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Impact of Migratory Experience on Mental Health: A Qualitative Study in Dhaka City

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Abstract

The complex relationship between migration and mental health involves aspects at multiple levels, such as the migrant's personal history, the collective history of their place of origin, and the category of climatic events. Recent years have seen a rise in the country of migration. Even though the migratory scenario of the county increased over the last few years. The study describes and analyses the impact of the migratory experience on mental health with different migration experiences and living in Dhaka city slums. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 climate migrant slum dwellers in Dhaka city slums. A thematic qualitative data analysis was performed whereas three themes were created based on the different times of the migration experience: before, after, and during migration. Mental health effected by traumatic events before and during migration. In addition, a great level of psychological distress is associated with post migratory difficulties (e.g., unemployment or facing a new cultural environment). Multidisciplinary interventions, with focus on skill development, such as work-related skills, on access to basic needs, help the well-being of mental health.

Keywords: Climate migrants, Migratory experience, mental health, slum dwellers, Dhaka City.

1. Introduction

Migration and mental health are inextricably intertwined and involve a wide range of factors, including the migrant's personal history, the history of their place of origin in general, and the history of the category of climatic events. Even if Bangladesh's migration pattern has changed over time because of climate change.

The process of migration definitely affects the political, cultural, religious, social, and economic aspects of human existence in the region. People have long researched how migration affects various

facets of human life, and one significant field of study is how it affects migrants' mental health (Virupaksha et al., 2014).

The amount of research on mental health issues in Bangladesh is likewise limited. Adult prevalence of mental diseases ranged from 6.5 to 31%, while child prevalence ranged from 13.4 to 22.9% (Hossain et al., 2015). In terms of urban mental health issues, these disorders were worse in slum regions and were correlated with levels of education and employment (Izutsu et al., 2015).

In addition, mental health issues tend to be overtaken by other health problems, especially in the rapidly urbanizing megacities of developing countries, where a growing number of people are living in slums and unhealthy environments (UN-HABITAT, 2010). High levels of environmental pollution, lack of adequate water and sanitation, overcrowding, insecurity of tenure, and non-durability of housing could adversely affect the health of slum dwellers (Sclar et al., 2005), (Unger et al., 2007), (UN-HABITAT, 2003). To date, little is known about the burden of disease in urban slums (Riley et al., 2007), and research on the mental well-being of slum residents is lacking (Izutsu, 2006).

This research represented the Impact of Migratory Experience on the Mental Health of climate migrant urban poor women slum dwellers in Dhaka city and assumed that the mental well-being of women slum dwellers is associated with the social and physical environment even controlling for the impact of personal factors such as place and reason of migration, age, gender, and diseases.

2. Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research was to describe and analyse the impact of migration on the mental health of migrants with various migration experiences who were living in the slums of Dhaka City. On the other hand, to find out the significant factors to increase the mental distress of climate migrants.

3. Methodology of the study

3.1. Approach of study

This Research was conducted with qualitative types of study. This study has been conducted through a quantitative approach because it represents some specific point of view of their life's vulnerability to natural hazards which leads to climate displacement and emphasises the natural flow of slum dweller's social life and analyses the impact of migration on the mental health of migrants with various migration experiences.

3.2. Study site

General information has been collected from the Korail slums Mohakhali area of Dhaka, where people migrated for climate change and have been selected as the research area.

The researcher figured out that Korail (Photo 01) was the biggest and densest slum in Dhaka city. According to the report of the Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 2014, the number of houses or khana was 10,222, and the total population was 36719. Males were 19280, females were 17405, and Hijra was 34. However, the number of people who migrated to Korail because of climate change was not mentioned anywhere.



Photo 01: Study area of the research: Korail slum. Source: Daily Star

After consulting with certain officials involved in Dhaka's slum issues, researcher have been reassured that Korail would be a good area to look for various types of climate migrants. This was really beneficial, and the researcher eventually conducted studies in the Korail slum. Though the study followed purposive sampling to select respondents for case study and snowball sampling for interview, researcher was fortunate enough to come across a large number of migrant who had recently moved due to climate change and some of them who migrated long time ago, especially those impacted by Cyclone Sidr and Cyclone Aila, Cyclone Mohashen, floods, riverbank erosion, sea level rise, drought and soil salinity. The target groups of the respondents are the lower income group of people who migrated from their homeland to Dhaka city because of any kinds of climate effects.

3.3. Study period

This study was conducted from October 2022 to February 2023.

3.4. Location of the study area

Korail, one of the largest slums in Bangladesh, is located just opposite the BRAC Head Office in Dhaka. Home to around one lakh people, who include 28,000 voters, Korail Basti is spread over 90 acres of government land in Mohakhali. People have been living there since 1990. It is also situated under Dhaka North City Corporation. Korail slum is a ward under number 20. Latitude and longitude of the Korail slum area are 23.784822 and 90.404326 (Fig 1).



Fig 01: Korail slum Mohakhali

3.5. Population of the study

In this research, all climate migrants who migrated because of climate change in Dhaka City from various palaces of Bangladesh have been selected as the population of the study. The respondents have suffered different types of natural hazards including flood (e.g. river flood, urban flood and flash flood), cyclone and storm surges, drought, soil salinity, river bank erosion, tornadoes for their respective field about climate change effects.

3.6. Sampling of the study

A convenience sampling procedure was adapted to collect data from climate migrants. So, it has been easier and more comfortable to run the study in these areas. A total of 20 climate migrant participants have been interviewed. The respondents belonged to the age of 20 to 50 years. Respondents were interviewed as an individual case for representing actual factors of climate migration in the Korail slum of Dhaka city.

3.7. Main data collection technique

Information was collected through an in-depth interview that complied with qualitative analysis. For this study, it was observed physically and in contact with selected cases. Primary data were

collected from selected samples through face-to-face interviews using an interview schedule and observation.

All key informant interviews in this study were cross-checked using the results of an in-depth interview schedule. KII (Key Informant Interview) used to collect information about the impact of migration on the mental health of climate migrants with various migration experiences. Interviews were collected with key informants at certain points of the migration routes of climate migrants. Five/5 key informants (Such as a Ward Councilor, local Leader, climate migrant specialist, NGO representative, etc.) conducted for KII in Dhaka city slum.

Primary data were gathered using a field study. The field study primarily offers a vulnerability survey of climate migrants using an interview schedule.

A pre-tested, modified, semi-structured, self-administered interview schedule was designed based on the living conditions and the impact of migration on the mental health of the climate migrants people in Dhaka city.

3.8. Data processing

Firstly, the collected data from the research area were edited. Then, they were classified according to their characteristics. The proper way of analysing case studies was used to analyse the data.

3.9. Data presentation

After analyzing some data, they were presented in a descriptive way. A thematic qualitative analysis of the data was performed to create a theme based on the different times of the migration experience: before migration, during migration, and after migration. All codes of these three bigger themes were organized in sub-themes for the samples in the Korail slum of Dhaka city.

4. Analysis of the study

Migration is a selective process, and it depends on the community, family, or individuals, and it also varies extensively from culture to culture. Several studies showed that migration varies depending on socio-economic, demographic, environmental, political and cultural factors. Lack of work availability, unemployment, political chaos, social discrimination, social prejudice, fanaticism, poverty, marriage, family conflict, better living, better educational facilities, and natural disasters, i.e., floods, drought, river erosion, etc, also act as motivational factors of migration.

This study represents the inherent natural and environmental factors that directly or indirectly prompt migration from rural to urban.

Data collection from the field is shown with a short description. The results obtained are shown below

4.1. Reasons of migration

Bangladesh is a country that is highly vulnerable to the devastating effects of natural disasters, particularly floods, cyclones, and droughts (Ahsan et al., 2021). It has been found that most of the respondents were frequently affected by natural disasters—such as floods, cyclones, and drought. After being affected by any form of climatic event people first try to adapt with the changing environment and try to stay at home. Who lost almost everything and cannot survive any more, they leave their place of origin.

Maximum respondents migrated for River erosion, followed by Cyclones and then no agricultural work available during the off-season (Monga period). Some other respondents migrated because of the sudden loss of their house and/or crops due to flooding or Drought and a lack of water for irrigation or Water-lodging or High temperatures or erratic rainfall or salinity and sea level rise.

4.2. Loss/ damage in climate effect

Most of the respondents lost their income sources after the climate effect. They lost their houses and living land, and cultivated land was damaged.

4.3. Reasons for choosing Dhaka City slum

Most of the time, it has been seen that people want to live a better life. Besides, in any crisis period the poor people want to get help or any assistance from rich relatives. Work availability and kin-network played a very important role for choosing a migration place/city.

4.4. Year of coming and place of residences

Day by day, the proportion of migration increased due to climate change. The number of respondents were the same for those who migrated 1-5 years ago and 21-25 years ago, and those who migrated 11-15 years ago in the second position. The third position of respondents who came from their home districts before 16 to 20 years.

4.5. Socio-economic condition of the respondents

Korail slum has several entries, and it is a combination of groups of slums, local dwellers use to address those slums as the block. There are five blocks in Korail and this study targeted to conduct the questionnaire survey in all blocks. The desired number of sampling was 68. The target respondent was the household head or his spouse.

Our target in this study is to understand respondent's way of living, such as their occupation, workplace, mode of access to their workplace, monthly income, duration of living in the Korail slum, a member of family members, category of tenure, etc. the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents are summarized in Table 1.

Table 01. Summary of socio economic characteristics of respondents

Family status	1. Average number of family members	4 to 7 people
	2. Average age of family head	38 years
	3. Families with aged people	Less amount
	4. Families with children	Every family have more than 2 children
Living status	1. Average length of living in the Korail slum	16 years
	2. information ownership of a house a. informal owner b. Rented	Rental respondents are more than house owners.

	3. Family income 3,000 BDT ≤ 5,000 BDT 5,000 BDT ≤ 7,000 BDT 7,000 BDT ≤ 10,000 BDT 10,000 BDT ≤ 12,000 BDT 12,000 BDT ≤ 15,000 BDT 15,000 BDT ≤ 18,000 BDT 18,000 BDT ≤ 20,000 BDT	0.5% 2.9% 7.3% 21.7% 40.2% 22.4% 7.0%
Occupation	1. Formal job (Third-grade office employee, garment worker, social service worker) 2. Informal job (House or office maid, rickshaw puller, vendor, business in the Korail slum area, day labourer) 3. others or no job	18.3% 77.2% 4.3%
Work place	1. In Korail slum 2. Near Korail (Gulshan area, Banani area, Niketon area, Mohakhali & DOHS area) 3. Far from Korail	67.1% 28.6% 4.1%
Access mode to workplace	Walking Using Boat Using Public transport Using personal transport	69.7% 9.5% 11.9% 1.0%
Present monthly house rent	2,500 BDT – 3,000 BDT 3,000 BDT – 3,500 BDT 3,500 BDT – 4,000 BDT 4,000 BDT – 5,000 BDT 5,000 BDT – 6,000 BDT More than 6,000 BDT	9% 11% 13% 59% 5% 3%

Source: field survey, 2023

4.6. Multiples migration experiences

Respondents of the study described important exposure to traumatic events before and during migration. The migration experiences were multiple, in some cases presenting a traumatic history. In most cases, migration was seen as an opportunity to have access to better life conditions.

4.7. Identified factors for mental health

The diversity of cultures, religious beliefs, and people of different places of origin increased in the city slums day by day. The processes of resettlement that climate migrants experience can place their mental health at risk. Grief, loss, and continuing anxiety over family and friends left behind can make it difficult to establish a new life. Respondents reported a significant level of psychological distress associated with post-migration difficulties.

Other barriers to overcome may include:

- loss of family and social support, particularly for women after childbirth
- unemployment, lack of recognition of professional qualifications, and a drop in socioeconomic status

- language barriers/ learning a new language
- isolation from others of a similar cultural background
- or facing a new cultural environment
- experiences of trauma before and after settlement.

Adapting to a new culture can be a hurdle which impacts on mental health. Grief can relate to the loss of values that were the norm in the culture of origin.

4.8. Psycho-social challenges before and after migration

Climate migrants experienced psychosocial and mental health crises before, during, and after their migration. According to the survey, respondents of the study faced critical psycho-social challenges in living conditions, basic needs, housing facilities, family concerns, risk of infection, matters of their children, poverty, joblessness, unemployment, future insecurity, and inadequate social support which created psychological distress, depressive disorder, stress, and anxiety.

The psycho-social challenges after coming to Dhaka city were no less critical than before migration. They had to bear the difficulties of survival. The various crises they faced after the climate effect included lack of work, starvation, unsanitary conditions, lack of

housing and transport facilities, insecurity, unemployment, lack of social protection, and uncertainty in life.

4.9. Psychological distress before and after migration

It has been noted that both before and after migration, respondents experienced severe psychological distress. They experience anxiety and depression, which causes poor sleep quality.

The responses from the respondents vary in terms of opinion. However, some people experience episodic stress while others experience acute stress. Some people feel chronic stress. One of the Respondents stated that

“There are different thoughts, which makes me sometimes acute stressed... as a result, some common signs and symptoms are anxiety and depression, tension, headache, back pain, neck pain or jaw pain... Sometimes I felt transient stomach, gut and bowel problems, heartburn, acid stomach, flatulence, diarrhea, or constipation.”

Because of climatic effects, they are unable to accomplish as much as they once could before climatic effects, which adds to their frustration.

Anxiety about one's personal life, physical illness, a lack of access to medical care, uncertainty about the future, concerns about one's family, society, failure, or financial condition all contribute to frustration after a disaster.

Due to these bad behaviours, after the migration is also characterised by neglect, carelessness, humiliation, disrespect, inattention, insignificance, and unlawful practices.

One of the respondents said,

“I have come across various changes in my lifespan... I felt frustration in every significant event in my life during the disaster, before and after migration... after losing my home place, frustration attacked my mind strongly.”

5. Discussion

- Disasters happened long ago in their lives however, its aftereffects are still present today.
- Because of lower classes, they are unable to take various preventive measures before disaster. They try to survive how long they can stay in their homeland. When they are unable to live on, they start being migrated towards the city.
- Various types of neglect and abuse occur in the form of failure food, shelter, clothing, medical care, and personal care, leading to malnutrition, depression, confusion, and life threatening health harm. As a result, the respondents become frustrated, and their health is damaged day by day.
- Because of climatic effects, they are unable to accomplish as much as they once could before climatic effects, which adds to their frustration.
- Anxiety about one's personal life, physical illness, a lack of access to medical care, uncertainty about the future, and concerns about one's family, society, failure, or financial condition all contribute to frustration after the disaster.

- The experience of migration can be a complex and multifaceted journey, often accompanied by a myriad of challenges that can profoundly impact the lives of those who embark on this path.

6. Recommendations

- Internal migration within Bangladesh also requires more attention, with many migrants facing challenges due to the lack of services, resources, and employment opportunities.
- To assist migrants, education programmes, training, and affordable accommodation will be required for an effective adaptation plan.
- To establish multidisciplinary interventions, with focus on skills development, such as work-related skills.
- Supportive Adaptation measures for climate change help to make planned migration of climate induced displacement.
- GO and NGOs Local should take income generating activities and microcredit facilities in the climate affected areas.
- Local administration should take strong initiatives for women to avoid the events of physical abuse or assault and threat to personal safety other unexpected events during disasters and after migration.
- Policymakers should make an urgent plan for better mental health care and prevention programs for slum dwellers.
- More and more research should be conducted to find out the coping and mitigation strategy and other relevant issues for the climate affected areas of Bangladesh.

Globalisation, modernization, and advancements in technology have significantly impacted human migration patterns, making it a pressing contemporary issue that warrants careful examination. The rapid increase in worldwide migration flows, coupled with the complexity and diversity of migration patterns, have substantial consequences on the daily lives of those who migrate, often resulting in adverse health risks and outcomes.

7. Conclusion

In this research, it is clear that migration due to climate change significantly impacts the mental health of urban poor women living in Dhaka's Korail slum. The study highlights that these women face a range of psychological and social challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and stress, which are exacerbated by their precarious living conditions, lack of basic services, and social support. The mental health burden before, during, and after migration underscores the need for targeted interventions that address the unique needs of climate migrants, particularly women. Effective policies and programs should be developed to provide better mental health care, socio-economic support, and safer living environments to enhance the well-being of these vulnerable populations. Continued research is essential to understand the full scope of migration-related mental health issues and to develop sustainable strategies for improving the quality of life for climate migrants in urban slums.

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