been a significant impact on various aspects of life of elderly people in Kashmir like, they feel loneliness, depression, isolation, lack of care love and support by their children. Further it has been found that elderly parents receive less time contribution from their migrating children.*

**Key words:** (Inter National Migration, Impact, Elderly, Kashmir, Srinagar District)

## **1. Introduction**

If we look at history and analysis on migration phenomenon or study mobility of people worldwide, people have been travelling from one place to another for different reasons, in search of better livelihoods and in terms of employment opportunities or escape persecution or displacements of people, largely most dominant prerequisite for mobility or migration of people has always been to better their economic condition for which people have been travelling within or across geographical boundaries. Migration can be termed as individuals in transition. It has is always been ingrained in individuals psyche. Some get chance to migrate where as others don't. There has always been a family decision behind migration of individual or individuals and as well as individuals own decision. Migration can be defined as mobility of individuals or people from one geographical area to another. It is movement of individuals who leave their country or society of origin, either for permanent or temporary residence in country of destination.<sup>1</sup>

The increasingly emerging phenomenon of process of globalization, urbanization, employment opportunities elsewhere and settlement of persons in foreign countries have led to the expansion at both local and international migration of people from developing to developed countries. This has changed the living standards and patterns of the societies worldwide including change in familial settings which has posed many problems for both country of origin and country of destination. There has been a profound impact on who migrates and who stay behind be it spouse children or elderly parents. The main and increasingly striking impact has been on old age parents who stay behind when their children migrates to other countries that leads to health, emotional and psychological problems and challenges for them.<sup>2</sup>

International migration is a socio-economic process which involves and affects individuals who move to other country and who stay behind in origin country and the places where they choose to migrate. It is considered as an increasingly global phenomenon. It is a well-accepted notion that overseas international migration along with different causes has certain consequences on both on origin and destination countries .However the size, magnitude, composition and direction of the effects of this process of migration may differ and it needs to be further investigated and understood in a more enlightened manner and deeply analyzed and studied. The rapid increase in trends of adult children migration is raising the issue of sufferings of those who left behind (elderly parents stay behind particularly) and their reliance on the migrant children for support.<sup>3</sup>

The impact of migration on older people has been further compounded by the disruption of the welfare state, which used to provide extensive benefits to all sections of society. The fact lies that international migration can result in both positive and negative outcomes and the impact of migration on those left behind is likely to be specific in nature, depending on the local culture and the importance of kinship networks as well as the social and legal arrangements between sending and receiving states. The Remittances send back home by migrants children to their elderly parents left behind may also play a significant role in helping family members to meet their financially needs but other aspects of welfare such as practical and emotional support, social standing in the community and the coverage of formal systems of social protection may also be equally important for elderly parents.<sup>4</sup>

Although Children who had migrated may often make a phone call to lessen the loneliness of their elderly parents while elderly parents who are left behind at home country suffer many problems due to migration of their adult children and this aggravates there agony ,misery and suffering and they feel they are being isolated. Elderly Parents who at this stage of life when they are older and when their physical and mental capabilities is on decline, need love care, affection and emotional support and time from their children but due to increasing out migration of their children they live life of loneliness without their children and this makes them suffer in terms of social, psychological and health problems.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, when adult children find suitable employment opportunities and earn a decent living they start getting settled in host country of destination. They send remittances to their elderly parents in terms of financial contributions so that they live happily and also take care of property which is usually looked after by elderly parents in home country. Elderly parents Instead of getting care and emotional support from their migrant children, they are left to take care of household chores and property. The adult children think that they have provided their ageing parents with all comforts and facilities but they are unaware in terms of true realities and ignore the sufferings which elderly parents face in the absence of their adult migrant children such as loneliness, missing their children on different social and religious events, neglect.<sup>6</sup>

Migration of adult children to other countries not on has economic implications and outcomes but it is also affecting the social apparatus, and family as one of the socializing unit and emotional bonding is also getting affected by international migration of

younger people. The intensity of effects may be of different kinds either like nuclear family separation from joint family in the host country of destination or Adult children migrating alone while their spouse and elderly parents are left behind at country of origin. There is a lot of research available on left behind children, wives but very little studies are available and explores the relationship between migration of adult children and elderly parents left behind when their children migrate.

The numerous studies conducted in developed countries have witnessed and explored the phenomenon of international migration of young people particularly with respect to left behind parents in home country. The present and evident studies show that there is profound impact of international migration of adult children on elderly left behind parents who are living without their children especially male children living in other countries. The present literature available has focused particularly on physical health of the elderly parents while other aspects related to their life like problems of mobility, feeling of sense loneliness and isolation, repression anxiety, emotional instability, attitude of relatives and people around them is given and paid lesser attention to. Most of the Parents in context of developing and developed countries traditionally rely and are dependent on their children in later stage when they attain ageing or become old enough rely for personal care needs, affection, Emotional and financial support like it is prevalent in every culture and such a similar situation is found in Kashmir valley especially in Srinagar city which has good number of concentration of elderly parents who are living alone and left behind by their adult children who had migrated to other countries. The parents have started living alone which has created different problems for them.<sup>7</sup>

## **2. Review of literature**

**Zachariah et. al. (2003)** in his study reveals that Migration adult child affected the elderly parents in many ways. The adult children's absence may deprive older parents care or they may feel loneliness, but on the other hand, remittances send back home by their migrant children may improve their socio-economic and financial condition and security in old age, and may enhance their ability to access to better medical facilities. Migration has increased the old-age dependency in the state by increasing the number of the elderly persons and had decreased of the working age population of young people. Migration has increased the proportion of the elderly persons living alone without their adult children and has aggravated many problems that elderly persons face like anxiety, depression, loneliness and sometimes emotional instability of elderly parents. Migration of young adults increased proportion of the elderly who live alone by 50. The researchers further found that Anxiety is major problem among 15 percent of the elderly parents.<sup>8</sup>

**Gupta et, al. (2003)** in his study provides the evidence for the impact of the three emotional health indicators regarding the number of migrating sons. The results reveal that the depression indicator among elderly parents shows the strongest negative reaction whereas the level of happiness is not found to be significant and large in magnitude. This study further reports the impact of migration by the gender of the child, separately. It is considered that, mostly sons in all economies are found to be productive assets for their left behind family especially for support for elderly parents as they are more likely to remit money back to their elderly parents in higher amounts. These remittances can prove to function as a substitute for emotional proximity as it allows the elderly parents to be financially become well off. It has further been revealed in this study that the absence of a younger son significantly reduces the physical attendance that the elderly parents receive. The increasing frequency of contacts of elderly parents but the decreased likelihood of being in weekly contact with the sons is likely to leave the elderly parents in emotional distress and develop in them feelings of loneliness. This is emphasized by 6.4% higher levels of loneliness in the case of migrating sons. In this case elderly parents depend more strongly on a caretaker who is likely to be a poor substitute for the own child or the spouse. Such a situation could aggravate the emotional state caused by the absence of a child and is likely to lead to lower levels of satisfaction and could potentially explain the augmented probability of depression. The another significant reason for the more severe impact for migrant sons could be that traditionally, Chinese elderly parents (especially in rural areas) have a

preference for sons.<sup>9</sup> **Xiang (2005)** in his study points out the basic problem faced by left behind elderly persons in rural economy in china. The researcher identified an emotional loneliness as the most aggravating problem of the left behind elderly persons because of migration of their children. The researcher further reveals but in general their situation was not much worse than those living with family members. Their problem could not be attributed to being left behind; instead the fundamental cause was that many rural communities as a whole had been left behind economically and socially by one or more of their children migration.<sup>10</sup> **Silberstein et al (2006)** in this study has examined how migration of adult children and household composition has influenced the psychological well-being of elderly parents in rural China study further revealed in findings that financial transfers provided to elderly parents may serve as compensation for their custodial care of parents as part of a time for money exchange that exemplifies the functional integration between generations in the rural Chinese family.<sup>11</sup>

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Universe of the study**

Based on a sample of 50 respondents and using an intensive approach through structured and unstructured interview schedule, the study has been carried out in urban Srinagar district of Kashmir valley and aimed to trace the problems of elderly parents for enhancing objectives of the research both open ended and closed end interview schedule were framed along with participant observation method.

#### **3.2 Sampling Plan of the study**

The sampling plan of the present study is based on the sample of 50 respondents selected at random basis from Srinagar district of Kashmir valley. Exploratory research design was used to collect data from the field.

#### **3.3 Hypotheses of the study**

In the broader theoretical context an attempt was made to develop a proper and realistic sociological hypothesis regarding the topic of research. The main hypothesis in regard could be explained in a way that international migration of adult children has impacted on elderly people in Srinagar city. The elderly parents feel sense of distress, loneliness, alienation, lack of support and less time contributions from there migrant children.

#### **3.4 Objectives of the study**

1. To identify emerging problems of elderly parents in the study area;
2. To examine the health, emotional, psychological problems of elderly parents who are left behind by their migrating sons in the study area;

### **4. Findings of the Study**

The findings of the study are as under:

In most of the countries children are viewed as sometimes as insurance against disability in old age and providing income after retirement for elderly parents, especially in terms of developing countries where there are limited markets for credit facilities and insurance. When the time comes that parents reach an age where they require assistance, security and are dependent on their children. Their children are considered as a form of social security at the time when parents reach old age. They need utmost care and affection when they are old and fragile and their physical and mental abilities start to decline. At this important stage of life it is children that are needed by their parents more than any other relatives. However, it should be their children that must decide to take on and shoulder responsibility of caring for their elderly parents.

This study has been taken in Srinagar district of Kashmir valley. In this study the older parents have been taken into consideration belonging to the age group of 50 to 80 years. In this study it has been found that out of 50.00 i.e. (100 percent); 20.00 elderly parents admitted that are suffering hypertension, diabetes and heart disease. Similarly, it has observed by the researcher that most of the older age parents had at least one son living and working abroad. Out of 50.00 respondents; 10.00 (10 percent) elderly parent respondents reveals that that they persuaded their son to migrate abroad because of lack of better employment opportunities and life style. Even if their children or their son was well qualified and had opportunities for getting job at native place but still their children choose and made the decision to go abroad.

Further, the study acclaimed that out of 50.00 elderly respondents 10.00 respondents (10 percent) admitted that the motivation for migration of their sons to live and work abroad was through their getting tempted by some of the relatives or cousins who were already settled in foreign land. This was also a key factor for their migration the young people migrate to abroad because of the pull and push factors which has tremendous impact on their elderly parents. It has been observed by the study that also that pull and push factors are and still remain dominant factors in the process of migration. And out of 50.00 respondents; 10.00 elderly parent respondents i.e. (10 percent) admitted that the motivating and leading factors behind the migration of their sons were the desire to earn more income and to seek better employment opportunities elsewhere. It has been observed that some old age couples reported that they had compelled their male children to migrate to United States of America and also towards Gulf countries because their relatives and even some of their friends or even cousins resided there and they enjoy luxurious life. Some of the old age parents acclaimed that they too motivated their sons to migrate because other of their relatives along with their families were living abroad so they also persuaded and wanted their children to go and get settled over there.

Some elderly parents said that motivation for the migration of their sons was to improve the financial condition of family and better life style for their sons as their sons could not get better employment here because of his higher qualification as well as the conflict situation and prevailing circumstances. We did not want our sons to work here earning but working in stressful conditions like their father had been doing since long which ultimately ruined his health. Thus, we decided to send our f son abroad for making his future better and live a free and prosperous life.

Similarly, sometimes older parents when asked about their son migration, they replied that we didn't want our son to work in such conflicting conditions as are currently prevalent here. But rather we wanted him to live a peaceful happy life which was only possible in foreign land. Money is not everything but the happiness and peace of mind of our children is most important. They further revealed that our son send us good amount of money which is very enough for us to lead a wealthy life but whenever we talk to our son on phone or make a video call seeing him happy while chatting with us make us both feel better. When asked about social relations of elderly parent respondents they replied that often they feel a sense of loneliness and alienation because they are living alone without their children and even their relatives don't come to them very often but our relations with our neighbors are better enough. They are the ones who help us in times when there is emergency or other kind of need arises like going to social functions i.e. marriage, funeral ceremony or even they sometimes accompany us to hospital. This is our case and situation we don't know about other elderly parents are they treated the same way or not.

The study depicts that majority of the respondents said that no matter our sons is living abroad from us but we have our daughter who is like our son and she take best care of us. But we often miss our son and it gives us a feeling that will our son be able to attend out funeral rites of not since he lives far away and has to spent lot of money to come back home. We are on mercy of God and our daughter who make all necessary arrangements for us and make us feel even better.

## **5. Conclusion**

In the light of above findings it has been concluded that there are a number of studies that have found the problem and effects of adult children's out-migration on the left behind parents in home country, but very less and rare efforts have been taken into consideration in terms of left behind parents in Srinagar city whose male children have been migrated internationally and they are left alone to take care of themselves in absence of their adult son or sons. This problem of international migration of adult children to other countries is aggravating and an emerging sociological concern. This study conducted in Srinagar city of Kashmir valley has been taken into consideration to probe into the problems of elderly parents who are living alone and left to take care of themselves. The attempt in this study has been made to fill the gap in the research pertaining to old age parents and by focusing on day to day sufferings and experiences of left behind parents in Srinagar city. It is evident from the present study that out migration of adult children has brought many transformational changes in the life of elderly parents and increased their problems and sufferings be it in terms of positively or negatively. The gains from adult migration of children in terms of economic contributions and remittances had to some extent improved their life style which has resulted in respect and alleviating their social status within the social structure prevalent in society. On the other hand the elderly parents said that no matter financially sound but this financial contribution from their adult migrant son does not suffice enough and it's not everything that elderly parents want and need but also elderly parents in absence of their adult migrant son have developed the feelings of loneliness, less time, emotional and psychological support and sense of isolation which effects their health and aggravates their problem.

Further, the study reveals that this problem of elderly parents is genuine and well understood because of the cultural context prevalent in our country where presence of male member within households is considered the strength and bread winner of the family and the primary source of care giver and taker of older parents during the time of old age when they feel much dependent and are physically weak. Those Children weather staying with their elderly parents or not who do not shoulder this responsibility of taking care of their old age parents when parents want and need utmost physical care and emotional and psychological affection are looked down and disrespected within society. The elderly parents often had persuaded their adult sons to find employment opportunities elsewhere and some children had made the decision of migrating to other country by themselves. Some parents complain about their sons for migrating to other countries and leaving them behind at mercy of God but others did not complain for their sons because they knew and were well aware and understood that there young sons had migrated abroad to earn decent living and support and benefit for the family financially and they were still shouldering this responsibility in terms of providing financial contributions to raise the family incomes and to provide better facilities and high standard of living for their family particularly their elderly parents left behind but such contributions in terms remittances send back home does not suffice it is more than that since elderly parents have no control over the emotions when it comes to adult child absence and the strong desire to be able to be close to their children. In order to cope up to prevailing circumstances elderly parents find to multiple strategies to adapt themselves and get use to their problems and sufferings.

## References

1. Kahanec, M. & Zimmermann, K. F. (2008). *Migration and Globalization: Challenges and Perspectives for the Research Infrastructure*.
2. Antman, F. (2010) *How does Adult Child Migration Affect the Health of Elderly Parents Left Behind: Evidence from México*
3. Miltiades, H. (2002). The Social and Psychological Effect of an Adult Child's Emigration on Non-Immigrant Asian Indian Elderly Parents. *Journal of Cross Cultural Gerontology*. Vol, 17 (3) P-33-55.
4. Martin, Linda. (1989) Living Arrangements of the Elderly in Fiji, Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines. *Demography*. Vol, 3 (1). P-627-644.

5. Adhikari et al. (2011) Impact of Children's Migration on Health and Health care-Seeking Behavior of Elderly Left Behind. *BMC Public Health*, Vol, 11 (1) P-143.
6. Knodel & Saengtienchai. (2007) Rural parents with urban children. Social and Economic Implications of Migration for the rural elderly in Thailand. *Population, Space and Place*, Vol, 13(3). P-193-210.
7. Cecilia & Battistella, (1998) The Impact of Labour Migration on the Children Left Behind. A study of elementary school children in the Philippines. *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*.P-220-241.
8. Zachariah, KC, ET Mathew and S. Irudaya Rajan (2003) Dynamics of Migration in Kerala. *Dimensions, Determinants and Consequences*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman Pvt Limited.
9. Gupta, M. D. Jiang & Z, Li. B. Xie, Z, Chung. W. & Hwa, Ok. B. (2003) Why Is Son preference So Persistent in East and South Asia: A Cross-Country Study of China, India and the Republic of Korea. *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol, 40 (2).
10. Xiang, B. (2005). How Far The Left-Behind Left Behind? Preliminary Study In Rural China, *Centre On Migration Policy And Society*, Working Paper No. 12, University Of Oxford
11. Silverstein, M. Cong. & Li, S .Z. (2006). Intergenerational Transfers and Living Arrangements Of Older People In Rural China Consequences For Psychological Well Being', *Journal Of Gerontology, Social Sciences*, Vol, 61(5), P-256-266.