



Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities: A Multifaceted Study on the Experiences of Senior Citizen Migrants in Urban Areas of Punjab, Pakistan

Ume Hafsa¹, Mohammad Meesam², Adeel Ur Rehman³

¹ Labor Welfare & Safety Officer (LW&SO), Pakistan Navy

² Social Welfare Officer, District Multan, Punjab, Pakistan

³ Lecturer, University of Jhang, Punjab, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

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This comprehensive research explores the urban experiences of elderly migrants in Punjab, Pakistan, providing insights into the obstacles and possibilities they face. The study employs a comprehensive approach to investigate various aspects of the mobility of elderly individuals, taking into account social, economic, and cultural factors. Its objective is to uncover the challenges that seniors encounter when adjusting to urban life while acknowledging the potential benefits and opportunities associated with their relocation. This is achieved by examining the perspectives of senior citizens. The research utilized qualitative research design and case study methodology for data collection. The results reveal that senior citizen migrants in urban Punjab face significant obstacles, including social isolation, limited healthcare access, and financial difficulties. Navigating unfamiliar urban environments, these individuals often face with social isolation, leading to a sense of alienation. The challenges are compounded by restricted access to high-quality healthcare, impacting their overall well-being. Furthermore, in urban settings, traditional support systems may weaken, potentially affecting financial stability and exacerbating economic constraints. The insights from the study can guide the development of policies and interventions aimed at improving the welfare of this demographic in urban areas.

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Corresponding Author's Email: adeel.sociologist@gmail.com

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Introduction

Migration, as defined by Ellerman (2005), involves the voluntary or compelled departure of individuals from their native countries in pursuit of employment, termed as emigrants or immigrants. This intricate and historically significant phenomenon impacts economic, social, cultural dimensions, as well as geopolitics, exchange, and social commerce (McAuliffe & Ruhs, 2017). Internally, migration is a widely discussed global subject, encompassing various movements such as rural-urban, urban-rural, rural-to-rural, and urban-to-urban, with rural-urban migration being particularly crucial (Bilir, 2010). The transition from urban to rural areas, driven by factors such as job insecurity, trade, retirement, and the high cost of living in metropolitan regions, is a prevalent occurrence (Adewale, 2005). In developing nations, disparities in financial advancement contribute to a significant rise in rural-to-urban migration, a trend subject to fluctuations due to unpredictable development dimensions (Nyberg–Sørensen et al., 2002). Migration is a human spirit driven by experience, dreams, and trust, impacting both the communities that receive and receive migrants, and their communities as a whole (Stockdale, 2004).

Pakistan is a developing or underdeveloped nation with a high rural-to-urban migration rate, despite its low-income population and low poverty rates. Agriculture is a significant source of income, with 44% of the workforce engaged in this sector, and 68% in rural areas. Pakistan's urban economy contributes 78% to the national GDP, despite being home to 33% of the population. With a 3% annual urbanization rate, 35% to 50% of the population lives in agglomerations, with projections suggesting more will live in urban areas by 2030 (Mitra & Murayama, 2009).

Air factors like temperature and precipitation influence agrarian productivity in nation regions, with warmth stress specifically affecting the effectiveness of winter crops (Teixeira et al., 2013). The dry season in Punjab and Sindh significantly impacts crop yields, causing sharecroppers to seek elective jobs and occasionally move to urban settlements (Mohmand, 2011). Pakistan's rural urban migration is a miracle that not only improves the financial status of migrant families but also provides employment opportunities in urban areas (De Haan, & Rogaly, 2002). The rural-urban movement in Pakistan significantly impacts migrant nuclear families and the economy due to its unique volume and nature (Hassan, 2020).

Pakistan's main source of income is land and agriculture, with migration from rural to urban areas driven by cultivable land. Unbalanced growth can be influenced by job availability, income, and vertical occupational mobility, as well as state/region status and distance (Khanam, 2013). Migration in Punjab is affecting local employment and survival, improving migrants' socio-economic position and reducing production costs. However, it also reduces demand-supply gaps and lowers production costs. However, as every coin has two sides, the other side of this aspect is that excessive migration to the urban areas as well as the increase in population has led to negative effects (Owusu et al., 2008).

The age of 60 or 65, generally proportionate to retirement ages in most developed nations is said to be the start of senior citizen's age (Bloom et al., 2011). The researcher suggests that old age signifies physical dependence, declining mental capacity, social withdrawal, and a shift from financial independence to reliance on others for assistance (Aeri & Sharma, 2001). Old age is

challenging due to limited energy, declining mental capacities, health conditions, social misfortunes, and the breakdown of traditional social associations and changing value structures, affecting the interest and engagement of migrant senior citizens (McMichael & Manderson, 2004).

Aging is a global challenge in the 21st century, characterized by declining mortality and improved public health care. Longer, healthier lives are achieved through improved health services and financial advancements (Nepal, 2010). The aging population demands global coordination and global efforts to manage negative outcomes. The United Nations and other organizations have developed strategies to mitigate negative impacts. However, the wellbeing of emigrant senior citizens is improving due to lower disease rates. Current biomedical anti-aging studies may extend the healthy and profitable life of future generations (Fand et al., 2015).

Migrants, particularly senior citizens, experience numerous changes and experiences, including disappointment, losses, frustration, abuse, and internal conflict. These adjustment issues can be layered and often occur simultaneously. Not all migrants have negative experiences, and some may feel migration was a struggle due to fluctuating situational factors such as reasons for immigrating, financial stability, assistance, job opportunities, language, abilities, education, perceived amicability, inspiration, and response to loss (Pavlish et al., 2010).

Rural-urban migration is a significant issue in developing countries, particularly for senior citizens. These individuals face challenges such as loneliness, insecurity, poor health, and dissatisfaction due to lack of basic needs such as healthier living and better healthcare. Urban families often fail to fulfill these needs, leading to loneliness, insecurity, and dissatisfaction. Studying the impact of rural-urban migration on senior citizens and their families is crucial, as it influences social texture and family structures (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2006).

Senior citizens' couples face anxiety, weakness, loneliness, and social issues, leading to isolation. They propose moving to better places with better services, but prefer living with relatives (Gautam, 2005). Migration, a complex social issue due to globalization, has both positive and negative effects on both migrants and senior citizens. In developing nations, traditional family systems have destabilized, and rural migrant seniors face challenges such as loss of home, network, and cultural identity. They are also impacted by individual aging processes and community losses (Cook et al., 2007). The study found that older individuals are more likely to migrate, while senior citizens are less likely to do so. Nuclear families with higher education levels are more likely to have out-migrants, while higher dependency levels decrease migration chances. Financial status, including land ownership, does not influence migration decisions (Haq et al., 2015).

Research questions

What are the diverse factors influencing urban migration?

What are the challenges encountered by senior citizens as a result of urban migration?

What opportunities become available to senior citizens following urban migration?

2.0 Literature Review

Liversage's (2023) study focuses on the well-being of migrant senior citizens but overlooks factors such as mobility issues, depression, seclusion, emotional insecurity, and homesickness. In Asian countries, including Pakistan, migrant senior citizens often depend on their male children

for individual care and financial support, highlighting cultural distinctions in these scenarios. Ekoh et al. (2022) noted that globalization and technological advancements have reduced family social interactions, leading to a decline in informal connections with relatives, particularly affecting migrant senior citizens. This detachment from society fosters feelings of powerlessness and sadness among these individuals. Neglect from family members and a lack of encouragement for social interactions contribute to loneliness and detachment among senior citizens, especially women.

According to Nguyen et al. (2021), many elderly individuals experience poverty due to their reliance on agriculture and limited education, leading to hardships, a low economic status, isolation, and poor health in later years. Essential necessities like food, clothing, shelter, human services, and access to safe drinking water are crucial for this group. Gender inequality and oppression are prevalent social issues among migrant senior citizen widows. Marandi and Main (2021) discovered that the availability of community resources, particularly in housing, transportation, and community foundations, can mitigate the impact of distressing events for migrant senior citizens. The absence of these resources may increase vulnerability in this group. Shankardass (2021) highlighted that the diminishing status of senior citizens due to age-related economic factors, changes in family structures, and migration patterns is a significant concern. With declining birth rates and increasing life expectancy, senior citizens' reliance is growing, while co-residence is decreasing. Urbanization may contribute to the erosion of social norms, resulting in a shift toward nuclear family structures rather than joint ones.

Fang et al. (2020) found that in urban areas, many migrant senior citizens face age-related diseases like coronary disease, hypertension, and diabetes, making them susceptible to disabilities, health problems, and loss of independence. Inadequate rural seniority homes for large populations are evident. While some homes are operated by volunteers and benevolent individuals, they fall short in addressing the health and convenience needs of these seniors. Tang et al. (2020) explored that migrant senior citizens in urban areas often face a diminished societal status due to aging, exacerbated by shifting life patterns. They lose influence in household economies, as they now have the ability to select their own employment. Society perceives them as inept, deeming their skills and commitments outdated even before retirement. This decline in status poses a notable challenge for these elderly individuals. Pass et al. (2019) stated that elderly individuals residing in rural areas encounter challenges such as limited access to medical services, a dependence on themselves, family, or friends for transportation, and insufficient financial resources. In comparison to older migrants, these seniors face a lower quality of life concerning housing, health, and nutrition. Despite displaying notable confidence and autonomy, these seniors contend with frail support systems, contributing to an elevated poverty rate.

2.1 Theory of Human Social Practice

The sociological paradigm known as the Theory of Human Social Practice emphasizes the role of social practices in shaping both individual and collective conducts within a society. This theory asserts that practices, which encompass a variety of behaviors, routines, and activities, serve as the fundamental units of organization for human existence. These practices are interconnected

and influenced by historical, social, and cultural contexts. Often referred to as the Theory of Social Practices, this framework is crucial for understanding the experiences and challenges faced by older immigrant populations in urban areas. In this context, migration can be conceptualized as a social practice influenced by economic, social, and personal factors. The decisions of senior individuals regarding migration involve nuanced discussions considering finances, family relationships, and lifestyle preferences.

Elderly individuals, typically aged 60 and above, relocate to urban areas for reasons such as seeking improved healthcare, being closer to family, accessing cultural amenities, or exploring retirement opportunities. This concept aids academics and policymakers in comprehending the social practices motivating older adults to move to metropolitan regions. It delves into the cultural, economic, and social factors influencing their migration decisions, providing insights into the rationale behind their choices. This understanding facilitates a comprehensive examination of the daily habits and practices of senior citizen migrants in urban settings, including their utilization of services, interactions with neighbors, and leisure activities. Identifying areas that may require support or interventions becomes simplified through an understanding of these practices. Elderly individuals often bring along their cultural customs and traditions, and the examination of how these practices are maintained and adapted in urban environments is conducted through the lens of the Theory of Social Practice. Understanding this process is crucial for preserving cultural diversity and identity. Social inclusion of senior immigrants is a significant concern, given potential experiences of loneliness, prejudice, or language barriers.

The Theory of Social Practice helps identify social practices that either facilitate or hinder their integration into urban communities, informing programs and policies aimed at promoting social inclusion. Furthermore, the theory explains how older immigrant migrants engage with healthcare services, adhere to prescriptions, and adopt preventive measures, particularly in relation to their specific healthcare needs. This information guides the development of healthcare programs and services tailored to the needs of senior migrant populations. The significance of individuals' networks and social connections, known as social capital, is paramount for overall well-being. Knowledge about how senior migrants establish social capital in urban areas and the role of social practices in this process can inform strategies to enhance their support networks. Decision-makers can use this concept as a framework to craft policies that acknowledge and respect the social practices of senior immigrants. By considering their needs and preferences related to housing, transportation, or community engagement, policymakers can create more thoughtful and effective interventions. Interventions rooted in an understanding of their social practices can precisely target efforts to enhance the lives of elderly migrant populations. Customizing community-based activities and programs to align with the daily routines and cultural preferences of elderly immigrant populations is feasible. The social practices and well-being of these individuals may undergo fluctuations over time, and conducting long-term research guided by the Theory of Social Practice can track these changes, providing valuable insights for evaluating the effectiveness of treatments and policies.

3.0 Methodology

This chapter delves into the research techniques and design crafted to explore and comprehend the subject under study. Acting as a guide, it delineates the methodology applied in the study, extensively elaborating on the design, strategy, and research techniques employed to investigate the real-life experiences of senior migrants in Punjab. As per Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) definition, qualitative research is characterized by an interpretative, naturalistic viewpoint, aiming to understand phenomena in their natural contexts by interpreting events based on the meanings individuals ascribe to them.

The study utilized a phenomenological qualitative method, focusing on the lived experiences of senior migrants and gathering personal narratives through individual interviews. Phenomenology, a discipline exploring the essence of human consciousness and revealing patterns that illuminate participants' perceptions of specific events, is commonly utilized in the examination of lived experiences. Recognized as a unique form of discourse fostering information generation through dynamic interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee, interviews served as the primary method for data collection. The researcher conducted these interviews using a loosely structured interview guide encompassing essential questions and sub-questions. This method facilitated the collection of participant descriptions, allowing for exploration, illumination, and gentle probing of their experiences.

Descriptive phenomenological research, aligning with the focus on the human experience, was deemed appropriate for this study, specifically investigating how migrant elderly individuals experience their family situations and daily lives in urban settings. Participants in the study were senior citizens who had relocated with their families in Punjab Province, focusing on the districts of Multan, Lahore, and Rawalpindi. Purposive sampling was employed, with participants selected based on the researcher's knowledge of the population and the study's specific requirements. Data quality took precedence over quantity in phenomenological research, aiming to understand the phenomenon deeply through exposure to its qualities, rather than simply counting the number of people with a particular experience. The study included three female principals of primary schools chosen deliberately based on their experience of being in the role for three years or more. All participants provided detailed descriptions of their experiences, and transcription was conducted meticulously to capture oral text verbatim, including pauses, emphasis, and emotional reactions. To protect participants' privacy, pseudonyms were used in the study.

4.0 Results

The identity crises

The study unveils a multitude of intricate factors that impact rural migrants, encompassing financial, educational, health, social, cultural, conflicts, and insecurity dimensions. A common motivation for rural migrants is the pursuit of enhanced economic standing and employment security, driven by the decline of agriculture and diminishing job prospects in rural areas. This trend is particularly notable among families with senior citizens, who migrate to urban areas seeking solutions to these challenges. The research underscores that conflict, uncertainty, and a lack of educational opportunities contribute significantly to the decision of many rural residents to

migrate to urban centers. Factors compelling migration include the absence of social amenities and the dearth of improved facilities, such as social services, healthcare, and modern lifestyles, in rural areas. While some families relocate to urban areas to embrace the urban lifestyle, the adjustment proves challenging for migrant senior citizens. The study brings to light that migration choices are shaped by both social and financial conditions, with families playing a pivotal role in motivating members to migrate. According to the Systems Theory of Migration, personal desires and rural adjustment mechanisms influence decisions related to rural-urban migration. Migrant senior citizens frequently migrate with their families due to close family bonds, the anticipation of a connected life, and the aspiration for improved compensation and support. They hold the belief that prioritizing their family's well-being is the key to achieving life satisfaction and happiness, even if it entails enduring physical distance. The research findings underscore that migrant senior citizens prioritize their family relationships over physical proximity, emphasizing potential and probability. Their commitment to family leads them to sacrifice personal convenience for the well-being of their kin. They actively engage in social interactions with people from their village, sharing common concerns and discussing aspects of rural and urban life. The significance of strong family ties is evident in their use of mobile phones and participation in events in rural areas.

The present way of living and familial condition of migrant senior citizens

Migrant senior citizens frequently encounter dissatisfaction stemming from subpar housing and financial conditions, restricted freedom, and a sense of hopelessness upon returning home. The challenge of adapting to their new community and defining their role within it is a common struggle. In rural areas, they relish a modest yet comfortable lifestyle, often engaging in agriculture and farming, where they benefit from physical, moral, and financial support in their daily endeavors. This study sheds light on the intricate emotions and tensions experienced by migrant senior citizens throughout their migration journey. While some seniors exhibit energy and contentment in urban environments, a majority express unhappiness with their hometowns due to emotional attachments and a lack of support. Their reduced interest in forging social connections in new communities is attributed to factors such as old age and negative perceptions. Family involvement is generally low, with only a few actively engaged and financially robust families participating in decision-making processes. Among the study's findings, it is observed that certain participants lead fulfilling lives with their families, enjoying the vitality and dynamism of urban settings, albeit with a tinge of exhaustion. They express a preference for comfort and readily available products but yearn for the strong community ties left behind. This discrepancy results in nostalgic emotions and a realization of the pivotal role played by family support. For some, the hardships of a past life in poverty serve as a driving force to persist in the city. The geographical adaptability of these individuals introduces them to new experiences that, in turn, shape their future perspectives.

The socio-cultural repercussion on migrant senior citizen

In Pakistani society, a tapestry of multiple cultures intertwines as individuals bring their cultural values and practices to novel communities. Rural areas are characterized by values such as cooperation, respect, and communal worth, while urban settings lean toward being status-

conscious, self-centered, and driven by financial pursuits. Migrant families, particularly the younger members, find easy acceptance, but senior members among migrants' express dissatisfaction with urban culture. Residing in urban areas has a profound impact on cultural values, resulting in a loss of worth, dignity, autonomy, socio-economic status, wisdom, and a sense of identity as integral community members for migrant senior citizens. Despite possessing valuable knowledge, life experiences, and professional skills, migrant senior citizens find a lack of interest from their families, communities, and society in acknowledging their contributions. Societal disparities pose challenges in addressing aging-related issues. Migrant senior citizens navigate complex experiences with cultural diversity, often exhibiting reluctance to embrace urban culture. They tend to favor the non-material cultures of rural settings over the material culture prevalent in their families. The majority of migrant senior citizens express dissatisfaction with the material culture found in cities, holding a preference for the traditional practices observed in rural areas. Resolving these issues necessitates aligning societal standards with individual beliefs.

Mode of problems faced by the senior citizens in adjustment in urban areas

The process of migration poses challenges for both individuals and families, with some perceiving it as a joyful pursuit of freedom. However, migrant senior citizens encounter significant obstacles, encompassing social isolation, financial instability, health concerns, and psychological issues. Noteworthy challenges include the absence of family support, inadequate government pensions, feelings of rejection, and a dearth of social connections in urban settings. Emotional and environmental issues further complicate the lives of migrant senior citizens in urban communities, marked by difficulties in coping with the loss of a spouse and a lack of domestic skills, leading to sentiments of loneliness and stress. The living conditions, such as residing in small and substandard homes, play a role in their adjustment, contrasting with their prior experiences of well-being in natural and open environments. Financial struggles and health issues among migrant senior citizens in urban areas can contribute to dissatisfaction and unfavorable experiences. Despite some having robust social networks and positive relationships, many still feel displaced and unsupported. The study proposes that although government services are utilized to aid migrant senior citizens in their adjustment, these services fall short of fully meeting their needs. Traditional services tend to focus on conventional requirements rather than addressing the entirety of their needs.

Required welfare facilities as government maneuvered policies

Government-designed social welfare policies aim to safeguard citizens' rights and well-being, having been implemented in four phases spanning from 1955 to 1994. However, since then, no new policies have been introduced. While concerns persist about limited services for senior citizens, advancements in technology and medicine offer the potential to extend life expectancy. Senior citizen services were initiated between 1988 and 1993, yet many seniors continue to work in rural areas. The discussion centers on evaluating the efficacy of social welfare policies, particularly for senior citizens and migrant seniors. Present policies predominantly target women, families, children, and the young, as well as those with physical and mental disabilities, with minimal attention given to senior citizens. Recognizing the challenges faced by seniors who are

unable to work and encounter rejection from their families and society, the government has introduced new policies to address their needs. However, the policy framework for social welfare concerning migrant senior citizens is deemed insufficient, lacking a comprehensive understanding of their needs. The framework falls short in identifying primary resources and promoting their independence. Practical strategies are lacking, government monitoring is inadequate, and budget constraints contribute to the ineffectiveness of these policies. Migration emerges as a significant concern in the context of aging and social welfare policies, impacting the well-being and personal adjustment of senior citizens.

Conclusion

Rural-urban migration has profound effects on rural communities, particularly those engaged in agriculture. Senior citizens from rural areas often migrate to urban centers seeking social amenities and strong family connections. Many choose to relocate with their families, prioritizing their lives and making sacrifices for the sake of their kin. This complex phenomenon raises concerns about the development of agricultural regions in rural settings. The research indicates that migrant senior citizens express dissatisfaction with their social relationships in their new urban communities. Half of them struggle to form connections, while one-fourth do not establish any relationships at all. Despite this, they maintain daily contact with their rural communities and actively participate in events. Emotional distress is reported among migrant seniors, stemming from challenges in their family relationships.

The study further reveals a divide among migrant seniors in urban living satisfaction. Half of them find contentment due to positive family experiences and decision-making autonomy. In contrast, the other half grapples with social isolation and loneliness, attributing these difficulties to strained family relationships. This underscores the detrimental impact of migration on their overall well-being. Living conditions and the environment significantly shape the roles and responsibilities of migrant senior citizens, who often view their past rural lives as superior. Urban living proves challenging, leading to feelings of loss of dignity, autonomy, and socio-economic status. Additionally, they face difficulties arising from the deaths of family members and the disruption of social networks. Cultural diversity poses a challenge for migrant senior citizens, contributing to depression in approximately one-third of the population. While rural areas tend to respect cultural values, urban areas struggle to accommodate this diversity. Many elderly migrants find themselves lacking sufficient family care in their new surroundings, and traditional support systems prove insufficient.

The significance of social and financial assistance for preserving dignity in old age becomes apparent, with half of the participants expressing dissatisfaction with their family support. Senior migrants face challenges assimilating into new environments due to financial struggles, unemployment, and a lack of social support. Lingering physical issues like bodily aches, hypertension, and frailty have adverse effects on their mental well-being. Consequently, individuals grapple with feelings of worthlessness, loneliness, and demoralization as they attempt to effectively apply their accumulated knowledge. The aging process of senior migrants is influenced by organizational, social, and psychological resources. Elevated poverty,

unemployment, and crime rates present governance challenges for the government. It is crucial for the government to prioritize the development of essential infrastructure in rural areas as a primary measure to mitigate forced migration and discourage young individuals from relocating to urban centers. Existing government initiatives are considered inadequate, lacking social protection and support for effectively addressing the needs of migrating older individuals in urban environments. The underrepresentation of this demographic in the policymaking process underscores the need to establish institutions that provide social assistance and essential amenities. Recognizing their wealth of knowledge and experience, such measures can contribute to community development and enhance their overall quality of life.

Ume Hafsa: Problem Identification and Model Development

Mohammad Meesam: Data Collection, Results and Analysis

Adeel Ur Rehman: Literature search, Methodology and final drafting

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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