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**Assessing the Socio-Economic Role of Remittances: A Case Study of
Migrants' Families in the North West of Pakistan**

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Setting the Context

Globalization is a complex concept folded with macro and micro level implications. It is a continuously structuring and restructuring of the world economy and global social order. Consequently, more cosmopolitan and metropolitan cities are emerging worldwide (Koser, 2007; see also Held et al., 1999). Faist, (2009) argues that the effects of globalization could be widely observed through various social, political and economic transformations through the movement of people, goods, ideas, information and capital within and beyond national borders (Faist, 2009; Koser, 2007¹).

Migration is one of the most debated topics in globalization discourses. And as Castles & Miller rightly argued, globalization is a widely accepted framework for discussions on international migration. It is at the same time a political project and an economic process that brings about structural changes, and leads to the process of social transformation (Castles & Miller, 2009). Similarly, Vertovec illustrates that the ongoing expansions of urban economy and labor markets are embracing population that are more diverse, and are transforming and generating new transnational and international identities (Vertovec, 2006 cited in Cedric & Dorai, 2009, p. 9; see also PILDAT, 2008).

The current century is comparatively more fluid and open in communication and technology. Therefore, people are more mobile, and forms and patterns of migration are becoming more complex but also more restricted than ever before (Urry, 2007 cited in Castles, 2010, p.1567). For the last few decades, international migration occupied a significant place in international politics and state policies. Stricter immigration policies and border controls are taking place; however, the flow of migrants is ever increasing (Castles & Miller, 2009). According to United Nations reports, the number of migrants is increasing every year and in the past two decades, there has been significant growth in the number of migrants. In 2017, there were around 258 million migrants in the world with an increase of up to 10 percent as compared to 2015 figures (UN, 2017, see also Penninx, 2009). Majority of migrants, around two-thirds (64 percent or 165 million people), are living in high-income countries. The middle or low-income countries' share

¹ The 3Ts (Transportation, Tourism & Telecommunication) effect of globalization (see Koser, 2007)

• Orozco (2005) describes 5Ts with reference to the impacts of migration and development. Here, the 5Ts are transport, transfer, tourism, trade and telecommunication (cited in Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, p. 145).

is 36 percent (92 million). In comparison with the year 2000, there is a slight increase in international migrants in 2017, while international migrants' ratio has decrease in low and middle-income countries (UN, 2017).

It is believed that migration significantly contributes to the world economy, and is equally important for countries of both Global North and South. However, due to internal and international politics and socio-economic pressures, Global North countries do not encourage random migration. For example, they prefer selective or highly skilled migration (Koser, 2007). In connection to the importance of migrants, Koser argues that in some developed countries, migrants hold complete segments of the economy and occupy important positions in the public offices, and if they stop working, the entire socio-economic structure will collapse immediately. Citing the example of the UK, she further adds that "though it is difficult actually to prove – that migrants are worth more to the UK economy than North Sea oil" (Koser, 2007, p. 10). The importance of migrants and their labor is nevertheless denied by some political parties (Koser, 2007). In case of developing countries, migration is not less than a 'heavenly help' to minimize socio-economic problems of people. Moreover, many international organizations such as World Bank, IOM, UN and Asian Developing Bank also believe in positive outcomes of migration², and mention continuously in their reports and policy papers that developing countries are getting more money through migration than through development aid (Koser, 2007).

Migration is a complex process and its transcending nature is permanently creating new migrant categories and migration forms (Cedric & Dorai, 2009). As Naerssen et al. (2008) argue, it is not easy to make generalizations when dealing with migration. It is a widely contested term with manifold meanings and patterns. It can be defined according to a number of interconnecting concepts and definitions like the place of birth, country of residence and citizenship, and the purpose and magnitude of stay. Once individuals migrate and cross international borders, they themselves and their immediate families whom they left behind are expose to significant socio-economic and cultural changes. Thus the transnational process not only affects the people directly involve in migration process (such as migrants and their immediate family members) but also affects the non-migrant communities and are transforming societies in both sending and receiving countries (Naerssen et al., 2008).

² These institutions or organizations mostly focus on policies regarding Circular or temporary migration (Koser, 2007).

Migration is also believed to be a multi directional phenomena, however, South to North and South to South migration is more prevalent. Similarly, the current discourses on migration mostly focus on movements from South to North which is evident from the fact that most of the scientific and political discourses and debates focus on South to North³ flow of migration (Cedric & Dorai, 2009).

It is believed that low socio-economic, political and development progress in developing countries instigates migration. Furthermore, it is assumed that other reasons such as decreasing job opportunities and increasing demographic, democratic and developmental asymmetries, deprivations and constraints based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, political and economic bases in the Global South countries increase migration⁴ (Haq, 1980). The labor market segmentation in developed countries is creating more opportunities for labor force; therefore, migrants from developing countries, even under highly exploitative circumstances, are ready to migrate. Moreover, the globalized communication as mentioned by Held et al. (1999) and Beck (2000) on one hand has led to awareness regarding prospects and possibilities for migrants, and on the other hand, revolutionized transportation system and made mobility more economical and convenient (Koser, 2007; PILDAT, 2008; see also for example Held et al., 1999; Beck, 2000; Bauman, 1998).

Migration scholarship has given considerable space to discussions on inequality in the migration process. For example, Castles (2010) and Monsutti (2009) have argued that some individuals and groups are highly privileged in the migration process due to their resources and skills, whilst others with low socio-economic, political, and ethnical backgrounds face numerous limitations (Castles, 2010; Monsutti, 2009 see also Cedric & Dorai, 2009). The situation seems overdrawn and in accordance with Bauman's statement (1998) that, "the right to be mobile is more class specific and more selective than ever" (Bauman, 1998, p.19). However, migration is an essential component of globalization, and a source of free cross border trade and networks, yet—in the absence of proper global governance system—the phenomena

³ Europe, Australia and North America have 56 percent of international migrants in 2000 (UN, 2006). In 2017, USA is the first major recipient of international migrants with 50 million migrants. Saudi Arabia stands second and Germany and the Russian federation holds third and fourth place in international migrants receiving countries (around 12 for each). These countries followed by UK and Ireland with nearly 9 million migrants and United Arab Emirates (UAE) has some 8 million migrants (UN, 2017).

⁴ For more details on migration motivations and reasons see also Monsutti, 2009; Gonin, 2009; Stark & Bloom, 1985; Taylor, 1999, Massey, et al., 1993 and Naerssen et al., 2008. Furthermore, perspectives on migration patterns i.e. the role of nation states, institutions, geographical proximity, social and family networks and historical and cultural factors that shape movements (Haas 2008, Koser, 2007 and Monsutti, 2009 and for non-economic factors of migration i.e. conflict and war see Ahmed et al., 2008).

of random migration is largely discouraged by many countries of the Global North (Cedric & Dorai, 2009). Describing the scenario of migration process, Castles (2010) argues that the utopian world of borderless geographies has not yet come; there are inequalities and discrimination in the migration processes. He further adds that the echo of migration debates has been heard at various junctions in history of political discussions. For example, few years back i.e. after the financial crisis of 2008, highly advanced economies increasingly needed immigrant labor force to recover from the economic and demographic shock. Even then, the labor force they demanded was highly selective: individuals with higher skills were considered valuable, and low skilled migrants were discouraged and restrained from placing themselves in the competitive markets (Castles, 2010, p.1567).

Mobility, which is synonymously used for so called “circular or temporary migration” is highly reflected in migration debates in the modern world and is seen as an alternative strategy to counter long-term immigration (Castles, 2010). Moreover, states are sovereign either to give access or limit non-nationals. Many states, especially in the Global North, have formed strict border control for non-solicited migrants, as does the EU with its immigration policies⁵. On one hand, the EU advocate freedom of movement as a fundamental right, but on the other hand, they also restrict immigration especially of the so-called third world nationals. This reflects a contradiction in their words and actions, and their slogan of free movement for certain categories and groups of people seems void (Penninx, 2009).

The significant increase in international migration and remittances to developing countries is believed as a step towards poverty reduction and local development for home countries (Ekra et al., 2011; see also Ramírez et al., 2005). The migration and development discourses see migrants as agents of economic development and social change for their countries of origin (Kapur, 2004; Haas, 2008; see also Dannecker, 2009). For instance, remittances boost economic activities and create more employment opportunities for local communities. Additionally, social remittances transform and change traditional gender roles (Schiller & Faist, 2010). In South Asia, like other countries in the region, the majority of migrants from Pakistan are temporary labor migrants in Gulf Cooperation Council states (Malik, 2009). The remittances labor migrants send to their families potentially change gender relations in the area (Iqbal et al., 2014).

⁵ “The EU (and its predecessors) essentially created a fundamental right to move and settle within the EU area for citizens and residents of its member states. On the other hand, EU member states have developed restrictive and defensive immigration policies to keep out unasked-for migrants” (Penninx, 2009, p. 24).

Generally, the contemporary epoch is marked by a dense interconnection of economic, cultural and social structures as well as people and places. This in return has more in-depth effects on people relationships. Consequently, the whole process of interconnectedness has catalyzed the global flow of information and communication, or, as described by Appadurai, the finanscapes, ideoscapes, technoscapes and mediascapes (Appadurai 1995 as cited in Cedric & Dorai, 2009, p. 09). The ongoing changing discourses and growing knowledge in social science have led researchers to reevaluate previous concepts and analytical frameworks in migration studies. As Massey et al. (1998) highlight that the concepts used by social scientists to explain international migration reflect the classical settings of the industrial era. Moreover, these approaches face challenges and need modification at the dawn of the twenty first century (Massey et al., 1998). There is a fertile ground for further research and exploration as argued by Cedric and Dorai (2009), the whole migration process has to be analyzed in close connection with integration, transnationality, socio-economic development and settlement issues. This will bring more innovative analytical and methodological frameworks that will articulate both local and global perspectives on migration and development (Cedric & Dorai, 2009, Monsutti, 2009, Castles, 2010).

1.2 Migration in Pakistani Context

Since its inception in 1947, Pakistan has witnessed some major population shifts. The first historical movement took place from 1947 to 1948 just after the partition of united India⁶, in which approximately 14.5 million people migrated (Bharadwaj et al., 2008). A decade later i.e. in 1960s and then early 70s, Pakistan again saw a significant movement of economically driven migrants to North America, Europe and Gulf countries (Amjad & Arif, 2014; Ballard, 2003).

The present study is about the role of migration (labor migration) and remittances in changing gender relations in the households left behind by migrants in district Abbottabad in the North West of Pakistan. Households from two union councils⁷ (union council *Malakpura* and union council *Nawansher*) of district Abbottabad are selected for this study⁸. Thus, in this section, I mainly discuss labor migration from Pakistan to Gulf Cooperation Council states.

⁶ Before 1947 united India was a colony of British Empire which was divided into two separate countries India and Pakistan in 1947.

⁷ The union councils are smaller administrative units (third tier administrative unit) within the district. Each union council has one or more villages depend upon the population of the union council (GoKP, 2013). The union councils are discussed in detail chapter no.4 sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

⁸ Number of households, respondents (men & women) and their characteristics are discussed in detail in Methodology chapter no. 4 sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

At present, Pakistan is among major labor exporting countries in South Asia (BE & OE, 2017). According to registered migrant's figures of Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (the federal department dealing with emigrants), until 2018, there were about 10.48 million⁹ Pakistanis working in different countries of the world. These immigrants include labor migrants to Gulf States, students and emigrants and their families to Western countries (BE & OE 2018). However, the accurate ratio of Pakistani emigrants is not available¹⁰, and it is believed that majority of these are short-term labor migrants¹¹ in Gulf countries.

Emigration from Pakistan to Gulf Cooperation Council states (GCC) started in mid-1970s during the economic boom in the Persian Gulf. Pakistan, having surplus manpower and religious contiguity with Gulf Cooperation Council states (GCC) sent and encouraged the flow of labor migrants to these countries (Arif, 2009; Azam, 2005). According to Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BE & OE) more than 96 percent of Pakistani labor force is employed in Gulf countries (BE & OE, 2017; see also Amjad & Arif, 2014; Azam, 2005). Within these figures (i.e. 96 percent), Saudi Arabia and UAE are major destination countries for Pakistani labor migrants. Currently, Saudi Arabia has around 49 percent of labor migrants from Pakistan. It is followed by UAE with 34 percent and the remaining concentration of labor migrants is in other GCC countries¹² (BE & OE, 2018).

Large portion of remittances to Pakistan are made from Gulf countries (Arif, 2009). Benefiting from the positive outcomes of labor migration such as foreign remittances and local development, the government of Pakistan initiated new migration policies and set up federal level departments to facilitate and encourage labor migration. For example, the Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment¹³ (BE & OE) was established in 1970, and since then it has facilitated and registered around one billion Pakistanis who have moved abroad for work (BE & OE, 2019).

⁹The current official statistic available on Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BE&OE) agency.

¹⁰These are only the registered figures of migrants and do not include irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

¹¹ The labor migrants to Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC) are short term or temporary migrants who after finishing the contracts return to their countries. The labor migrants in Gulf countries are mostly illiterate and are working in the construction sector, transportation, and security services (BE & OE, 2017).

¹²Oman (7.26 percent), Bahrain (1.58 percent), Qatar (1.41 percent) and Kuwait (1.90 percent), these are 2016 figures. Collective figures from 1971-until mid-2018 are also mentioned in table 1. However, in that table these countries percentage is collectively mentioned under GCC countries.

¹³BE&OE is a Federal Government agency working under the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD).

The labor migrants from Pakistan are mainly male which is evident due to low ratio of women labor migrants. For example, around 6,500 (.06 percent) women laborers migrated till 2015 mainly to Saudi Arabia and UAE. Among these, most female migrated with their employers' families who shifted from Pakistan to these countries (BE & OE, 2015). Women's independent migration for economic purposes is negligible in Pakistan because of its strict socio-religious and cultural norms, and lack of government attention to women migration. Moreover, unfortunately, Pakistan's migration policy is largely silent about women labor migration (Azam, 2005).

Migration and remittances have considerable effects on the geographical territory, economy, population arrangements and social spatial patterns. Pakistani labor migrants in Gulf countries are mostly illiterate having rural backgrounds who send remittances directly to their immediate families back in Pakistan that has a significant impact on local economy and social structures (Amjad & Arif, 2014; Gazdar, 2003). The major output of migration includes remittances, capital, goods and social remittances that migrant workers send back to their families (Gazdar, 2003). In Pakistan, there has been a considerable increase in the flow of remittances since 2000. The remittances flow to Pakistan jumped from US \$1 billion in 2001 to US \$12 billion in 2011. The more recent figures until the first quarter of 2021 show an increase in remittances to US \$26.1 billion which is around 10 percent of Pakistan's GDP (KNOMAD, 2020).

In Pakistan, remittances have been a major motivating force for emigration (Ahmed et al., 2008). Families and households are basic units in Pakistan which take an active part in migration decisions and funds management for emigration. Usually, poor and middle-class families tend to spend all their saving on foreign endeavors in hopes of future returns (Nishat & Bilgrami, 1991). Remittances in Pakistan are subject to the nature of relationship between the migrants and the consuming population, for example, who is receiving, managing and deciding about remittances expenditures and investments. Nishat and Bilgrami illustrate that remittances in Pakistan are a kind of binding agreement between the migrants and their families at home where the latter manage the migration endeavor, and in return the former provide financial support by sending remittances (Nishat & Bilgrami, 1991).

Utilization of remittances and priorities in Pakistan are different for different social classes and geographical locations. The mainstream Pakistani literature shows that overall more than half of the remittances are spent on purchasing real estate, agricultural tools and machinery, rituals and ceremonies like marriages and death, loan repayments, charity and future savings (Amjad et al., 2014; Amjad et al., 2012; Arif, 2009; Azam, 2005). However, the study area of my thesis

such as district Abbottabad shows a relatively different pattern of remittances utilization. For example, in both poor and middle-income households, the priority areas of remittances consumption include expenditures on food, health and education. Other investments and expenditures priorities such as investments in real estate, business and savings for future and social obligations come next in the priority list of remittances investments (IUCN, 2004).

Generally, in discussions over gender dimension of remittances in the sending countries, it is argued that gender has little or no influence on the way remittances are sent and used in the countries of origin (Ekra et al., 2011). However, gender roles are crucial in migration process; they not only play a role regarding migration decisions but also influence the amount of remittances money, its management and impacts on gender relations within the households (Ekra et al., 2011). There are various power positions in households and it is thus important to look at who is receiving and managing remittances, and what role migration and remittances play in negotiating and transforming gender relations (Ekra et al., 2011 c.f. Zee, 2012, p. 24). Generally, it is argued that migration makes women de facto household heads, and that the control over remittances increases women autonomy and empowerment (Datta & Mishra, 2011; Gulati, 1993; Iqbal et al., 2014; Iqbal, et al., 2014). However, in the study area, women's position after the migration of their husbands is subject to various socio-economic and structural factors (Lefebvre, 1990). For example, as Desai and Banerji (2008) and Gulati (1987) demonstrate, household composition and social structures differently influence women's positions, and some structures such as nuclear families give them more powers while others restrict women agency (Desai & Banerji, 2008; Gulati, 1987). Similarly, regarding socio-economic differences Datta and Mishra, (2011) argue that the socio-economic classes and backgrounds also have diverse implications for women (Datta & Mishra, 2011 see also Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). Nevertheless, migration and remittances create new spaces and possibilities for negotiating gender relations and transforming social structures (Ganguly & Negi, 2010; Ramirez et al., 2005).

My interest in the study mainly developed because of my previous work experience in migration and development related research projects, and because of my personal background. I belong to a community where, in most households, women stay at home, and men commonly migrate to Gulf States for economic purposes. The primary focus of my prior projects was the monetary and developmental aspects of migration and remittances, and the target groups were mainly men. Thus, my first-hand experiences and previous work affiliation motivated me to conduct this study. Moreover, I was always curious and interested to know the socio-economic

implications of male out migration and remittances on the spouses and families left behind. Another factor that stimulated my interest was the research area or locality. Despite high labor migration from district Abbottabad, hardly any research so far conducted in the district particularly focuses on migration, remittances and gender development. Thus, my aim is to make a qualitative inquiry which will allow to unveil the unique and complex issues relating to the role and influence of remittances on gender relations in that area. Secondly, the research area has very different economic and political characteristics than most of the other areas in Pakistan. Thus, to analyze how social structures, especially gender relations, get negotiated and might lead to transformations through the remittances economy is another scientific interest guiding this research. Finally, another interesting point that motivated me was the unique socio-ethnic characteristics of different social groups in the district. For example, the social groups are from different social and ethnic backgrounds with different norms, values and social statuses. This was especially unique in the local context when studying the implications of migration because women's interactions and participation are largely determined and influenced by their socio-economic positions and ethnicity (see empirical chapters).

1.3 Significance of the Study

Pakistan stands as the second¹⁴ largest country in South Asia having a population of around 207.7 million. According to 2017 population census, women are 49 percent of the total population of Pakistan (UN WOMEN, 2019). Yet, the status of women is comparatively low in the society. The situation of women considerably varies in Pakistan due to unequal socio-economic development, regional and ethnic differences, socio-economic classes and urban and rural divides (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). However, the government of Pakistan, national and international organizations, human rights advocates and civil society are trying to bring women into the mainstream society in Pakistan (Gender Concern, 2019). Nevertheless, the socio-religious, cultural, political and economic obstacles continuously impede women participation and exercising of free will in the wider social arena in Pakistan (Tabassum, 2016).

The present study was conducted on labor migrants' households in district Abbottabad of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province¹⁵ in the North West of Pakistan. The district is located some 120km from the country's capital, Islamabad. The total population of district Abbottabad according to 2017 census is about 1.3 million (PBS, 2017). There is a common perception that

¹⁴ The largest country in terms of population and size in South Asia is India.

¹⁵ One of the four provinces of Pakistan

every third household in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province has a migrant (Amjad & Arif, 2014). Labor migration from the province started in 1970s to Gulf countries, since then the province has a significant share in the annual migrants' outflow¹⁶ from Pakistan (Amjad et al., 2014). Several districts of KP have comparatively high emigration rates in Pakistan. These include, district¹⁷ Swat, Dir, Mardan, Peshawar, Swabi, Mansehra and district Abbottabad (Amjad et al., 2014). Especially, district Abbottabad has a significant portion of labor migrants to the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) which is evident from the fact that the district stands among the top ten migrants sending districts¹⁸ in Pakistan (BE & OE, 2018).

As mentioned before, migration is generally men's endeavor in Pakistan as they usually migrate for economic purposes to Gulf States. After the migration of husbands, usually the spouses left behind take on the responsibilities of the households (Iqbal et al., 2014). They become in charge of households thus managing household affairs and wellbeing of family members (Desai & Banerji, 2008). Additionally, the spouses are also responsible for matters beyond households. For example, they look after community affairs, and maintain and develop social networking (Ganguly & Negi, 2010). However, the long absence of husbands may cause loneliness and psychological issues among their wives (Iqbal et al., 2014). Thus, studies on migration and remittances in South Asia show the diverse impacts of male migration on spouses, and have identified challenges as well new opportunities for them (Iqbal et al., 2014; Ganguly & Negi, 2010).

This study is thus a qualitative attempt to search answers for and analyze questions that have been largely neglected in the mainstream migration literature in Pakistan. For example, questions like: "Whether migrants' wives being the remittances recipients and managers attempt to influence and negotiate gender relations in the area?" More contextual and specific questions, for instance, who are the remittances recipients in the union councils? What are the most possible channels of receiving remittances, and do remittances increase women's decision-making powers and empowerment? Additionally, some specific questions relating to women's role and influence on remittances management and utilization in nuclear and extended households after husband's migration are also part of this study.

¹⁶The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province annual flow of labor migrants is around 26 percent which is comparatively higher than other more populated provinces of Pakistan (Amjad and Arif, 2014).

¹⁷ Districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province in the North West Pakistan

¹⁸ See table 5 section 4.4

This study is significant because the literature on the role of remittances and its importance for the women left behind in general and for Pakistan in particular have largely ignored the complex issues of gender, migration and remittances (Desai & Banerji 2008). For instance, these discourses do not focus on whether and how remittances initiate transformations with regard to gender relations even though the majority of the receivers are women due to male migration (See for example Ekra et al., 2011). Hugo (2000) states that, surprisingly, the literature on migration and remittances generally pays less attention to the women left behind who are receiving remittances, and are profoundly affected by the migration of their husbands (Hugo 2000). Moreover, for Pakistan, most studies are quantitative¹⁹, but to get a more nuanced picture of the remittances and gender issues, I am conducting a qualitative study in the North of Pakistan district Abbottabad because, as mentioned already, this area has been mostly neglected regarding qualitative studies about migration in general and on remittances and gender relations in particular despite high labor migration to the Gulf Cooperation Council states. For example, in the past decades, considerable research has been focused on Pakistan to study the socio-economic impacts of labor migration and remittances. The majority of these studies have been conducted at national or macro level focusing on the contribution of remittances to the larger national economy. However, there are hardly any micro level empirical studies of households at provincial and district levels in Pakistan and district Abbottabad is no exception here (Amjad & Arif, 2014). For instance, for the current study, I consulted several sources to get initial information about the migration and remittances situation in the district but unfortunately, I did not find any major empirical study or statistics that examine migration and gender issues in Abbottabad. The migration information and statistics I found are mostly from NGOs and district profile reports that only contain statistical information which is insufficient to understand the complex issues relating to migration. Thus, this study is an empirical attempt to examine migration and remittances issues in the district. Moreover, the current study is the first of its nature (with a qualitative approach) in the area which entirely focuses on remittances and gender relations, therefore, it is significant in the sense that it tends to fill the existing literature gap with an in-depth analysis of the changes and negotiations of gender relations through migration and remittances.

¹⁹ In Pakistan there are mostly quantitative studies and statistical reports of the Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment of Pakistan (BE&OE), State Bank of Pakistan and ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OPHRD), Pakistan institute of development economics (PIDE) and UN organizations on migration and development issues. Unfortunately, offices within the district's own jurisdiction such as the union council offices and the district labor office lack basic information about district Abbottabad migration and remittances situation. However, during my field research I found some migration reports prepared by some local NGOs and district line departments but these mostly included basic statistical information about the district's migration situation.

According to Go (2009) “remittances undoubtedly help improve the economic situation of receiving households, and act as a social security and safety net for those left behind” (Go, 2009 c.f. Ekra et al., 2011, p. 71). In case of male migration, the remittances are mostly send to spouses who then use these on various household needs (Orozco et al., 2009; Ullah, 2017). However, remittances are extremely necessary for households in the sending countries, the mainstream literature generally overlooks gender issues in managing and utilizing remittances. For example, Ullah (2017) states, “research on gendering migration has produced innumerable literature. What is prominently missing is that the experience of left-behind female members, especially the wives after their husbands leave them with entire responsibility of the family” (Ullah, 2017, p. 03; see also Datta & Mishra, 2011). Similarly, in this study, my focus is on the actors and especially women’s agency in the remittance process which allows to get more insights into gender relations and women not as senders but receivers (see for example Ramirez et al., 2005; Ekra et al., 2011; Debnath & Selim 2009).

On one hand, this study gives new insights about the relation between migration and development thereby focusing on remittances and gender relations, and on the other hand, it analyses the possibilities for women’s empowerment. The theoretical framework of the study is the migration and development nexus and empowerment as a concept. Furthermore, transnationalism or, to be more precise, the transnational space not only structures migration but is also important regarding remittances and their influence on gender relations.

Thereby it is assumed that not only migration but the whole remittances process is gendered and embedded in local gender relations. For example, the gender roles and responsibilities are largely determined by local, cultural, religious, social and gender norms which influence the overall remittances, migration and development process in the area. In this thesis, I want to show that remittances lead to the negotiation of gender relations as well as the reproduction of existing gendered power relations. This depends, as will be shown, on social categories like ethnicity, age, and religion but also especially on the household structures.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study objectives aim to accomplish the goals which contribute to current debates and discourses on the relation between migration and remittances. In doing so, the objectives help to better understand the role of remittances in changing gender relations in micro and in the wider socio-economic context. The term socio-economic is broad and multidimensional, and focuses on multiple issues at a time. To narrow it down, I selected a few important perspectives

of remittances process such as the remittances receiving, management and utilization by migrants' wives at household levels. These perspectives serve as parameters to access and explain the wider process of remittances and gender relations in district Abbottabad. Thus, the study aims to investigate:

- The remittances receiving behaviors in nuclear and extended households.
- To understand the remittances management and utilization process and women empowerment.
- And to explore women decision making powers after receiving remittances

The main emphasis of the study is to access the negotiations and transformations taking place after male out migration in two union councils of district Abbottabad. In order to get a comprehensive picture and detailed analysis of the migration and remittances phenomena in the context of gender relation, it is pertinent to study these in the local socio-economic and cultural contexts. The main objectives and connecting concepts of the study such as remittances receiving, management and utilization helps to understand the complexities and the role of remittances in influencing gender relations in Abbottabad. For example, through remittances receiving, management and utilization, I explained the involvement of both men and women in the migration and remittances process and how these affect them. Thus, the first objective relating to remittances receiving and management in nuclear and extended households is further split into connecting concepts such as the formal and informal ways²⁰ of receiving remittances by men and women. The formal and informal channels of receiving remittances are important because these processes involve interactions outside the traditional sphere of routine household tasks such as mobility outside homes regarding remittances receiving and fulfilling household responsibilities. Moreover, the remittances receiving is also significant because migrants' spouses receive remittances either themselves through banks and other formal ways, or through individuals such as brothers, sons and in laws for different socio-cultural reasons (Arif, 2009; Sulari & Savage, 2006). The receiving channels and processes may have some possible repercussions for women and may affect their agency differently. For example, some receiving channels and methods such as banks and women receiving themselves give more space and possibilities of negotiating gender relations in the local social arena, while others like receiving remittances through brothers and in laws do not (Arif, 2009). Likewise, as majority studies in South Asia show, in nuclear households, women receive remittances while in extended

²⁰ The formal channels of remittances transfer include bank accounts, postal services and money transfer operators MTOs (Rahman, 2012). While informal channels for transferring remittances includes individuals such as migrants themselves and migrants' networks and *hundi* or *hawala* system (Arif, 2009).

households, male members of the family mostly receive remittances (Ekra et al., 2011; Haas & Rovij, 2014). Similarly, other studies show that remittances received (through formal and informal channels) and management increase women mobility and decision making (Iqbal et al., 2014; Arif, 2009). However, women receiving remittances through in laws mostly remain under the control of male members of the households (Haas & Rooij, 2010). Thus, the first objective tends to analyze the remittances receiving behavior in both nuclear and extended structures and its influence on women independent mobility and interactions outside homes, which ultimately highlight the possibilities that remittances and migration create for negotiating and transforming local, social and gender relations in the area. The distinction between nuclear and extended households regarding remittances receiving and management is also important in the context of district Abbottabad because it tends to influence women differently. For example, the mainstream discourses on migration and remittances in the Global South show that women living in extended households have different socio-economic positions and are less independent than their counterparts living in nuclear households (Haas & Rovij, 2014; Desai & Banerji, 2008; Lefebvre, 1990). Thus, the structural distinction is also essential because it comprehends not only the positions of women in two different structural settings but also in relation to men.

The second objective aims to understand the remittances utilization and management process at household level. Remittances utilization or the productive and unproductive use of remittances is one of the most debated themes in discussions about migration and development in the context of so-called developing countries. The argumentation is on which investments and expenditures are productive and which are unproductive. For instance, some investments which are considered productive for some regions and groups of people may be unproductive for others. Similarly, spending remittances on household construction is generally believed as unproductive in certain contexts; however, these can have positive implications for local markets and jobs creation (Gonin, 2009; see also Ramirez et al., 2005). In Pakistan, the first priority regarding remittances consumption is to fulfill basic household needs such as food, shelter (not included luxurious constructions in case of labor migrants), education and health (Lefebvre, 1990; Arif, 2009; Amjad, et al., 2014). There are also variations in remittances expenditures according to social classes, gender and ethnicity. However, as Gonin (2009) argues, the productive and unproductive use of remittances is complex and needs contextual understanding (Gonin, 2009). The gender perspective regarding remittances investment also largely echoes in the migration and development discourses. For example, women are mostly perceived as unproductive users of remittances. However, their remittances expenditures on health and education of children are largely assumed as investments in “human capital” or

productive investments for future (Salomone, 2006; Piper, 2009; Rahman, 2012). The objective of the study is thus to present a comprehensive overview of remittances utilization and management priorities in the area and the people (men and women) involved in this process. The discussion also shed light on how remittances management takes place, who controls the overall remittances (expenditures and investment) in households, and how it leads to social and gender transformations in migrants' households.

The final aim of the study is to analyze the decision-making powers of women after receiving remittances. Mainstream literature in the migration and development context argues that control over remittances makes women more independent and increases their decision-making power in the household (Datta & Mishra, 2011; Gulati, 1993; Iqbal et al., 2104; Remirez et al., 2005). Thus, in this thesis women decision-making authority at different levels is in the focus such as women decision making powers regarding household expenditures, investments, children affairs (marriages, education and health) and decisions on issues outside home.

1.5 Research Question and Methods

The following research question is examined in the light of above discussions,

How and in what way do remittances play a role in changing gender relations in the left behind migrant households in the North West of Pakistan?

In order to analyze and explain the research questions and objectives of the study, I conducted an extensive field research in two union councils of district Abbottabad from April 2016 to July 2016 which is a mandatory part of the doctoral degree. The migrants' spouses from nuclear and extended households and male members from extended households were the main focus of this study. Thus, in order to understand the roles, actions and interactions of people under circumstances such as through remittances receiving, investments and consumption and their embeddedness in the whole migration and remittances processes, I adopted different methods including informal conversation, observation and in-depth interviews. Furthermore, I approached various national authorities and representatives such as Overseas Pakistani Foundation (OPF) and district labor officers to get more saturated data. Additionally, using Corbin & Strauss' (2015) approach, I used single and sometimes several tools at a time, or in combination with different methods for data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The data analysis for present study was done by using the grounded theory approach. This approach involves different phases of coding and catagorization. In grounded theory analysis,

the researcher forms codes connecting to the data and later develops additional abstract categories from the empirical data. The initial categories reconstruct, modify and connect to relevant categories that give more sense to the empirical analysis.

1.6 Chapter Outline

The present study comprises of seven chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter that briefly sets out the background of the thesis. Starting with the general introduction of the problem, it gives a brief account of migration movements in Pakistan. It further discusses a short historical overview of the migration and development policies and research. Additionally, it presents the significance of the current study in the local and national scenarios. Finally, the objectives, research questions and methods used in the study are discussed.

Chapter two is important in the sense that it gives background information about labor migration issues in Pakistan in general and in district Abbottabad in particular. To break down the chapter in descending order, it firstly provides an overview of historical developments of migration patterns in Pakistan. Secondly, it particularly discusses labor migration to Gulf Cooperation Council states (GCC). Thirdly, it presents the socio-economic profile of Pakistani labor migrants. Fourthly, it focuses on the migration situation in district Abbottabad. Finally, the socio-economic profile of district Abbottabad is discussed.

Chapter three gives a detailed overview of the relevant literature. The chapter begins with a broader historical background of the topic covering the historical journey of research and policy phases of the migration and development discourse. This is followed by a theoretical overview of migration and development that is further divided in to sub-sections according to specific time periods and relevant schools of thought including the functionalist era, the dependency phase and the pluralist turn. Each section discusses in detail the theoretical standpoints of their particular schools of thought. In the third section, the transnational perspective in migration studies gets introduced. Transnationalism is discussed in relation to connected concepts of transnationalism and integration, the transnational practices and transnationalism and remittances connection. Finally, the chapter concludes with discussions on gender, remittances and development.

Chapter four presents a comprehensive summary of methodology and methods implied in the field to get maximum qualitative data. The chapter starts with methodological discussions that include methodology and methods used for data collection. The chapter also introduces the field

site to make the reader more comfortable while looking at the data collection techniques. Finally, it gives brief discussions over ethical considerations and field experiences.

Chapter five is the analytical chapter that is mainly divided into four sections followed by connecting sub-sections. The first section presents the remittances receiving behavior in nuclear households. In this section, I discuss who are receiving remittances in nuclear households. For example, the analysis shows that migrant's spouses mainly receive remittances from their husbands in nuclear households. Additionally, I discuss the various formal and informal channels of remittances receiving such as through bank accounts and *hundi* (money changers). The second section of the chapter focuses on remittances utilization priorities and management by migrants' spouses. In this section, I discuss who actually manages and utilizes remittances and for what purposes. For example, if migrants' spouses manage remittances, what are their priorities, and are they independent in remittances expenditures? The third section investigates women decision making powers after receiving remittances. For instance, do remittances influence women decision making powers? Finally, additional socio-cultural factors are discussed in relation to migration and remittances that have a significant impact on gender relations in the area.

Chapter six is the second analytical chapter. Following the trail of chapter five, it is mainly divided into sections and sub-sections. Like the previous data chapter, the first section of the chapter focuses on remittances receiving behavior in extended households. For example, who receives remittances in extended households? This section further investigates the influence of remittances on migrants' spouses. Moreover, I discuss the remittances management and utilization by both men and women in the extended households. Finally, the chapter concludes by explaining the role of remittances and its influence on women such as remittances and women decision-making powers in the extended households.

Chapter seven is based on conclusions of the data presented in chapters 5-6. It combines emic approaches presented in the analysis chapters and theoretical perspectives to explain the process of remittances and its impacts on transforming gender relations in two types of households (nuclear and extended) in Pakistan.

Chapter 2

LOCATING MIGRATION IN PAKISTAN

2.1 Pakistan, a Country Profile

In this chapter, I examine some theoretical and factual perspectives of labor migration in Pakistan. First, I explain the general pattern of migration in Pakistan such as the historical overview of Pakistani migrants working abroad, the socio-economic profiles and skill composition of migrants and the amount of remittances they send back to Pakistan. Later, to narrow down the discussion, I particularly focus on the migration situation in district Abbottabad, and finally, on the socio-economic characteristics of district Abbottabad such as education, health and income of migrants that significantly influence migration, remittances and gender relations in the Abbottabad district.



Figure 1: Map of Pakistan (the red dot shows the location of district Abbottabad)

Source: <https://www.google.at/maps/place/Pakistan>

Above is the country map of Pakistan. The red dot on the map represents the city of Abbottabad, in the Hazara region of Northern Pakistan and the research site of the present study.

2.2 Historical Background and Overview of Pakistani Migration

Globalization frequently refers to economic integration of national and regional markets into international trade systems by means of socio-cultural, technological, political and economic transformation processes. This makes globalization a universal phenomenon that has diverse and multiple implications on local and international trade markets and policies. Many developing countries entered the liberalization process in early 1980s in order to balance their external accounts and increase export demands²¹ (Malik et al., 2011).

Pakistan started to liberalize its economy in late 1980s hoping for economic transformations in the country. For example, Pakistan decentralized many industries, restructured the local economy and reformulated exports and import policies. However, the liberalization process did not bring the expected economic outcomes. For instance, the state revenues declined and the government expenditures on social development and public welfare sharply decreased. The liberalization process and changes in national and international economic policies affected all sectors of socio-economic and political life in Pakistan. The heavy economic losses incurred on national economy steered economic insecurity and increased unemployment in the country that consequently escalated large-scale emigration²² from Pakistan (Malik et al., 2011).

Pakistan has the 10th largest labor force in the world which is continuously growing and adding more individuals to the labor market every year (Malik et al., 2011). According to the 2019 figures of Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, there are about 10.17 million Pakistani working in different countries. These are only the registered figures of Pakistani migrants including students, temporary labor migrants and immigrants (permanent) and their families, and do not include irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (BE & OE, 2019).

Migration from Pakistan can be divided into broader categories according to the countries of destination, the nature of migration (temporary or permanent migration) and the origin areas (rural or urban) of migration. As mentioned already, globalization and liberalization of

²¹The 1970s oil crisis brought recession in OECD countries, which consequently affected the developing countries' economies. These countries sought financial assistance from World Bank and IMF under structural adjustment programs (SAP). However, the experiences of liberalizing the economy under the SAP did not give the expected results (Malik et al., 2011).

²² Emigration in this context is collectively used for all types of migration including permanent migration and temporary labor migration.

economy has largely increased emigration²³ from Pakistan, nevertheless it is not a new phenomenon in the Pakistani context because soon after its creation in 1947, Pakistan witnessed several phases of economically motivated migrants to different parts of the world (Arif, 2009).

The first phase of migration spanned from 1950s to late 1960s. In this phase, the migration was mainly towards Europe and North America. Major stock of migrants from the first phase of migration was from remote and comparatively low agricultural areas of Pakistan such as from district Attock* and Mirpur* (Amjad & Arif, 2014). It is noticeable that this was mainly male migration, and that migrants had low income and education profiles. Moreover, the main destination country in the first phase of migration to Europe was United Kingdom because of its colonial history²⁴ and special work permit system for Pakistani migrants in the 1970s. Ballard (2003) states that in UK, the migrants adopted low paid industrial jobs which were mostly rejected by local people (Ballard, 2003; Noman, 1991). Later, the male migration had turned into family reunification and currently Pakistan has the second largest ethnic community in the United Kingdom with a population of almost 1.7 million individuals²⁵ (ONS, 2018). The Pakistani diaspora in UK is very active in the socio-economic and political spheres of life, and occupies some important public offices²⁶ while simultaneously maintaining strong transnational links with their origin areas back in Pakistan. These transnational links are usually maintained through kinship (*Biradri*) lines. Ballard (2003) speaks of ‘the transnationally organized *biradris*²⁷’, which are a source of mutual bound for wider kinship obligations and also plays an important role in motivating new migrants and investing remittances in the origin areas (Ballard, 2003).

In the same era, another flow of economically driven migrants from Pakistan started migrating towards North America through various immigration schemes such as the “Canadian points system” and the US quota system policy. It is also worth mentioning that unlike the UK immigrations, the majority of immigrations to North America through points and quota systems had middle and rich urban economic backgrounds. Since then there are around 450,000

²³For example, 3,534 persons were migrated in 1971. The number of migrants increased every year and until 2018 were some 10.17 million Pakistani migrants working in different countries (BE & OE, 2018).

*Attock is a district in the Punjab province of Pakistan and Mirpur is a district in Pakistani controlled part of Kashmir (Azad Jammu Kashmir).

²⁴ United India remained British colony from 1857 to 1947.

²⁵ Pakistani emigrants are the second largest Asian ethnic group in the UK following India.

²⁶ For example, the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, is a Pakistani-origin British.

²⁷ *Biradri* is a term used for common ethnic affiliations. For example, it can be commonly defined as “The *biradhri* is an association, attachment, emotional linkage and sharing common characteristics by an individual being a part of a particular group descended of the same ancestor” (Chaudhry & Ahmed, 2014, p. 01).

Pakistani in the USA and 155,000 in Canada. These immigrants, like the Pakistani diaspora in the UK also maintain very close transnational connections with their areas of origin in Pakistan (Statistics Canada, 2018 see also Khan, 2012, MPI, 2015).

The table below provides details of the registered (through Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment) Pakistani immigrants to different regions of the world from 1971 to 2019. The figures of labor migration to Gulf Cooperation Council states (GCC) are elaborated in detail in the second phase of Pakistani migration (for example, see table no. 2) in the same section.

S.#	Countries	Year 1971-2019 (in thousands)	Percentage
1	GCC states	9721498	96.19
2	Other Middle Eastern states	104035	1.03
3	Africa	98690	0.98
4	Malaysia	87434	0.87
5	EU Countries	32276	0.32
6	South Korea	15459	0.15
7	Others (include US & Canada)	47814	0.47
	Total	11114848*	100

Table 1: Regional distribution of Pakistani Manpower from 1971-2019
Source: (BE & OE, 2019).

Pakistan is one of the leading labor exporting countries in the South Asian region. As mentioned earlier, before 1970s, Pakistani emigration was more towards Western countries such as United Kingdom, America and Canada. Later in the mid-1970s, the economic boom in the Gulf region redirected the flow of Pakistani migration to the Middle Eastern countries. Thus, the second phase of migration from Pakistan started from 1970s onwards (Amjad & Arif, 2014). Migration in this phase was mainly dominated by temporary labor migration to the Gulf Cooperation Council states (Awan et al., 2013). Unlike emigration to the Global North, which is more or less permanent in nature, labor migration to Gulf countries is short term or temporary in which

* 11.11 billion international migrants from Pakistan until 2019

the migrants return to their countries of origin once their contract at the destination countries ends (Azam, 2005).

As mentioned already, the trend of labor migrants from Pakistan shifted to the Middle Eastern countries especially to the GCC states since 1970s. The recent statistics of the Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment²⁸ (BE & OE) show that around 96 percent (of 10.17 million) of Pakistani migrants are working in the Gulf Cooperation Council states (BE & OE, 2019; Amjad & Arif, 2014; Azam, 2005). Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates are the main recipients of Pakistani labor migrants. These two countries collectively share around 83 percent labor migrants from Pakistan (Saudi Arabia 49 percent and UAE 34 percent). Other countries in the region such as Oman (7.26 percent), Bahrain (1.58 percent), Qatar (1.41 percent) and Kuwait (1.90) have the remaining 13 percent of labor migrants from Pakistan (BE & OE 2019). Like the early Pakistani emigrants²⁹ to the Western countries, the labor migrants in Gulf countries are mainly illiterate and have rural backgrounds. The remittances they send are very important for transforming local economies, social structures and gender relations in the origin societies (Gazdar, 2003). Another salient feature of Pakistani Gulf migration is the ratio of male and female migrants from Pakistan. For example, mainly men migrate and women stay behind. Thus, the ratio of women economic migrants is very low in comparison to male migrants, (i.e. almost 0.6 percent of 6.500 women migrants until 2015)³⁰ (BE & OE, 2015).

Generally, migrants use various patterns of migration from Pakistan to different parts of the world, however, these can be broadly divided into two categories of formal or legal migration and informal or irregular migration. The first category of migrants uses proper legal channels with valid travel documents (passports, work permits and admission letters in case going for study) (Amjad & Arif, 2014). Migration in this category is usually for study and work purposes and family reunification. This pattern of migration is considerably adopted by highly skilled and well-off people in Pakistan since they have enough money and resources to afford the migration costs. The second category of migration includes irregular migrants who travel

²⁸ The BE&OE is a Federal Government agency working under the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD). The bureau was founded in 1971 by combining three federal level offices i.e. protectorate of emigrants, national manpower council and directorate of seamen's welfare (ICMPD, 2013). The federal unit controls, promote and regulate emigration from Pakistan. It also formulates emigration policies and procedures and look after the welfare and interests of the emigrants. Furthermore, it also monitors employment promoters in Pakistan and process their licenses (BE & OE, 2019).

²⁹ Unlike their predecessors, the second and third generation of Pakistani emigrants in the Western countries are getting education.

³⁰ Current data about the number of female migrants is not available at the Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment.

without valid travel documents. A few decades ago, this type of migration was most common for the majority low-income Pakistani labor migrants (Gazdar, 2003). However, currently the majority labor migrants are adopting legal ways of migration because of bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOU) with migrants' receiving countries, strict border controls, diverse funding possibilities³¹ and the active role of migrant networks (Ahmed et al., 2010).

Despite significant benefits of migration flow between the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Pakistan, many challenges continue to lessen the 'triple-win' impacts of migration. The lack of information regarding skills, qualifications, and wages result in loss of opportunities and policy planning in both the recipient and source countries (ILO, 2016). The government of Pakistan, in order to give more protection to migrants, and to increase the export of manpower, signed several bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOU) with many countries. For example, Pakistan has bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOU) with Gulf Cooperation Council countries like the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, and with countries other than GCC countries such as the Republic of Korea and Italy to make the recruitment and employment process of migration easy and to encourage migration from Pakistan (MoFA, 2021).

S.#	Countries	Percentage
1	United Arab Emirates	34
2	Saudi Arabia	49
3	Other GCC countries	13
	Total in GCC	96

Table 2: Number of Pakistani workers registered through BE&OE from 1971-2019
Source: (BE & OE, 2019)

2.3 The Socio-Economic Profile and Skills of Pakistani Labor Migrants to Gulf Cooperation Council States

It is pertinent to understand the socio-economic characteristics of migrants in the context of the current study since the socio-economic characteristics not only influence the national migration policies but also significantly boost local development and social change in the origin areas in Pakistan. Traditionally, the work force from Pakistan to the GCC countries consists of unskilled and low skilled laborers such as drivers, masons, technicians and other similar categories

³¹ Loans from banks, friends and migrant's networks

(Amjad & Arif, 2014). However, the economic crisis of the last decade and the policy changes in the Gulf countries lowered the demand of unskilled and low skilled migrants especially of construction workers and drivers (BE & OE, 2018)³². Moreover, in recent years, demand for highly skilled or qualified categories of professionals such as doctors, engineers, pharmacists and teachers from Pakistan to the Gulf Cooperation Council states increased (BE & OE, 2018).

A substantial portion of labor migrants in the first category is of illiterate and unskilled workers such as laborers who are almost 51 percent of the total 96 percent of labor migrants from Pakistan in the GCC countries. The second category of labor migrants is of manual workers. This group falls in the category of skilled workers such as drivers, masons, carpenters and tailors. They are 42 percent of the labor migrants. The third group of migrants are the white-collar professionals such as engineers, doctors, managers and accountants. They are only three percent of the total 96 percent migrants in the Gulf countries. The highly skilled professionals usually migrate along with their immediate families. However, the majority (around 85 percent) of the migrants mostly leaves their families back in Pakistan (BE & OE, 2019). Thus, they are strongly connected to their origin areas and frequently send remittances to their families (Erdal, 2014).

S.#	Skill composition	Percentage
1	Unskilled	51
2	Skilled (manual labors)	42
3	Highly skilled	3
	Total	96

Table 3: Skill composition of Pakistani labor migrants to GCC countries

Source: (BE & OE, 2018).

2.4 The Remittances of Pakistani Labor Migrants

The South Asian region stands at the center of international migration since it harbors some of the highest migrants-sending and remittances-receiving countries (Ahmed et al., 2010). For example, according to the World Bank's estimations, India is the highest recipient of remittances in 2019, followed by Pakistan and Bangladesh³³. Interestingly, the three countries

³² For example, the economic crisis slowed down the infrastructural development in the Gulf countries and the policy changes such as demand of highly skilled professionals and the lifting of prolonged ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia dropped the ratio of Pakistani low skilled labor migrants (BE & OE, 2018).

³³ These figures are only of countries in South Asia.

from South Asian region (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) fall in the top ten list of remittances receiving countries (Ahmed et al., 2010).

S.#	Country	Remittances inflows in US\$ million
1	India	82.2
2	Pakistan	21.9
3	Bangladesh	17.5

Table 4: Countries receiving high remittances in the South Asian region

Source: (World Bank, 2019).

Regarding remittances to Pakistan, it is difficult to estimate the actual flow of remittances since migrants use different channels (both formal and informal) of remitting money³⁴. However, it is believed that the flow of remittances to Pakistan is growing steadily over the past few years (BE & OE, 2019). For example, the remittances flow increased from 19.3 billion dollars in 2015 to 26.1 billion (US\$) in the year 2020-2021 (World Bank, 2020).

Remittances are an important source of overseas money for many developing countries including Pakistan. Analysts and policy makers in Pakistan see remittances as an important source of foreign exchange for reducing poverty, lowering external debts and sustaining local economy of the country. In Pakistan, remittances are always seen as the main reason for migration (Kock & Sun, 2011). Similarly, many economic analysts directly relate the remittances growth with the increase of migrant workers, especially the highly skilled ones (BE & OE, 2019).

Remittances are equally important for the left behind migrant households in Pakistan. Many studies in Pakistan suggest that remittances benefit migrant's families, and individuals and groups beyond the immediate families, for example, members of the larger extended groups (Ahmed et al., 2010; Erdal, 2014). The migrant families use remittances for various household needs, however, these can be broadly divided into two categories such as routine household consumption and long term future investments (Fatima & Qayyum, 2016). The routine household expenditures include food and grocery expenses, utility bills such as electricity, telephone, water, health, education and transport bills and household valuables like television, refrigerator and vehicles (Arif, 2009; Fatima & Qayyum, 2016). The second pattern of

³⁴ The formal channels are banks and money transferring operators such as Western Union, MoneyGram, Ria and TransferWise etc. The informal ways are Hawala or *Hundi* systems and via other migrants.

remittances utilization consists of small and large investments such as investments in business, real estate, agriculture, construction and poultry farming. These kind of investments are considered as future savings for the entire family (Fatima & Qayyum, 2016). Regarding the impact of remittances on local economies and households, Khan et al., (2016) state that remittances improve the overall socio-economic status and living standards of migrant families (Khan et al., 2016).

As mentioned already, labor migration to Gulf countries is highly gendered which makes migration in the Pakistani context a men's domain. Therefore, remittances are sent by male migrants to the left behind families (Amjad & Arif, 2014). The mainstream literature in Pakistan shows that remittances receiving and management are highly dependent on various socio-economic and cultural factors. Majority migration studies in Pakistan conclude that in nuclear households, women manage remittances receiving and utilization, and in the extended households remittances are mainly managed by men (Farooq & Javed, 2009). Further studies in the South Asian region suggest that the migration of husbands transforms wives' roles and responsibilities thus leading to women mobility, interaction and independent decision making (Gerry, 2019; Rajkarnikar, 2017; Iqbal et al., 2014). Therefore, it creates possibilities for women, and transforms the local gender relations (see chapter no. 3)

2.5 District Abbottabad Migration Situation

District Abbottabad is among high migrant sending districts in Pakistan (ICIMOD, 2010). Generally, the number of migrants from district Abbottabad seems relatively less as compared to bigger and more populated districts. However, comparison of migrant's ratio in relation to the population of districts reveals that despite having less population, district Abbottabad's migration ratio is still among the highest in Pakistan (see for example table no. 5). The migrant population of district Abbottabad is around 125,000 thousand which is around 9.3 percent of its total population (BE & OE, 2018). According to the sixth and the more recent (2017) population census of Pakistan, the total population of district Abbottabad is 1.332 million (PBS, 2017).

Labor migration from district Abbottabad originates from both urban and rural areas. However, the number of migrants from rural areas is relatively higher. Similarly, migrants from both categories also have different skill composition. For example, the urban migrants are often skilled workers and professionals like doctors, engineers, managers, electricians, mechanics, goldsmiths and drivers, while migrants from rural areas are more likely to be low skilled or unskilled workers (ERRA, 2007). Studies conducted in the district show that people leaving

rural areas have been involved mainly in livestock raising, and small-scale agricultural activities which can no longer sustain large families because of land division, low productivity and the increasing population. Therefore, people from different geographical locations (urban and rural), income groups (poor and rich), and occupation categories (skilled, unskilled and highly skilled) who can endure migration expenses try their luck³⁵ (*Qismat azmai karty han*) and migrate internationally (ERRA, 2007; IUCN, 2004).

Table 5 consists of top ten high emigrants' districts in Pakistan with respect to district population. District Abbottabad is 9th in the list of top ten districts.

Sr.#	Districts	Total Population of the district according to 2017 national census	No. Of Migrants until 2019	Percentage of Migrants
1	Lower Dir	1,435,917	347052	24.1693635
2	Karachi central	2,971,626	526645	17.7224523
3	Kotli	774,194	131781	17.0217026
4	Kohat	993,874	137555	13.8402856
5	Swat	2,309,570	306135	13.2550648
6	Jhelum	1,222,650	160790	13.1509426
7	Sialkot	3,893,672	434677	11.1636779
8	Bannu	1,167,892	128240	10.9804674
9	Abbottabad	1,332,912	124864	9.36776021
10	Chakwal	1,495,982	139545	9.32798657

Table 5: Districts with high migration rates with respect to its population until 2019

Source: Researcher own calculations based on the data from BE & OE, 2019

The above table has five districts (Lower Dir, Kohat, Swat, Bannu and Abbottabad) from the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa³⁶ province in the North of Pakistan. Three districts, Jhelum, Sialkot and Chakwal; are from the most populated Punjab province of Pakistan. There is one district each (Karachi central and Kotli) from the Sindh province and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (part of Kashmir under Pakistan control). The mainstream migration literature in Pakistan suggests different reasons of migration from these regions. For example, some of the main reasons of

³⁵ For example, migrants see migration as an opportunity to change the socio-economic conditions of their families.

³⁶ The North Western province of Pakistan

migration are poverty, less agriculture land, large families, local conflicts and natural disasters, migration history of the region and migrants' networks (see Ishfaq et al., 2016). However, people living in these regions have some specific motivations and aspirations regarding migration. For instance, migration from the Northern districts of Pakistan is mainly because of poverty, large families, local conflicts, less agriculture land, and migrants' networks. Likewise, studies conducted in the Punjab region of Pakistan show that poverty, migrants' networks, and migration history of the area mainly motivate individuals to migrate (see for example Ahmed et al., 2008; Awan et al., 2015; Rehman, 2015). Labor migrants from high migration districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Sindh province of Pakistan have mixed migration motivations such as natural disasters, poverty, migration history of the region and migrants' networks (IOM, 2019; Hasan, 2010).

In the next section, I discuss the socio-economic profile of district Abbottabad because each district has a specific profile that is important for understanding the overall migration and remittances scenario and social and relations in the district. Additionally, the district's socio-economic profile is also helpful in connection to the empirical chapters³⁷.

2.6 Socio-Economic Profile of District Abbottabad

The socio-economic profile of district Abbottabad gives an overview of some basic information about the district, which is necessary to have a background on the socio-economic development of the district. Abbottabad is an administrative district in the North West KhyberPakhtunKhwa province of Pakistan. The district's topography is predominantly rugged and mountainous (IUCN, 2004). The capital of the district is Abbottabad, which is located on the Karakoram Highway (Silk Route connecting Pakistan to China), some 120 km from the Pakistan's capital city of Islamabad and nearly 200 Km from the provincial capital of Peshawar. The district is bordered by district Mansehra in the North; district Rawalpindi in the South, Muzaffarabad district of AJK (Azad Jammu & Kashmir under Pakistan control) in the East and district Haripur in the West (IUCN, 2004). The total area of the district is 1,969 sq. miles (SMEDA, 2009). According to 2017 national census, the average household size in district Abbottabad is 6.5 persons per household. Almost 18% of its population of the district is urban while the remaining 82% is rural (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

³⁷The empirical chapters 5 & 6

At the confluence of two dominant cultures, the *Pashtun*³⁸ and *Potohari*³⁹ cultures, the people of district Abbottabad have maintained their own culture identity, the ‘*Hazarawal*’ culture of the *Hazarawal* ethnic groups (IUCN, 2004). The *Hazarawal* is a regional⁴⁰ as well as cultural identity for all ethnic groups residing in the region such as, the Jadons, Sardars, Abbasis, Awans, Karals, Maliks and Tanolis. At the broader national level, all the groups are commonly known by their *Hazarawal* identity. However, each ethnic group in the area has their own distinctive culture and identity (Suleri & Savage, 2006). The *Hazarawal* culture is influenced by the *Potohari* and *Pashtun* cultures bordering on both sides of the district Abbottabad, which gives the local culture a unique mixture of both *Potohari* and *Pashtun* cultures. However, the *Hazara* region has its own distinctive language and social customs (SMEDA, 2009). Historically, the city of Abbottabad was an administrative headquarter during the British government in the region. It was named after the first deputy commissioner of the area, Sir James Abbot in 1853 (ERRA, 2007). In the following sections, I discuss some of the socio-economic characteristics of district Abbottabad.

2.6.1 The Union Councils in Abbottabad

The union council is a smaller administrative unit (the third tier of administrative unit) within the district. Each district has several union councils and each union council comprises one or several villages depending on the population of the villages (GoKP, 2013). According to the local government ordinance 2001⁴¹ of Pakistan, the district Abbottabad was initially divided into 46 union councils. However, for administrative purposes, the number of union councils increased from 46 to 51 in 2013. Currently there are 51 union councils in the district (GoKP, 2013). Two union councils (*Malakpura* and *Nawansher*) of the district Abbottabad were selected for the current study. More details about the union councils are given in the methodology chapter.

The below table gives a quick overview of the socio-economic characteristics of district Abbottabad.

³⁸ The *Pashtun* culture of *Pashtun* ethnic group. This ethnic group resides in the North Western part of Pakistan surrounded the Northern border of the district Abbottabad.

³⁹ The *Potohari* culture of *Potohar* region is very much dominant in the Rawalpindi district of Punjab province in Pakistan and bordered the Eastern side of district Abbottabad.

⁴⁰ An area in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan called *Hazara* which comprises of seven districts such as Abbottabad, Haripur, Battagram, Mansehra, Lower Kohistan, Upper Kohistan and Torgar (Suleri & Savage, 2006).

⁴¹ The Local Government Ordinance 2001 of Pakistan decentralized government in all four provinces of Pakistan to shift power to local district governments. The major idea behind the project is to transfer power to local people for their welfare and community development

Quick overview of District Abbottabad	
Area in sq-miles	1969 sq-miles
Population of the district according to 2017 population census	1.3 million
Male population	50.8%
Female population	49.2%
Population growth rate	2.20%
Literacy rate	69% ⁴²
Male Literacy rate	82%
Female Literacy rate	59%
Union councils in district Abbottabad	51

Table 6: Quick overview of some socio-economic characteristics of district Abbottabad

Source: <http://dga.com.pk> and www.pbs.gov.pk

The next section gives a brief overview of gender relations in the district. The overview of gender relations is important for the analysis of empirical data in the later chapters.

2.6.2 Locating Gender Relations in Abbottabad

Gender relations are intricate social and personal relations of power and control between men and women within a society. Gender relations also determine access to material resources. Gender relations exist in all cultures and generate systemic differences in societies, for example, regarding gender division of labor, and men's and women's different access to resources, opportunities and political participation (March et al., 1999; IFAD, 2000).

The discussion over gender relations in this section gives an overview of gender relations in Pakistan in terms of how both genders normally participate in everyday life. However, there are variations in gender relations in some areas such as in metropolitan cities and other areas from where large scale migrations have occurred. These changes in gender relations are depicted in chapters 5 and 6. In Pakistan, the social indicators of gender equality such as mortality, life expectancy, literacy and gender disparity place it in the lowest position among countries with similar economic growth. For example, according to the Global Gender Report 2017, Pakistan stands at 143, second last in the group of 144 countries in the gender equality index. It is also the lowest in the South Asian region (World Economic Forum, 2017). Social

⁴²Pakistan social and living standard measurement 2014-2015 (PSLM)

scientists and feminist scholars believe that this is due to the gender imbalance and classic patriarchal structure of the Pakistani society (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Kandiyoti (1988) describes that the geographical areas of Muslim Middle East countries including Pakistan are under a strong influence of classic patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988). This is evident through the fact that Pakistani women lag education, economic participation, political representation and access to public places (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). Gender differences are widespread in the society; thus, inequality and uneven gender relations are major policy challenges for the government of Pakistan (Gazdar, 2003). Regarding the situation of women in Pakistan, Yazdani (2003) states “Women in Pakistan have always been more deprived than men. More than half are plagued by low income opportunities, health and education; and even where overall poverty of opportunity has been steadily declining, the male-female gaps have actually widened” (Yazdani, 2003, p. 04). Pakistan has a majority Muslim population which is 96% of the total population. Islam is an essential feature of Pakistani society and thus the prevailing dominant religious discourses in the country influence every segment of the society including women affairs (Yazdani, 2003).

According to Ahmed et al., (2015) the early conventional Islamic traditions and interpretations of some Quranic verses, especially those relating to women development and wellbeing are interpreted in a way that largely curtail women’s role and social positions in the society (Ahmad et al., 2015). The interpretation of certain verses of the Holy Quran⁴³ (*Ayat*) by some orthodox religious scholars⁴⁴ has largely institutionalized the so-called male superiority over women in the minds of Muslims that have gradually become part of their respective societies. The so-called religious interpretations see men with divine powers of wisdom, intellect and knowledge for managing the public and religious affairs, political leadership, military and financial affairs and exclude women from all these domains of society. Thus, women have been treated in isolation and their welfare has been considered safe only inside homes (Shahid, 2007). The early practices and ideologies give the impression that Islam, being a religion, subjugates and secludes women, and restricts their participation in the mainstream socio-economic and political domains of life (Smith, 1979). The argumentation seems logically correct in the context of many contemporary Muslim countries (Shahid, 2007). However, many religious scholars and Islamic historians believe that these argumentations are merely the historical distortion of facts and manipulation of religion by some orthodox religious leaders and the early

⁴³ Holy book of Muslims

⁴⁴ For example, Baydawi’s interpretations of Muslim religious text (see for example Shahid, 2007).

Muslim rulers⁴⁵ for gaining control and political power. Nevertheless, the true spirit of Islam (Islamic laws, practices (*Sunnah*) and saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)⁴⁶ of Islam) gives women liberty and equal rights in the society (Shahid, 2007).

Pakistan came into being on 14th of August 1947 as a separate state for the Muslims of United India. Islam was the main motivating force behind its creation. In United British India, there were mainly two groups, the Hindus and Muslims, with Hindus being the majority. Therefore, the Muslims wanted a separate country where they could freely practice their religious rituals, traditions and culture (Wynbrandt, 2009). Since religion was the ideological basis of the nation building process of Pakistan, the influence of the so-called distorted version of Islam could be seen on every aspect of social life (Mezzera, & Aftab, 2009). Since then, the Pakistani women are struggling to gain proper representation in the society because they are largely segregated from the mainstream society (Purewal & Hashmi, 2014). The Pakistani society is clearly divided into public and private domains of social activities where men occupy the public domain whereas women are restricted to private spaces. The public and private dichotomies largely shape Pakistani society and consequently increase disparities between men's and women's statuses and achievements in education, health, political representation and basic women rights (Mezzera, & Aftab, 2009). For example, women literacy ratio is lower than that of men (42 percent to men's 67 percent). Similarly, women representation in politics, especially in the legislative assembly of Pakistan, is also low. Only 33 percent⁴⁷ of the 342 members of the national assembly are women. Moreover, women participation in economic activities is also relatively low (Mezzera, & Aftab, 2009). The Pakistani society is largely influenced by the so-called religious practices and beliefs, for example, the influence of so-called religious views can be seen on all aspects of life in Pakistan such as on politics, education, laws and economy of the country, thus restricting women participation in everyday life. Further, other considerably important social factors such as ethnicity, class, language and social status also play a critical role in defining social life and gender relations in Pakistan (Gazdar, 2003; see also Rauf, 1987).

⁴⁵ For example, the subjugation of women started soon after the demise of Holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH), however, this was later systematically implemented during the reign of the Umayyad (661-750 CE) and the Abbasid (750-1258 CE) caliphates (reigns) (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Hence, considered the start of male dominance in all domain of social life (Shahid, 2007).

⁴⁶ Peace Be Upon Him

⁴⁷ For example, the previous 3 percent political representation of women was increased to 10 percent in 1988. In 2001, it was increased to 33 percent (Awan, 2018).

In the rest of Pakistan, local cultural traditions and Islamic practices are part of everyday life in the selected union councils⁴⁸ of district Abbottabad. The traditions and religious practices significantly shape and reshape individual's life, social behaviors and interactions between men and women (Khan, et al., 2010). The prevalent ideology and spatial differences (the public and private domains) clearly divide the society into two different social worlds such as the public 'male' space and private 'female' space (Tabassum, 2016). The private and public spaces in district Abbottabad are highly segregated. For instance, women are relegated to private spaces and household duties. They are largely discouraged from entering and taking part in activities outside their homes which influence their possibility to earn income, to represent themselves politically or participate in decisions related to community development. They mainly perform the household work such as preparing food for family members, cleaning dishes, washing clothes and preparing children for school and men for work⁴⁹ (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). Similarly, women are also not allowed to perform prayers in the mosques or to get religious education from male religious teacher (*molvi or mufti*) once they reach puberty (I-SAPS, 2015). Moreover, they cannot participate and attend ceremonial processions that takes place in public. They cannot go to funerals or to the graveyards and they have a separate place inside homes for performing death rituals (Tabassum, 2016). Money or assets (dowry) which women bring with them after marriage from their parental families are usually controlled by their husbands. Likewise, their inheritance rights⁵⁰ are often denied or they themselves do not demand their share because "this would be tantamount to losing their brothers' favor, their only recourse in case of severe ill-treatment by their husbands or divorce" (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 279). Men, on the other hand, are mainly involved in activities outside the household such as to provide financial support to the family and protect the family honor or *izzat*⁵¹ (Tabassum, 2016). *Purdah* and *izzat* are mainly linked at two different levels such as with individual and at family level. For example, women observe *purdah* not only to earn respect for themselves but for the entire family, and are considered as modest women (*purdah-daar and izzat-daar Khawateen*) likewise, the family (*izzat-daar khandan*) also gets respect in the society. Family honor (*izzat*) is mainly attached with women's honor or *izzat* because "the notion of male honor and *izzat* is

⁴⁸ The union councils selected for the present study

⁴⁹ Also, see women daily activities chart in appendix 4.

⁵⁰ Women, as mothers get 1/6th share of the inheritance. As wives, they receive 1/8th share (if they have any children) and 1/4th (if they do not have children) and as daughters ½ of brothers share. These are the provisions and property rights granted under the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961 and Muslim Personal Law of *Shariat* Application Act of 1962 of Pakistan for *Hanafi* school of thought. The *Hanafi* School of jurisdiction is the dominant and largely followed school of thought by the Sunni sect of Muslims in Pakistan (Rubab & Usman, 2018).

⁵¹ *Izzat* (an Urdu language word) is synonym of honor. In district Abbottabad people mainly use the word *Izzat* for honor, prestige and social status.

linked with women's sexual behavior; their sexuality is considered a potential threat to the honor of the family. Therefore, women's mobility is restricted and controlled through the system of *purdah*" (Bari & Pal, 2000, p. 2; see also Lari, 2011; Bhowon & Bundhoo, 2016). Veiling or *Purdah* means covering body, and has different forms depending on the geographical location and culture of the areas. For example, *odhni* (a head scarf), *burqa* (cloth for covering whole body), *chadar* and *chunri* (piece of cloth, cloak) and *ghunghat* (a veil over the face) are some forms of *purdah* to mention (Jain, 2008). As discussed already, *purdah* or veil is closely connected with women and family honor or *izzat* because women who do not observe *purdah* risk family honor, respect and social status. Women usually use veil when going outside homes or come in contact with individuals other than immediate family members because *izzat* and *purdah* are ideal norms and lived realities in the local context thus followed by women and adherently monitor by men in some families. Lari (2011) argues "The concept of *purdah* (veiling), also meant to provide protection and respectability to women, but in fact is also a manipulative tool used for control, results in internalizing amongst women the notion of the fragility and importance of their own behavior and the insecurity of their status. The concept of women as holding men's 'honor' is also extremely relevant to women's *Purdah* or veil" (see Lari, 2011, p. 9; see also Bhowon & Bundhoo, 2016; White, 1977). Thus, women and especially veiling women are considered as carriers of entire extended family honor or *izzat* and restricted to the private space and their honor or *izzat* is related to how they perform household duties and raise their children (Abid, 2010).

Honor or *izzat* is the basic component of the local culture in district Abbottabad. The honor of an individual and family is considered the honor of the entire extended family and ethnic group (Khattak et al., 2009). Interestingly, the honor of family is largely determined by the actions of women and as discussed above, men are responsible for maintaining the honor and prestige of family through the implementation of *purdah* (Yazdani, 2003). In order to ensure family honor, women are supposed to remain in *purdah*, follow the local socio-cultural norms under male surveillance. Hence, women's mobility and interactions are restricted, and they have hardly any contact with the outer world and opposite sex outside the extended family group (Khattak et al., 2009).

In the district, *izzat* or honor of a family or a group is further determined by several factors such as wealth, impeccable piety, victory over opponents, success in life, management qualities and control over conduct of women. *Izzat* or honor is closely connected to social prestige and power. For example, a person or family having more *izzat* is more respected and powerful in the society

(Mandelbaum c.f. Abid, 2010, p. 51). Thus, it is highly maintained through strict rules and women's veiling. Moreover, *izzat*, of a woman, a man or a family is something constant. It is a process that "has to be continually reaffirmed in practice, reinforced in action, defended against challenge, and reward and advanced in competition" (Mandelbaum, 1988, p. 23). Mandelbaum states that *purdah* and *izzat* are interdependent and for the protection of *izzat*, consistent *purdah* is a mandatory part of the social life for women (Mandelbaum, 1988). Kandiyoti (1988) argues that "The institution of *purdah*, and other similar status markers, further reinforce women's subordination and economic dependence on men. However, the observance of restrictive practices is such a crucial element in the reproduction of family status that women will resist breaking the rules, even if observing them produces economic hardships" (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 281).

In district Abbottabad, *purdah* is observed by women by wearing a long robe called *abaya* or *burqa* and *chadar*. Abid (2010) states that *purdah* serves various functions as an instrument of body concealment and control over women (Abid, 2010). Body concealment means covering the whole body with a piece of cloth (Abid, 2010). Papanek (1973), in relation to the covering of body, argues that the full body concealment of women symbolizes them as isolated individuals in the society (Papanek, 1973). The *purdah* or concealment of the body also serves as an instrument of controlling women (Abid, 2010). Similarly, Papanek speaks of the controlling characteristics of *purdah* and states that along with functions such as preserving individual and family honor and respect, *purdah* is also an element of control over women inheritance (property), division of labor and marriages (Papanek, 1973).

Regarding *purdah*, Mandelbaum (1988) argues that *purdah* and honor are interconnected. When women observe *purdah*, they protect not only their honor but also that of their families and groups. He further argues that women's actions affect men's reputation in public spaces as well as family's honor (Mandelbaum, 1988). Thus, women are mostly bound to follow the prevailing customary rules, which define gender relations and women's position in the wider social context (Khan, et al., 2010; Shah, et al., 2015). Similarly, in Abbottabad, women's ideal place is believed to be at home and to protect family honor. However, a shift in this situation has been observed in areas such as in the selected union councils of study where large scale migrations have resulted in women taking on more responsibilities, and being more in control of decisions, mobility, participation and interactions as receivers of remittances. These activities significantly changed women's traditional roles and responsibilities thus changed gender relations and empowered women (see Chapter 5 & 6).

Ideological principles are not the only reasons that shape gender relations in the district. Household structures and the available economic resources also significantly determine gender relations and women participation in the socio-economic and political life (Noureen, et al., 2005). In district Abbottabad, there are diverse household structures, however, nuclear households are in majority. Nuclear households have particularly increased in the last few decades due to migration (international migration and migration within the district from rural areas to the urban centers for economic and education purposes) and natural disasters (IUCN, 2004). Regarding household structures and their implications on gender relations, Mbonile and William (2017) state that in nuclear households, in case of the migration of male head of the household, women become the de facto household heads (Mbonile & William, 2017). Depending on the circumstances, they take extra domestic responsibilities in the absence of men which they had never experienced before the migration of husbands (Desai & Banerji, 2008).

However, in extended families, women participation and gender relations operate differently. For example, Kandiyoti (1988) shows that women living in extended families are not only subordinate to all men in the household but also to senior women (Kandiyoti, 1988). Unlike in nuclear families where spouses become more active after the migration of husbands, in extended households the migration of husbands has less influence on spouses because other men might take over and have the dominant position in running the household matters (Ganguly & Negi, 2010; see also Datta & Mishra, 2011). In extended households, members of the family live in the same compound under the guardianship of senior male members. The senior member (grandfather, father or uncle) is the head of the household and takes all important decisions regarding the household members (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). However, this does not mean that women are passive individuals in the extended households. There is a clear difference between how gender relations are presented and lived in the district. For example, studies show that women living in extended households are also involved in income generation activities after the migration of their husbands such as in 'women economic committees' (Fatima & Qayyum, 2016). The 'women committees' consist of a group of 8-12 women usually from the same socio-economic group. They mutually form a committee of women and deposit a fixed amount of money every month to the committee. The monthly contributions of the committee are then given to one of the group members through a draw or mutual consensus⁵².

⁵² More details about women economic committees are provided in the empirical chapter no. 5 (section 5.7.2).

As discussed already, in both union councils of the current study, spaces as well as economic activities are highly gendered. Men are responsible for outside activities whereas women mostly stay at home, looking after the households (IUCN, 2004). In the course of a usual day, women do not go outside the house unless they have some important tasks outside home such as to buy household grocery or to go to the healthcare facility and to visit the ill family members while following the local norms of veil.

In urban areas such as Abbottabad city, one can see equal mobility of both men and women, however, their representation is highly gendered. For example, women have low representation in public institutions and offices in the area (IUCN, 2004). Another example is of the staff in the union council office which consists of male members only. However, women union councilors are also part of the council office, but they mostly stay at home. Women union councilors are the political representatives of women, elected on reserved seats for women in the Local Government⁵³ at union council level (Aurat Foundation, 2020). The local health facilities such as the Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centers (RHCs)⁵⁴ and local public schools usually have separate medical and teaching staff for both men and women and boys and girls⁵⁵ (I-SAPS, 2015). However, there are also combined health and education facilities where both men and women equally work and attend (IUCN, 2004).

Despite religious, cultural (*purdah* and honor), and local power structures, the gender relations in the district are not static and are changing with the passage of time. Additionally, migration, and the active role of the government of Pakistan, and the local and international organizations are considerably improving women's social positions. For example, the government of Pakistan, through different programs and initiatives⁵⁶, is encouraging women participation and representation in the mainstream society. At national level, the government of Pakistan and the United Nations (UN) agencies are trying to empower women and improve their representation

⁵³ The third tier of government at district level. The first tier is federal level and the second is provincial level government.

⁵⁴ The BHUs and RHCs are the first or primary health facilities in the union councils and rural areas (Health Department Government of Punjab, 2020)

⁵⁵ The institutional setup of education and medical services is different on higher levels (district, provincial and national levels). For example, big hospitals (public and private) have both male and female staff and doctors who equally treat both men and women. Similarly, higher education institutions (college and universities) offer admissions to both boys and girls and have both male and female teaching staff. However, there are also separate health and education services for women even at higher levels such as women hospitals and women colleges and universities where the faculty and administrative staff are mostly female (also see section 2.6.3) (I-SAPS, 2015).

⁵⁶ For example, the government introduced Gender Reform Action Programs, Pakistan *Bait-ul-Maal*, National Rural Support Program (NRSP), Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), First Women Development Bank and National Commission on the Status of Women are some of the initiatives of government of Pakistan for increasing and improving women's socio-political, economic and educational representation (MoF, 2019).

in Pakistan, for instance, by focusing on women education and economic participation, and their representation in different walks of life such as political representation and equal rights (Aurat Foundation, 2020). The government of Pakistan is continuously encouraging women participation in the public sectors and national politics. For this purpose, the government has reserved special seats (quota) for women in the national and provincial parliaments of Pakistan and public sector jobs. Likewise, the parliaments⁵⁷ (federal and provincial) of Pakistan have passed several women protection bills and legislations to empower Pakistani women (Islam, 2018).

The local NGOs and international organizations, despite socio-cultural barriers and criticism from hardcore religious organizations and individuals in Pakistan, are playing a significant role in empowering women and thus changing gender relations. In Pakistan in general and in district Abbottabad in particular, NGOs are working on diverse issues related to women, for instance, legal and political awareness among women, skill development programs, micro credit schemes and capacity building programs for women. The NGOs initiatives and programs are considerably changing women positions in the district, thus making women more independent and empowered (Sungi, 2019).

As stated already, gender relations are gradually transforming in the district and currently women are working in different public and private sector jobs. For example, the number of working-women is gradually increasing in different public offices such as education, health, and other public sector jobs. Likewise, women are also working in private sector such as banks, multinational companies, and NGOs. Generally, in recent years because of some of the above mentioned factors like migration, government programs, and NGOs activities, girls' education and women overall economic participation have increased (I-SAPS, 2015). In the next subsections, I briefly discuss educational, health and economic activities in district Abbottabad that are important for understanding gender relations. These activities (educational, health and economic) are helpful to analyze the data and understand the changes and transformations taking place in the district which can then be taken up for explaining and contextualizing the empirical analysis in the later chapters.

⁵⁷ Legislative bodies of Pakistan at federal and provincial levels

2.6.3 Role of Migration in Increasing Education in Abbottabad

In this section, I examine the academic situation in district Abbottabad. It is important to discuss education in the context of migration and remittances because the remittances play a significant role in increasing the overall literacy rate, and have even more positive impacts on girls' education (Mansuri, 2006). Moreover, the mainstream studies on migration in Pakistan also suggest that remittances significantly improve girls' literacy rate thus changing women roles and gender relations (Khan & Khan, 2016; Khan, et al., 2020). This section discusses the educational structure and the literacy ratio of both men and women in Pakistan and especially in district Abbottabad. Additionally, in this section, I discuss the relevance between remittances and education in general, especially its relevance with female education, and show that migration is not only improving female education ratio but also providing equal education opportunities to women in the remittances receiving households (see chapter 5 & 6).

The education system in Pakistan can be divided into three tiers, federal, provincial and district level tiers. Among these, district level education is important because it ensures maximum community participation (I-SAPS, 2015). The overall literacy ratio of Pakistan is 58 percent (PBS, 2014). It is 58% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, and 69% in Abbottabad (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2016-2017). There is an overall gender imbalance in education at the national level in Pakistan. For example, the male literacy rate is 60 percent whereas female rate is 49 percent (PSLM, 2014-2015). In district Abbottabad, this difference can also be observed in both private and government education systems (I-SAPS, 2015).

Despite the high literacy ratio of district Abbottabad people in the area face different challenges regarding access to education. For example, some of the problems people face are geographical limitations, low income of households and gender differences in education (I-SAPS, 2015). Geographical limitations in the context of Abbottabad refer to the remote areas of the district which have hardly any education infrastructure, lack education facilities (schools and colleges for boys and girls) and lack access due to long distances and poor roads. Poverty and low income also restrict parents from sending their children to school. Similarly, gender differences in education such as local education norms regarding boys and girl's education are an additional hurdle. For example, boys' education is priority whereas girl's education is considered relatively less important in terms of future investment (I-SAPS, 2015). However, studies in Pakistan suggest that the literacy ratio is improving in households receiving remittances because with remittances, they can afford education for boys and girls both (Amjad & Arif, 2014;

Farooq & Javed, 2009). Similarly, some studies show that education is one of the top priorities regarding remittances expenditures by migrant families (Awan, et al., 2013). Furthermore, the migrants' households send both boys and girls to schools and equally spend money on children's education (Amjad & Arif, 2014; Khan et al., 2013).

In Abbottabad, co-education system also exists apart from the institutions set up exclusively for boys or girls. The girls' educational institutions mostly have female staff (both the teaching faculty and the administrative staff) and the boys' institutes have male faculty and administrative staff. The co-education institutions (both private and public) have no specific gender criteria of admission. However, statistics of staff (teaching and non-teaching) show differences in the number of male and female staff. For example, male teaching staff is comparatively greater than female teaching staff⁵⁸ (KPE & SE, 2019).

The next section includes the healthcare facilities in the area. These facilities are important to discuss here in relation to gender access and differences in access.

2.6.4 Migration and Health care

In Pakistan, healthcare facilities are generally provided at three different levels: primary, secondary and tertiary level. Primary healthcare is provided at union council level and includes basic health facilities such as Basic Health Units (BHUs), Rural Health Centers (RHCs), centers for tuberculosis (T.B) control, and mother and child health centers (MCHs) (Hassan et al., 2017). The macro level secondary and tertiary healthcare is available at the tehsil⁵⁹ and district level. The secondary and tertiary level health facilities include district and tehsil hospitals (GoKP, 2012). In district Abbottabad there are total eleven Basic Health Units (BHUs), four Rural Health Centers (RHCs), five tehsils headquarter hospitals (THQs) and one district headquarter hospital (DHQ), one teaching hospital (Ayub Medical and Teaching Complex) and one Combined Military Hospital (CMH) (GoKP, 2013). In addition, the city is flooded with private clinics and hospitals. Public health facilities are mainly used by middle income and poor people as these clinics and hospitals provide cheap healthcare where as well-off families go to private hospitals. Health facilities in the district have different structures such as some hospitals and clinics only deal with women while others attend both male and female patients. Health facilities where only women can go for treatment include centers and hospitals consisting of

⁵⁸ For instance, see appendix 2&3

⁵⁹ Tehsil is a lower tier administrative unit within a district. In case of district Abbottabad, it has two Tehsils

only lady doctors and female staff (GoKP, 2013).

Local people usually take their patients to different health facilities depending on their socio-economic conditions (GoKP, 2013). For example, some families and women prefer to go to women only health centers while others go to private hospitals and clinics. However, in any situation, women mainly go with male members of the households.

In the next section, I discuss the district's economy. Here, I focus on the main components of the district's economy in relation to migration, gender roles and relations in the area.

2.6.5 The District's Economy

The main occupations in district Abbottabad are paid employment in public and private sector jobs such as banks, educational institutions, healthcare, and business. The district's population mainly pursues employment in government and private sectors because of limited alternative livelihood opportunities such as less agriculture land because of hilly topographical landscape of the district, low productivity of crops and lack of local industries (IUCN, 2004). Moreover, another possible reason of greater attention towards paid employment is the bureaucratic status of the district in the region. For instance, the district is an administrative headquarter and home to many civil and military offices (SMEDA, 2009). In the context of district Abbottabad, self-employment is also an important sector and consists of cultivators, small-scale traders/shop owners, daily wage workers, and employees in forestry and livestock sectors.

Business⁶⁰ and employment sectors are usually urban professions whereas livestock and agriculture are mainly rural occupations (ERRA, 2007). Interestingly, limited resources and economic opportunities in the district are significantly leading to large scale internal and international migration from the district. Studies on the socio-economic characteristics of the district suggest that the ratio of migration from the district is gradually increasing thus becoming the leading livelihood resource for majority urban and rural population of the district (IUCN, 2004; see also SMEDA, 2009).

There are also gender wise variations in economic patterns and participation in the formal and informal sectors. For example, the overall representation of women is low in both formal and informal economic sectors. For example, the total labor force of the district is around 27.9

⁶⁰ Includes business activities such as transport business, sales and retail trade, construction and real estate etc.

percent of which 55.20 percent is male, and just 1.25 percent is female⁶¹. The remaining 43.55 percent females are domestic workers or housewives who are not officially considered in the employment category (IUCN, 2004). The economic participation of urban women in formal economy (government and private sector jobs) is relatively higher compared to rural women (IUCN, 2004).

Every household in the union council depends on several livelihood sources. The socially defined sexual divisions of labor in the area places men as the breadwinners and protectors of households whereas women as the caretakers of households and children (Tabassum, 2016). Moreover, the socio-cultural norms and economic strategies entitle men to fulfil household duties related to the public domain such as income earning and provision of basic commodities for households whereas women usually work inside homes and perform domestic tasks (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; see for example Rauf, 1987). As already mentioned, “The *purdah* is an institution, which governs all gender interaction. It is not merely a physical description of the veil or the homestead but a complex set of rules” (Haque, 2010, p. 304; see also Papanek, 1973). In the union councils of Abbottabad, *purdah* on one hand determines physical spaces, which also include the gender division of labor, and on the other hand serves as a symbol of family honor. However, apart from the prevailing patterns of gender division of labor, some women from low income groups participate in economic activities. For example, along with the domestic work, they also run small-scale income earning activities such as contributions to women committees, stitching/sewing and embroidery to support their families because their current income is insufficient to support large families⁶² (Tabassum, 2016).

The overview of socio-economic life of the district in general and of union councils in particular in district Abbottabad is important to understand gender relations in the larger social context. The discussion gives the impression that like the rest of the country, gender roles and relations in Abbottabad are highly segregated and revolve around the prevalent gender ideologies and local power structures. However, some factors for example migration and remittances are significantly transforming gender relations in district Abbottabad as will be shown in later chapters.

⁶¹ Unfortunately, the union councils in the district have no current official records of different social indicators such as population, health, education, employment and livelihood resources. Therefore, I am using district and national statistic for the current study.

⁶² For more details regarding women economic activities see the empirical chapters 5 & 6.

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This study tends to assess the socio-economic role of remittances in the border context of migration studies. Several theoretical perspectives emerged on migration over the past decades. Most theoretical perspectives were developed and adopted by different analytical and paradigmatic positions. The potential reason for these differences is the interdisciplinary nature of migration studies (Haas, 2008). The field of migration studies is quite vast and covers every aspect of social life; as Castle states, “Migration embraces all dimensions of social existence, and therefore demands an interdisciplinary approach” (Castle, 2010, p. 1569). Majority of migration scholars argues that it is difficult to find a single theory for explaining the complex phenomena of migration. Instead, there are theories and concepts that collectively serve as theoretical foundations for migration studies, and in cases, some even cross the disciplinary boundaries in search of answers (Massey et al., 1993, Castles, 2010, Haas, 2010, Monsutti, 2009, Penninx, 2009, Castles et al., 2014).

The present study is part of the transnational and development discourses of migration for understanding the impact of remittances on gender relations in district Abbottabad of Pakistan. The literature review for this research, starts with the broader notions of migration and development in the historical context. The discussion then moves to the critical examination of various theoretical positions and perspectives closely related to the study. Finally, I narrow down the discussion from the transnationalism phenomena to migration and development discourses and its influence on gender relations and women empowerment. The following sections of the chapter discuss various perspectives and theoretical positions directly and indirectly related to the study. However, I initially started by examining and attempting to understand the different historical phases of migration and development debates, and the theoretical developments because these have significant implications in which this study is embedded.

3.2 The Optimism Pessimism Pendulum: A Brief Historical Overview of Different Phases of Migration and Development Research and Policies

In this section, I present a brief overview of historical developments (phases) and schools of thoughts that surround the theoretical debates of migration and development since 1950s. The study is generally embedded in the wider discussion on migration and development. Therefore, overview of different phases of theoretical developments and debates is important to understand migration and development in the historical context.

Since the last decade, scholars and policy makers have been taking more interest in migration and development debates (Kapur 2003, Ratha 2003 c.f. Haas, 2008, p. 01). Historically, a change from optimism to pessimism and then back to optimism has been observed in migration and development discourses. In the current section, I discuss post WWII scholarly and policy debates on migration and development that according to Haas, “tended to swing back and forth like a pendulum from sheer optimism to sheer pessimism, and back again to optimistic views in recent years” (Haas, 2008, p. 04).

The 1950s and 60s were optimistic about migration and development progress and considered migration as a modernization process for less developed countries. The public policy focus at that time was to fill the labor gap in Global North and reciprocal economic development in the South. Consequently, substantial migration movements started from developing countries towards the industrialized nations. Keeping in view the economic benefits of migration and remittances, the developing countries started to focus on and modify their national emigration policies, as emigration was considered a major source of foreign investment and national development for these countries (Haas, 2007).

The research scholarship in this era falls in the developmentalist and functionalist paradigms. For migration optimists, migration and development was a unilineal process, a North-South⁶³ flow of income that would lead to modern norms, and a source of bringing education and new political ideas to the so- called traditional societies. Hence, migrants were viewed as agents of social change and economic development through innovations and investments for their origin countries and societies (Haas, 2007). Furthermore, it was believed that remittances and the skills migrants acquired in the destination countries would help in the socio-economic uplift of poor and marginalized groups and individuals in the origin countries.

⁶³ “The North-South divide expresses not a geographical configuration, but a political and social one. The North also includes areas and groups subject to social exclusion, while the South has elite groups and enclaves, which enjoy considerable prosperity. There are also important regions and groups in intermediate or transitional positions” (Castles 2004, p. 862)

Historical structuralists heavily criticized the optimistic school of thought in the late 1960s. The phase between late 1960s until 1980s was largely influenced by the historical structuralists discourses of migration. However, as Haas (2007) states, after the pessimistic phase of historical structuralists, optimistic thoughts were revived again at the dawn of new century, but this time these were mainly influenced by the neo-liberal thinking (Haas, 2007, see also Cedric & Dorai, 2009).

In the second phase, the term development was replaced by dependency, which was perceived as a structural condition between central and peripheral countries, and resulted in underdevelopment of the Global South. In the late 1960s, after a number of failed policy experiences, optimists were highly criticized by historical structuralists (Haas, 2008). They believed that migration further increases underdevelopment in the sending countries. Moreover, it was argued that the developmental project disrupts the traditional agro-based economies and made people dependent on foreign investments and capital transfers. Consequently, it would lead to non-productive and static development that would increase inequality, individualism, and more dependency on foreign remittances (Haas, 2007 & 2009, Kearney, 1986). The “brawn and brain drain” movements of skilled and strong young men and women from agricultural areas caused labor shortage in origin areas which was perceived as the “development of underdevelopment” that would further increase migration⁶⁴ (Haas, 2007 & 2008 See also Cedric & Dorai, 2009 ; Faist, 2009). Moreover, in this phase, migration was viewed mainly of skilled, well-off and young people, which instead of bringing economic parity, fosters more inequality in the sending societies (Frank, 1966 c.f. Haas, 2007, p. 40; Haas, 2008).

Research interests in this phase include debates about the productive and unproductive use of financial remittances in origin countries. For example, Lipton, in his critical study on the impacts of migration and remittances, suggests that most remittances in migrants’ origin areas are lavishly spent on unproductive daily consumption for maintaining social status in the society (Lipton, 1980 c.f. Haas, 2008, p. 29). Furthermore, the productive investments are also critiqued because it is argued that they lead to socio-economic inequality in the origin communities (Haas, 2008)

At the same time, the concept of co-development emerged in the late 90s in France to enhance bilateral cooperation between the sending and receiving countries. Like optimists, the

⁶⁴ See for example “Dutch disease” or “migrant syndrome” in Taylor 1999

supporters of co-development approach saw migrants as development agents⁶⁵. The project was supported by several immigrant states like Netherlands, France, and United Kingdom, international organizations, and the World Bank. The main aim was to control future migratory flows from developing countries through development. Therefore, migrants in the destination countries who were already connected to their origin countries through transnational linkages were motivated to be further engaged in development projects in their origin countries with the hope that development projects will stop or at least lower the migration flows from origin countries. Later the European Union and the United Nations also implemented the concept in their immigration policies (Gonin, 2009; Faist, 2009 see also Kearney, 1986).

Until 1980s, migration scholarship was overwhelmingly surrounded by controversial debates and it was in the second half of 1980s that social scientists questioned and rejected many rigid theoretical positions and particularly the hard-core historical-structuralist stance (Taylor, 1999; Haas, 2007 & 2008). This paradigm change has particularly significant impacts on the migration and development debates particularly relating to the decision making process in migration endeavors (Haas, 2008). As Taylor illustrates, migration researches in the previous era studied the impacts of migration and remittances on the sending areas but did not include the basic and more significantly important components of decision-making process in migration (Taylor, 1999). Contrary to the previous theoretical perspectives, the new approaches such as NELM (new economics of labor migration), Transnationalism and livelihood, particularly include and give more weightage to structure-agency debates and extend more space for discussing the counter effects of migration. Moreover, in the new theoretical approaches, the migration and development phenomena was discussed in the wider socio-economic and political context (Haas, 2008). The main theoretical perspectives emerged in this era included NELM, livelihood approaches and transnationalism (Haas, 2008; Faist, 2010). Several optimistic and pessimistic shifts shadowed these approaches, for example, until 1990s, the pessimistic views on migration and development in the origin areas dominated the debate;⁶⁶ later, more optimistic discourses emerged with NELM and transnational studies (Faist, 2010, see for instance, Naerssen et al., 2008). After discussing the different historical phases of migration and development discourses, I examine different theoretical perspectives in the next section.

⁶⁵ They see immigrants and diaspora groups as assets of development for their origin countries, and motivate them to start development projects in the origin countries to discourage migration to Global North countries.

⁶⁶ See for example Papademetriou and Martin (1991)

Period	Research Community	Policy Field
Before 1973	Development and migration optimism	Developmentalist optimism, capital and knowledge transfers by migrants would help developing countries in development take-off.
1973–1990	Development and migration pessimism (dependency, brain drain)	Growing skepticism; concerns about brain drain; after experiments with return migration policies focused on integration in receiving countries; migration largely out of sight in development field.
1990–2001	Readjustment to more subtle views under the influence of increasing empirical research	Persistent skepticism; tightening of immigration policies.
After 2001	Boom in publications: mixed, but generally positive views	Resurgence of migration and development optimism and a sudden turnaround of views: brain gain, remittances and diaspora involvement; further tightening of immigration policies but greater tolerance for high-skilled immigration.

Table 7: Overview of main phases in migration and development research and policies

Source: (adopted from Haas, 2007)

3.3 Historical Overview of Theoretical Developments

In the previous section, I briefly explained various phases of migration and development discourses. In the present section, I examine some theoretical perspectives and approaches that are relevant to explain migration, and influence other discussions like remittances and gender relations. Some of these approaches are largely used in Pakistan to explain migration processes, and these ideas still dominate our thinking about migration as argued in the later sections of this chapter. Therefore, the following sections include some important theoretical developments. The first prominent theoretical contribution in this series is the neo-classic economic theory discussed in the following section.

3.3.1 The Neo-Classic Economic Theory

Ravenstein is known for his scholarly work on migration in the nineteenth century; particularly the formulation of “laws of migration”. These laws were introduced in 1885 and again in 1889.

Ravenstein's general theories describe population shift from low opportunity rural areas towards the centers of high economic hubs. According to him, urban individuals are less mobile as compared to rural people who have low economic opportunities. He viewed migration as income maximization and complementary to development (Massey 1993; Schiller & Faist, 2010; Haas, 2008 & 2010). However, distance and population density influence migration patterns (Skeldon, 1997 c.f. Haas, 2008, p. 04).

Like Ravenstein's theories, the neo classical theory follows the labor demand and supply concept. On macro level, the theory sees migration in terms of geographical differences and labor supply and demand factors, and with the outflow of capital from the destination to the origin countries (Haas 2008; Massey et al., 1993). According to neo-classic economic theory, migration is a result of economic imbalances between developing and developed countries. As a result, people from underdeveloped and labor-surplus regions move to low labor and high-income areas (see for example Mario & Dominique, 2002). These motivating factors are termed as the "push and pull" factors. It is believed that income opportunities attract or pull people to destination countries and the push factors on the other hand motivate them to leave low opportunity places (Mayda, 2008; Pedersen et al., 2008). At micro level, the theory sees individuals as rational decision makers who, in order to maximize income, move to areas of high profit. The migration decisions are subject to migrants' skills and the demands of labor market. Furthermore, the neo-classical economic theory suggests that once the supply and demand margins reach equilibrium, the migration process is likely to stop (Haas 2008; Constant & Massey, 2002; and Massey, et al., 1993).

However, the neo-classical theory is not only widely used to explain the causes of migration and mainly concentrate on the income and wage differentials but it also offers micro and macro level analyses of migration process (Kurekova, 2011). The theory has been highly criticized on conceptual and empirical grounds (Haas, 2008). It is believed that the theory largely ignores structural limitations in shaping the migration process. For example, its central focus is on individual choice in migration decisions; neglecting the broader migration policies such as the receiving states migratory policies and social structures like family, community and social networks. (Todaro & Smith 2006; Haas, 2014). Moreover, it has been further criticized for its Eurocentric and ahistorical approach, for instance, in spite of differences time and context, it applies the nineteenth and twentieth century European modernization model on present developing countries which, according to many scholars, seems completely unrealistic (Haas, 2008; Kurekova, 2011). However, for its analytical objectivity and hypothetical nature, it is still

popular in the policy and academic research circles. For instance, “The propositions of the neoclassical theory of migration were also used (almost exclusively) in the research which preceded the 2004 Eastern enlargement of the EU” (Kurekova, 2011, p. 04). Similarly, majority migration scholarship in Pakistan follows neoclassical discourses (see for example Arif 2009; Amjad, 2014).

3.3.2 The Push and Pull Extension

The push and pull model of rural to urban migration by Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) is considered as the basis for neo-classical theory of migration. Initially the model was formed to study the contrary phenomena of rural and urban migration in developing countries. Harris and Todaro stated, however, that in spite of decreasing demand for job opportunities, migrants still move to urban centers. Furthermore, they added, that migrants do not always consider the current rural urban income differentials, but also think about the expected future high income once they find jobs in the urban market (Haas, 2008; Kurekova, 2011). Later, the Harris and Todaro model was further refined to include additional factors such as opportunity costs, travel expenditures, and psychological support from the family. Though the model was primarily developed for internal migration but later with some modifications, it was also used to explain international migration (Haas, 2008; Kurekova, 2011; see also Massey, et al., 1993). The push and pull concepts of economic equilibrium and movements to certain geographical locations are still present in researches of geographers, economists, demographers and political discussions (Castles & Miller 2003 c.f. Haas, 2008, p. 04).

The Pakistani male labor migration to Gulf countries in mainstream literature is categorized under the push models of migration for the reasons of economic motivations of migrants and low income opportunities in the origin country. For example, since its inception in 1947, the poor, uncertain and unfavorable socio-economic and political conditions of the country have compelled hundreds and thousands of young people to migrate to Gulf countries every year as argued by PILDAT, 2008 and BE & OE, 2016. Moreover, like early neo classical and push and pull concepts, the migration literature on Pakistani migration is largely silent on gender issues in migration process (Azam, 2005).

The push and pull model is further extended to human capital framework; here migration is viewed as income investment strategy. The theory sees individual personal skills (education and physical abilities) as fundamental resources that enhance economic growth. However, the theory unlike the previous models, not only focuses on costs, but also gives theoretical

explanations to human personal skills, physical abilities, knowledge, sex and age. The framework explains migration as a highly selective process where migrant selection is subject to receiving countries' demand for specific type of skills and educational backgrounds (Haas, 2008 & 2010).

3.4 Historical Structuralist and Dependency Theories

Entirely different views appeared in migration discourses in 1960s, which were contradictory to earlier developmental and functionalist thoughts (Castles & Miller 2003). Structuralists believed that the capitalist states manipulate the political and economic inequalities for their own interest (Haas, 2008). Modernization and progressive slogans are actually extra economic burdens on the developing countries (Haas, 2010). The main tenets of historical structuralist and dependency paradigm are dependency theory, world system theory, dual labor market theory and network theory. Basic concepts of historical structuralists have been already discussed in the previous section. In the current section, I only discuss the network theory, which has more relevance for my study because migrant's networks in both destination and origin countries are actively participating in migration management and economic development in origin countries.

3.4.1 Network Theory

This theory does not consider the causes that trigger migration in the origin areas but it rather focuses on the continuity of migration in space and time (Massey et al., 1993 c.f. Kurekova, 2011, p. 05). Migrant networks often take the form of institutions and help to explain the complex issues surrounding the migration process (Kurekova, 2011). The presence of migrant's networks or diaspora tends to ease migrants' decisions for selecting destination countries (Vertovec, 2002). Moreover, ethnic and interpersonal connections of friendship, ethnicity and kinship closely link migrants with one another (Bauer & Zimmermann, 1997). Network theory has close affiliations with migration systems theory which emerged in 1970. However, unlike the former, the latter "posits that migration alters the social, cultural, economic, and institutional conditions at both the sending and receiving ends and that it forms an entire developmental space within which migration processes operate" (Haas, 2009 c.f. Kurekova, 2011, p.05).

Not only the push and pull factors, but also the migrant's networks as mentioned in the majority of studies and policy papers on Pakistan are equally important in the migration process and local development. In district Abbottabad, migrants have some connections (networks) in the destination and origin countries that facilitate migration management in the sending and

receiving areas. Majority studies shows that the presence of migrants' networks play a significant role in male out migration between the Gulf States and district Abbottabad in Pakistan (IUCN, 2004; SUNGI, 2009). The functioning of these migrant networks resembles the transnational migratory connections that Levitt (2001) describes in her study of Miraflores community of Dominican Republic in Boston (USA). The role of transnational connections in migration between district Abbottabad and Gulf States have been comprehensively discussed in chapter no.5. In the next section, I discuss the theoretical perspectives commonly associated with the pluralist turn in theoretical discourses of 1980s and 1990s.

3.5 The Pluralist Turn

The present study is partly embedded in some theoretical perspectives of the pluralist debates of 1980s and 1990s. The pluralist turn is a paradigm shift in social theory that has significantly influenced the migration and development discourses. Major approaches associated with this era are the new economics of labor and migration (NELM), the livelihood approaches and more recent approaches on transnationalism. The pluralist debates further refined migration and development concepts and included structure and actor perspectives in studies. These approaches see the migration process as heterogeneous and reciprocal activity functioning in macro and micro context (Haas, 2008).

3.5.1 New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM)

New economics of labor migration emerged in 1980s and 1990s as a reaction to structuralist approaches. NELM has presented a more comprehensive view of migration and development process and has turned individualistic focus to more reciprocal relations (Haas, 2007 & 2008). The basic argument of NELM is that the migration decisions are collective family strategies to maximize income and reduce future risks. For example, through remittances to overcome market constraints for migrant households or productive investments which might improve future livelihood opportunities (Haas, 2008; Stark & Bloom, 1985; see also King, 2012). However, as Taylor argues, the decisions are influenced by many more factors in the origin areas (Taylor, 1999). Contrary to the new classical migration theory, NELM took household or family as unit of analysis (Stark & Bloom, 1985). However, in the Pakistani migration context, Erdal (2012) argues that "remittances in chain-migration often consist of transactions to targeted individuals within the household and to individuals beyond the household, exposing kinship, gender, and religious dimensions that are not as visible when the household is the unit of analysis" (Erdal, 2012, p. 347).

According to Wong (2006), migration is a complex process. The empirical data of this study also supports this idea as it shows that individuals (men & women) either from households, extended family and the community are involved in necessary arrangements such as migration expenses, documentations and preparations (psychological support and responsibility of left behind family) for migration endeavours in the area.

NELM has been criticized for its over focus on migrant sending regions and its suitability for poor rural settings only. Moverover, it presents a 'happy' picture of intrahousehold relations, which is quite different in reality. King (2012), for example, argues that in NELM the household is "like a black box", and complex and conflicting relationships are ignored. Moreover, there are socio-cultural and contextual differences varying geographically such as patriarchy, differences in gender norms and sibling rivalries which might distort the decision making process of migration (King, 2012).

Brown (1994) states, that "modernization, industrialization and commercialization brought about social changes within the household structures, composition, and its social and economic organization" (Brown, 1994 c.f. Der Zee, 2012, p.17). However, Moser (1989) argues that "in most Third world societies, sexual division of labor is seen to reflect the natural order, and is ideologically reinforced through such means as the legal and educational system, the media, and family planning programs, without recognition that within it the woman's position is subordinate to that of the man's" (Moser, 1989, p. 1800), thus women are largely neglected in decisions regarding different households' affairs. She further argues, "within the household there is a clear sexual division of labor in which the man of the family, as the breadwinner, is primarily involved in productive work outside the home. While the woman as the housewife and homemaker takes overall responsibility for the reproductive and domestic work involved in the organization of the household. Implicit in this is also the assumption that within the household there is an equal control over resources and power of decision making between the man and the woman in matters affecting the household's livelihood" (Moser , 1989, p. 1800).

Studies show that factors such as income earning and gender ideologies influence women's decision-making power in households. For example, in some societies women's bargaining power and their influence in household decision-making is largely determined by their economic contribution in the household (Bradshaw, 2013; Attanasio & Lechene, 2002). However, literature shows that despite economic contributions, factors such as patriarchal norms considerably limit women's bargaining powers, as Sen (1990) argues "that most patriarchal norms hold women responsible for social reproduction (such as the traditional belief

that a woman's place is in the kitchen) also prevent women from bargaining on their own behalf" (Sen, 1990 c.f. Bieteru, 2019, pp. 38-39). These patriarchal norms largely confine women to domestic responsibilities in the households. Bieteru (2019) argues that "this is partly as a result of how society perceives women but more often because of a deeply rooted belief that women are not culturally entitled or even capable of making such decisions" (Bieteru, 2019, p. 39). This shows that not only less economic contribution influences women's decision-making, but the cultural perceptions and patriarchal norms additionally restrain their decision-making and bargaining powers in households (Bieteru, 2019).

Regarding decisions about migration, King (2012) argues that it is important to understand "that migration decisions (who goes, where to go, for how long, to do what etc.) are not individual decisions but joint decisions taken within the ambit of the household, and for different members of the household" (King, 2012, p. 22). Decision-making within the households is not only about increase in income but is also about risk aversion, income diversification, and the changing role and power relations (King, 2012). Feminist critics, while analyzing migration and the related decision-making processes by taking 'household as unit of analyses' believe "that it can be misleading because this fails to take gender relations into account" (Brown, 1994 c.f. Der Zee, 2012, p. 17; Erdal, 2012). For example, Jackson (2007) argues "that households embody both separate and shared well-being and interests, their members both conflict and co-operate, and these intersections are absolutely critical to the workings of gender" (Jackson, 2007, p. 109; Moser, 1989). Berry (1997) states "that we should understand a household or community as social interactions (which is a process), rather than clearly bounded social entities. Not only the position one has inside the household determines how powerful one is in decision-making, but it also determines the position outside the household; the status one has in the community is important" (Berry, 1997 c.f. Der Zee, 2012, p. 12). The household is a unit where tasks relating to consumption, socialization, production, and reproduction take place, and has a gender division of labor (Brown, 1994). Additionally, there are gender and power hierarchies, differences in gender roles and power relations which are important to consider while analyzing migration decisions at the household level (Erdal, 2012).

As discussed already, the ongoing socio-economic transformation around the globe largely brings flexibility in the conventional gender norms and influences gender relations within the households. These transformations broaden the possibilities and opportunities for women, and their access to resources thus bringing changes in gender relations which are not only reflected

in women's overall decision making but also on decisions relating to migration (Mahapatro, 2013).

3.5.2 Livelihood Approaches

Livelihood approaches are popular among anthropologists, sociologists and geographers for conducting small-scale micro studies in developing countries. The approaches emerged in the late 1970s, and contended that poor populations in developing countries should actively participate to improve their livelihoods. This indicates the central role of human agency in livelihood process (Lieten & Nieuwenhuys, 1989 c.f. Haas, 2008, p. 36). The livelihood approaches include income generation strategies of households involving other social institutions. (Ellis, 1998 c.f. Haas, 2010, p. 244) The strategies are heterogeneous and different for different individuals and households. Moreover, its methodological standpoint is more empirical than previous deductive and rigid historical-structuralist approaches (Haas, 2008).

Migration in this context is an important activity to secure and improve rural household livelihoods (Bebbington 1999, Ellis 2000, McDowell & Haan 1997, Scoones, 1998 c.f. Haas, 2008, p. 36). Furthermore, Bebbington (1999) argues that migration is more than a short-term survival strategy for rural population in developing countries (Bebbington, 1999 c.f. Haas, 2008, p. 37)

The livelihood approaches explain individuals and households survival strategies in the broader context (Haas, 2008). They adopt household as a primary unit of analysis and give more space to actor and structure dynamics. Moreover, these approaches acknowledge the likely changing nature of household according to space, time and social setting (Haas, 2010).

3.5.3 The Transnational Perspective

Parallel to livelihood and the new economics of labor migration arose the transnational perspective in migration studies. The transnational approach explains migrant communities' integration in the destination countries (Castles & Miller 2003, Faist 2004). Moreover, the approach views individual migrants and their families as transnational agents operating in the transnational social fields (Guarnizo et al., 2003, Vertovec 1999). Portes (1999) offers a comprehensive definition of transnationalism and states, "it involves migrant activities that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants. These activities are not limited to economic enterprises but include political, cultural and religious activities as well" (Portes, 1999 c.f. King 2012, p.25). The transnational links are further strengthened by means of improved communication

and formal and informal channels of remitting money (Haas 2005; Guarnizo et al., 2003 c.f. Haas, 2008, p. 38) which serve as a means of transnational livelihoods for both migrants and their families in the origin areas (Haas, 2008).

As mentioned already, the current study is embedded in some of the theoretical approaches discussed earlier, however, it is largely positioned on the main tenets of transnationalism because of the transnational networks of migrants and the socio-economic remittances and its development implications for the study. I discuss the perspectives and their relevance for the study in detail in the next section.

3.6 The Transnational Perspective

“The lives of increasing numbers of individuals can no longer be understood by looking only at what goes on within national boundaries. Our analytical lens must necessarily broaden and deepen because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind. As a result, basic assumptions about social institutions such as the family, citizenship, and nation-states need to be revisited” (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, p. 1003).

The present study is embedded in some of the dominant concepts of transnationalism such as the transnational social spaces and the connections or networks of migrants in which migrants and the left behind families continuously operate (For Pakistan see Ballard, 2003; Erdal, 2014 & 2012; see also Awan et al., 2013). Transnationalism is not a new phenomenon; there are evidences from the past that migrants have actively participated in the socio-economic and political lives both in their areas of origin and destination (see for instance Basch et al., 1994; Levitt, 2001; Vertovec, 2009). However, there are some significant differences in the past and current transnational migration trends as Joppke & Morawska (2003) puts it, “the contemporary transnationalism is not an exact replica of the old, but a different configuration of circumstances” (Joppke & Morawska, 2003 c.f. Vertovec, 2009, p. 14). For example. at present more sophisticated and convenient means of communication and advances in transportation and communication allow easy and more intimate transnational connections (Levitt, 2001; see also Vertovec, 2009). Furthermore, the recent analytical and conceptual developments in the subject have made transnationalism more ‘mature’ (Vertovec, 2009).

Transnational studies gained prominence in early 1990s, when the analytical and narrative style studies started to become more dominant in migration discourses. The dominant analytical

contribution in the era was the study of international migration through a transnational perspective⁶⁷ (King, 2012). The approach presented a holistic understanding of migration processes and tried to smoothen the structure agency debates by integrating various theoretical concepts (Kurekova, 2011). Castle (2004) argues, for example, “migrants are not isolated individuals who react to the market stimuli and bureaucratic rules, but social beings who seek to achieve better outcomes for themselves, their families and their communities by actively shaping the migratory process” (Castles, 2004, p. 860). Haas argues that it is essential to recognize the structure and agency connection for better understanding of the heterogeneity of migration and development interfaces which developed through transnationalism (Haas, 2010).

In transnationalism the individual migrant agency has a central position, living across borders under continuous surveillance and structural constraints such as ethnic, racial, economic and policies-related constraints. Migrants are thus involved in development of two or more societies at the same time. The connection between origin and destination countries is maintained through “transnational social spaces,” and the migrant’s agency is actively involved in maintaining these connections across borders thus constituting transnational spaces (Basch et al., 1994; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, see also for Pakistani transnational migration Erdal, 2014 & 2012 and Ballard, 2003). And as Levitt (2001) argues, “individual actors cannot be excluded from the transnational social fields in which they are embedded” (Levitt, 2001, p. 13).

Scholars belonging to various disciplines have used transnationalism to discuss the complex migratory process. According to Levitt (2001), the term has been used excessively for a wide range of connections and social interactions in migration process, and many scholars have worked on different aspects of transnational migration (Levitt, 2001). Guarnizo et al., (2003) describe transnationalism as a series of socio-cultural, economic and political practices and discursive relations that transcend the territorially bound jurisdiction of the nation state (Guarnizo et al., 2003). Similarly, Portes (1999) offers a comprehensive definition of transnationalism and states, “it involves migrant activities that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants. These activities are not limited to economic enterprises but include political, cultural and religious activities as well” (Portes 1999, c.f. King 2012, p. 25). Bash and Blanc define “transnationalism as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et al., 1994, p.

⁶⁷Glick Schiller, Basch, Portes, Levitt and Vertovec were among the few early proponents of transnationalism

08). These definitions help to clear many past confusions concerning migrant identity, physical location and structural constraints (Basch et al., 1994).

The transnational approaches attempt to eliminate the ‘false dichotomy’ of classical migration theories that have categorized migrants either as emigrants or immigrants (Basch et al., 1994). In the past, nation states were seen as territorially bounded entities having population with common culture. However, in the current era territorial limitations are shrinking and patterns of migration are significantly changing, for example, new forms of diasporas, migrants (regular and irregular) and ethnic identities are emerging but still majority of migration literature defines these changing patterns of migration under the classical conceptions and definitions of nation states (Basch et al., 1994). Furthermore, Levitt from her experiences of ‘Miraflorinos’, argues that the idea that people will confine to their national boundaries is no more valid. In the current century people will migrate and will belong to more than one society at a time. “They will work, pray, and express their political interests in several contexts rather than in a single nation state” (Levitt, 2006, p. 21).

The transnational perspective sees nations not as containers and no longer just as reference points for migrants’ departure and arrival. Consequently, individuals who simultaneously identify and interact in more than one state and society form the ‘transnational communities’ (Levitt 2001). Moreover, Haas (2005) argues that the origin and destination dichotomies and the permanent, temporary and return categories are difficult to stand in the transnational process, as migrants are simultaneously connected to more than one society (Haas 2005).

Transnational social networks operate within transnational links, commonly known as “transnational social fields” (Levitt 2001, p. 08). These social fields include people at various locations in the transnational process such as migrants and non-migrants and other community members in the sending and receiving countries. The transnational practices also influence people who stay behind in the origin societies such as through transfer of economic and social remittances, therefore, this is an important theoretical framework for my study. Additionally, the transnational practices, also directly and indirectly affect people in the wider community by the socio-economic changes migrants bring with them (Levitt 2001). The transnational social networks, social fields, and its relevance for the study area are discussed in detail in the coming sections (Section 3.6.2 and 3.6.3)⁶⁸. However, before moving to the next section, I have

⁶⁸ Section 3.6.2 and 3.6.3

summarized the discussion how different scholars have responded to the critics over the transnational approach of migration.

Jong & Dannecker (2018) state, “despite the fact that the concept of transnationalism became very popular it was not only embraced, but also hotly debated, especially in the 1990s” (Jong & Dannecker, 2018, p. 495). Studies show that transnationalism was frequently related with globalization, cosmopolitanism, migration, multiculturalism, internationalism, and diaspora that often confused the theoretical definition of transnationalism. Thus, the critics stressed over “the need for conceptual and academic clarity regarding transnationalism, whether considering it from narrow or broad perspectives” (Tedeschi, et al., 2020, p. 01). Likewise, Pries (2008), states that transnationalism “was criticized for just replacing globalization and internationalization, thereby deliberately overlooking power relations between social groupings, the role of the political, especially nation states” (Pries, 2008 c.f. Jong & Dannecker, 2018, p. 495). The transnational perspective on migration has also been criticized for pretending to be a new conceptual and analytical framework for studying migration however there is nothing new in the approach (Vertovec, 2009). The “historical records and processes were not taken into account and that the focus, especially in migration studies, on human mobilities camouflages the global political system of nation-states controlling the movement of people” (Salazar & Smart 2011, Kivisto 2001, c.f. Jong & Dannecker, 2018, p. 495). Furthermore, it is said that the definitions and theoretical boundaries of the approach are not clear but the proponents of transnationalism have highly exaggerated its importance for migration studies. The approach also tends to reduce migrant activities to the wider category of ethnicity, overlooking other relating domains such as gender, class and race (Vertovec, 2009 & 2004; Levitt, 2001; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). Moreover, it is believed that regardless of the fact that at present highly advance communication and transportation systems have created more intense transnational connections, people were engaged in cross border connections in the past as well (Levitt, 2006; Vertovec, 2009).

Vertovec (2009) terms these criticisms over the transnational approach as ‘the usual suspects’ because most of the criticisms are repetitions of the previous without looking at the current developments of transnational scholarship and that the critics have mainly targeted few authors⁶⁹ and their work (Vertovec, 2009). In responding to these criticisms, Vertovec (2009)

⁶⁹Particularly, Schiller, Basch and Blanc, M.P. Smith, Guarnizo and Portes. For more details, see Vertovec, 2009.

argues that there were long distance contacts some 100 years ago but comparing those with contemporary transnationalism is highly exaggerating because the earlier migrations and connections were just “border crossing networks” which were usually taken on irregular intervals (Vertovec, 2009). He further states that many criticisms on transnationalism have been well dealt and answered by the most criticized transnationalist scholars such as Schiller and Levitt (Vertovec, 2009). Proponents of transnationalism believe that the approach has now “matured enough” and the new transnational optic has made new migrant categories operating in transnational social fields at multiple locations (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Moreover, the clear distinction of migrant and non-migrant agency has extended the transnational fields beyond national borders and provoked new conceptual thinking of identity and belonging (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

For the current study, it is important to use a transnational approach that focuses on transnational practices (regular or sporadic) of migrants and non-migrants in the origin areas because migrants and their left behind family members from district Abbottabad are embedded in multiple networks and social relationships by which resources, practices and ideas are constantly transforming and being shared. “The transnational social fields” as Levitt & Schiller (2004) term it, contain labor migrants and individuals such as migrant’s spouses, relatives and extended family and community members who actively operate in the transnational social fields (Levitt & Schiller, 2004). The socio-economic exchanges (remittances) are influencing and creating new spaces for negotiating relations especially gender relations which are the focus of this study in district Abbottabad.

3.6.1 The Transnational Practices in Transnationalism

In this section, I discuss the transnational practices that migrants and non-migrants carry out, and the arenas and transnational social groups involved in carrying out these practices. There are two obvious and important functions of transnational practices, first, its influence on shaping migration movements and direction and second, the flow of remittances (economic and social remittances) to the origin countries. Generally, transnational practices operate by means of transnational networks that are present both in the origin and destination countries (Levitt, 2001).

The transnational practices are relevant and significantly important in the context of my study because these practices such as the migrant’s networks and the economic and social remittances are considerably important in determining the flow and direction of migrants from Pakistan,

and the remittances sending and receiving behaviors to district Abbottabad especially (See for example Awan et al., 2013; Azam, 2005 and Erdal, 2012). The Pakistani migrants whether they are temporary labor migrants in Gulf States or some diaspora in the western countries, establish strong transnational networks and practices that connect migrants with both the left behind people and their country of origin (See for instance Arif, 2009; Ballard, 1991 and Amjad & Arif, 2014). The following text will further elaborate and show the relevance of transnational practices with my study.

Network theory was developed long before transnationalism; it highlighted the importance of migrant networks in influencing migration process. According to Massey et al., (1993) “networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in the origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin” (Massey et al., 1993, p. 448; see also Levitt, 2001; Arif, 2009; Erdal, 2012). Once these networks expand in size and strength, they lower the risks and expenses of migration, which consequently increase migration movements (Massey et al., 1993). The migrant’s networks facilitate future migrants to follow the same lines as their fellow migrants did before. The exchange of information through these networks makes it easy for intended migrants to choose a country with more financial benefits and initial support (Koser, 2007). New migrants also want to move to countries where they already have some friends or family members to support them in the beginning. It is believed that apart from other reasons, one valid reason for present day increase in migration is migrant’s networks. There are three ways migrant networks encourage new migrants first of which is information sharing (facilitated by modern means of communication); second is financial help in the form of loans; and third is helping newcomers to settle and finding jobs for them (Koser, 2007). Boyd and Nowak (2012) identify three major types of migrants networks. These include personal and family networks, networks of irregular migrants and labor migrant’s networks. They also highlight the gender perspective of these networks, and argue that women’s role is often more active in the family and personal networks (Boyd & Nowak, 2012 c.f. King, 2012, p. 23).

In case of Pakistani labor migrants, there are also three main types of networks including the personal and family networks, the ethnic based networks of *Biradri*⁷⁰, and finally the common residence or ‘*Darawal*’ networks. The personal and family networks of migrants from district Abbottabad are more or less of the type as mentioned by Boyd & Nowak (2012) above. The

⁷⁰*Biradri* is a term use for common ethnic affiliations. For example, it can be commonly defined as “The *biradhri* is an association, attachment, emotional linkage and sharing common characteristics by an individual being a part of a particular group descended of the same ancestor” (Chaudhry & Ahmed, 2014).

biradri networks consist of same ethnicity⁷¹ and the *darawal* networks comprise of individuals belonging to same geographical areas such as from the same village or community in the origin country who live together in the same buildings in the destination countries. The role and functions of these migrant's networks and transnational practices are similar to the above mentioned networks of migrants. However, there are hierarchical segmentations and gender differentiation in these networks. For example, the *darawal* networks of unskilled or low skilled migrants living together form their own separate networks, and the *darawal* networks of skilled migrants are separate. Likewise, women representation in these migrants' networks is low and confined to the origin areas for receiving and managing remittances only. These networks not only help and facilitate migrants in the host countries but migrants also use these networks for sending and receiving remittances. Additionally, these networks also extend economic support to poor migrant's families and communities through remittances in the origin areas (See for example Suleri & Savage, 2006).

The continuous networking between non-migrants and migrants constitutes transnational social fields between the receiving and sending societies (Mahler, 1998; Fraser, 1991 c.f. Levitt, 2001, p. 08). The social fields connect individuals across borders making a social arena in which both migrants and non-migrants actively participate. The transnational social fields encompass almost all characteristics of social life. However, these commonly arise through economic connections but the religious, political and social ties also create important arenas in the transnational social fields (Levitt, 2001). The stronger and more diverse the social fields are, the more intimate and active connections they develop with the origin countries. The majority of the transnational studies show that many individuals (migrants and non-migrants) are involved in some sort of transnational practices, however, Levitt argues that neither all individuals are embedded in transnational social fields nor all belong to transnational communities (see for example Levitt, 2001). She further demonstrates that to understand the migration and development correlation, one must consider the impacts of transnational practices on all individuals involved in transnational spaces (Levitt, 2001).

In some cases, the transnational social fields become so well-organized and institutionalized that they transform to some sort of transnational community. Here, it is not simply the number of individuals engaged in cross border formations, but it is a number of individuals from common origin who share mutual experiences, that transform their collective thinking into group consciousness (Levitt, 2001). There are close connections among transnational

⁷¹ See for example, empirical chapter 5 (section 5.3 page 104)

community members and they know one another personally or have common relatives in the groups. The members acknowledge common belonging and group membership across transnational space that allow them to form groups like hometown associations. These groups have strong holds at both the origin and destination countries, and influence individual migrants and their families (Levitt, 2001). Discussing the Mexicans, Dominicans and other Central American groups in the United States, Goldring (1998) argues that the reason that many people from these groups are involved in development projects at home countries or celebrate traditional festivals which is a way to affirm their belonging to these groups (Goldring, 1998; see also Levitt, 2001).

Labor migrants from district Abbottabad of Pakistan are also actively involved in transnational networking and as mentioned already, they have formed various transnational migrant's networks. The empirical data shows that these are sorts of informal groups (neither registered at the destination countries nor with the Pakistani immigration departments) that operate transnationally and collect a specific amount of money from the group members (they have different collection periods such as some groups contribute monthly while others on quarterly basis) to support their activities. The money is then utilized for different purposes such as on emergencies like accidents and deaths of migrants, financial help to migrants without work and for social obligations like serving common guests and visitors in the destination countries. These groups also extend financial help to migrant families in case of unfortunate events such as accident and death, contribute in disaster rehabilitation⁷², and donate as charity to religious organizations in the origin areas.

Levitt uses a unique term the “transnational village” for transnational community of the Dominican Miraflores for its distinctive features. She argues that migration is not a condition to be a member of transnational village. The migrants are so intimately connected to their sending communities that non-migrants adopt most of their practices and values. Both migrants and non-migrants are strongly rooted in the same transnational space; however, life in the origin society depends on ideas, resources and money from other transnational spaces. Transnational villages develop and sustain mostly because of social remittances (Levitt, 1999 c.f. Levitt, 2001, p. 11). The transfer of social remittances creates a Global culture in the origin communities that helps individuals to adopt new practices and identities or what Appadurai (1996) calls a new

⁷²Migrant's networks helped in disaster rehabilitation in Pakistan on many occasions. For instance, during the 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods and during the 2009 & 2010 conflict in the northwest of Pakistan (Suleri & Savage, 2006). See for example Koser, 2007, Savage & Harvey, 2007 and Gioli et al. 2013 for more examples of migrants' contribution in disaster rehabilitation in their origin countries.

“cartography”, which encourages them to try new political ideas, organizational strategies and new gender roles (Levitt, 2001).

According to Levitt (2001), transnationalism and globalization are influencing social relationships in general and gender relations in particular. However, the influence of transnationalism is different, but it must be understood in the context of globalization, in which it is rooted. The changes produced by globalization and migrations mutually support one another (Levitt, 2001).

Migrants and their left behind family members in district Abbottabad are deeply enmeshed in transnational social fields. The overall influence of globalization and the economic and social remittances or transnational practices are bringing social transformation in the area. The empirical data illustrates that due to strong attachment such as economic and emotional, both migrants and non-migrants see themselves in transnational spaces. Moreover, locally the migration desire is so strong that most of the families in the origin area are preparing future generations to take places of their predecessors (migrants).

In district Abbottabad, transnational social fields or networking could be vital in many ways. Firstly, they shape migration patterns and motivations. Secondly, the transnational perspective emphasizes on durability of transnational ties that connect people and societies. For example, in case of district Abbottabad, the transnational ties bring ethnic and regional solidarity on broader social issues such as financial support to families and rehabilitation work. Finally, the transnational connections are transformative channels that share transnational ideas through socio-economic remittances and economic exchanges that modify and shape social structures and introduce new ideas to the origin societies. These aspects have been analyzed in more depth in the empirical chapters.

3.7 Migration, Remittances and Development: A General Overview

International migration is considered as one of the defining features affecting the socio-economic relations of the Global North and Global South countries in the twenty first century. The beginning of the current century was marked by a significant increase of international migrants which were initially projected around 175 million migrants worldwide (United Nations, 2017). However, in 2019, the number of international migrants increased and reached to some 272 million migrants globally, almost 3.5 percent of the entire world population (UNDESA, 2019; IOM, 2020).

The main receiving countries and regions of international migrants are Asia and Europe that accommodated around 84 and 82 million international migrants respectively in 2019 which is 61 percent of the global stock of international migrants. North America stands third in the row of major destination countries and hosts about 22 percent of migrants globally, Africa hosts 10 percent, the Caribbean and Latin America host 4 percent and the Oceania hosts 3 percent of international migrants in 2019 (IOM, 2020). According to the International Organization for Migration report (IOM, 2020), the largest countries and regions of sending migrants are Asian and have a share of 112 million or 40 percent of international migrants globally in 2019. Countries such as India, China and some other countries in the South Asian region like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are the main origin countries of migrants. The second major migrant sending country is Mexico followed by Russia. Likewise, several European countries such as Poland, Germany, Ukraine and the United Kingdom also have substantial number of emigrants around the world (IOM, 2020).

As discussed before, the majority migration discourses and conventional models of migration discuss multiple reasons and motivations of migration such as for economic purposes and well-being of the family, family reunification, education and political instability, underdevelopment, unemployment and low productivity in the origin countries (Poppe et al., 2014; Geist & McManus, 2012; see also BE & OE, 2016; Azam, 2005). Similarly, the majority migration literature in Pakistan sees migration in general and labor migration to the Gulf States in particular for economic purposes and social transformation (See for example Amjad & Arif, 2014; Gazdar, 2003).

Migration from one country and region to another has significant influence on both the receiving and sending societies in the form of sharing ideas, investments, socio-economic development and innovation. This flow of new ideas, economic resources and knowledge is very important for setting the new “economic landscape” of these countries (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017). The economic development as a result of migration and remittances for the Global South countries is highly debated and included in almost all the global agendas and discussions on migration and development. However, the significant increase in the number of international migrants in the recent years raised heated political debates and large-scale unrest among people and political leaders of the developed Global North countries (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017). Similarly, the migrants’ origin countries are also greatly concerned over the migration of working population but they also see migration and remittances as a source of socio-economic development for their countries (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017).

Migration can bring development both at destination and origin countries. Remittances as an outcome of migration are an important source of income for households in sending countries. In 2019, some \$714 billion of remittances were sent worldwide in which around \$554 billion remittances were received by the Global South countries (World Bank, 2019). The households in the origin countries mostly invest remittances on education, sanitation, housing and infrastructure all of which are considered to bring overall socio-economic development in the migrant sending countries (UN, 2017).

Remittances are the financial means that migrants send from destination countries to family members, relatives, households and wider community in the origin countries. They help in economic uplift of developing countries and are considered as the second major source of foreign funding for many countries of the Global South (Koser, 2007). The international organizations such as World Bank, UN agencies, IOM, and some major migrants receiving countries of the Global North also acknowledge the importance of remittances for reducing poverty and increasing local level development in the sending countries. It is believed that the amount of remittance to the Global South countries is three times more than the amount received as donations and development aid (Koser, 2007). There are some general estimates that the amount of remittance sent through informal channels is almost double of the amount sent through formal means (Koser, 2007; see also Erdal, 2012).

The discovery of remittances in 1970s has initiated new debates in migration discourses. The new classical theory of migration with its focus on individual had no place for remittances discussions. It saw migrants as independent authorities who working for profit maximization only. Thus, the theory did not debate some important issues such as migrants' connections and relations with their households, families and the wider community (Taylor 1999). A simple model of migration where individuals leave places of low opportunities and wages and move to better places (areas of high wages and employment opportunities), do not anticipate the future income transferring back to their areas of origin. Nevertheless, income transfer to support people left behind is a common practice of majority migrants. The importance of these transfers (economic and social remittances) has made remittances most prominent and debated among other transnational practices (Pelling, 2013).

Remittances affect the lives of many individuals around the globe (Zanker & Siegel, 2007). In case of migrants from district Abbottabad, both social and economic remittances are an essential part of the transnational practices that connect migrants with their families and communities in the sending areas. In the present study, I analyze the process of sending and receiving

remittances (mediums and individuals) and its role in shaping gender relations in the area. Therefore, it is essential to understand the determinants of remittances.

Zanker & Siegel (2007) have summarized the main determinants of remittances as altruism, bequest motive, insurance, exchange purpose and loan settlement (Zanker & Siegel, 2007). Similar determinants of remittances have been noted in the empirical data from district Abbottabad. However, the implications of these determinants in the origin communities, especially their role in influencing the gender relations, is largely missing in the literature. Thus, my study focuses on the changing gender relations in the context of remittances (both social and economic) sending and management processes.

The theoretical discussions regarding remittances determinants started with Stark and Lucas' (1985) landmark work on "Motivations to remit" in Botswana, which is still considered as basis for majority current debates over the determinants of remittances (Zanker & Siegel, 2007). Lucas and Stark (1985) studied the household level remittances and presented major determinants for remittances as "pure altruism, pure self-interest and tempered altruism or enlightened self-interest and any kind of contractual arrangements between the left behind households and migrants can be in the latter category, for example co-insurance, exchange-motives" (Lucas & Stark, 1985 c.f. Zanker & Siegel, 2007, p. 05).

Altruism can be defined as "the willingness to give part of one's time or resources for a good cause" (Tchouassi & Sikod, 2010, p. 02). It can be also defined as "an unselfish concern for the social welfare of others" (Tchouassi & Sikod, 2010, p. 02). Lucas & Stark (1985), define altruism as "an act of motivation for migrant to remit to those (left behind) migrants' care for" (Lucas & Stark, 1985, p. 913). Funkhouser, (1995) states that altruistic feelings are natural that compel migrants to send remittances (Funkhouser, 1995 c.f. Zanker & Siegel, 2007, p. 05). Most migrants are concerned about the welfare of family, poverty and shocks to the left behind family which gives rise to altruism and thus leads to remittances (Zanker & Siegel, 2007). This develops a positive connection between the receiving households (poor economic conditions) and the remittance sending persons. For example, the flow of remittances increases with altruism, and migrants' income or salary, but decreases with the increasing income of recipients (Funkhouser, 1995 c.f. Zanker & Siegel, 2007, p. 05). Zanker & Siegel (2007) argue that migrants' duration of stay also influences altruism; the longer migrants stay at destination countries, the weaker would be their ties to origin communities and hence less altruistic motives (Zanker & Siegel, 2007; Mahmud, 2020). However, in case of Pakistani labor migrants to the

Gulf States, studies suggest that time has no implications over the altruistic motives for sending remittances. The migrants continuously send remittances for supporting their families (see for instance Erdal, 2012; Arif, 2009; Amjad & Arif, 2014). Some studies suggest that altruism is not the sole determinant for sending remittances (Zanker & Siegel, 2007). Orozco et al., (2005) illustrates that both altruism and self-interest work collectively in shaping remittances motives (Orozco, et al., 2005). Other scholars identified different motivations including economic support to families, loan settlements, and future investments upon the return of migrants, which sometimes overlap or support each other for sending remittances (Lowell & Schneider, 2006 c.f. Pelling, 2013; Pasha & Altaf, 1987).

Rahman and Fee (2012), shows that “migrants’ remittances allow an exploration of how society shapes them by incorporating social-cultural factors in addition to individuals’ interests” (Rahman & Fee 2012 c.f. Mahmud, 2020, p. 179). Mahmud (2014) shows that “empirical studies recognize how migrants’ perception of remittances is shaped by their class position both in the home and destination countries” (Mahmud, 2014 c.f. Mahmud, 2020, p. 179). He further states that “this line of argument dictates a need to incorporate migrants’ destination’s social contexts where they make decisions about sending remittances, in addition to the place of origin, where the recipients use the remittance” (Mahmud, 2020, p. 179; see also Dannecker, 2003). As mentioned already, different factors influence and determine remittance motivations. For example, remittance motivations are also largely determined by different social pressures on migrants as demonstrated by Dannecker (2003) in her study of Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia. She argues that social pressures such as responsibility of dependent parents and siblings, finances incurred because of sponsoring migration, and recovery of mortgaged property or ancestral land largely motivate migrants especially in South Asia to send remittances home (Dannecker, 2003). Likewise, studies show that potential natural disasters and threats also determine migrants’ motives of sending remittances (Suleri & Savage, 2006; see also Bouoiyour & Miftah, 2015).

The empirical data relating to determinants for sending remittances shows that migrants are likely to send more remittances because of altruism to households that are more dependent on remittances. Particularly, the altruistic motive becomes stronger in cases of temporary migrants who have left their spouses and children in origin countries. In cases, where marriage is the central variable for sending remittances, the flow of remittances is high. Therefore, married migrants commonly send remittances to their wives under altruistic feeling. However, there are some variations in the flow of remittances. For example, in nuclear families, migrants send

remittances directly to their wives in their personal bank accounts or through other means such as migrant's networks as observed during the fieldwork. In extended households, these are sent to the household head (male). The head of the household receives remittance and manages it according to the household needs. In extended households, the migrant's spouses usually get some of the money remitted for their personal use. Furthermore, some evidence from empirical data also shows separate remittances for migrant's spouses⁷³ (See for example Arif, 2009; Sinha et. al. 2012; Gulati, 1987).

Apart from to altruism, self-interest is also a motivation for sending remittances. Here, the motivation is to send remittances for future investment. According to Zanker and Siegel (2007), the migrants see household as a trustworthy and well-informed agent for investments at home. Here, the flow of remittances increases with migrant's saving and income, increase in household possessions and earnings and remittances decreases with 'risk aversion' (Zanker & Siegel, 2007 see also Lucas & Stark, 1985). Next is the more moderate determinant of sending remittances, the 'tempered altruism'. In this case, migration is viewed as a kind of contractual agreement, benefiting both migrant and his/her family. Self- interest and altruism can also play their role in strengthening the contract. The main contractual arrangements are loan repayment, exchange for services and co-insurance (Zanker & Siegel, 2007).

Generally, the determinants of remittances operate as a two-way process. For example, the remittances are sent to households for investments or in cases of unexpected shock or emergency. In return, the household members support the migrants by repaying migration costs and supporting his/her immediate family. The flow of remittances increases if the household faces shocks or when its income decreases, the remittances flow further increases with the increase in risk level of migrant (Zanker & Siegel, 2007).

Remittances not only include economic transfers but also some kind of social exchanges such as sharing of ideas, knowledge and cultural values (Wong, 2006, c.f. Erdal, 2012, p. 439). The exchanges often take place upon migrants' visit to the origin country. These visits are significant in sustaining and maintaining transnational connections and are an essential part of the social process in which socio-economic remittances operate (Mason, 2004; Erdal, 2012). Levitt (2001) defines social remittances as "the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from host to the sending communities" (Levitt, 1999 c.f. Levitt, 2001, p. 54). She argues that there is also the cultural and social capital that migrants carry with them to the

⁷³ See empirical chapter no. 6

destination countries. It is widely recognized that these cultural and social capital play an important role in maintaining migrant's political integration and entrepreneurship in the receiving countries and community development in the origin areas (Levitt, 2001). As already mentioned, "migrants living abroad and returnees transfer new ideas and norms to their household members and peers back home, thereby modifying the social institutions and norms of the origin communities and countries" (Tuccio & Wahba, 2020, p. 02). Thus, they bring continuous transformations and significant changes in the origin societies (Levitt, 2001). Likewise, as analyzed in the empirical chapters, the social remittances brought some obvious changes in gender relations in the study area thus, important to examine here.

According to Levitt, (2001) social remittances can be broadly divided into three types; 'normative structures', 'systems of practice' and 'social capital'. Normative structures contain beliefs, ideas and values. These include concepts of family responsibility, motivations for social mobility, behavioral norms and principles of community participation and neighborhood. Normative structures also contain ideas and values about organizational work, good governance and political behavior. In the context of her study in Dominican Republic, Levitt (2001) illustrates that Miraflores migrants transfer social remittances to their families back in Dominican Republic over their visits and through phone conversations from the destination societies (Levitt, 2001). Ideas or norms from destination societies might get transmitted through various means to the origin countries, which as a result exposes non-migrants to the sending areas' new concepts and ideas. Giving example from her study of Miraflores, Levitt, (2001) argues that women migrants from Miraflores transfer social remittances to non-migrant women that "construct new versions of womanhood". Consequently, these transformations influence women's everyday social roles and gender relations. For example, women started working outside homes, took collective decisions relating to household matters and convinced their husbands to help in household tasks (Levitt, 2001). Similarly, in district Abbottabad, both social and economic remittances are influencing the mobility and decision making of migrants' spouses in some poor and middle-income families. The empirical data shows that significant changes in women's role and influence in household's matters have been observed once migration has started from the area.

Next is the system of practice which includes the procedures formed through normative structures. These include distribution and handing over of household duties, performing religious rituals and participation in political and welfare programmes. Systems of practices also include organizational behavior and practices (Levitt, 2001). These social remittances have

significant effects, and tend to challenge the old patterns of social and political life in the origin societies or regions (Levitt, 2001).

Finally, social capital refers to the status and prestige immigrants acquire in the destination countries. They use the social capital to influence the origin communities socio-politically. For example, immigrants' active participation in community welfare could increase their socio-political influence in origin societies, whereas the social capital lowers when the migrant's participation in community welfare is low. This could also affect the social positions of non-migrant members of the household in the origin communities (Levitt, 2001).

According to Levitt (2001), there are various means of transferring social remittances to the origin areas. For instance, through returnees, migrant's visit to origin communities, non-migrants visit to destination countries and through letters exchange, e-mails, cassettes, telephones and videos (Levitt, 2001). Currently, because of globalization new mediums of exchanging and transferring information and social remittances have been introduced such as various social media tools and applications. According to Dekker & Engbersen (2014), "social media have created a de-territorialized social space that facilitates communication among geographically dispersed people in migrant networks. Through internet applications, such as MySpace, Facebook, weblogs, YouTube, Twitter, and so on allow individuals to use these mediums for networking purposes" (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014, p. 403). Dekker & Engbersen (2014) further argue that "social media stand out among other digital tools like telephones, TVs and radio, and transfer migration information between migrant networks and potential migrants in a relatively cheap and easily accessible manner. For example, social media and migrant networks are mediating factors that act as informal sources of information. They also decrease the transaction costs of migration. Social media strengthen the ties between potential migrants and migrants' networks" (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014 c.f. Obi, et al., 2021, p. 06). The "digitalization or use of digital technologies in communication such as social media is one of the transformations in today's world that improves information flows and awareness among people. It can also influence migration decisions" (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014, p. 05).

Apart from transferring social remittances (norms, cultural traits and political ideologies), social media also motivates prospective migrants. For instance, Hermosa & Hachtmann (2013) state, "social media has changed the way in which migrants' keep in touch with their families. Social media connected people and they could stay up to date on the main family events, see pictures, use chat tools to talk to members of their family and know everything about them" (Hermosa & Hachtmann, 2013, p. 99). Likewise, "social media have become popular channel of

communication that make prospective migrants more informed about possibilities to migrate and destinations to settle” (Dekker, et al., 2016; Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2014 c.f. Dekker, et al., 2018, p. 02). According to Obi, et al. (2021) social media enhance “migration aspirations even amongst people with low capabilities to migrate via legitimate routes” (Obi, et al., 2021, p. 06). These are “increasingly becoming popular mediums of information sharing on which migrants base their decisions on whether to migrate and the destinations where to settle” (Dekker, et al., 2018, p. 01).

Levitt, (2001) states that social remittances often take place systematically and with clear intentions. For instance, social remittances take place when a migrant directly shares different ideas with family and community members. There is a difference between ideas directly communicated to the groups and the information they receive through mass media. According to Levitt, (2001) the mass media information is not comparable to social remittances because these are not focused on a particular group or individual. However, the widespread use of media facilities lead to smooth transmission and quick acceptance of social remittances (Levitt, 2001).

The impact or influence of remittances also varies depending upon class, gender and age of the receiver. People with more power, recourses and freedom can frequently reject or accept social remittances. For example, regarding women’s position with respect to social remittances, Levitt, (2001) argues that economically independent women are more ready to accept social remittances as compared to women who are dependent on husbands (Levitt, 2001). However, Haas & Rooij (2010), while referring to Moroccan migrants in some Gulf States, argue that migrants are also significantly influenced by the norms and cultural practices of the destination societies that further make them more conservative thus having less or no influence on gender relations in the sending societies (See for example Haas & Rooij, 2010).

In the study area, remittances are deeply embedded in the local socio-economic, cultural and gender norms. For example, regarding the influence of remittances on people and particularly on women, the empirical evidence suggests that generally the local gender norms and power structures do not allow abrupt acceptance of new ideas and norms; however, the society is gradually transforming and accepting changes. Moreover, the economically independent women and migrants’ spouses directly receiving remittances from their husbands are more ready to accept new changes which tends to influence gender relation in the area (see for example, Ganguly, & Negi, 2010; Ekra et al., 2011). The remittances are increasing female mobility and decision making in some poor and middle-income nuclear households as shown in detail in the following empirical chapters. However, in extended households where men

control household affairs, women have fewer chances of negotiating gender relations (see for instance, Gulati, 1993; Datta & Mishra, 2011).

As stated already, the rapid increase in migration from developing countries and the subsequent flow of remittances in the last decade is seen by Western regimes, international organizations and the governments of sending countries as positive steps towards local development and poverty reduction in developing countries (Ekra et al., 2011; see also Ramírez et al., 2005). Looking at migration and development from a broader perspective fits well with Sriskandarajah's (2005) concluding remarks in his study that migration transforms individuals (both migrants and non-migrants) in host and origin societies (Sriskandarajah, 2005).

The history of migration scholarship saw a positive relation between migration and development a century ago when Ravenstein, the father of modern migration studies, positively linked migration to development in his last three laws⁷⁴ of migration (Skeldon, 2009; Schiller & Faist, 2010). To date, migrants are seen as agents of economic development and change for their countries of origin (Kapur, 2004; Haas, 2008; see also Dannecker, 2009). However, Schiller (2010) argues that in spite of the positive role of immigrants in the form of remittances contribution, they are still seen critical in migration discourses (Schiller, 2010).

The asymmetric and reciprocal resources transfer, as Schiller & Faist, (2010) argue, are "deeply flawed," and serve the interests of developed countries and international institutions only⁷⁵ (Schiller & Faist, 2010). International organizations and the OECD states have made strict changes in their migration policies and introduced more nation-centric migration schemes such as temporary migration or "circular migration". They argue that highly skilled migrants are transferring skills and knowledge (i.e., brain gain) from West to East and from North to South countries rather than creating brain drain. These schemes of temporary and circular migration have focused both on individual migrants and migrant's associations (Diasporas/HTAs) for the transfer of economic and social remittances from Global North to Global South countries (Schiller & Faist, 2010). Moreover, the "circular migration is seen as promoting a triple win solution, bringing benefits to destination countries, origin countries and migrant workers,; for example, a win for destination countries that can support a level of economic activity that would be impossible without foreign labor; a win for countries of origin because it lowers

⁷⁴Particularly Laws 9-11 for more details see Ravenstein (1885, 1889)

⁷⁵For example, currently the international organizations (World Bank, IOM, GCIM and UN) advocate and relate development with circular migration. For details, see Castles, 2010, Schiller & Faist, 2010, Haas, 2008, Naerssen et al. 2008.

unemployment and brings in remittances and skills; and a win for migrants who can earn more income and escape poverty” (Wickramasekara , 2011, p. 01; see also Ghayur, 2016).

As mentioned already, the remittances have diverse implications on the origin countries because the resulting socio-economic development is largely dependent on some structural and behavioral (of individuals) characteristics of the receiving societies (Katseli et al., 2006). For example, the local socio-economic and structural conditions not only determine the transferring amounts of remittances, but also regulate the channels and investment patterns of remittances in the sending societies thus having different developmental impacts (Katseli et al., 2006). Leon and Piracha, (2004) see development in the context of the nature and categories of migration and migrants, and argue that majority of the current literature relating to migration and development suggests that the developmental implications of migration and remittances on the origin societies vary with the category of migration and skills of migrants such as permanent versus temporary, and unskilled versus skilled migration (Leon & Piracha, 2004).

Similarly, Dannecker (2009) argues that development as a process is merely conceptualized or defined in the wider context of socio-economic factors, ignoring the different meanings it carries for different individuals and groups involved in the process. She further adds that many studies have focused almost entirely on the diaspora and transnational migrants in the developed Western countries while ignoring development discourses covering migration patterns and migrant groups in developing countries such as contractual labor migrants from Asian countries. However, this category of migration has gained significant importance in migration and development debates in last decade (Dannecker, 2009; see for example Rahman, 2012). Dannecker, (2009) states that in developing countries in particular, this kind of migration is highly relevant due to remittances’ contribution in the countries of origin. Therefore, the temporary migration because of its unique characteristics such as contractual limitation (return in case of contract expiry) and leaving behind families may have considerable and “yet different development implications” (Dannecker, 2009: 120). At present, new concepts and ideas are emerging in migration and development debates. However, the role of migrants and the development of their origin countries is mostly discussed in the Western development context (Dannecker, 2009). Likewise, Skeldon (2009) is also somehow skeptic of the very idea of development and states that the concept of development itself is contested and complex, and it must be seen in the wider socio-economic and political context of the societies (Skeldon, 2009; see Naerssen, et al., 2008).

In 1980s, Sen introduced a unique concept of development; the “Capability Approach” to development. His approach to development has critically evaluated the concept of development “moving from an income-led definition of development to one based on multiple ends” (Frediani, 2010, p. 175). Sen, evaluated the individual’s abilities and capabilities beyond the commonly perceived economic notions of development. For instance, he argues that individuals’ current situation should not be judged in the perspective of available resources or development progress rather, they should be judged in the framework of freedom and opportunities they have or wanted to lead a good life (Frediani, 2010). Rahman (2012), in his study of “Gendering Migrant Remittances: in Bangladeshi”, also uses a rather similar concept of social development. He argues that the concept of social development is of potential relevance in the context of short-term labor migration from Asian countries (Rahman, 2012).

Another important component of development is the productive use of remittances. There is a hot debate over the remittances’ utilization, for instance, whether their consumption is “productive” or “unproductive”⁷⁶. Piper (2009) argues that not only the notions of “productive” and “un-productive” use of remittances are questionable but even some scholars are skeptical over the use of these terminologies⁷⁷ in migration and development discourses (Piper, 2009 c.f. Rahman, 2012, pp 161-162). Gonin (2009) argues that this debate of productive and unproductive is complex and needs contextual understanding. For example, expenditures on household construction can have important impacts on local market and employment activities and are thus productive for local people. He further adds that even spending lavishly on weddings could have positive future demographic consequences for some communities (Gonin, 2009; see also Ramirez et al., 2005). There are also variations in remittances expenditures and development, and what is considered productive in developing countries’ context might be unproductive in the developed countries and vice versa. In Pakistan, for example, the majority families’ first priority is to spend remittances on basic needs like food and shelter excluding luxurious constructions in case of labor migrants (Lefebvre, 1990; Arif, 2009; Amjad, et al., 2014) which might not be the productive use of remittances for many developed countries. Therefore, like many other developing countries in the region, the unproductive and productive debate of remittances expenditures for receiving households in Pakistan may be better explained through a local saying; “*Jaan hai to Jahan Hai*” (The world

⁷⁶There is a debate on which items are productive and unproductive; as Haas argues, “there seems reason to criticize the inclination to denote expenditure on housing, sanitation, health care, food and schooling as unproductive and non-developmental” (Haas, 2005; for detail see Papademetriou and Martin, 1991).

⁷⁷ Some scholars prefer to use alternative terms such as “physical capital” and “human capital” (Salomone, 2006; Piper, 2009; and Rahman, 2012)

is meaningless without one's own existence) which signifies the use of remittances on basic needs of survival in developing countries.

Another relevant concept in the migration and development discourses is 'the feminization of migration' which is a complex system of economic, social and political experiences operating globally and influencing both destination and origin societies (Remirez et al., 2005). Currently women are actively participating in migration movements, and are being perceived as agents of local development in comparison to their earlier movements which were mostly for family reunification. Now more women migrate for economic purposes. Being migrants, they contribute in household and community development. However, Remirez et al., (2005) argue that due to the prevalent gender differences, women are treated differently in the whole migration process which has different developmental consequences (Remirez et al., 2005). Ekra et al., (2011) suggest that development policies and programs, and the process of migration should be "gender neutral" because gender is very important in the whole developmental process (Ekra et al., 2011). The gender not only decides who in the household will migrate, how, where, when and why, but it also influences the frequency and amounts of remittances, their management at household level and their impacts on the relationships within households (Ekra et al., 2011; see also Rahman, 2012; Dannecker, 2009).

In majority male out-migration countries in South Asia, the remittances are often sent to the family members who are more socially powerful and have higher hierarchical positions in the family. However, it is argued that remittances have the potential to change gender relations, for example, by remitting money, women earn respect (Ramírez et al., 2005). Similarly, by controlling remittances, they become more independent (Jolly & Reeves, 2005 c.f. der Zee, p. 23). However, contrary to Ramírez et al's., (2005) argumentation of "women remitting money and the consequent respect", Dannecker, (2015) demonstrates that such argumantations need contextual understanding especially in the context of some Muslim societies where women migration relates negatively to family honor and shame (Dannecker, 2015).

In Pakistan, in general and particularly in the North-West of the country, the concept of "feminization of migration" is largely discourages because of strict gender norms and lack of migration policies and initiatives from the government. For example, in Pakistan, about 96 percent registered migrants are male and the official data records only documents male migration which reflects the government's lack of interest in female migration (See for example Azam, 2005; Iqbal, & Mozmi, 2014; OP&HRD, 2015). The available government immigration data untill 2015 shows that only around 6,500 women labor migrants have migrated from

Pakistan mainly to UAE and Saudi Arabia. These women migrants are housemaids who migrated with the families they were working with in Pakistan (BE & OE, 2015). In Pakistan's context, the common female migration patterns are those of family reunification (BE & OE, 2015).

The labor migration to GCC states is contract based in that it does not allow family repatriation (see for example Thiollet, 2016; Malik, 2009; Rahman, 2012). In the study area, women are mostly involved in migration process at two main stages such as in the initial preparatory stage (before the migration) and the remittances receiving and management stage after the migration. The former stage includes preparatory tasks such as managing funds for migration, psychological support, and looking after the family and other necessary migration preparations. The latter stage includes women's role in remittances utilization and management⁷⁸. These stages have their own implications depending on intra household relationships, classes, genders, ages, economic status and family structures. For example, in some households, women are more active whereas in others they take less part in the migration process (see for example, Fatima & Qayyum, 2016; Iqbal, & Mozmi, 2014).

Migration of men has social costs for the left behind family members especially for wives because of increased responsibilities and husbands' long absence from homes. This is particularly important in the Pakistani context because of strict gender norms and power structures as discussed above. The mainstream migration literature mainly includes the economic impacts of migration on the origin communities, and gives less space to discussion over the psychological well-being and emotional impacts of migration on the left-behind family members (Silver, 2014; Nobles et al., 2015). For example, Hugo (2010) states, "Migration brings opportunities for social, economic, and personal development. At the same time, the left-behind families of the migrants face various types of risks, insecurities, violence, mental sufferings and exploitation. These sufferings are treated as unavoidable social costs of migration" (Hugo, 2010 c.f. Siddiqui & Ansar, 2020, p. 11). Silver (2014) assesses the emotional effects and well-being of women in Mexico, and argues "Migration of close family members to the United States, especially spouses and children, significantly increased depressive symptoms and feelings of loneliness in family members in Mexico. Women, particularly mothers and wives, are more adversely affected by family member's migration" (Silver, 2014, p.194). Her study finding illustrates that these emotional effects are more severe in case of Mexico because of migrants' lengthy stay abroad due to border restrictions.

⁷⁸ See empirical chapters 5 & 6 for details

Furthermore, she argues, “In contrast to men, women with spouses, mothers, siblings and children in the United States are significantly more likely to report higher levels of loneliness” (Silver, 2014, p. 209). Emillio et al. (2007) studied the emotional stress on migrants’ wives in the Caribbean and Latin America and argue, “Migration increases risk of family breakdown, fragmentation of social networks and psychological stress” (Emillio et al., 2007 c.f. Siddiqui & Ansar, 2020, p. 13).

The long-term separation from loved ones such as husbands, sons and siblings causes depression and stress among family members in the origin communities. For example, a study of Honduran transnational families “emphasizes the importance of communication in maintaining family ties across borders; however, the study provides evidences of stress that results from familial separation regardless of sustained communication. Although many respondents interviewed for the study discuss the economic benefits of migration as outweighing the psychological and emotional costs of familial separation, others mention feeling abandoned or not understanding the reasons that their family members left without them” (Schmalzbauer, 2004 c.f. Silver, 2014, p. 197).

As mentioned above, migrants’ wives are more vulnerable to the emotional impacts of migration because of husbands’ absence especially in families having traditional structural and power relations and unequal gender representation in both private and public spheres (Artico, 2003; Fomby, 2005; Kanaiaupuni, 2000, c.f. Silver, 2014, p. 197). Studies on the emotional well-being of left-behind family members in South Asia show multiple emotional implications of male out-migration. For example, Zachariah and Rajan’s (2009) study in the state of Kerala in India demonstrates that the wives of Gulf migrants in Kerala experience significant insecurity, additional responsibilities, loneliness, and difficulties in raising children without the support of husbands (Zachariah and Rajan, 2009). In another study in Nepal, Bhurtyal (2015) found that “separation from husbands due to a husband’s migration is associated with depression in the left-behind wives. Majority of left-behind wives believed that physical and geographical separation from their husbands increases their depression. The stress and depression are more in women whose husbands went abroad soon after their marriage because women feel loneliness and are worried about their husbands’ health and wellbeing” (Bhurtyal, 2015, p.244).

Living arrangements such as nuclear and extended families affect women differently regarding their level of stress and emotional well-being. For example, Bhurtyal (2015) demonstrates that “women living with in-laws or in male headed families reported that the in-laws’ attitude and

perception towards them is associated with their traditions and religious beliefs, and they believe that a household head's individual characteristics are vital for them in the absence of their husbands. Most of the left-behind wives found it difficult to share their feelings and experiences with their in-laws who were religious and traditional. They also reported that household heads do not listen to their voice and they have had difficult and miserable situations under illiterate household heads. Majority of left-behind wives perceived that their condition under illiterate household heads was one of the contributory factors in their depression" (Bhurtyal, 2015, p. 236). In a similar context, Lei & Desai (2021) argue, "The left-behind wives in nuclear families gained greater autonomy than left-behind wives in extended families. The behaviors of women in the later residential arrangement such as in extended families are more closely monitored and constrained by senior family members which increased the negative health impacts on women. On the other hand, women in nuclear families are more likely to make decisions in the households and have cash to spend when their husbands migrated. They are also less required to ask for permission to go out and to eat separately from male family members after the husbands' migration. These changes largely suppressed the negative impacts of husbands' out-migration thus making women less vulnerable to depression and stress" (Lei & Desai, 2021, p.08).

The migrants usually maintain connection with their family members and areas of origin through regular visits and virtual means of communication. As migrants are mainly away from homes, it largely changes the local social dynamics. Women, especially migrants' wives, are mainly affected by such circumstances because of additional responsibilities and changes in their roles which often lead to stress and depression (Sahar & Gillani, 2014). Sahar & Gillani (2014) further argue, "the more time the male earning figures spend away from their families, the more is the likelihood of emotional and psychological problems in their families who live behind. Although the whole family is affected but wives of migrants are the ones who experience severe depression and loneliness" (Sahar & Gillani, 2014). Likewise, in a study by Karasaz (2005), "it was found that Indian and Pakistani women whose husbands are living in USA consider themselves more sensitive and get depressed more easily. It was also seen that many women associated illness with isolation and confinement in the home. Managing a family in the absence of the husbands becomes difficult for women especially in nuclear families which increases wives' burden as well as their loneliness" (Karasaz, 2005 c.f. Sahar & Gillani, 2014, pp.25-26). Studies in Pakistan also show that additional responsibilities on migrants' wives in the form of childcare due to the long absence of fathers negatively affect both women and children. For example, "Women felt alone and burdened when they assumed new duties and

responsibilities in the absence of their husbands, particularly concerning the male children. The children also felt loneliness and lack of guidance in the absence of their father which resulted in their poor academic performance” (Farooq & Javed, 2009,p. 236; see also Kousar et al., 2014).

In the last decades of twentieth century, the positive and negative impacts of migration and development, particularly the impacts of remittances on origin areas have been the focus of migration scholarship. Remittances are perceived as highly significant for macro level development in sending countries (Hein, 2008; Amjad & Arif, 2014; Haas, 2010; Hoang & Yeoh, 2015) whereas their potential for sustainable development at micro level is criticized (Ramírez et al., 2005). Many critics of migration and development believe that if remittances bring development to the sending countries, they also tend to give rise to inequalities and dependency in the origin communities (Lipton, 1980; Rubenstein, 1992; Taylor, 1999; Binford, 2003; see also Ratha, 2003; Haas, 2005). In developing countries, migration is thought to bring some benefits in the form of remittances and development. For example, it helps in the economic uplift of migrant families and if invested properly, it creates employment opportunities for local population (Schiller & Faist, 2010). Moreover, the social remittances or behavioral changes migrants transfer to the sending societies help in intangible development such as behavioral changes towards education of both boys and girls, and changes in the traditional social structures and gender roles and relations (Schiller & Faist, 2010).

In Pakistan, mainly the poor unskilled and semi-skilled people migrate to Gulf countries (Azam, 2005; see also Lefebvre, 1990). Due to lack of employment opportunities in Pakistan in general and particularly for unskilled and low skilled workers, Gulf States are not less than a survival destination to test their fates. These Gulf States, in spite of exploitative migration policies and harsh labor conditions, are a source of livelihood and survival for many migrants’ households in Pakistan. Similarly, migration and remittances tend to change the traditional social structures and bring socio-economic development in the developing countries like Pakistan (see for example, BE & OE. 2016; Khan et al., 2010 and Iqbal et al., 2014).

Some scholars suggest that for analyzing migration and development phenomena, one needs to understand the national political structure, emigration policies, returnees’ situation and the positive role of migration in development (Cedric & Dorai, 2009; see also Skeldon, 2009). Moreover, Stark and Kuznetsov, state, “In fact, the answer to the question of how and to what extent financial and social transfers of emigrants contribute to the development process of sending countries depends on our own conception of development and on the spatial scale of

analysis” (Stark 2003; Kuznetsov 2006 c.f. Cedric & Dorai, 2009, p. 16). Therefore, micro level factors like family, kinship, and gender roles at village and regional levels in the countries of origin are important to consider (Cedric & Dorai, 2009).

As mentioned already, migration and remittances are transforming traditional power structures and gender relations. In developing countries, especially in the context of male out migration, women take active part in the whole migration and remittances process thus significantly empowering themselves (Fatima & Qayyum, 2016; Iqbal, & Mozmi, 2014). In the next section, I discuss the literature and theoretical concepts on the role of migration and remittances in empowering women, and argue that migration increases women’s decision making and empowerment.

3.8 Decision- Making and Women Empowerment

Women’s empowerment considers an essential component of the socio-economic development of society and especially of women’s status and development in the socio-economic and political spheres of everyday life. Similarly, women’s empowerment is among one of the leading concerns of many countries of the Global South, and a major component of the development agenda and policies of the major international organizations and some Global North countries (Sinha and Negi, 2012). World Bank recognized empowerment “as one of the key constituent element of poverty reduction, and as a primary development assistance goal” (Malthotra et al., 2002, p. 03). Empowerment is considered as “the process of removing the factors which cause powerlessness and has been used to represent a wide range of concepts and more often to advocate for certain types of policies and intervention strategies as demonstrated by a number of documents from the United Nations” (UNDAW 2001; UNICEF, 1999 c.f. Haque et al., 2011, p. 18).

Haque et al., (2011) argues that the concept of empowerment is complex, and is sometimes confused with terms like autonomy and gender equality (Haque et al., 2011). Some researchers believe that there is no clear differentiation between these concepts. For example, Mason and Smith (2000) and Mason (1998) use gender stratification, empowerment and autonomy interchangeably. Likewise, Jejeebhoy (2000) thinks about empowerment and autonomy as relatively similar concepts that show women’s independent position in the society and their control over everyday socio-economic and political lives (Jejeebhoy, 2000). However, Haque et al., (2011) states that empowerment is largely used especially in the context of marginalized

groups and individuals, especially women and poor people, and thus needs clear definition for the progress of women and the society as a whole (Haque et al., 2011).

Schuler and Hashemi (1993) state, “The process of empowerment begins at the level of a woman’s individual consciousness and becomes externalized through greater physical mobility, remunerated labor, a strong role in the household and, eventually, meaningful participation in the wider community” (Schuler & Hashemi, 1993, p. 17). Likewise, the DAC (1998) report related to gender equality states that women’s empowerment and their equal participation in everyday socio-economic tasks such as decision-making powers and authority over family and social affairs are basics for achieving gender equality and development of the society (DAC, 1998). Social scientists identified some key factors that determine and influence women’s empowerment. These factors include gender, age, marital status, social role, nationality, economic activity, distribution of intra-household resources, and health (Sen, 1992; Sen, 1999; Sen, 2009; Kabeer, 1994; Trommlerova et al., 2015 c.f. Sell & Minot, 2018, p. 47). Another important factor which determines women’s empowerment is “women participation” in socio-economic and political affairs (Sell & Minot, 2018). Kishor and Lekha (2008) argue that women’s participation in decision-making in their households is widely accepted as a universal indicator of their empowerment (Kishor & Lekha 2008 c.f. Haq et al., 2017, p. 120); for example, “Women’s ability to make larger purchases, involvement in major decisions, relative freedom from domination within the family, political and legal awareness, participation in public protests and political campaigns, and their level of economic security as sources of women’s empowerment” (Haq et al., 2017, p. 123). Towfiqua et al.’s, (2007) study of Bangladeshi women identified three dimensions of empowerment; “women’s role in economic decision-making, their role in decisions regarding household, and finally women’s decisions about physical freedom of movement” (Varghese, 2011, p. 41). Studies show that “there is a positive relationship between women’s empowerment and decision-making at household level, and empowerment of women means giving women decision making powers in social, economic and political sphere of life” (Yogendrarajah, 2013, p. 2; Malhotra & Schuler 2005). Likewise, Peterman et al., (2015) state that decision-making powers to women is a key element of women’s empowerment (Peterman et al., 2015 c.f. Sell & Minot, 2018, p. 47).

Many scholars define empowerment but Kabeer’s (2001) definition of empowerment is the most popular in academic and policy circles. She states that empowerment is “the expansion of people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (Kabeer, 2001, p. 19). Similarly, Keller and Mbwewe (1991) state that women

empowerment is “a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination” (Keller & Mbwewe, 1991 c.f. Haque et al., 2011, p. 18). The main theme of the concept of women’s empowerment holds the fundamental idea of women’s capabilities to take independent decisions and the power to control their lives. Nearly all the above definitions include the elements of free choice, decision making and control over their lives that are essential for women’s progress and development (Malhotra & Schuler 2005 c.f. Haque et al., 2011, p. 19).

Amin et al., (1998) present three essential elements of the women’s empowerment concept such as “the interspouse consultation index” which shows the level of women’s involvement in household matters and to what extent their husbands or male members of the household value women’s consultation; “the individual autonomy index” refers to matters relating to women’s mobility and independent economic decisions; and the “authority index” sees the real decision-making powers of women in the predominantly male society (Amin et al., 1998). Similar factors relating to women’s empowerment are also included in the eight points empowerment indicator of Hashemi et al., (1996). For example, these empowerment indicators include economic security, economic decision-making at household level, the capacity to influence economic matters outside the household, mobility, influence and involvement of women in overall decision making, individual freedom without family influence, legal and political awareness, and women representation at the political platforms (Hashemi et al., 1996 c.f. Sinha & Negi, 2012, p. 65).

In between 1980s and 1990s, the debates relating to the concepts of gender equality and empowerment received prominence in the academia and at the policy level, and thus led to significant transformations in social sciences and concepts such as gender equality, development and women’s empowerment (Sinha & Negi, 2012). Drinkwater (2005) argues that in gender, migration and development contexts, gender issues are considered as fundamental in “anchoring and shaping immigration patterns”, and migration or immigration is a leading force for either restoring and derailing the everyday socio-economic lives of migrants and individuals involved in the migration and remittances management process (Drinkwater, 2005; Sinha & Negi, 2012). Majority of the mainstream migration and development literature sees migration as an instrument of women’s empowerment. Migration, whether temporary or permanent, of an individual person (male and female) or members of the family brings significant changes in the roles and functions of the family (Hugo, 1987). The absence of an

individual or head of the household (husband), wives take most of the household responsibilities such as looking after the household and children, managing agriculture and livestock, and taking independent economic decisions (Hadi, 2001; see also Gulati, 1993; Haas & Rooij, 2010; Hugo, 2008). Thus, the new responsibilities and roles that women acquire in the absence of their husbands are seen by many scholars in the context of women's empowerment (Singh et al., 2013; see also Datta & Mishra, 2011; Desai & Banerji, 2008).

Migration, remittances and other transnational practices tend to change gender norms both at the destination and the origin societies because they greatly affect the lives of people (Wong, 2006 c.f. Der Zee, 2012, p. 24). Migrants' spouses, being the remittances recipients and decision makers in the origin areas, lead to women's empowerment. Datta and Mishra (2011) argue that migrants' spouses have more say in the decision-making process in the households after receiving remittances. Likewise, the modern means of communication such as mobile phones, telephones and internet are further facilitating decision-making. For example, in case of urgent matters relating to households and members of the household, women use the modern means of communication to contact and discuss the issues with their husbands and take decisions (Datta & Mishra, 2011).

Migration has largely expanded the roles of migrants' spouses and women left in origin areas such as at homes, villages and communities. Women's role and participation in decision making in families have increased after migration. For instance, women managing household budget, decisions regarding agriculture, the schooling of children and animal husbandry, and their involvement in community have largely increased (Hugo, 2008). In a study of Gulf migrants from the state of Kerala in India, Gulati (1993) illustrates that male absence gives women the freedom to break the old shackles as they become more mobile and come in contact with broader human networks and social institutions that they have never experienced before. Under the new circumstances, women have gained more confidence, taken on additional responsibilities, and some have even started small-scale income generation activities (Gulati, 1993). Similarly, in an empirical study in Pakistan, Iqbal et al., (2014) argue that male out migration gives more autonomy⁷⁹ and independence to the left behind spouses as they take independent decisions for their families. In terms of gender division of labor, Iqbal et al., (2014) state that male migration has brought many changes in the traditional gender division of labor. For example, the previous locus of female work has shifted from homes to outside such as from home to farm and factory work (Iqbal et al., 2014). In another study, Iqbal et al., (2014) illustrate

⁷⁹See for example Jejeebhoy and Sathar, 2001, see also Haque et al., 2011.

that migrant's spouses perform double role in the absence of their husbands, for instance, they look after the households and perform necessary social obligations such as attending marriage or death ceremony, visit relatives and neighbors on the birth of children or attending to an ailing person (Iqbal et al., 2014). Likewise, Hugo (2008) in his study of 'Bangladeshi migrants in Indonesian', states, "The absence of a migrant family member leads to a major change in family decision making. There is a striking sex differential here with a third of families with male migrants' absence indicating that the absence has produced an influence on family decision making" (Hugo, 2008, p. 60). Assessing the overall influence of remittances on women, Haas and Rooij, (2010) believe that remittances can bring quick change in gender roles and power relations. For example, working in the labor market along with men and participating in decision-making process give more independence to women (Haas & Rooij, 2010). Likewise, Desai & Banerji, (2008) argue that the social remittances may establish new norms, attitudes and ideas in migrants which may eventually bring changes in the gender hierarchies and roles in households in the origin areas (Desai & Banerji, 2008, see also Mahler & Pessar, 2006).

Migration and remittances bring changes; however, as Taylor et al., (2006) argue, these changes are gradual because the traditional social structure would not allow rapid changes (Taylor et al., 2006). Similarly, some scholars believe that the impact of remittances on gender roles and relations in the origin areas is complex and often contested. Women may gain empowerment and become de facto household heads but still their social positions are different and largely embedded in local gender norms and power structures. For example, Buvinic, (2009) states that women's social agency is subject to factors such as religion, education and socio-cultural patterns that determine their social positions (Buvinic, 2009 cf. Der Zee). Apart from these, the ethnic belonging and social classes also influence women's positions. For instance, Datta and Mishra (2011) state that remittances are significantly transforming women's social positions and gender relations; however, these have different implications for different ethnic and social groups. For women from high status communities (socio-economic and ethnic) in India, the remittances apparently do not change their positions at large because women in these groups are significantly under male influence (Datta & Mishra, 2011). Reysoo (2008) states that migration is a social and economic development strategy of many communities and families especially in the developing countries. "Migration is increasingly appreciated over the years for what migrants can contribute to the material welfare of a family, however, migration is also perceived as the root cause of social disintegration in some African societies, especially when unmarried girls start earning, gaining autonomy and sometimes transgressing traditional moral and cultural codes" (Reysoo, 2008). She further adds, "This gain in liberty cuts both ways: it

exerts more control on them by their moral guardians (maternal uncle, paternal aunt) while also contributing to their emancipation and empowerment in the sense that women enjoy more freedom of movement and more access to money” (Reysoo, 2008, p. 259).

Studies show that transformations in gender roles and relations due to remittances management are not always positive, as Haas and Rooij, (2010) state, women are mostly compelled by circumstances to take on extra responsibilities and additional duties that were never in their domain of work before the migration of male members. Thus, the new roles and responsibilities of women are not by choice but usually by compulsion. Therefore, one should be careful while equating it with women’s emancipation as done in some case studies cited above (Haas & Rooij, 2010). In the context of certain South Asian countries like Pakistan, Iqbal et al., (2014a) state that sometimes changes in gender roles destabilize the social structure necessary for equality and empowerment. However, the double roles that women perform sometimes prove an extra burden for women (Iqbal et al., 2014). In a similar study, Jetly (1987) found that in most cases, the amount of remittances is too low to bring considerable changes in the households. Instead, the situation often increases women’s work burden and put more pressure on them (Jetley, 1987; see also Datta & Mishra, 2011).

As already mentioned, remittances and migration are influencing gender roles and relations; and the gender differences mainly embedded in a specific political, economic, religious and social context that shapes remittances behaviors and development patterns (Ramírez et al., 2005, see also Sorensen, 2005). Therefore, it is important to analyze the remittances, gender and development troika in the context of local narratives and experiences.

In the next section, I discuss the remittances sending pattern such as who is sending remittances to whom and how it is affecting gender relations.

3.9 The Remittances Sending, Receiving and Management Patterns and Its Influence on Women

Naerssen et al. (2008) argue that “international migration should be studied from a gender perspective. As a result of labor migration, important transformations take place in the power relations and labor division within households, while also producing wider processes of societal change” (Naerssen et al., 2008, p. 15). Regarding remittances, Meher and Dash, (2017) state that “remittances are transfers, either in cash, in kind or as social remittances (ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital) to the households from which a migrant has migrated out. These are amongst the most important aspects of migration, because remittances play a crucial role in

improving the livelihoods of the households and changing social structures and gender relations” (Meher & Dash, 2017, p. 7227; see also Drbohlav & Dzurova, 2021).

Remittances sending behaviors are highly gendered in the Pakistani context because individuals at both the sending and receiving ends are mostly male. As mentioned already, in Pakistan, migration is considered a male endeavour and the majority labor migrants are men. Therefore, in the context of present study, the remittances sending persons are mostly male migrants (Azam, 2005). For contextualizing the empirical findings, some general patterns of sending remittances and the factors influencing the sending behaviors are essential to discuss.

Remittances, whether sent by men or women, are highly influenced by a number of factors such as class, ethnicity, gender and family structure. In addition, the remitting behaviors are also significantly influenced by socio-economic and political forces operating in the larger social arenas. As Ramirez et al., (2005) argue, it is not only a simple process of transmitting money but a “complex process of negotiations” significantly embedded in transnational relations (Ramirez et al., 2005, p. 21).

As stated earlier, women migrants’ ratio is increasing in migration endeavors and globally, they are almost sending the same remittances as their male counterparts (Der Zee, 2012). Additionally, women are more consistent and regular remitters (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005 c.f. Rahman, 2012, p. 162; see also Der Zee, 2012). Several studies suggest that in spite of less earning, women migrants are sending higher proportions of income to their families (Ekra et al., 2011). Women migrants are often restricted to low paid jobs of care work, domestic servitude, catering, prostitution and other low paid factory works. These occupations are characterized by insecurity, low wages and poor working conditions (Orozco et al., 2009 c.f. Ekra et al., 2011, p. 70).

The increasing female migration is continuously changing gender positions in the global migration scenario (see for example Sorensen, 2005). However, gender differences still influence the migration and remittances process (Jolly & Reeves, 2005). Similarly, Reeves & Baden (2000) illustrate that gender identities are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural context and it is hard to bring sudden changes in gender norms (Reeves & Baden, 2000 c.f. Der Zee, p. 15). Despite the fact that women are significantly contributing in migration process, it is still assumed a male task in many developing countries like Pakistan (Ekra et al., 2011).

As stated earlier, the remittances sending and receiving behaviors are deeply embedded in the socio-economic and cultural contexts of given societies. Generally, it can be argued that men

send remittances to their wives (for example Orozco et al., 2009, and Orozco & Paiewonsky 2007 c.f. Ekra et al., 2011, p. 72). For example, studies conducted in some Latin American countries of high male migration show women as the main remittances' recipients (IOM 2007; UN-INSTRAW 2007 c.f. Ekra et al., 2011, p. 72). On the other hand, some studies in South Asia show different patterns of remittances sending and receiving. For example, Debnath and Selim's (2009) study in Bangladesh illustrates that men send remittances to other male members of the families to avoid their wives' direct contact with moneylenders because of the fear of harassment or to maintain control over their wives (Debnath & Selim, 2009 c.f. Ekra et al., 2011, p. 72). Similarly, remittances receiving behaviors in Pakistani context show that male migrants mostly send remittances to household heads that can be male or female (Arif, 2009; Amjad, et al., 2014). Studies in some major labor sending South Asian countries like India suggest that apart from other factors, remittances receiving behaviors are highly influenced by the age, economic status, gender, household structure and education of the receiving persons. For example, in women headed households, migrant's wives and mothers are the main remittances recipients; whereas in male headed households, the remittances are usually received by male members (Gulati, 1987; Datta & Mishra, 2011; Ganguly & Negi, 2010; Jetley, 1987). However, there are variations in remittances receiving behaviors as the empirical data revealed. The present study includes households of male labor migrants from Pakistan to Gulf cooperation council states such as Saudi Arabia and UAE. Therefore, the remittances sending authorities are exclusively male migrants and the recipients include non-migrants such as spouses, mothers, sisters, fathers, sons and brothers of migrants in both nuclear and extended households.

Generally, on a broader level, the household or family is the reference point for receiving remittances, and individuals come later in the socio-structural framework. The households are important to discuss in the context of my study because there are different power positions in the households and families, and to understand the remittances process such as who is receiving and managing remittances, it is essential to look at these structures (Ekra et al., 2011). The households and families are diverse, however, there are some universal characteristics and definitions which have been discussed in the empirical chapters of this study. A household may either consist of a single person or multiple people, but its more common definition is a group of two or more people who share a common kitchen and live under the same roof. These people have collective provisions for food and other basic requisites of life (HIES, 2016; see also Scott, 1997). Some social anthropologists see households as units of nature, nurture and utilization that work according to the gender division of labor (Brown, 1994 c.f. Zee, 2012, p. 17). Family

is a web of relationships and has no defined border; its structure decreases or increases with time. The relationships bind members of household into a family (Scott, 1997). Similarly, many anthropologists agree on “kinship” as an important factor that characterize family and household membership. Kinship plays an important role in migration and remittances process. For example, kinship is important for making migrant’s networks, sending remittances, giving loans for migration, and also in some cases in receiving remittances and looking after the migrants’ families. In the study area, there are different types of households. For instance, male-headed households and female-headed households of migrants, widows and divorced women. The empirical data shows that each household has their own patterns of receiving remittances. For example, in some households, women receive remittances directly from their husbands, while in some households they get remittances through household members such as parents in law, sons, parental family and kin members.

The average size of a typical Pakistani household is around six to seven persons living under the same roof (NIPS & Macro International Inc., 2008). Different terms such as ‘*Makan*’ or ‘*ghar*’ are commonly used in the structural sense for a household in district Abbottabad. The house or *Makan* is a structural entity, and it becomes a household or *ghar* once people start living in it. And the entire immediate or extended family is called “*khandan*” (empirical data from Union Council *Malakpura*). In literature and policy documents, there might be differences in defining the concepts of households and families; however, common people do not really distinguish these definitions and use households and families as same concepts, and often use these interchangeably. The local people define households as “a social unit where males and females in some relation (blood or marital) live together along with their children” (empirical data from Union Council *Malakpura*). Similarly, the households are not autonomous social units but a web of social networks of kinship and ethnicity that actively participate in the whole migration and remittances process such as providing loans for migration, accommodating and finding jobs for new migrants in the destination countries, and receiving and sending remittances.

As mentioned already, the remittances receiving behaviors are largely determined by factors such as age, gender, class, social status, the household and power structures and local gender norms. The mainstream literature in Pakistan shows that both men and women are receiving remittances in Pakistan. However, these are mainly silent over the mediums of receiving remittances and their influence on women. My empirical data revealed different means of

receiving remittances such as direct transfers to personal bank accounts, and how they influence women mobility and interactions in the larger social arena.

There is a general assumption that individuals who receive remittances from migrants are also involved in their management. For example, many migration studies in India and Pakistan suggest that women whose husbands are migrants, are more active in managing family affairs (Datta & Mishra, 2011; Iqbal et al., 2014). Interestingly, women are considered good managers of remittances because they utilize remittances on more productive investments such as education, health and family care (Rahman, 2012; Datta & Mishra, 2011). However, Ekra et al., (2011) identify some determinants that are significantly important for women's remittances management behaviors. They believe that the key factors in determining women's positions as remittances managers include their education, household's socio-economic status and the household structure. These factors either increase or decrease women participation in managing remittances for households (Ekra et al., 2011).

The present study primarily focuses on micro level issues of migration and development, and then suggests a holistic approach for the analysis of these micro level issues in the wider migration and development spectrum. The theoretical concepts and perspectives discussed in this chapter help to reflect on the data in the empirical chapters.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Male out migration and remittances serve as a basic subsistence strategy for many households in district Abbottabad of Pakistan. However, unlike other regions⁸⁰ of Pakistan, the migration phenomena of district Abbottabad has largely remained neglected in the academic and policy circles. Generally, there is a considerable body of literature on migration and remittances in Pakistan, however, unfortunately, there are hardly any qualitative studies on migration and remittances in general and in district Abbottabad in particular⁸¹. Therefore, this district was chosen since it allows an in-depth inquiry of migration and remittances process. The current study is therefore a qualitative attempt to search for and answer to the main research question and its connecting concepts like: “How and in what way do remittances play a role in changing gender relations in the left behind migrant households in the North West of Pakistan”? Similarly, the connecting questions such as “Whether migrants’ spouses being the remittances recipients and managers attempt to influence and negotiate gender relations in the area?” More contextual inquiries include, for instance, who are the remittances recipients in union councils? What are the most used mediums of receiving remittances and do remittances increase women's decision-making powers and empowerment? Additionally, questions relating to women’s role and influence on remittances management in nuclear and extended households in the area are also part of the present study.

The present chapter starts with a brief introduction to the area⁸², its administrative structure and the union councils of the district. The discussion further continues covering my entry to the field and interaction with the respondents. Likewise, I discuss the qualitative data collection process which includes group and individual interviews with spouses and mothers of labor migrants from both extended and nuclear households, head of the households particularly men

⁸⁰ Particularly the Punjab province of Pakistan has some highly immigrants districts. For instance, district Gujrat, Attock, Jehlum, Chakwal and Sialkot. Mostly immigration from these districts is towards the global North countries (BE & OE, 2019).

⁸¹ This statement has also been confirmed during my fieldwork in the district. For instance, I searched for migration relating studies in district Abbottabad through various online and field sources such as websites of bureau of emigration & overseas employment of Pakistan (BE&OE), state bank of Pakistan and ministry of overseas Pakistanis and human resource development (OPHRD) and field offices of union councils, the district labor office and Overseas Pakistani foundation office. Unfortunately, I could not find any in-depth qualitative study on migration issues in district Abbottabad. However, I found some studies and reports prepared by local NGOs but these mostly included some basic statistical information about the district’s migration situation.

⁸² See also chapter no. 2 for detail discussion on area profile of the district Abbottabad.

from migrants' extended households, returnee migrants and union council's officials. I further discuss the hiring and training of female facilitators (particularly for interviews with young women in *Jadon* and *Syed* groups⁸³). Moreover, in the concluding sections of this chapter, I present the data management and analysis process such as transcription of interviews, coding and developing categories. Finally, I conclude the chapter by discussing the ethical issues and limitations of the study. In the following section, I briefly introduce and justify the research area (district Abbottabad) and union councils of district Abbottabad.

4.2 Selection of the Research Sites (Union Councils) in District Abbottabad

The district Abbottabad was a small town a few decades ago, the current abrupt urbanization and population shift occurred in the last decade, particularly after the October 2005 earthquake⁸⁴ in the area. The 2005 earthquake has brought significant changes in both population and infrastructure development in the area. In the post-earthquake era, many people from the nearby towns and rural areas have migrated to Abbottabad city for various reasons⁸⁵ such as due to destruction of rural livelihoods by the earthquake and searching of new economic opportunities in the district's economic hub.

Pakistan has four federating units or provinces such as Baluchistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. For administrative purposes, these provinces are further divided into several administrative units (see figure no. 2) such as divisions/regions, districts, sub-districts or *tehsils*, and union councils (PBS, 2021). The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, which is one of the four provinces of Pakistan has several districts⁸⁶ and each district has their own district administration and administrative tiers. For example, the district administration of Abbottabad has three tiers (see figure no. 3). The first and highest tier of the district is the district administration which controls and manages all matters at the district level such as judicial matters, police or law and order, health, and education of the district. The second highest tier is of *Tehsil* administration within a district which works under the jurisdiction of

⁸³ *Jadon* and *Syed* are the social groups that I selected for interviews in union council *Nawansher*. For details, see sections (3.3.1 & 3.3.2) of this chapter.

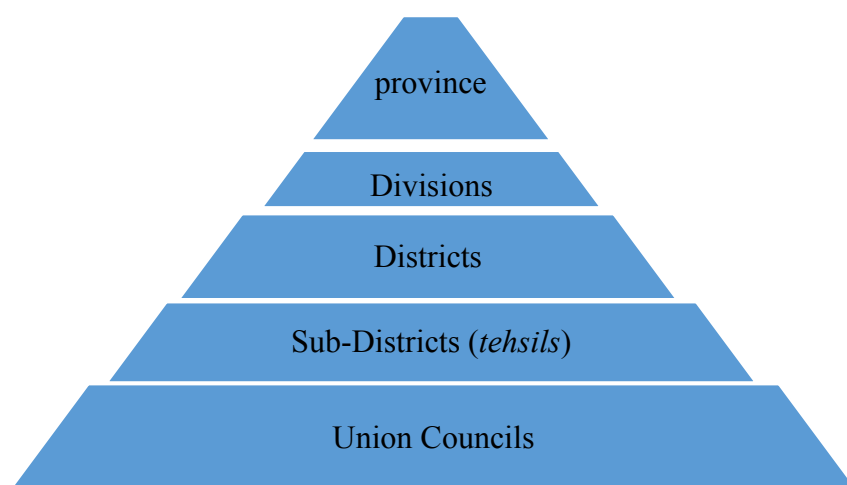
⁸⁴ The October 2005 earthquake in the Northern Pakistan and Kashmir was one of the most disastrous earthquakes in the history of Pakistan. The official death toll of the disaster reaches around 73,276 (ERRA). Because of the damage to livelihoods, people started to shift to urban areas for economic opportunities and with the compensation money they received from government of Pakistan after the earthquake buy property in Abbottabad.

⁸⁵ Among other as mentioned above, one major reason for shift of population to Abbottabad was the earthquake compensation money from government. People have shifted to urban areas for more opportunities and with the compensation money they bought land, homes and started small businesses in Abbottabad. For details see Pakistan 2005 Earthquake report <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PAKISTANEXTN/Resources/Publications-and-Reports/Damage-Assessment-Main.pdf>. See also ERRA, 2007.

⁸⁶ The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has total of 34 districts (<http://kpboit.gov.pk/digital-mapping-of-kp-districts/>).

the district administration. The third and smallest tier is that of the union council which consists of smaller administrative units and works under the jurisdiction of district and *Tehsil* administrations. Thus, at district level, the district or district administration is a larger or broader entity or administrating unit within which the two lower administrative units (*tehsil* and union councils) work. For the present study I selected union councils, the third and lowest tier of the district administration for the reason that union councils have less population in comparison to district or *Tehsil* which have larger population usually in millions⁸⁷ (see chapter no. 2, section 2.5). The union councils consist of several *muhallahs*⁸⁸ or villages depending upon their population. The councils have access to some basic life amenities such as education, health, electricity, natural gas, water and sanitation. However, the overall development infrastructure of the union councils in district Abbottabad is unsatisfactory. For instance, open sanitation lines, congested and narrow streets and haphazard construction are some of the defining features of the union councils' low infrastructure development.

Figure 2: Administrative units/hierarchy at province level

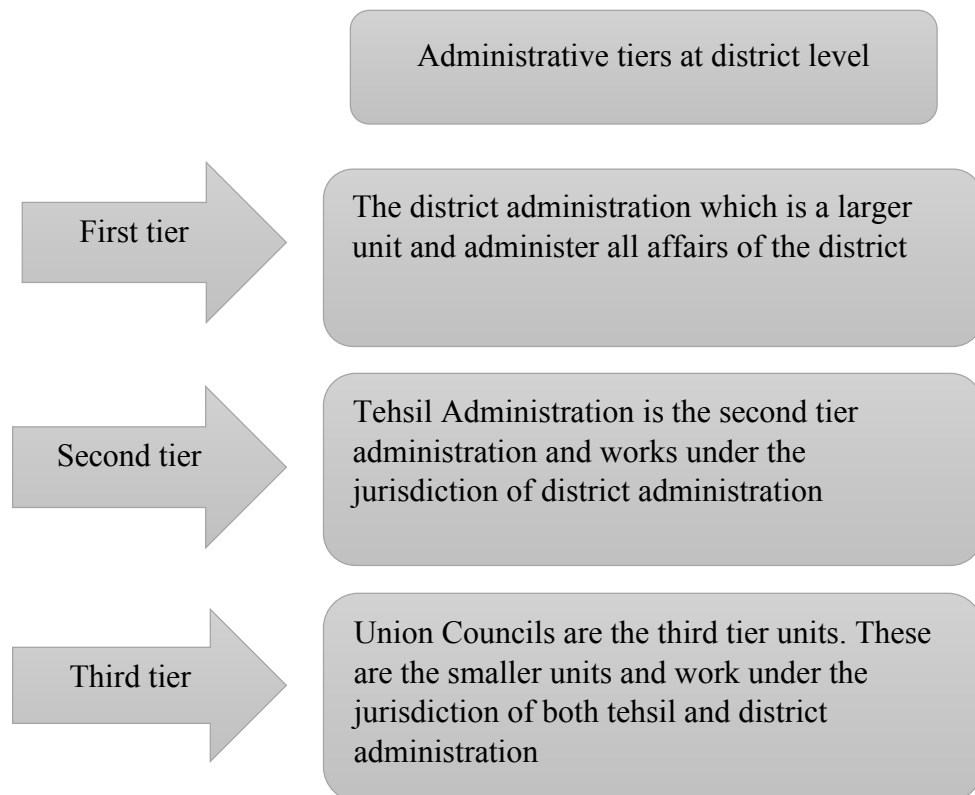


Source: Empirical data (union council's office)

⁸⁷ For example, the district Abbottabad has a population of 1.332 million (PBS, 2017).

⁸⁸ Small residential units within union councils. For details see the following section 4.2.1

Figure 3: Administrative structure of district Abbottabad in Pakistan



Source: Empirical data (union council's office)

For the present study, I initially planned to select rural unions councils located in the district's periphery for reasons such as high ratio of male out migration from rural areas of Pakistan, popular academic trends in Pakistan of researching rural communities, and my personal contacts⁸⁹ in some rural union councils. However, the original plan did not work as I had thought. Soon after my first visit to the rural union councils, I realized that for several reasons it was not a good selection for research work. I noted that I only had access to few households for individual interviews with women firstly due to strict local gender norms; secondly, the rural union councils were located in the district periphery in the mountainous terrains and it took six hours travel (both sides) for going to the field and returning to my place of residence; thirdly, I had a limited timeframe for the fieldwork⁹⁰; and finally, and most importantly, the rural union councils were not very practical and convenient for taking female research

⁸⁹ Some of my university colleagues belong to the rural areas.

⁹⁰ For instance, according to the scholarship policy, I was only allowed for three months fieldwork; exceeding the normal three months period of research work would result in reduction of my monthly scholarship stipend. Such as the normal monthly stipend of scholarship was 1000 euros per month and according to the scholarship policy, one could get 1000 euros per month for three months of fieldwork only. However, exceeding the fieldwork time beyond three months duration would result in deduction of scholarship amount to around 170 euros.

assistants⁹¹ because their families would not allow them to travel for long distances. Therefore, in the light of above limitations, I dropped the idea of selecting the rural areas.

Afterwards, I started a quest for other union councils in the district. In this regard, I used my local connections and discussed the issue with my friends and university colleagues. Fortunately, I found some people who volunteered to help me in the fieldwork. The first person was my colleague Malik Mateen, who belonged to union council *Malakpura*⁹². He gave me comprehensive information about the area and explained the basic features of the union council such as the socio-economic, political and religious characteristics including information on households and gender relations. My second facilitator was Muhammad Amir from union council *Nawansher*⁹³. Amir was also my colleague from the university where I had worked before embarking on my doctoral studies. Like my first facilitator, Amir also gave me the basic orientation of the area, households and the people. Apart from Mateen and Amir, I also met other individuals from the local community who supported my field work and data collection.

The most important criterion for selecting the new union councils was that they must have a great number of migrants' households thus to increase the chances of getting more diverse data. Also, I had to consider the possibility to access women respondents for individual interviews because for me being male researcher it was not easy to approach female respondents. Further, I had made very good connections in these union councils that helped me to participate and observe the everyday life in the union councils. After comprehensive discussions with the facilitators and local people, and after making close comparison of different union councils in the area, I selected union council *Malakpura* and *Nawansher* as they seemed most suitable.

In the following sections, I discuss the two union councils selected for this study. Likewise, I discuss their socio-economic characteristics and reasons for choosing the union councils. Discussing these characteristics is essential to understand the broader social structures that directly and indirectly influence remittances and gender relation patterns in the area.

4.2.1 Union Council *Malakpura*

The union council is among the fifty-one union councils of district Abbottabad (DGA, 2019). Majority population of the union council comprises of low and middle-income people. Therefore, it has high male out migration of both internal (within the country) and international

⁹¹I had already planned that I would hire female research assistants in case of problems in approaching and interviewing women.

⁹² The union council of district Abbottabad that I selected for field research.

⁹³ The second union council of district Abbottabad that I selected for field work.

migrants with most labor migration to Gulf States. Likewise, this union council has majority nuclear households and women have leading roles as household heads after the migration of their husbands. Moreover, the union council was easily approachable and had chances of getting diverse data. The union council is further divided into smaller residential units based on socio-economic and ethnic classifications called *muhallahs*. The *muhallahs* are smaller residential units within the union councils. In each *muhallah*, there are different numbers of households. For example, the number of households varies from 10-100 households in a single *muhallah*. The population and size of the ethnic groups also considerably determine the size of *muhallahs*; the bigger the ethnic group the greater is the number of households in the *muhallahs*. Moreover, as a common practice in the area, the *muhallahs* are mostly named after the majority residing ethnic groups in the union council. For example, the two *muhallahs* (Awan and Malik) of union council *Malakpura* that I selected for the present study are named after the two dominant ethnic groups, Awan and Malik, in the union council. However, the *muhallahs* consist of different groups but in the majority of cases, they comprise of same ethnic groups.

4.2.2 The Union Council *Nawansher*

The second research site was union council *Nawansher* which is located in the main territory of Abbottabad city. This union council has served as a research site for data collection for empirical chapter 6 of this study. The community of the union council *Nawansher* is an amalgamation of various ethnic groups and *biradhris*. “*Biradhri* is an association, attachment, emotional linkage and sharing of common characteristics by an individual being a part of a particular group descended of the same ancestor” (Chaudhry & Ahmed, 2014). The group homogeneity and *biradhri* system have connected people with each other on broader community issues.

The distinguishable characteristics of the union council are the presence of large extended families, men’s dominant role in the household and community affairs, the center of political power in the area⁹⁴, diverse ethnicities and religious affiliations and high labor migration (chain migration through family members and social networks) within the country and to the Gulf cooperation council (GCC) states. The distinctive group characteristics such as political, ethnic, religious and economic have made this union council unique for the present study. For example, the *Jadon* and *Syed* are the two dominant groups in the area. The *Jadon* are politically influential whereas the *Syed* have religious significance in the area. Thus, this union council gives

⁹⁴ Because politically influential groups such as *Jadon* live in this union council.

interesting insights on gender relations and the influence of migration and remittances on women.

Like union council *Malakpura*, *Nawansher* is also divided in to smaller residential units of *muhallahs*. However, the number of *muhallahs* in union council *Nawansher* are comparatively more because of the population and large size of the union council. There are seven *muhallahs*⁹⁵ in the union council having households with mixed economic status such as low, middle and rich income households. However, the majority are low and middle-income groups in the union council.

4.3 Sampling Households and Targeting Respondents from two Union Councils of District Abbottabad

Generally, there is a strict gender division of labor in both union councils. Males usually dominate both the household and the wider community affairs. In the extended households, the elder male is particularly the head of the household. In his absence, the second male member (based on age, socio-economic position) takes his place. Hence, it is a continuous cycle of power transformations from one male to another in the households. The nuclear households also have similar power structures. However, the migration of male members from nuclear households allow women to take some additional responsibilities of the households. However, it can be argued that women representation in everyday life (political, economic, social and religious) is low in the district.

For this study, initially, migrants' households (nuclear households) from low and middle-income groups were purposively selected from Awan and Malik *muhallahs* of the union council *Malakpura* because these were closely integrated groups where gender relation could have different parameters. Likewise, the Awan and Malik are socio-economically and politically influential groups in the area and the gender relations varyingly exist among them such as women after the migration of husbands assume leading roles in household's matters. Moreover, from the data collection and sharing perspective, they were more cooperative and willing to share their insights and everyday experiences about the migration and remittances processes and their implications on households and gender relations.

The categorization of low and middle-income households were done according to the local definitions of the terms. For instance, the majority of people define low and middle-income

⁹⁵ *Naya muhallah, muhallah Mohammad Zai, muhallah Imran Zai, muhallah Shoaibzai, muhallah Moosa Zai, muhallah Khalil Zai and Dhodehal muhallah* (Source: Union council office).

groups as those consisting of “individuals living in small rented households who are entirely dependent on remittances and have no alternative source of income in the origin”. The local people define the middle-income groups as “individuals living in their own houses who are not completely dependent on remittances”. For instance, they have some alternative source of income in the origin countries such as having some business and income from agriculture land.

I, therefore, formed two categories of women. Category (A) comprises of seven migrants’ spouses from middle-income nuclear households and category (B) consists of thirteen migrants’ spouses from low-income households. Women in both categories receive remittances directly and indirectly, for instance, through their personal bank accounts and through informal sources (migrants themselves and migrants’ networks). The category (A) respondents have their own bank accounts and they receive direct remittances through them whereas the category (B) women do not have their own bank accounts and receive remittances through various informal channels. In the below table no. 7, I show the selection and breakdown of various characteristics of the sample population.

Union council	<i>Muhallahs</i> and Ethnic Group		Nuclear households	
<i>Malakpura</i>	Awan	Malik	Categories	
No. of respondents	Eight respondents	Twelve respondents	Category A	Category B
			Seven spouses from both <i>muhallahs</i>	Thirteen spouses from both <i>muhallahs</i>
Economic profile	Majority middle income households	Majority low income households	middle income households	low income households

Table 8: Details of sample population from union council *Malakpura*

Source: Based on empirical data

From union council *Nawansher*, I took extended households of *Jadon* and *Syed* groups⁹⁶. The distinctive group characteristics such as complex gender relations, political, ethnic, religious and economic diversity made these groups unique for the present study.

In the social arena of the union council *Nawansher*, the Jadoon ethnic group is on the top of the socio-political and economic hierarchy. This is the largest ethnic group that holds most of the political and economic power in the union council. The Jadoon ethnic group commonly lives in close residential units (*muhallahs*) and maintains a *hujra*⁹⁷ tradition (a common sitting place for community people) to resolve community disputes through local *Jirgas*⁹⁸ (an assembly of local influential persons especially male for settling local disputes) (IUCN, 2004).

The second important social group from union council *Nawansher* is of *Syeds*. The *Syeds* have some religious significance in the union council due to their being direct descendents of holy men. They also play an important role in the local political and social life because of their religious background. Additionally, the *Syeds* are actively involved in migration and run small businesses in the area.

The sample population from union council *Nawansher* consists of both male and female (ratio in the below table no. 8) respondents from low and middle-income extended households from *Jadon* and *Syed* groups. The respondents are selected from extended households of two *muhallahs* (*Mohammad Zai* and *Dhodehal muhallahs*) of the union council. The two *muhallahs* are less populated and have specific population groups. For example, the *Mohammad Zai muhallah* has majority *Jadon* population while the *Dhodehal muhallah* have *Syed* families. I categorized the sample population in to two categories A and B; category (A) comprises of men and category (B) of women⁹⁹. The total sample population in both categories A and B consists of fifteen respondents, ten are male members from category A, and five are female participants from category B¹⁰⁰. The male participants are either head of the households or second in

⁹⁶ *Syeds* have religious significance due to their direct ancestral affiliation to the prophet of Islam and his grandsons (through his daughter). Comparatively, they have more respect in the society.

⁹⁷ "*Hujra* is a common community-gathering place located in each village in most of the Pashtun dominated rural areas of Pakistan. However, some well-off families having strong ethnic connections to their origin areas also maintain *hujras* in urban areas. The *hujras* are mostly own by well off families and shared by the whole community. For example, Khattak et al. (2015) states, "Other than a place to accommodate collective ceremonies, the *hujras* also serves as a place for guests and to initiate *Jirgas*" (Khattak et al. 2015).

⁹⁸ *Jirga* is a traditional gathering of male elders of the community for dispute resolution. In the union council, the *Jadon* ethnic group also practice *Jirga* for various purposes such as for conflicts resolution, for political consultation and for sorting out common community issues.

⁹⁹ Limitations such as, the local gender and power relations have sometimes halted researcher accessibility to select respondents.

¹⁰⁰ Total eight respondents (six male and two female) belonged to middle-income group whereas seven people (four male and three female) are from low-income group.

position to the head of the households whereas the female participants are migrants' spouses living with their in laws in the extended households. In the below table no. 8, I present both categories A & B from union council *Nawansher*.

Union council	<i>Muhallahs</i>		Extended households	
<i>Nawansher</i>	Mohammad Zai	Dhodehal	Category A	Category B
Ethnic Groups	<i>Jadon</i> Group	<i>Syed</i> Group	Ten male respondents from both <i>muhallahs</i>	Five female respondents from both <i>muhallahs</i>
Economic profile	Low and middle income households	Low and middle income households		

Table 9: Details of sample population from union council *Nawansher*

Source: Based on empirical data

Below is the map of district Abbottabad, the red circles on map show the union councils where the research was conducted.



Figure 4: Map of Research Sites

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Abbottabad,+Khyber+Pakhtunkhwa,+Pakistan>

4.4 Data Collection

For the present study, data was collected through different sources such as individual and group interviews with women and men, informal discussions with men and officials of different offices like union council persons, social workers and immigration officials in Pakistan. Moreover, secondary data such as reports and statistics on migration and remittances were also collected from various departments in Pakistan. In the following section, I discuss my entry to the field and the data collection processes.

4.4.1 Entry to the Field and Conducting Interviews

After selecting the field locations and identifying the households in both union councils, the next crucial step was entering the field and having face-to-face interactions (interviews) with people. Despite the fact that I selected the union councils and had permission letter of the district

officials, I needed consent of local ‘gatekeepers’ for final entry to the research field and conducting individual interviews with women (see for example Creswell, 2014).

As mentioned already, in the first phase, I only identified the migrants’ households in the area. Later, after detailed inquiry and gathering information about the households, both male and female members of migrants’ households were selected for interviews. For example, the respondents must have belonged to migrants’ households, received and managed remittances for households, were head or second in position to the head of the household and were present on the location at the time of research. Almost similar criteria were applied for migrants’ spouses who directly and indirectly received remittances in both nuclear and extended households. Although, I am residing in the district for several years, serving in a reputable educational institution¹⁰¹ in the area and have maintained close relations with the local people, still there were some differences in practices, beliefs and understandings of my respondents and me (Abid, 2010). These differences along with many other socio-cultural and linguistic differences and experiences made the research sites sometimes relatively unknown to me.

However, my prior local connections, understanding of language¹⁰² and knowledge of local culture and area helped me in the initial phases of research processes. The data collection (mainly interviews) took place inside homes, in the community and in union council offices. In both union councils, I conducted interviews with both men and women at different places. For example, in the guest rooms (*Mehmankhana* or *baitak*), a separate portion in the house for guests while with others, inside homes in the common living places. Regarding interactions and interviews, I had two separate sets of semi-structured interview guides; one each for male and female respondents. The interviews were designed to focus on the respondents. Moreover, the narrative and biographical nature of interviews gave more space for actors to include their everyday experiences and rationalities of actions and interactions (Lachenmann 1995b, c.f. Dannecker, 2002). I conducted a total of thirty five individual interviews with men and women from migrant households, and some informal discussions with union council members and social workers. The data collection process lasted for about four months from April 2016 to July 2016.

¹⁰¹ Almost everyone in the union councils knew about the university (my working place) because this is the only university in the area. Some of my respondents’ children were also studying in the university.

¹⁰² Because of my residence in the area for several years, I can speak and understand the local language.

Union councils	Interviews with Women	Interviews with Men	Number of Interviews
<i>Nawansher</i>	5	10	15
<i>Malakpura</i>	20	0	20
Total Interviews			35

Table 10: Number of individual interviews with men and women from both union councils

Source: Based on empirical data

4.4.2 Interviews in Union council *Nawansher*

My original plan was to conduct parallel interviews with both men and women (migrants' spouses) in union council *Nawansher*. However, my assistants suggested to spend some time with men first, and then go for discussions with migrants' spouses. Therefore, I started with the men from *Muhammad Zai* and *Dhodehal muhallahs* of *Jadon* and *Syed* groups in union council *Nawansher*.

According to my field plan and with the help of my assistant Muhammad Amir and some local people, I approached the households that I had previously identified for interviews. I started interactions and individual interviews after I formally introduced myself and explained to them individually about the purpose of my visit and study. I briefed them about my study objectives and told them that they were free to ignore questions that they did not want to answer. Similar introduction criteria were also used for female respondents. Interestingly, the locals were already familiar with the interview procedures because after the 2005 earthquake, many NGOs had worked in the area and they had different projects for which they had also engaged the community. Therefore, the local people had some prior knowledge of the interview procedure. However, sometimes my interviews became lengthy and took more time than expected schedule. Some respondents humorously remarked, "The NGOs people finished things very quickly". In such circumstances, to engage the respondents and to maintain their interest, I either took a short break or started informal discussions. Simultaneously, I also tried to explain the NGOs data collection procedures and my methods of qualitative interviews and empirical studies. For example, I told them that the NGOs usually run short-term development projects and they mostly use short and close-ended questionnaires that do not need detailed information

while for my study, I greatly rely on in- depth and lengthy discussions so that I can discover the local experiences and perspectives. I also recording the interviews as the respondents had no objection over voice recording.

My advantages in the field were, for example, prior knowledge of the local cultural norms and the support of local people; therefore, my initial interactions and discussions remained largely positive. My consistent interactions and presence in the field helped me to gain the confidence of local people, which was obvious from the fact that they soon started sharing their everyday experiences and interactions with me. Moreover, they invited me to wedding functions and participation in union council's meetings which was altogether a different experience for me and provided me diverse opportunities of interaction with the local people. In the interview discussions, they openly shared veritable information. For example, one respondent narrated his brother's divorce¹⁰³ case. However, I was not expecting such information because in the local context, divorce issues are usually linked with family honor and prestige, and are usually kept from individuals outside the family and *biradhri*. Similarly, another respondent shared his narrative about the influence of remittances on migrant spouses. His narrative included some interesting information such as discussions over family separation after migration, tense relations between migrants' spouses and other household members and his son's (migrant) extraordinary favor for his wife in the household matters. My discussions with male members of migrants' household were informative and allowed me to grasp the in-depth perspectives of the participants' everyday experiences, actions and their interactions in the micro as well as in the larger social context.

As discussed earlier, the *Jadon* and *Syed* groups were less open on women issues, and in the beginning, I was hesitant to ask openly about women's activities and their roles in the households after the migration of their husbands. Gradually, I opened on women related questions, however, I did not want to overwhelm or confuse them. So I started with some basic information such as about the socio-economic situation of migrants' families, and their children and spouses' daily activities. Once, I was sure that they were comfortable enough with sharing information, I started more in depth discussions on the role and influence of migration and remittances on migrants' spouses in households and outside the household matters and decision-making.

¹⁰³ See empirical Chapter no. 6

I had continuously spent about two weeks in the field. I used to go to the field in the morning, talk with people, observe their daily routines and interactions, write memos and meet new people and return home in the evening. In a fortnight, I conducted five individual interviews with men that included their perspective of women's everyday role and activities. Additionally, I also undertook several informal discussions with men (head of the households) and with some union council officials. The interviews and informal discussions¹⁰⁴ were mainly conducted in Urdu¹⁰⁵ language. The native language of the district is *Hindko*¹⁰⁶, but the local people can speak Urdu fluently. I also have the advantage of speaking and writing Urdu language and while residing in the district for several years; I also understand and partially speak *Hindko*, which was an additional advantage for me in the field. When I realized that the circumstances are favorable enough for starting interviews with women, I started with migrants' spouses from *Jadon* and *Syed* groups in *Muhammad Zai* and *Dhodehal muhallahs*. In some households, due to our close relations, they allowed me to talk directly with women. However, the talks were not quite productive since they took place under the constant surveillance of household members (see for instance Dannecker, 2002). Moreover, access to some women, especially who belonged to middle income *Jadon* and *Syed* groups was particularly difficult because of their strict socio-religious and gender norms, honor and political influence, which might have otherwise questioned their social status and family honor while exposing their women to outsiders.

The locals showed gestures of closeness and empathy toward me during my stay in the area, and some even used to call me '*Jatuk* or *Putar*' (son) or '*Prah*' (brother). *Putar* and *Prah* are not merely the ostensible calling terms; they show the degree of affection and closeness in relations and interactions in the everyday life in the union council. Similarly, when they call an outsider living among them as '*Putar* or *Prah*', it gives the impression that they consider him or her trustworthy and are ready to accept their presence in the community. However, in my case the feeling of empathy was more in the gestures of hospitality and respect shown to a "privileged stranger or guest" who has access to public places while his entry to private places is largely subject to the locally prevalent circumstances (see for example Moore, 1998). My entry to private places (inside homes) and especially with regard to access to female spaces and

¹⁰⁴ In the present context informal discussions means individual and group talks with other than the selected sample of migrants' spouses and male (head of the households) members of migrants' houses. For example, informal discussions with union council officials, social workers and community elders both men and women.

¹⁰⁵ National language of Pakistan

¹⁰⁶ Hindko is a branch of indo Aryan languages mostly speak in the northwestern (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa) and Punjab provinces in Pakistan (Rashid, 2015)

interaction with women was negligible in both *muhallahs*¹⁰⁷. In such circumstances, my situation resembled that to what is described by Hellawell as, “There may be some elements of insiderness on some dimensions of the research and some elements of outsidersness on other dimensions” (Hellawell, 2006, p. 490). Likewise, I had access to public places and some women groups; however, my entry to private spaces and particularly my interaction with young spouses was largely restricted. Under such situations, my previous position of self-presumed native researcher¹⁰⁸ proved a mere illusion (see for example Abid, 2010).

According to my research plan, I had to conduct five formal interviews with migrants’ spouses from extended households in both *muhallahs* of the union council *Nawansher*. However, under the circumstances, I had few hopes of access and intense talks with migrants’ spouses. I had conducted two interviews with women from the *Jadon* group, however, these interviews took place in a ‘controlled environment’ such as in the presence of male members. In such situations, the researcher has to make some pragmatic negotiations in the field in order to proceed with the research process (Abid, 2010). Therefore, I made some important negotiations such as revised my field plan and included female facilitators for interviews with migrants’ spouses. I had revised my field plan and decided to find an alternative way to approach migrants’ spouses through which I could get women's perspectives and experiences. Thus, I took help of female facilitators because as a male researcher and an outsider it was not practically possible for me to reach all women due to *Purdah*.

“The *purdah* is an institution which governs all gender interactions. It is not merely a physical description of the veil or the homestead but a complex set of rules” (Haque, 2010, p. 304). In district Abbottabad, “*Purdah* or veil,” is the practice of covering head or entire body by women. It is a systematic and well institutionalized system of gender segregation in the society. The *Purdah* which is often related to *namoos* (gender boundaries), on one hand imposes restrictions on women’s interactions and mobility in public places for the protection of their honor, and on the other hand, it also controls men’s entry to women’s private spheres (Elahi, 2015). Similarly, in the field, the *purdah* had helped the female facilitators to talk with migrants’ spouses without male surveillance because women’s (female researchers) presence had turned the interviews places (homes where they conducted interviews) into female spaces.

¹⁰⁷ Except the interviews I did with women under men surveillance

¹⁰⁸ For instance, I was considering myself a native researcher due to the advantages and privileges such as local residence, native connections, understanding and knowledge of local language and cultural norms and empathy from the locals. See for insider and outsider discussion Dwyer & Buckle (2009), Hellawell, 2006 or Narayan, 1993

4.4.3 Hiring Female Research Assistants

Since I had changed my interview plan because the only suitable option under the circumstances was to conduct women's interviews through female facilitators, thus, in search of female facilitators cum researchers, I returned to my home university and talked to my female colleagues about the issues related to women's interviews in the union councils. Fortunately, two of my female colleagues, Abda Khalid¹⁰⁹ and Maryam Malik¹¹⁰ agreed to help me in conducting interviews with women. Although in anthropology, gender studies, sociology disciplines the reflexivity and subjectivity of the researchers are increasingly (often controversially) discussed, the role of and the positionalities of interpreters and research assistants get less attention (Turner 2010).

Before entering the field, we had intensive rounds of discussion and training sessions about the interview procedures, comprehensive understanding of interview's text (such as contextual terms like remittances, gender relations, formal and informal remittances receiving channels for women and management priorities), of research questions and study objectives. Finally, after one week of intensive preparatory workshop for the fieldwork, we moved back to the selected union councils. The field location was easily approachable through connecting roads and the public and private transportation was mostly available for twenty-four hours.

Maryam conducted interviews in *Dhodehal muhallah* with migrants' spouses of *Syed* group and Abda in *Muhammad Zai muhallah* of *Jadon* group. Luckily, Maryam already had some connections in *Syed* group because her maternal grandparents belong to *Dhodehal muhallah*. They helped her in approaching the migrants' spouses and in conducting interviews. In *Muhammad Zai muhallah*, I continued with my previous plan, for example, in formal and informal talks with men whereas my male assistant, Amir's sister facilitated Abda in interviews with migrants' spouses. The revised strategy in field plan was successful as females had entered the field impeccably and started interactions with migrants' spouses.

Regular meetings at the end of daily fieldwork had become part of our field plan. For instance, the research team (the research facilitators and I) gathered at the local cafe (*Dhabah*)¹¹¹ located in an area between the two union councils. The *dhabah* was our meeting point where we discussed the whole day field activities (experiences, interactions, and observations) in detail.

¹⁰⁹Abda Khalid was a doctoral student in development studies at the time of my fieldwork.

¹¹⁰Maryam Malik was a final year master's student in the department of development studies COMSATS University Abbottabad.

¹¹¹ *Dhabah* is a small cafe that provides light refreshments such as fast food, snacks, cold drinks and tea.

For example, we listened to the recorded interviews. Later in the context of recorded interviews, we exchanged views, searched for and made comparisons, shared daily observations and discussed interview responses. We also discussed the level of comfort of respondents during the interviews such as their surrounding environment and male surveillance. Likewise, discussions over female respondents' interactions with other household's members (men and women) were also part of the discussions. Furthermore, we also shared our experiences about community queries and curiosity about our research team, particularly, the questions related to our background (origin areas) and relationship with each other. For example, on many occasions, people asked me questions such as "Are these females (the research assistants) your relatives? When they knew about our relationship, which was professional, they curiously said, "How did their parents allow them to be with a stranger?" The female researchers had also come across similar experiences in the field. The discussion and information sharing rounds continued until the end of our fieldwork in union council *Nawansher*. After we completed the scheduled interviews, informal discussions and comprehensive sessions of information sharing, I realized that there is no more room for further data saturation (Creswell, 2012). Thus, we decided to move to the second research location of union council *Malakpura*.

4.4.4 Interviews in Union council *Malakpura*

The next phase of research was simultaneously started in two *muhallahs* (Malik and Awan) of union council *Malakpura*. In *Malakpura*, I entered with the same group of researchers except for Amir, my male research assistant in union council *Nawansher*. In the new research location, Malik Mateen and another male facilitator Haji Mubarak were with us. Malik Mateen and Haji Mubarak¹¹² were locals of the union council. Malik Mateen belonged to an influential political family in Malik *muhallah* whereas Haji Mubarak lived in Awan *muhallah*. Both facilitators had a good reputation and close socio-ethnic connections with the local community. For example, Mateen had political and social influence because of his family's role in local politics and conflict resolution in the community whereas Haji Mubarak was respected in the community because of his social work and good relations with the people.

Altogether twenty formal interviews with migrants' spouses were scheduled in the union council *Malakpura*. Additionally, some informal discussions with male members of migrants' households, union council officials and social workers from both *muhallahs* of the union council were also included in the schedule.

¹¹² Haji Mubarak and I were colleagues in the university in Pakistan.

On the very first day of fieldwork in union council *Malakpura*, we gathered at Mateen's home and discussed the fieldwork plan such as practical execution of plan and challenges of interviews with women. Different aspects of research issues and fieldwork possibilities such as which migrants' spouses to interview first, and how to reach them, was mutually discusses and decided in the meeting. After detailed consultation, we made two groups of researchers, for example, the first group was of Abda and Malik Mateen and the second group consisted of Mubarak, Maryam and myself. According to the field plan, Abda interviewed women in Malik *muhallah* where Mateen assisted her, and the second group moved to Awan *muhallah* for interviews. However, the possibility of changing research locations between the two groups was kept intact.

Before entering the field, I was overwhelmed with suspicions because of my previous experiences with women in union council *Nawansher*. However, against my fears, I had a very smooth and productive time in the *Malakpura*. For example, on the very first day in the field, when we entered a narrow street in Awan *muhallah*, I saw some women talking with one another in front of their homes. My first thought was that upon seeing me, they would disperse and enter their homes because of local norms of *pardah*. Instead, they stood there and greeted my female colleague and male facilitator. Suddenly, my fears turned into surprise after seeing how women responded toward us and it was a great sigh of relief for me. After my initial interactions in the field, I became quite optimistic about intense data and access to women respondents.

The union council *Malakpura* was comparatively less rigid in approaching women than the earlier union council. There were several reasons for this openness: first, the close social and ethnic grouping where women have more interaction and mobility in the community, as observed during the fieldwork; second, the structure of households i.e. women headed households who were relatively more free in interactions with the researchers; third, the geographical location of the community because it is located near the old city center and people are more integrated; fourth, our reputation¹¹³ and the social position and influence of research assistants; and final and most important, urbanization and migration brought many transformations in the local community that facilitated our entry into the field.

Physical access to the union council was possible through vehicles such as *carry-daba*¹¹⁴ and cars. However, I had hired a *carry-daba* because of our group strength (five persons) and local

¹¹³ See for example Nader, 1986 regarding researcher's rapport building in the fieldwork

¹¹⁴ A vehicle having sitting space for eight people. The *carry daba* is used as taxi in the district

travelling norms. According to the local travelling patterns, it is considered inappropriate or a sort of travelling taboo for women to sit close to men other than their close relatives such as siblings, parents and husbands. Therefore, *carry-daba* was a suitable travelling option for the area where one could easily see our separate sitting positions inside the vehicle. According to the plan, Abda started interviews with women in Malik *muhallah* and Maryam and I in Awan *muhallah*. Our facilitators greatly helped us in approaching the women groups. They individually talked with women and later introduced us to them. Individual interviews and some informal discussions with women mostly took place inside homes, however, informal sittings with men were conducted in union council office and their personal *betaks*¹¹⁵. In my group, Maryam asked the questions from migrants' spouses and I recorded the interviews in the audio recorder. Furthermore, I also participated in the discussions and made important notes, wrote quotations and noted field observations in my field diary.

Unlike union council *Nawansher*, the interviews in *Malakpura* went very smoothly except for one unpleasant incident during the initial days of our fieldwork. When Maryam and I were interviewing a migrant's spouse and our facilitator Mubarak was not with us, the brother in law of the migrant's spouse we were interviewing became angry while seeing us inside the home with his sister in law. However, we controlled the situation by giving the reference of our facilitator Mubarak, and told him that we were just conducting an interview. The incident had happened during our initial days in the field. However, later, due to our permanent presence in the area, we developed good relations with the locals. For instance, sometimes in the field, the locals randomly offered us tea and meal as a good gesture even though we had no prior interaction or scheduled interviews with them. Moreover, we also conducted some individual interviews without our facilitators. Apart from individual interviews with migrants' spouses, I also conducted some informal discussions with union councilors and social workers.

Like our previous sitting sessions in union council *Nawansher*, in *Malakpura*, we had daily gathering at Mateen's home. During the sessions, we discussed our daily progress such as the number of interviews and informal discussions conducted by each group, individual observations and contents of the interviews. We also talked over our next field strategy such as identification of migrants' spouses for upcoming interviews. Additionally, we discussed the field issues particularly related with individual interviews. For instance, on many occasions, the individual interviews would have turned into group discussions when the neighboring women joined the talks, which interrupted the flow of interviews and alerted and reserved migrants'

¹¹⁵Portion of house/residence reserve for guests

spouses in sharing information. However, it was difficult to control these interruptions in such close living areas, therefore, we decided to include these interviews in informal discussions category and instead planned additional in-depth interviews.

As already mentioned, altogether, we conducted thirty-five formal interviews and twelve informal group discussions in both union councils of *Nawansher* and *Malakpura*. Of these, ten interviews were conducted with male and five with migrants' spouses in union council *Nawansher*. Additionally, we had seven informal sittings with union council officials, community elders, district's labor department officials and local social workers in union council *Nawansher*. The informal discussions also included sessions with women members of the union councils¹¹⁶, lady health workers¹¹⁷ and spouses of non-migrants (in migrants' households). In union council *Malakpura*, we conducted twenty individual interviews with migrants' spouses and five informal discussions with both (male and female) union councilors and social workers. The time durations of talks were different, for instance, some interviews and informal discussions took one hour whereas others took two to three hours. From these interviews, I made new protocols, wrote memos and developed categories. The diverse nature of empirical data allowed the building of distinctive patterns of behaving and the underlying rationalities and motives (Schütz 1971 c.f. Dannecker, 2002).

4.5 Data Analysis

In order to avoid personal biases and reflection, the empirical analysis needs some degree of distinction (see for example Dwyer & Buckle, 2009 and Hellowell, 2006). The data was mainly analyzed in two steps. Firstly, the recorded interviews and informal discussions were translated from *Urdu* to English and then transcribed through F4 transcription software. Secondly, the transcriptions were passed through qualitative data analysis software MAXqda for making codes. "Coding is an important process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis" (Creswell, 2009, p. 189). The empirical data was carefully examined and reviewed through detailed microanalysis that is "line-by-line analysis of the data, necessary at the beginning of a study for initial categories and to suggest relationships among

¹¹⁶“The union council is composed of 21 members: one Union Nazim and one Naib Nazim, one member elected from the minority communities, twelve Muslim representatives elected to general seats and six elected for peasants and workers. The one-third reservation is applied to the Muslim seats (four women) and the six seats for peasants and workers (two for women). Each union council has thus six seats for women” (Reyes , 2002).

¹¹⁷ Lady health workers are mostly local women associated with district public health department. They usually provide door-to-door health awareness and services to the community such as health consultation (mostly consultation on family planning) and help in vaccination campaigns such as polio vaccination campaigns in the union councils.

the categories” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 57). For the present study, the “line-by-line” scrutiny was done through the careful analysis of the entire data such as of the narratives, individual paragraphs, quotations, sentences and phrases (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

After comprehensively examining the entire data, and identifying and selecting different topics, I made various categories such as women bank accounts, female mobility, networks of women, transnational control and women’s economic committees from the empirical data. Later, the primary categories were further divided into sub-categories. Once these categories had enough data, and there were no chances for further saturation, I carefully searched for connections between the categories. These connections and “relationships could be antecedents or consequences and concurrence of initial categories” (Morse et al. 1995 c.f. George, 2013).

I tried to understand the narratives in larger social structures, and gathered additional documents and studies during the fieldwork (Dannecker, 2002); for example, copies of demographic and socio-economic documents from union council offices, local public libraries and national immigration offices¹¹⁸. Furthermore, everyday field interactions and discussions gave different perspectives to the analysis of individuals and their everyday interactions with one another in the micro and wider social cosmos (see for example Dannecker, 2002). The discussions and individual interviews conducted inside homes, at public offices and community gathering places like mosques and *betaks* allowed me to closely observe and analyze the everyday gender relations and the strategies of men and women to interpret and react to the ongoing socio-economic transformations in the area. Additionally, close observation of everyday life in the union councils helped me to broaden the scale of data analysis, for instance, women’s role and position in the larger community and inside nuclear and extended households.

The analysis took into consideration different theoretical assumptions to understand and explain the data analysis process (see for example Dannecker, 2002). This helped to construct and analyze how gender relations under the local gender norms and power structures responded to new socio-economic transformations in the union councils.

4.6 Ethical Reflections and Limitations

Ethical issues in research are usually taken as second thought, however, it is the moral duty of the researcher to ensure reliability and validity in research. In the past few decades, the social science research methodology and methods have become more rigorous and the scope of

¹¹⁸ For example, Overseas Foundation of Pakistan (OPF) office in Islamabad

research in this field has gained significant recognition. This phenomenon has created awareness as well as some serious concerns about the research and the investigator (Berg, 2001).

While conducting this study, I faced not only several methodological and practical challenges but also some ethical issues. From the beginning, such as during my synopsis defense (*defensio*) at the University of Vienna, there were questions on how difficult it would be for me being a male researcher to conduct research in a society that has significantly strict gender norms. Additionally, the post conflict and sensitive law and order and security situation raised further ethical concerns.

As mentioned already, like other parts of Pakistan the district Abbottabad has strict gender relations especially in some religious and socio-political influential groups. However, Abbottabad is a peaceful city but for some reasons the city is sensitive too. For example, being part of a province such as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa¹¹⁹ that witnessed considerable violent conflicts since the year 2001 and especially after the killing of Usama bin Laden, and the presence of important military installations in the district, security is on high alert all the time. In such situations, being an outsider and male researcher, it was quite difficult to conduct individual interviews especially with women. However, through my personal connections and with the help of female research assistants, I managed to get data (interviews) from both men and women. Nevertheless, the overall complex gender relations and security situation of the district show the fragile nature of the area.

In such circumstances it was difficult to gain the community's trust on the issues of privacy and confidentiality of data and observance of local gender norms. However, through local facilitators and my personal contacts, I approached the community. My priority was to carefully examine the potential risks, consider the sensitivity of the circumstances and participants, and avoided increasing or further exposing them to more vulnerabilities through my presence. The ethical concerns of this study are mainly based on the principles of privacy, sensitivity and respect (see for example George, 2013).

I started research work after gaining permission from the district and union council offices and community leaders¹²⁰. Upon my first contact with the local people such as men, women and

¹¹⁹Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province is severely affected by terrorism since 2001 and it is a highly security sensitive province

¹²⁰ Elder and socio-political influential persons in the union councils.

community leaders, I clearly explained the purpose of my research work and its objectives and assured them full confidentiality and anonymity of their identity and data. Additionally, I showed the translated version of the departmental reference letter of the University of Vienna for conducting field work in Pakistan to all the participants such as women, community elders and union council and district officials. The departmental letter helped to authenticate my identity and build the trust of respondents (men and women) and concerned officials of the district and union council offices. The locals of district Abbottabad respect people associated with the education sector (teaching and working in educational institutions) because teaching is considered a noble profession in the local culture and the locals respect people educating their children. Likewise, my affiliation with the local university was an advantage for me because everyone in Abbottabad knew about the university and its credibility, thus, I was able to gain their trust quickly. Additionally, along with the research team I conducted separate meetings with women especially with migrants' wives. I introduced myself and my research team, and explained to them the purpose of my visit and study. Likewise, during individual interviews with women, I asked for their consent and made sure that they were comfortable, without any pressure, and would not face any problems after the interviews.

I was somehow a bit overconfident before starting the research process (site selection, reaching the participants and conducting interviews) because of my personal and professional contacts and interactions with the local people. I was residing and working in district Abbottabad for the last seven years. Therefore, I have close contacts with local people due to which I was expecting smooth entry to the field and easy access to respondents.

Soon after starting the research work, I realized that the process was not as easy as I thought. Several challenges accompanied the field research. Right from the beginning, such as during selection of research locations (union councils and households), respondents and conducting interviews with women, I faced many problems during the entire fieldwork period.

As discussed already, initially I selected the rural union councils of district Abbottabad for this study. However, due to local gender norms, long distance travel and financial limitations, I had to quit those rural locations and select new ones. The whole process of quitting, selecting and getting permission from the district administration to the new union councils took many days of my limited research timeframe because according to the scholarship policy I was only allowed three months of field research work.

The next major limitation was to get permission from the district administration (Assistant commissioner* and special branch of intelligence agency), union council's officials (council secretary) and community leaders. This was also important because the security situation of Pakistan in general and of the district Abbottabad in particular has become considerably sensitive since the last decade, especially after the 9/11 incident and the killing of Usama bin Laden in the main city of district Abbottabad in 2011¹²¹.

Therefore, according to my research plan, I visited the district and union council offices for getting prior permission of access to the union councils. My colleagues advised me to wait for the fieldwork until I get proper permission letters because a few of my colleagues who had previously conducted research in the area faced similar problems in the field for not having permission from the district administration.

In March 2016, I submitted an application (for permission letter) along with copies of departmental reference letter signed by my supervisor and copies of additional documents such as my national identity card (CNIC) and research synopsis to the district administration and special branch office of the district. In the meantime, I also approached the union council officials and community leaders, thereby approaching the community people was relatively easier than the public offices. With the help of my facilitators, I talked to the community people personally and briefed them about my study. Their response was unexpectedly very positive and they immediately agreed without any hesitation. For example, on several occasions the local people and council officials said, "like Amir and Mateen (my facilitators), you are also our brother and if you need any help just let us know".

To get permission from district administration was challenging. I visited the office several times and also inquired on phone but I did not receive a positive reply. Every time I visited the office, they made excuses and only later with the help of my friend in another district office, I finally got the no objection letter. As I was expecting, it took almost one month in issuing the no objection certificate (NOC) for conducting research. Finally, by the end of April 2016, I had the permission letter in my hand.

Limitations such as, the local gender norms and power relations have sometimes halted researcher's accessibility to conduct individual interviews with women especially with young

*Assistant commissioner is a second tier district administrative officer in the Pakistani government system.

¹²¹ The US navy seals undertook a secret military operation (Neptune Spear of 2011) and killed Usama bin Laden in district Abbottabad of Pakistan (CIA, 2019).

women in some religious and socio-political influential groups. As discussed already, I faced limitations in conducting interviews with some women in union council *Nawansher*. Moreover, the interviews I conducted with women were mostly in the presence of male members of the family. In such situations the women were under pressure and were not openly sharing information. Thus, I hired female facilitators for women's interviews because individual interviews with women were an essential component of the study.

Another major limitation was the unavailability of district and union council's official data such as data about the migrants', socio-economic and population indicators of the district. It is important to mention here that officially, the union councils and districts are supposed to keep the basic record of local population such as employment and migration ratio, birth and death rate and population records. However, unfortunately, in the present case the union council had no official migration and population figures (they said that the record maintenance is in progress). This indicates the lack of administrative responsibilities in the local administrative setup. In order to overcome this problem I visited the center and provincial offices in Pakistan such as the Bureau of Statistics of Pakistan, Overseas Pakistani Foundation and provincial labor and population offices for the district migration and population data. As mentioned before, I also had some advantages while conducting research. These included the familiarity with local culture, language and good connections with the local people.

Chapter 5

ANALYZING GENDER RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION AND REMITTANCES IN NORTHERN PAKISTAN

5.1 Introduction

The local saying “*Dubai Tu Hai Na!*” (After all Dubai is there for us to feed!), interprets the importance of migration and remittances in district Abbottabad of Pakistan. For many people it is the first and last option of their economic survival and support of families. In the local area, migration is perceived as a symbol of high socio-economic status, and people see migrants with respect (*Ezat ki nazar se dekty hain*). It would not be an exaggeration to say that migration is a way of life for many in the selected union councils of *Malakpura* and *Nawansher* in district Abbottabad (see for example, Islam & Azad 2008 c.f. Allen et al., 2020; see also Cohen & Sirkeci, 2011).

The current empirical chapter examines the role of migration and remittances in changing gender relations in the migrants’ households in union council *Malakpura*¹²² of the district Abbottabad in Pakistan. In order to explain the interfaces between migration, remittances, and gender relations, I focus on the major processes that are initiated due to migration and remittances in the area. These processes include for example mobility, decision making, receiving and managing remittances, women bank accounts, and women’s economic committees. Through these processes and factors of migration and remittances, I analyze the transformations and changes in the selected union council and their influence on local gender relations.

The following sections examine the remittances process and as I show in the following sections of this chapter that the remittances process and its impacts on gender relations are complex and significantly influenced by the dominant socio-cultural, religious, and local gender norms. Thus, in this chapter, I focus on whether the migration and remittances processes influence women’s positions and change local gender relations. Additionally, I argue that the processes initiated by migration and remittances transform gender relations and make women more independent and empowered in many everyday socio-economic activities; however, the significantly important local factors such as the local gender and religious norms, ethnicity, household structures, and age of migrants’ wives are considerably influencing and changing

¹²² Gender relations in the second union council i.e., union council Nawansher has been analyzed in the next empirical chapter no. 6.

gender relations. Interestingly, these local factors are very important; however, they are often not taken into account in the literature, especially in the Pakistani context.

Generally, in district Abbottabad, the male and female spheres of work are separate. For instance, women mainly look after the household, and are discouraged to work or participate in activities outside homes such as income earning, or taking part in political and religious events and community decisions. Male members of the family provide economic support to the family. They are controlling family members who protecting the family honor (see for example chapter no. 2). However, as shown through the empirical data, gender relations in some union councils of the district are changing after male out migration especially in nuclear families where after husbands' migration, women take control of the families (for details see empirical findings in the next parts).

In this empirical chapter, I divide migrants' wives into two broader categories according to their socio-economic status, household structures, and ethnicity in union council *Malakpura* of district Abbottabad. These categories include wives from middle and low-income households of Malak and Awan ethnic groups: category (A) of migrants' wives from middle-income Malak households and category (B) of migrants' wives from low-income Awan households. All women belonging to these categories are directly and indirectly involved in the process of migration and remittances from their husbands. For instance, managing migration (helping in arranging finances, extending psychological support and looking after the family) and receiving and managing remittances. Some wives receive remittances through their personal bank accounts while others receive them through informal sources such as through migrants' networks and relatives as discussed in the following parts. However, there are variations within the categories of low and middle-income groups. For instance, some groups are religiously strict and more status conscious than others which means that the categories are heterogeneous. These variations are reflected in the analytical discussions in each section in the next parts.

A total of twenty migrants' wives from both categories (A&B) were interviewed. Among these, seven women from category (A) had bank accounts and received remittances through the same whereas thirteen spouses, or their relatives, did not have any bank accounts, and they received remittances through various informal sources such as money lenders and migrants' networks. The empirical analysis in the following parts of this chapter includes narrations of women from both categories (A & B).

5.2 The Remittances Receiving Process and Women Empowerment

As discussed above, gender relations and their possible transformations through remittances receiving behaviors of migrants' wives in union council *Malakpura* are examined. Studies show that the remittances receiving and management increase women's decision-making, mobility, and control over household affairs (see Reysoo, 2008; Hugo, 2008; Sell & Minot, 2018; Haq et al., 2017; Yogendrarajah, 2013; Naerssen et al., 2008; Keller and Mbwewe, 1991; Amin et al., 1998). Likewise, the empirical analysis illustrates that after male out-migration, women experience frequent mobility and interactions outside homes, their say in household decisions increases, and they get greater control over remittances management for various household affairs. For example, women's mobility and interactions increase because of receiving remittances and fulfilling different household needs such as grocery and education. Likewise, women become more independent in managing household tasks such as children's health and education, marriages, social obligations and everyday household needs (see also chapter no. 3 sections 3.8 and 3.9). These processes of mobility, decision-making, and control over remittances and household affairs are mainly developed through the coding of empirical data and are taken as the main categories for analyzing the empirical data in this chapter. It was on the basis of the empirical data that remittances are gradually transforming gender relations in the area; however, in the presence of some factors discussed already such as the local socio-economic, gender and religious norms, and age of women have considerable impact on women's independent position in the society.

Like other social structures and functions prevailing in the area, the remittances receiving process is also institutionalized according to the local gender and power structures which consequently make the process highly gendered. For example, the remittances sending and receiving patterns are largely decided by migrants and male members of the households. The prevailing gender binaries consider men as the breadwinners and protectors of the households and women as the household's managers. Thus, generally the main areas of remittances process such as remittances sending, receiving and management mostly come under the widely held male realm of socio-economic duties in the households (see Allen et al., 2020; Rajkarnikar, 2017). Nevertheless, the empirical findings of this study demonstrate some exceptions especially regarding migrant households and households headed by women. For example, migrants' wives who have no alternative male members for receiving remittances and performing the outside household duties, perform both tasks themselves; however, under certain limitations on women stated already (see also chapter no. 2).

In scrutinizing whether and how migration and particularly remittances increase women's empowerment and influence their everyday socio-economic lives, two different strands of argumentations are common in migration literature. The first line of argumentation states that generally remittances have no obvious impact on women's social, economic and political position (Chant, 1997 cf. Haas & Rooij, 2010, p. 45; Haas & Rooij, 2010). Particularly in extended households, women operate in the traditional and locally acceptable social structures that limit their role and participation (Datta & Mishra, 2011; Desai & Banerji, 2008; Jatuly, 1987; and Lefebvre, 1990). However, the second strand of literature argues that remittances tend to empower women thus enabling them to become decision-makers at household levels. This argument postulates the discussions predominant in the mainstream migration and development discourses and suggests that migration and remittances make women more independent and empowered (see Arif, 2009; Taylor et al., 2006). The use of remittances by migrants' wives such as investments on children's education, health, and business are considered as productive investments. Because these investments and the related activities like women's mobility, interactions and increased responsibilities significantly changed gender relations (see sections 5.3.1-5.3.3 & section 5.4). This implies that remittances bring local level development and increase women's involvement in everyday activities. Likewise, women investments that lead to the negotiation of gender relations are considered productive, especially expenses on education and health which are assumed as future investments in human capital (Pant, 2010; see also Ekra et al., 2011).

Remittances operate differently according to the household structures and women's socio-economic positions, and thus influence women differently. Desai and Banerji (2008) argue that women in nuclear households experience post migration process comparatively differently from those living in extended households. For example, women in nuclear households become more active in household affairs (Desai & Banerji, 2008 see also Ekra et al., 2011). Similarly, in the context of rural Pakistan, Lefebvre, (1990) states that in nuclear households, spouses temporarily take over responsibilities of daily expenditures and some extra household decisions such as decisions regarding children's education, but this is within the established socio-cultural parameters (Lefebvre, 1990). Moreover, some literature argues that the increase in women's responsibilities in the absence of their migrant husbands should not be equate with women's emancipation because the empowerment is temporary and is usually perceived as an extra burden on women (Haas & Rooij, 2010). Thus, it would be an exaggeration to comprehend women's de facto status of the household head with power and authority because with the return of migrants, women have to take their previous positions of household caretakers only (Der

Zee, 2012). Furthermore, some migrants also control and exercise powers from transnational space. These migrants use transnational links to exercise power from a distance over the left behind wives and family members (see Mahler, 1999). However, as shown through the empirical analysis in the following parts, women, even after return of migrants, largely manage household responsibilities.

The above discussion presents various theoretical argumentations relating to migration, remittances, and women empowerment. After analyzing the different theoretical positions, I argue in the next section that migration and remittances are gradually transforming gender relations in the union council and, as discussed already, for this I take some factors or processes initiated by migration and remittances such as women mobility, decision-making, remittances receiving, and household management as parameters to analyze the changing gender relations.

In the following section, I discuss remittances receiving behaviors and women's mobility. This section starts with remittances receiving of women and the analysis of changing gender relations.

5.2.1 Women Mobility and Changing Gender Relations through Remittances Receiving

In this section, women's mobility in the context of remittances receiving behavior is analyzed. This category is added for analysis because many women during the interviews articulated that remittances receiving and management increased their mobility, decision-making and control over household management (see also section 5.2.2) thus changing gender relations. Moreover, many women from the group stated that women as remittances recipients are considered more influential, independent, and empowered because they independently move and interact outside homes take independent decisions, and manage household affairs which were previously or before male out migration were men's part of everyday work.

This section includes migrants' wives from middle and low income households (category A and B) from union council *Malakpura*. Women from this group mainly receive remittances from their husbands. The empirical data reveals that migrants' wives in this group are household heads in the absence of their husbands and hold important positions within the households regarding receiving and managing remittances.

Pakistan is a majority Muslim (almost 96%) population country. Religious and cultural norms and institutional challenges relatively exclude women from the mainstream society and formal

economic sector (World Fact book, 2013 c.f. West & Sheena , 2016). Nevertheless, efforts are underway to encourage and include more women in the formal financial sector. For example, the state bank of Pakistan's national financial inclusion strategy (NFIS) aims at increasing women account holders up to 25% by 2020. Likewise, the government of Pakistan is also encouraging migrant families to receive remittances through formal sources, particularly through banks which will increase women bank accounts and their inclusion in the formal financial sector (SBP, 2018).

In Pakistan, various channels of remittances transfer are used; however, the informal channels of remittances are largely in practice. Arif (2009) argues that more than half of the remittances to Pakistan have no official record because most informal channels are used for such transitions. However, since 2001, significant efforts were made by the government of Pakistan to regulate remittances flow to Pakistan. Still in many rural areas of Pakistan, people use informal means for receiving remittances because of local social networking and lack of access to formal money transfer institutions (Amjad et al., 2012; Sulari & Savage, 2006). Likewise, Suleri and Savage's (2006) findings in Northern Pakistan show that majority of their study respondents used informal channels for receiving remittances among which the most commonly used informal channels were money changers or hundi system, and migrant networks (Suleri & Savage, 2006). The important question I analyze under the category of women mobility and remittances receiving patterns is: how remittances receiving and the resultant women mobility and interactions are making women independent and changing gender relations in the union council.

As stated already, in nuclear households, migrants' wives usually take control of household matters after the migration of their husbands (Haas & Rooij, 2010; Datta & Mishra, 2011; and Iqbal et al., 2014). The empirical analysis shows that along with other household responsibilities, the spouses are also involved in remittances receiving and management activities as discussed already. In union council *Malakpura*, the low income and unskilled migrants mainly send remittances (goods and money) to their families through informal channels to avoid extra transfer charges, and ensure safe and smooth delivery of money to the recipient households. Generally, different informal channels of remittances transfers are used in the union council. However, in the current context, I only examine the most popular and commonly used informal channels of transfers in the union council which include migrants themselves (when coming on vacations) and migrants' networks (friends and fellow migrants).

The mainstream literature on migration and remittances shows that personal links and networks are significantly important for transferring remittances to the less developed countries;

particularly to countries like Pakistan where majority of the labor force consists of unskilled and low income migrants (see chapter no. 3). In Pakistan, migrants' networks are considerably discussed in many studies (see for example Amjad & Arif, 2014; Arif, 2009; Azam, 2005; BE & OE, 2018). Arif (2009), for example, states that the role of migrants' networks is multidimensional such as they help new migrants in finding jobs, support their initial stay in the destination country, manage finances for migration endeavors and look after the left behind family. However, unfortunately, their role in transferring remittances has not been well researched so far. Thus, further empirical studies are needed to discuss the role of migrants' networks in transferring remittances (Arif, 2009). The current part of this empirical chapter attempts to examine the role of migrants' networks in transferring remittances and women's role and participation in these networks. Furthermore, I analyze whether these are increasing women mobility and interactions for receiving and managing remittances, and whether these tend to change gender relations in the union council.

The data findings show that the migrants' networks play an important role for transferring remittances and increasing women participation and interactions in everyday socio-economic activities in the union council. The migrants' networks are transnational such as they comprise of labor migrants at the destination countries and individuals (male and female members of migrants' households) in the sending communities. In the destination countries, the migrants' networks are mainly comprised of male members because of very low ratio of women migrants from Pakistan (see for example Azam, 2005) and are usually based on common residence, ethnicity (same *Biradri*¹²³) and kinship (Ghazdar, 2005; Erdal, 2014). In the countries of origin, migrants' networks include both men and women from migrants' households. These networks are active in both origin and destination countries. In the present context, I particularly focus on migrants' networks active in transferring remittances to the union councils because many migrants' households use these networks for transferring money and goods. Additionally, women's participation in these networks is important to consider to analyze the role of these networks in increasing women's mobility, independent interactions and changing gender relations in the union council.

In union council, the common term use for these networks is *darawal*¹²⁴ (same residence groups). The term *darawal* in local language is used for people residing together in the same building, room, or apartment. The *darawal* networks mostly comprise of close relatives, friends

¹²³ "An association, attachment, emotional linkage and sharing common characteristics by an individual being a part of a particular group descended of the same ancestor" (Chaudhry & Ahmed, 2014; see also chapter no. 2).

¹²⁴ The term *Darawal* in the local language means people living in the same residence.

and individuals belong to same geographical areas in the origin countries as stated before (see chapter no.3). These networks can also be differentiated on the basis of skills and socio-economic hierarchy. For instance, networks of skilled, unskilled or low skilled labor migrants living together and form *darawal* networks. The empirical data reveal and as already mentioned, the *darawal* networks works transnationally. Additionally, these provides financial help to the group members and their households in emergencies (see for example Mohapatra, 2010). The labor migrants' networks from district Abbottabad have almost the same characteristics as the Filipino, Dominicans, Mexicans, and other Central American hometown associations in the United States (see for example, Levitt, 2006; Mahler, 1999 and Orozco and Lapointe, 2004). However, unlike the above-mentioned hometown associations, the socio-economic jurisdiction of *darawal* networks is only limited to group welfare and work seldom for the larger community welfare and development (see for example Levitt, 2001; Levitt, 2006).

As discussed above, one of the significantly important roles of *darawal* networks especially in union council *Malakpura* is the informal transfer of remittances to origin countries. In this case, the networks function in the same way as the Salvadorian "transnational couriers or *viajeros*" (see for example Mahler, 1999, p. 710). However, unlike the '*viajeros*', the *darawal* networks transfer their remittances without charging the transfer fee because it is a reciprocal process where the network members reciprocally transfer remittances during their home visits. The empirical examples from the union council show that apart from increasing women's mobility, participation and interaction through remittances receiving, these networks also strengthen group unity.

Regarding women mobility through remittances receiving processes, a woman from the group stated:

"My husband is working as a laborer in some construction company in the Gulf. His income is low; therefore, he always sends remittances through his fellow migrant friends (migrants' networks) because it saves time and the transfer fee, '*Ghareb tu pai pai ka hesab rakta ha*' (Each penny counts for the poor). Migrants' networks are good for women like me who are un-educated (because the money lenders and banking process is complicated for un-educated women), and we become independent after husband's migration. Though migrants' networks increased my responsibilities, interactions and mobility, but these are good for me because the interactions and mobility enabled me to do things independently and handle situations (household decisions, children

education and public dealing) which were previously managed by my husband”
(Chand Bibi No.1A UC, *Malakpura*)¹²⁵.

This narration has three possible analytical explanations. Firstly, the migrants’ networks are very strong and supportive and highly active in transferring remittances as shown already (see also Ghazdar, 2003). Secondly, for some un-educated and less educated women such as in this case, collecting remittances through formal channels seems a quite complicated process because of the formal bureaucracy involved in sending and receiving remittances. Additionally, they also face inconvenience such as delays in receiving money and absence of formal documentations for sending and receiving money as stated by many women respondents. Likewise, for example, Arif, (2009) in his study in Northern Pakistan finds that “both the migrants and their families consider the banking procedure for transferring money very difficult. The procedure or the paperwork involved seems to be one of the major obstacles in using banks for transferring remittances” (Arif, 2009, p. 03). Finally, women become part of and participate in migrants’ networks, for instance, in receiving remittances through networks which increase women’s mobility, outside interactions and responsibilities as stated by many women during the interviews. For example, one woman from the group stated, “I am responsible for all the household work after my husband’s migration. I buy groceries from the market, pick and drop children to school, visit health facilities when needed and manage social obligations such as attending marriage ceremonies, death and birth rituals. All these activities and responsibilities on one hand made me busier and on the other hand increased my mobility and interactions which is good for me because now I can manage things myself when my husband is not around”. Another woman during the interview stated,

“Before migration, there was clear distribution of work and responsibilities between husbands and wives. For example, my husband had financial and outside responsibilities, and I was responsible for household work like cooking, washing and raising children. These changed after my husband’s migration and currently, I am performing both responsibilities. Off course, this increased my work burden but now I am more independent. The outside interactions and mobility because of receiving remittances and household necessities made me handle situations such as dealing with men. As I stated, before migration, my husband was looking after outside matters but once he

¹²⁵ (Pseudo name). Pseudo names have been used for respondents throughout the chapter. The explanation of the statement, for example, Chand Bibi No.1B UC= name of the respondent, Number1A= means respondent number 1 from category A and UC= union council. The same pattern is used for narrations in the entire dissertation.

migrated, through my frequent mobility and interactions (regarding remittances receiving and household affairs), I learned dealing and bargaining with people like taxi drivers, shopkeepers, and milkmen” (Female respondent in UC, *Malakpura*).

Regarding women’s remittances receiving, another woman from the group said,

“My husband and other family members considered me very shy and naïve in outside interactions before my husband’s migration. However, after my husband’s migration, I took on all the responsibilities such as receiving remittances, children’s health and schooling, and I even learnt to drive. The more one’s mobility increases, the more one gains new experiences and becomes more independent. My husband’s migration and the responsibilities such as receiving remittances and household matters encouraged me to prove myself to others and make them realize that I am no more as naïve as they thought” (Female respondent in UC, *Malakpura*).

Generally, the remittances transfers through individuals directly reach the households. However, sometimes migrants’ wives collect the remittances themselves from migrants (persons who bring remittances from abroad). Moreover, as a common tradition in the area, community people, mainly relatives, neighbours, and friends visit returnee migrants (migrants on vacation). The main purpose of visiting returnee migrants is to receive remittances their husbands send from abroad. However, as a customary practice, the networks also serve the function of exchanging information as they share information and inquire about the health and stay of their husbands at the destination country. In this context, another migrants’ wife from low-income group narrated,

“Yes, there are some social complications regarding remittances receiving through migrants’ networks because for women who personally receive remittances from unfamiliar individuals (migrants on vacation), it becomes inconvenient and sometimes considered not in line with local social norms. However, receiving remittances through networks gives women some outside exposure and additional responsibilities which ultimately make women more independent and empowered” (Rabia Bibi No.2A UC, *Malakpura*).

Despite some social constraints such as local gender and mobility norms, labor migrants mainly use networks for transferring remittances because of strong migrants’ networking, reliability,

saving transferring fee and international experience that has brought significant changes in their behaviors. As stated before, the local gender and mobility norms largely discourage women's mobility and interactions in the society (see also chapter no. 2). However, many women during interviews stated that despite local cultural and religious norms, receiving and managing remittances largely increased their mobility which directly and indirectly empowered them. For example, one woman during the interview stated, "Before migration, I was largely confined to household duties because my husband was looking after outside work. Once, he migrated, through mobility, interactions, and household responsibilities, I became independent and did everything myself". Likewise, another woman narrated,

"Despite limitations like mobility and local norms, migrants largely use networks for transferring remittances. This whole process of migration and remittances receiving has added new experiences and exposures to migrants' wives in the origin societies. The local mobility norms are changing now, and women are moving without any support from men whether for receiving remittances and other household work. Furthermore, the overseas exposure has largely changed migrants' behaviors because despite local norms of *pardah*, religion and culture, they send money through friends (networks) and allow wives to receive and manage remittances. This is a big change in both migrants' behaviors and women's mobility and household management" (Zaitoon Bibi No.1B UC, *Malakpura*).

Some women in the group stated that informal channels for receiving money (through migrants' networks) are not always safe and convenient for two main reasons. Firstly, because in the local culture it is considered inappropriate for women to go, interact, and receive remittances from unknown individuals (who are not relatives), and secondly, sometimes the remittances collection needs long distance travel to other villages and cities for receiving remittances that migrants bring with them. For example, one woman in this group stated that sometimes it becomes difficult for women to travel alone to the distant places because of the general insecurities for women. Thus, analysis of the above narration illustrates that despite local gender and mobility norms, remittances receiving is largely increasing women interactions, mobility and outside experiences which eventually influence gender relations in the union council. For example, one woman during an interview mentioned that outside interactions and experiences after migration and receiving remittances make her more mobile and independent. For instance, she manages health and education of children such as dealing with school authorities and healthcare staff, buying grocery items from the marketplace and representing the household on

community matters. Furthermore, she added that this is possible because of migration which increased her outside experiences.

As already mentioned, some factors like religion, age, and ethnicity influence women's negotiating powers. The empirical analysis showed mixed responses regarding the above stated factors and illustrated that these factors influence women differently. For example, Zahida Bibi (respondent), during a group discussion, stated that her family had shifted to Abbottabad some twenty years ago from their native village *Nagri Bala* (located in district Abbottabad). Her husband used to work in a transport business in Abbottabad and later went to Dubai. Currently he is regularly sending remittances through migrants' networks. Zahida Bibi collects the money herself. She narrated, "My husband is a religious person, and before migration he did not allow me to go alone outside home. However, after migration, I took on all the responsibilities like remittances receiving and household management. After migration, my husband's behaviour considerably changed and he became very flexible towards me". She further stated, "Before migration there were some limitations on women especially on migrants' wives because of local socio-religious beliefs and age of women; however, these significantly changed after migration because of women's mobility and interactions, responsibilities, and changes in men's behaviors after migration". Likewise, as argued already, age and ethnicity also influence women's negotiating powers. For example, one woman during interview said, "Age is very important in the context of women's mobility, interactions and empowerment. The aged women have more respect and less restrictions, and everyone respects them so they move without limitations. Additionally, especially because of age, migrants' wives hold important positions in the households and community, and take independent decisions". Adding further she stated, "I was young when my husband migrated and had many checks on me through relatives and the extended family members; however, with the passage of time, the situation gradually changed and today I am freer and more independent. Off course, one factor for this change and freedom is age but migration of husband is also important in making women more independent and empowered". Regarding the age factor another woman stated, "Young and newly married women, especially when their husbands are not around, face some limitations regarding mobility and exercising power; however, once women become mothers especially of male children, they, particularly migrants' wives, become more independent in decision-making, mobility, and household management". Likewise, ethnicity is also important for determining women's mobility and interactions. For example, Asma Bibi during an interview narrated,

“Initially, after migration of my husband, it was very difficult to find someone to accompany me for remittances collection or going outside because I did not want my neighbors and relatives discussing me. Later I started to go out as there was no one to help me. My frequent visits altered my neighbors’ and relatives’ views (from same ethnicity) who then started gossiping that I am wandering alone in the marketplaces (*Akaly gumti hai*). Some relatives even called my husband in Dubai and asked him to have a check on me. However, my husband did not pay much attention to them” (Asma Bibi No.3A UC, *Malakpura*).

The analysis of Asma’s case highlights the general insecurities and social constraints women face while living in the same ethnic community. It is not thus easy for migrants’ wives to move and enter public places. For example, initially for Asma and many other women in the group, it was not easy to personally collect remittances and to move freely outside. Therefore, Asma and other women used to take other individuals such as neighbor females, sons and brothers or fathers with them. Analysis of her narration also suggests that pressures from the extended family and same ethnic community continuously limit women’s social positions. The analysis reveals that the social pressures such as living in same ethnic group have although not disappeared completely but these are gradually decreasing after migration as women have started to take on responsibilities of households and remittances management as shown above. For example, in the beginning, Asma had mobility and interaction issues but migration and remittances significantly changed her mobility, interactions and household management. Asma further stated, “After migration, I opened my personal bank account and I am free to manage it. Additionally, I am more empowered than before in making independent decisions”. In the broader context, the analysis is mainly in line with Iqbal et al., (2014) argumentations which state, “In the absence of their husbands, women feel more independent and autonomous” (Iqbal et al., 2014, p. 483).

Analysis of the above empirical data shows that because of factors stated above, women face mobility and interactions issues in receiving and managing remittances for households. However, migration and the overall process of remittances receiving and household management tasks significantly empower migrants’ wives and increased their mobility and everyday interactions with different people and spaces. In the next section, I analyze the possibilities and opportunities for women in the context of women’s mobility and honor after male out migration.

5.2.2 Mobility and Honor: Possibilities for Women after Male out-Migration in Union Council *Malakpura*

The mainstream literature on migration and development takes mobility as an important component of women's empowerment (see for example Smith, 2003). Likewise, these discourses identify multiple constraints on women's mobility in some male dominated societies. However, some studies also suggest that male out migration gives women opportunities to move and perform tasks they have never done before the migration of their husbands (see for example Datta & Mishra, 2011; Demurger, 2015; Desai & Banerji, 2008). For example, as Daubeterre (2005) argues, "The new roles not only change the traditional division of labor, but also allow women to move freely outside the boundaries of the household in order to attend public meetings, manage public resources or participate in religious ceremonies" (Dáubeterre, 2005 c.f. Ramerz et al., 2005, p. 39). Likewise, others state that migration of husbands gives women more freedom of mobility and contact with the wider social environment. This gives women more self-confidence and new sense of socio-economic responsibilities (Doorn, 2000; Debnath & Selim, 2009; Gulati, 1993). In Pakistani context, Iqbal et al., (2014) argue that male migration changes the traditional locus of gender division of labor. Generally, the left behind spouses take over male duties, which increases their mobility and autonomous status in the society (Iqbal et al., 2014).

As mentioned already in chapter no. 2 (section 2.6.2), men control the economic and community matters and are also responsible for protecting family honor or *izzat* (see for example Tabassum, 2016). Family honor and social status are primarily attached with women honor (Abid, 2010). Likewise, family honor is considered as the honor of the larger extended family and ethnic group (Khattak, Mohammad, & Lee, 2009). Thus, women are perceived as the carriers of family honor and their mobility and actions are constantly under male surveillance (Yazdani, 2003). However, as the empirical findings show, male out migration and women's new roles of remittances receiving and performing household duties are creating new spaces and possibilities for women. Analyzing the above argumentations in the context of migrants' spouses in union council *Malakpura*, I argue that although local honor and mobility norms are some of the limitations for women, but migration and remittances are creating possibilities especially for migrants' wives such as increasing women's mobility, decision-making and improving their social positions which are presented in the following analysis.

Regarding women's mobility, majority of women from the group were of the view that previously it was largely subject to local gender norms of honor and social status of family.

For example, one woman during the interview stated, “Women have always been suppressed (*Aurat ko hamesha dabah k raka gya ha*). But now the situation is changing especially in the union council as because of migration, women are handling most of the household and community tasks and taking independent decisions” (Akhtar Bibi No.2B UC, *Malakpura*). The freedom of mobility and interactions women gained after migration have considerably changed local gender relations. For example, in the context of changing gender relations in the union council, one woman during an interview narrated:

“Previously women’s mobility was not considered appropriate in the local context because it could possibly threaten or damage family honor. However, after men’s migration, things are changing in the union council. For example, before my husband’s migration, I could not do things (mobility and interactions) that I am doing now in his absence. For instance, after my husband’s migration, I regularly inspect the progress of construction work and instructing the labors who are working on my under-construction house. Likewise, I manage all the construction activities such as arranging construction material like cement and bricks, and paying daily wages to the labors. All this needs regular visits and interactions with people, for example, going to the marketplace and bargaining prices of construction material with shopkeepers and other vendors. Before male out-migration, this was mainly done by my husband. As stated earlier, currently I am performing all these tasks” (Fareeda Bibi No.4A UC, *Malakpura*).

This narration states that migration is providing opportunities (as women narrated) to women for performing duties previously considered men’s sphere of work. Likewise, as the narration shows, women are performing multiple duties of household because migration and remittances management are creating new possibilities for them, and as stated by some women, these multiple duties are also opening new possibilities of interactions and experiences. For example, in the above narration, migration of the husband enabled Fareeda Bibi to take on new responsibilities and tasks which increased her mobility and interactions thus enabling her to bargain with shop keepers, taxi drivers and other vendors. The analysis illustrates that for women, these activities were not considered inappropriate previously because of women’s exposure to men outside the family. The analysis additionally tells that Fareeda Bibi’s role in managing the construction work symbolizes her social status and influence because looking after and taking decisions relating to the construction are always considered men’s job and

mainly associated with men who hold positions of influence and authority in the society, and when women takeover these jobs, they are also considered influential in the community. Another woman during an interview responded,

“Currently, women in general and especially women from migrant households are very active in performing everyday household duties. Nowadays, even the relatives do not have much time to come and help us as they have their own families and engagements to fulfil. I cannot always ask someone to come and help me thus I do everything myself such as children’s education, health and marriages, and even sometimes I help other women in the community. It is understood that husbands’ migration increased workload of wives because we do multiple duties and perform tasks of men as well” (Nargis Bibi No.3B UC, *Malakpura*).

Regarding a question about local community pressures such as honor in case of women’s mobility, Nargis Bibi further stated,

“People are always there to criticize and discourage women but in times of need, they just disappear. In such situations, you have to take independent decisions, for example, last summer my younger daughter fell ill at midnight so I woke up my son and went to the local hospital. If I had waited for someone’s help or had thought about what people would say, the situation would have been different. My husband gave me a free hand after migration. Otherwise, I do not care about people” (Female respondent in UC, *Malakpura*).

Analysis of the narrations shows that despite some social and community constraints (family honor) on women mobility, male migration is making women independent and increasing women’s mobility and interactions as explained in the above narrations. For example, women take independent decisions about family members and household needs such as decisions on health and education. The analysis illustrates that although women’s responsibilities have increased and they are overburdened by extra duties, but these also help women to enhance their experiences and outside exposures as stated by many women. Additionally, women have support of their husbands which shows that migration is not only changing and creating possibilities for women in the recipient areas but also changing behaviors of male migrants

regarding women's new roles and responsibilities. Another respondent, Razia Bibi explained women's mobility in the local context of honor and stated:

“I have less constraints regarding mobility because of my ethnicity and my husband's long detachment from household matters due to migration. Therefore, I have more freedom of mobility and decisions regarding household. My husband does not strictly follow the local cultural norms of mobility but how long would he remain unaffected by the social pressures? I observed many times during his home visits that the community people try to empoison him about my mobility and outside activities, but he does not take this seriously and I am happy about this” (Razia Bibi No. 5A UC, *Malakpura*).

Razia's statement explains the insecurities and gender differences in mobility in the society. Firstly, she explains the possibilities for women through migration and secondly, the limitations for women because of local norms of mobility and honor especially for migrants' wives when their husbands are not around. Razia's husband does not put extra limitations on her mobility regarding household tasks, remittances collections and outside interactions because he knows that in his absence she will manage his home. The analysis illustrates different reasons for the migrants' flexible behavior such as it might be due to their long absence and detachment from household affairs, the influence of international migration (transnational experience), and husband's dependence on wives for managing household matters in their absence. However, others, mainly men from the local community, constantly target women for their outside mobility and interactions. The data findings regarding Razia's case demonstrate that her family recently shifted to the current locality (residence); as a result, she has fewer social interactions or connections with the community people. Furthermore, the empirical analysis tells that certain circumstances such as male out migration, different ethnic residence, and less interactions with neighbors (community) facilitate women's mobility. However, these also increase women's responsibilities because of the absence of supporting social networks like relatives and community people. Thus, Razia also has more responsibilities and mobility. To support Razia's statement, another woman in the group stated, “Migration is one of the main reasons for men's flexible behavior towards their wives' mobility”. Razia's narration illustrates that despite mobility issues and norms of local honor for women, male out migration one way or the other increases women's interactions and mobility. The analysis of Razia's narration also shows that individuals (men), whether they are relatives (kin) or members of the community, unnecessarily target women and continuously criticize and discourage their mobility and participation in

public spaces. For example, as the empirical data finds, a common justification usually given by men regarding women's mobility is that "if we do not put limitations (such as men surveillance) on our women they would become like 'them' (women who are mobile and working outside homes)". This statement shows that local non-migrant men do not like their women to work outside homes because it puts family honor at stake. Moreover, data findings reveal that women who make outside interactions and take part in public life are perceived as 'deviant individuals' (*dusri tarah k log*) who act differently or against the generally accepted and prevailing social norms of honor. Majority of the men during informal discussions stated, "Acts such as women's mobility and interactions can disturb the general social order, and honor of the family especially in situations when their husbands are not around" (see for example Lefebvre, 1990). Thus, the analysis shows that women in general and migrants' wives in particular are perceived as threats to family honor. However, migration is providing some space to women for changing gender relations in the union council, for example, by doing men's work such as managing education, health and other household duties as seen in the above cases.

Regarding women's mobility and honor Aziza Bibi narrated:

"Some women are less mobile and avoid unnecessary visits because of local mobility norms and extended families. Living together in the same community, where male members of the extended family mainly control or interfere in household affairs, continuously discourages women's participation in household and community matters. For women, mobility and interaction while living among common ethnic groups (community of same ethnic groups) is very difficult as we are under surveillance of members of same ethnic groups because a woman's honor is perceived as honor of the entire extended group. As my husband is abroad (a migrant), I have no other option but to do all things myself despite criticism from relatives and community" (Aziza Bibi No.6A UC, *Malakpura*).

Aziza's case shows some social controls that women experience while living in the same group (same ethnic group) communities. The analysis illustrates that women living in the same ethnic community experience more checks on their mobility than those living in different group residences (see above Razia's case). For example, same group residences closely connect people with each other through various social networks and, as already mentioned, women's honor is considered the honor of the entire ethnic group. Therefore, living in the same ethnic group or community influences women's mobility and social activities. Similarly, different

ethnic groups residing at one place or in the same community are loosely attached with one another, are less concerned and barely pay any attention to women's mobility as the empirical finding revealed. The empirical data found different social networks in the union council such as the networks of relatives, friends, and wider community networks (ethnic networks), which extend support to members and households in times of emergency and socio-economic support. At the same time, these networks control women's interactions for preserving family and group honor. The empirical data show that some individuals (men) from these networks of extended families also perform the task of 'moral policing'¹²⁶, especially on women when husbands are not home. People involved in moral policing largely tend to influence and control practices they see against the generally accepted local norms of the community. The second part of the statement points towards the 'circumstantial factors' where the migrants and their spouses have no alternative for fulfilling the household duties. Therefore, under circumstantial situations, the migrants' wives take on household responsibilities. The 'circumstantial situations' give women opportunities to negotiate and influence their positions. For example, even living in same ethnic group, women under special circumstances are taking independent decisions regarding mobility and household matters despite norms of honor. For instance, one woman during the interview stated, "Despite same ethnicity, honor and surveillance from relatives, I do all the tasks that my husband was doing before migration. Yes, it is comparatively difficult for me to be independent and mobile than what would be if I was living in a different ethnic community but I have to do these tasks. After all, it's my responsibility". Another woman during interview stated, "Even after the return of migrants, women go outside for household necessities". Moreover, data findings reveal mixed responses of women relating to 'circumstantial factors and responsibilities'. For instance, some women considered 'circumstantial factors and responsibilities' as new possibilities whereas others saw this as an extra burden because managing both household and outside matters needs more time, energy, and extra patience to bear the social criticism (see for examples Datta & Mishra, 2011; Jatley, 1987; Gulati, 1993).

As stated already, women's mobility is closely connected with family honor and largely influenced by local religious and *purdah* norms (see for example chapter no. 2). For example, women's mobility especially when they are young or without male company is considered inappropriate in the local religious and cultural contexts. However, the empirical data illustrate

¹²⁶ "Moral Policing in its broadest sense could mean a system where a strict vigil and restriction is imposed on those who violate the basic standards of society" (Jaiswal, 2020). Within the union council, there are individuals and groups with conservative cultural and religious beliefs tends to manipulate their powers (vested to them by the general society and the local power structures) and try to influence individuals and practices they consider against the general social norms.

some possibilities for migrants' wives despite the local conception of honor, religion and *purdah* norms. For example, one woman from the group narrated,

“The local norms of *purdah*, honor and religion restrict women's mobility especially when they are young, newly married or living in the same ethnic community. For instance, initially when my husband migrated to Dubai, I was largely confined to household work and faced restrictions from relatives and in laws. However, the circumstances changed after some time and I started moving freely for household needs and remittances receiving because how long would I depend on others and listen to them? The migration and outside interactions also helped me to think about and start some economic activity to support my family and repay the loan that my husband took from relatives for migration. Thus, I started embroidery work and sold it in the local market. Now, I am also planning to start embroidery training for local women” (female respondent UC, *Malakpura*).

Likewise, another woman stated,

“The freedom of mobility after migration helped women to find and experience new possibilities, and many women, especially migrants' wives, adopted new roles and responsibilities. There are some limitations for women such as religious and cultural (honor and *purdah*) but I do not take these very seriously because it is impossible to satisfy everyone and prove yourself right all the time. For example, after my husband's migration, I started home tuitions and earned a good amount of money every month. Initially, I was opposed by neighbors, in laws and even by local clerics because this was mainly men's job but later, the situation got normalized and currently I tutor even those children whose parents initially opposed me” (female respondent UC, *Malakpura*).

Many migrants' wives also see additional responsibilities as a social reality to live with and think that they have to cope with it. For example, one woman narrated, “I cannot always ask someone to come and help. It is understood that husbands' migration increased work burden of wives because we have multiple duties and perform tasks of men as well. I cannot depend on others to do my work”. Another woman during the interview narrated, “We have to accept that in the absence of men, we have to look after the family and fulfill all our needs”. Likewise, one migrant's wife stated, “After my husband's migration, the responsibilities shifted to me.

Now, it's my duty to perform these responsibilities. Of course, there were some challenges as I was not familiar with some responsibilities previously performed by my husband but now I am doing it and doing it right". Another woman added, "We cannot wait for someone to come and take responsibilities of our families. It was pre-decided and in consideration before migration of my husband that I will take his position and responsibilities. Thus, I was mentally prepared for these responsibilities".

Another possibility for many migrants' wives is the independent bank accounts¹²⁷ opened and operated after the migration of husbands. Many women during interviews mentioned that they opened personal bank accounts after migration through which they receive remittances. The data found that in the local context, women having bank accounts symbolizes their influence, autonomy and empowerment because managing bank accounts involves mobility, independent decisions and entry into men's domain of everyday work. Generally, in Pakistan, women can open their personal bank accounts, however, the ratio of women bank account holders is very low¹²⁸ in the country because of their limited access to formal financial services. Studies on women's financial inclusion and empowerment suggest that women's access to formal financial services such as personal bank accounts not only makes them economically independent but also increases their negotiating powers in the households (Dupas & Robinson 2013 c.f. Hendriks, 2019).

It is widely argued in the existing literature that generally women, whether they are spouses, mothers, and sisters, are major recipients of remittances in case of male migration (Orozco et al., 2009; Orozco and Paiewonsky 2007 cf. Ekra et al., 2011; Gulati, 1987; Mbonile & William, 2017 and Ramírez et al., 2005). It is also argued that women have a significant role in managing remittances; nevertheless, it also depends on the local socio-cultural and religious circumstances (Lefebvre, 1990; see also IOM, 2018). The empirical data reveal that in Pakistan in general and in the study area in particular, the remittances receiving behaviors are complex and significantly influenced by the local power structures and mobility norms. Thus, the empirical analysis shows that despite local factors of mobility and honor, migration has created certain possibilities such as personal bank accounts for women which are significantly changing

¹²⁷ The bank accounts and remittances receiving process is interchangeably used at different places in the chapter.

¹²⁸ Only 11.0 percent of the adult female population having bank accounts or accounts in other type of financial institutions (World Bank, 2018).

gender relations in the union council. Regarding women's bank accounts and possibilities for migrants' wives, Zara bibi narrated:

“I was among the first women in the community who had a bank account after her husband had migrated. Earlier, my husband used to send me money through informal channels (*hundi* or *hawala*), and sometimes through his friends and fellow migrants. At present, I have my own bank account that I use to receive remittances. My bank account gives me a sense of independence and I can do things for which I was previously dependent on my in laws. For example, previously when I used to receive money through my in laws, they always had a check on me regarding how much and where I spent the money. My in laws were particularly concerned about my parents and thought that I gave money to them. At present, I am free to take independent decisions about expenditures (household and community) and investments. The bank account and the related outside exposure helped me to find new investment opportunities and a sense of ownership. I would say possessing bank account in the local community symbolize power and influence especially for women” (Zareena bibi No.4B, UC, *Malakpura*).

Zara's case presents some interesting dimensions of women's remittances receiving and management after migration. Firstly, it reflects the symbolic significance for women having and managing bank accounts because previously bank accounts of women were uncommon and considered a cultural taboo in the union council. This means that women are entering public spaces because bank accounts are mainly perceived as a male domain of economic activities. Likewise, for women having personal bank accounts is significant in the sense that it gives them opportunities to make independent decisions and interact with people through frequent mobility and personal dealings. Secondly, the empirical analysis demonstrates that remittance-receiving behavior through bank accounts is closely connected with women's mobility, access, and control over remittances as shown in the above narration. For instance, Zara Bibi personally receives remittances and uses it for household needs, investments, and community contributions such as on births, deaths, and marriage ceremonies. This demonstrates a sense of ownership and women's ability to control and handle situations in the absence of their husbands. Regarding women's mobility and interactions through bank accounts, Arif (2009) states that women having personal bank accounts is significant because this gives them authority and freedom of movement and more influence on the use of remittances (Arif, 2009). Arif's

argumentations have several important points; for instance, migration considerably increases women's bank accounts ratio which means their inclusion in the formal economic sector. Furthermore, it indicates freedom of independent decisions over remittances management, investments, and decision making.

The empirical data additionally found some important factors that significantly increased women bank accounts in the union council, and which are missing in the mainstream migration and development literature. For example, women open bank accounts to keep the valuables safe (money and jewelry), to get additional income in the form of interest (profit) through saving accounts, and because of circumstantial conditions such as the absence of alternative individuals for receiving remittances¹²⁹. The empirical finding identifies that this phenomenon of bank accounts is particularly helpful for women living independently such as in nuclear households. For example, one woman during interview stated, "I opened a bank account because of two reasons. Firstly, because after migration I had no alternative individual neither from parental or in laws family to get the remittances for me as I have a nuclear family, and it was difficult for me get remittances from money changers' offices. Secondly, I get some profit on the amount by keeping it in the bank that helps to pay some utility bills". Another middle income woman narrated, "I brought some jewelry with me during my wedding as dowry from parental home. When my husband migrated, I had no male member at home thus because of fear of theft I opened a bank account. Last year, when my husband came on vacation, I went with him and opened my personal account to keep all my valuables in it". Some women especially migrants' wives use bank accounts for business. For example, Khalida Bibi narrated,

"After my husband's migration, we were under heavy financial crisis because of loans that we took for his migration. After my husband's migration, I thought to utilize the opportunity of having a bank account and started online business of selling women's clothes and other accessories. Now the buyers directly send money to my bank account. I got this idea of online business through outside interactions; for instance, the bank employee (where I have my bank account) guided me to start this business. Currently, I am earning good money through this business but this made me very busy. However, I am thinking to involve

¹²⁹ See also for example Suleri and Savage (2006) in their study 'remittances in crises in Northern Pakistan' which states that the 2005 earthquake in Northern Pakistan increased the ratio of women personal bank accounts because it was a prerequisite by the government to receive the earthquake compensation money through bank accounts (Suleri & Savage, 2006).

some women from the community as this would help both the community women and me” (female respondent UC, *Malakpura*).

Analysis of the narrations in this section shows that the overall process of remittances receiving whether through migrants’ networks and bank accounts has positively influenced migrants’ wives. The remittances receiving has significantly allowed migrants’ wives to interact and perform tasks they had never experienced or done before the migration of their husbands. For example, despite various social controls and surveillances on women as stated above, migration and remittances, and the process initiated by these such as mobility and operating bank accounts, are gradually changing the local norms of honor, *purdah* and mobility thus creating possibilities for women as shown in the above narrations.

5.3 Social Costs of Migration and the Significance of Receiving Remittances for Women in Union Council *Malakpura*

This section consists of three sub-sections. In the first part, I analyze the social costs of migration because migration of men has also social costs which are hardly discussed in the literature especially in the literature on Pakistan. In the second part, I examine the importance of deciding remittances priorities and uses by migrants’ wives and in the final sub-section, I analyze women’s active role in deciding education and healthcare of family members and its significance for women.

5.3.1 Challenges and Possibilities: The Symbolic and Emotional Significance of Being Migrants’ Wives

This category emerged accidentally after its repetitive occurrence during the data analysis phase. For example, women were asked about the significance of migration and remittances in terms of their independent status and empowerment in the union council. Some women completely overlooked these questions, however, they started talking about the emotional and psychological issues attached with migration and remittances. The research finding reveals that the main emotional and psychological issues migrants’ wives face include empathy, loneliness, stress, and additional responsibilities in some situations.

Graham & Jordan (2011) illustrate that the psychological and social issues of the left behind families of migrants have been rarely discussed in the literature on migration (Graham & Jordan, 2011). Other scholars explain, “The balance sheet of international labor migration typically involves a trade-off between economic well-being and family proximity. Families divided across national borders may reap economic benefits, but they also make sacrifices in

terms of geographical and emotional closeness” (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002; 2001 c.f. Graham & Jordan, 2011, p. 764). Similarly, Demurger (2015) argues that migration has significant social consequences on the non-migrant family members in the origin country. Particularly, the absence of male members can have different health, education, social status, and labor supply effects on the left behind household members (Demurger, 2015; see also Ekra et al., 2011).

In Pakistani context, Kousar et al., (2014) in their study about ‘male migration and the left behind family problems in Pakistan’ opine that women feel insecure and lonely in the absence of their husbands (Kousar et al., 2014). Another study by Khan et al., (2010) mentions various social problems that considerably influence migrants’ wives in Pakistan. These include social insecurity, responsibilities, and loneliness due to the lack of social and moral support of their husbands (Khan et al., 2010; see also Farooq & Javed, 2009).

Many of the above-mentioned factors regarding women workload, insecurity and loneliness because of male out migration correspond with my data that I analyze in this section. However, I have also added some additional factors such as the significance of being migrants’ spouses and the emotional attachment and empathy wives have with migrants and their working and living conditions at the destination countries. These factors are very important, however, not really focused in the migration literature especially in the Pakistani context. Therefore, in this section, I mainly focus on and examine the significance of being migrants’ wives, the emotional attachment they have with migrants and their money (remittances), and the psychological issues and support spouses need when their husbands are not around. These challenges are heavily reflected during the interviews and group discussions with women.

The empirical data states that women from both low and middle-income households (categories A&B) mentioned two main significances of migration and receiving remittances. For example, firstly, receiving remittances from husbands shows the intimacy and trust of relationships between the sending and the receiving persons (husbands and wives) and secondly, the social or symbolic significance of receiving remittances symbolizes women’s influence and status. Women during individual interviews and group discussions differently characterize the significance of being migrants’ spouses and receiving remittances. However, their responses can be collectively summarized under the above-mentioned categories of emotional attachment with remittances and their husbands, and the symbolic significance of receiving remittances.

The respondents stated that receiving remittances signifies the emotional attachment between

the sending and the receiving persons. For example, a woman during an interview stated, “Migrants’ emotions and hard work are usually attached with remittances (money and goods), but for me it is about more than just material possessions or of economic value. It is something valuable sent by our near and dear ones living far away from their homes, families, relatives, and friends just for the sake of earning good life for us” (Aneesa Bibi No.7A UC, *Malakpura*). Similarly, another woman from the middle-income group stated, “For us it is very difficult to spend the money because this is not just money but something that includes one’s (migrant) sweat and blood (*sirf pasa nhe bal k apny pyraou ka khoon pasena ha*)”. The above narrations explain that migrants’ wives have empathy and emotional attachment with their husbands and the remittances they send. Moreover, the empirical responses of migrants’ spouses and some returnee migrants from Gulf countries show that labor migrants in the Gulf countries live and work under extreme and unpleasant conditions, for example, unhygienic and poor living conditions and low wages. Thus, some family members such as mothers and wives usually get emotional about migrants. The empirical data illustrate that living conditions of labor migrants working in Gulf States are highly unsatisfactory; they live in congested and overcrowded rooms and apartments as many returnee migrants narrated. For example, one-returnee migrant mentioned during an informal discussion, “Migrants survive under very hard working and living conditions in the destination countries (Azam UC, *Malakpura*)”. The research findings show that in order to save some money, many migrants live together in single room apartments because residence (housing rents are extremely high for labor migrants) is very expensive in most Gulf States. Similarly, during an informal discussion, another returnee migrant stated, “People misjudge migrants by their clothing (as observed during fieldwork, migrants mostly dress up in white which symbolizes high status in the area) and the expenditures they incur on vacations at home, and think that migration is an easy way of earning money, however, they do not know about the hardships of migration” (Fida Khan UC, *Malakpura*). The news regarding migrants’ lives and working conditions at the destination countries spread quickly to their families in the origin countries. Therefore, people closely attached with migrants such as their immediate family members and friends have emotional attachment with them and their belongings (remittances, gifts, and other stuff).

The data analysis illustrates that women from both low and middle income groups directly receiving remittances from their husbands are perceived as independent and influential women by women of non-migrants’ households in the community. Receiving and managing remittances is significant for women. For example, one woman from the group stated, “Managing remittances is significant in the sense that it shows the importance of being

migrants' wives and the trust our husbands have on us, and also, women feel proud of controlling finances and having relatively high social positions in the society because of direct control over the finances" (Haseena Bibi No.5B UC, *Malakpura*). Remittances receiving wives from both groups stated that they had support and trust of their husbands which is significant in the local context. As a result of husbands' support and trust they have comparatively more authority and influence than women in non-migrant households because migrants' wives make independent decisions on various household and community matters. Another woman in the group stated, "I heard women (non-migrant) in the community gossiping and praising migrants' wives for their influence in decision-making. Even the community men come to me when they need to discuss something about the community such as contribution for community development fund." (Malika Bibi No.6 B UC, *Malakpura*). These narrations show the significance of migrants' wives in the community. Likewise, other women in the community portray and perceive migrants' wives as 'women of influence' with whom even the community men discuss community matters.

Women also feel lonelier and more burdened after husbands' migration, For example, one woman from the group stated, "Although we are independent and comparatively have more influence in the community than women of non-migrant households, but at the same time we lack emotional and social support of our husbands. For instance, our responsibilities increased because we have to look after our children, household and community matters simultaneously." (Tehsin Bibi No.8A UC, *Malakpura*). The analysis reveals that it is true for many migrants' wives. They have more influence in everyday matters; however, they lack emotional and psychological support of their husbands in times of need. Some women from both groups stated, "No doubt remittances give economic relief and independent decision-making to migrants' wives but at the same time it also increases women's responsibilities because before migration they were shared between husbands and wives" (see for example Datta & Mishra, 2011). Another woman narrated, "I am trying my best to manage things but sometimes because of many tasks at the same time, I lose control. From children's education to their health, and from household needs to community matters, I am managing everything single handed. Sometimes I feel exhausted and think that it would have been good if my husband had not migrated and stayed here. The responsibilities without his support are affecting my health". In such situations, women need support as stated by one migrant's wife, "We desperately need the moral and psychological support of someone such as of our life partners" (Arifa Bibi No.7B UC, *Malakpura*). For example, another woman from the group stated, "Unfortunately, we lack emotional and psychological support of our husbands. Last year, my son died and I fell into pits

of depression because my husband was not here. Though my husband was consoling me over the phone but it was not enough. I hardly came out of the situation and I am still on medication”. Likewise, one migrant’s wife narrated, “It’s fascinating to be a migrant’s wife because of the control over remittances and the decision-making powers I have in the absence of ours husbands, but at the same time, I feel alone”. Another woman from middle-income group during an interview stated, “Our economic situation was not good before migration of my husband. Thanks to God, now my children study in good schools, we have good clothes, and I have all the facilities that I wished for. However, on many occasions, I still feel the need of my husband’s presence”. Another woman stated, “Because of unemployment and good future of our children, I wanted my husband to migrate and support the rest of the family but I also feel his absence and need my husband’s support in the household.” Analysis of these narrations show that; however, migrants’ wives responsibilities increased after the migration of husbands but they are coping with these responsibilities. And many wives see the additional responsibilities as enhancing women’s empowerment.

The empirical data identified some major events and occasions where the left behind wives need their husbands’ presence and company. For example, the absence is felt on events such as socio-religious ceremonies of death and birth, marriage, and childcare and health-related matters. Majority of the women from both low and middle-income groups stated that they feel lonely in the absence of their husbands on important social occasions and ceremonies such as during wedding and religious processions in the family. One migrant’s wife during an interview narrated, “Last month, during a wedding ceremony in the family, I saw women accompanied by their husbands. They were happy and joyful. I felt very lonely and wished my husband was there too”. Many women from both groups confirmed that they wanted their husbands to be with them on such occasions because when they see other happy couples (husbands and wives), they feel lonely and miss their husbands. Likewise another woman from the group stated, “I recently separated from extended family because after my husband’s migration, I felt uncomfortable in the family because of the restrictions. Now, I am independent but feel lonely so I frequently call my sisters and mother to stay with me” (see for example, Lei & Desai, 2021).

The data identify another significant occasion when migrants’ spouses need their husbands’ presence such as relating to the healthcare matters and healthcare communication. Generally, in the district and particularly in the union council, women do not speak openly to men other than their husbands about their illness because culturally it is considered inappropriate for

women to speak about or share illness in front of other family members especially men whether they are relatives or the health staff (male doctors). Therefore, most of the times, they face various challenges in communicating their illnesses. Many women during the interviews confirmed this and stated that they feel comfortable and relaxed in the presence of their husbands, because their husbands communicate the health problems to the doctors which releases their stress and removes the communication gap (see for example Siegmann, 2010).

Women also stated that they need their husbands' support in childcare. Many women during interviews said that their husbands spend most part of their lives as migrants. The empirical data show that an average migrant spends 30-35 years of his life in migration. During these years, they hardly remain at home for 3-5 years. For instance, one woman stated, "If migrants visit home annually for one month's vacation, it comes to a total of 30 months of stay at home in 30 years which is equal to almost two and half years. Some migrants' visit home after 3-4 years on six months vacations and in that case they hardly remain at home for 4-5 years in total". The presence of both parents regarding children's education, health, and social development is important as stated by many women during interviews. The majority of the spouses from both groups expressed that they face many challenges whilst looking after their children outside homes, for example, in schools and at health facilities. Empirical examples of some women in both groups reveal that it is difficult especially to control adult children as they do not fear mothers and tend to exercise their own will. Therefore, migrants' spouses need their husbands' support in looking after their children. Similarly, many wives stated that children need attention of both parents and usually it becomes very difficult for single mothers to handle both household's responsibilities and children simultaneously. A woman during an interview regarding migrants' long absence from home stated, "Family members, especially children, have less interaction with fathers which consequently brings many problems in their everyday social lives and interactions" (see for example, Khan, 2016, Farooq & Javed, 2009; Graham & Jordan, 2011; se also Khan, et al., 2010). Many women from low-income group stated, "Every penny of remittances reminds us the hardships, long absence, dedication and sacrifices of migrants for the welfare of the left behind families. Because they're physically and socially away from their children for long, even their own children sometimes do not recognize them (*apny bachy nhe pachanty unhy*). There are some examples in the community where migrants' children who were born after their fathers migration, hardly recognized them after their return from migration". For example, one migrant's wife narrated, "My husband migrated before the birth of our first child. When he came home after five years, our daughter did not recognize him". The long absence of parental care negatively influences the lives and development of

migrants' children (see for example Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Iqbal et al., 2014). The analysis demonstrates that migrants' children suffer both psychologically and emotionally due to long absence of their fathers from homes. Some other empirical examples in the union council show that migrants' children perform very poorly in education and they usually adopt habits which are considered bad in the local context such as drug addiction, violence, low grades in schools, and lavish spending¹³⁰.

Analysis of the above empirical data illustrates that absence of husbands and additional responsibilities affect the emotional well-being of wives. For example, wives feel lonely and face emotional and psychological challenges. However, at the same time male out-migration and remittances force women to take over new responsibilities which in the long run lead to transformations regarding gender relations. For example, in the absence of men, wives control finances and fulfill household and community responsibilities. Furthermore, the analysis also illustrates that migrants' spouses want their husbands to earn income for the families but they also feel their absence.

In the next part, I examine women's role and influence in remittances consumption priorities and uses in union council *Malakpura*.

5.3.2 Women as Active Agents in Deciding Remittances Priorities and Uses in Union Council *Malakpura*

The data findings show that priorities about utilization of remittances in union council *Malakpura* vary according to household structures and socio-economic conditions of the families. However, women's participation and involvement in consumption priorities and investments after male out migration are seen as a processes of social change and transformation. Thus, identification of priority areas and uses of remittances are important to understand the changing gender relations in the union council. Through the empirical analysis, I argue that women are active agents in this process and the changes and possibilities because of migration and remittances are making them more independent and empowered in decision-making, hence, transforming gender relations in the union council after male out migration. Generally, the literature on remittances utilization suggests that a high portion or amount of remittances to origin countries is usually spent on routine household consumption such as everyday household needs. These views drove many researchers to believe that remittances transfers to Asian countries are mainly used for household consumption (Eelens & Schampers,

¹³⁰ Lavish spending also considers a bad habit in the area.

1992). In Pakistan, labor migration to Gulf countries is common among low and middle-income groups (Amjad, et al., 2014). Therefore, remittances are primarily used for household needs. For example, Amjad, et al.,(2012) argue that majority of the families' first priority is to use remittances for basic needs such as food, shelter (excluding luxurious constructions in case of labor migrants), education, health, loan repayment, and investments (see also Arif, 2009; Lefebvre, 1990).

Similarly, Arif (2009) mentions some factors that are significantly important to determine the remittances consumption and investment patterns in Pakistan. For instance, the pre-migration socio-economic conditions of households (rich or poor households); the age of migrants; high migration costs in Pakistan which are mostly met through loans; and the durations of stay. Furthermore, the investment and consumption decisions are particularly determined by non-remittance income sources of the households in the origin area, for example, alternative income sources apart from remittances in the country of origin (Arif, 2009; see also Amjad & Arif, 2014).

As discussed before, labor migration from district Abbottabad is mainly subsistence based. Thus, large amounts of remittances consumption meet the basic household needs, but nevertheless, some variations in consumption patterns are found through empirical findings. For instance, the data show that mostly unskilled and less educated men migrate from low-income households, therefore, the amount of remittances is comparatively low, which is mainly spent on priority needs such as on food items and utility bills in the first place. Other necessities such as health, education, social obligations, and loan repayments come later on the priority list as stated by many low-income women in the group. For example, one low income woman stated, "The poor have needs, not priorities (*Gherebo 'n ki zarorayat hoti hain na kay tarjehat*)". The empirical data found some differences regarding remittances utilization priorities in union council *Malakpura*. For example, data findings reveal that households struggling to manage budgets hardly think about investing remittances such as in real estate and business. Likewise, middle income households, having alternative income sources (apart from remittances) in origin country, usually invest the surplus remittances in construction, real estate, business, and transport. Thus, the empirical data on consumption priorities in union council *Malakpura* mainly correspond with the remittances consumption pattern mentioned by Amjad, et al., 2012; Arif, 2009 and Lefebvre, 1990 in their studies in Pakistan.

Apart from the above stated factors regarding remittances priorities and uses, the empirical data found some additional factors such as who influences and decides the priorities and uses of

remittances under different socio-economic circumstances. According to majority of spouses from low-income groups in nuclear households, “First we try to meet basic household needs and later think about other priorities (*pehly zarorat pori karty hain, phir baqi cheezo ’n kay bary mai sochty hain*)”. About priorities and decisions regarding priorities one woman stated, “I decide about the priorities and needs such as who needs what and what needs spending, because my husband knows nothing about household matters owing to his long absence from home. Even, in his presence (when the migrant is on vacation) I decide and purchase things”. As stated before, migrants’ long absence from homes creates a vacant space taken over by their wives, hence, wives usually decide about remittances use and priorities as analyzed in the above narration. Another woman from middle-income group (nuclear family) stated, “I cannot ask my husband what to do with the money all the time. I decide how and where to use the money, for example, expenditures regarding children’s education, health, and other needs. Similarly, I pay the utility bills and payments to internet operator, milkman, and grocery stores. I do all these myself” (Rafia Bibi No.8B UC, *Malakpura*). This narration shows that women are mostly independent in using and managing remittances whether they belong to low or middle-income groups. Likewise, Nusrat Bibi, another woman from the group, narrated,

“I live with my three children as my husband has been working in Abu Dhabi for the last twelve years. In the beginning, I used to ask my husband about household matters and expenses and sometimes ask relatives for help. However, with the passage of time, I took on the responsibilities and now perform all the household tasks myself such as buying food and grocery items and paying utility bills. I do not ask anyone for help because now I can easily handle these tasks. However, for some important decisions such as loan repayment, children marriages, and business investments, I consult my husband because it is good to mutually discuss such things. However, the consultation does not mean that I have no role in these decisions” (Nusrat Bibi No.9A UC, *Malakpura*).

Nusrat’s narration illustrates that she is quite independent in deciding about household consumption and priorities in the absence of her husband. Analysis of her statement also reveals that social change and transformation is gradually happening after male out migration which is obvious from the fact that now she can decide expenditure priorities and manage expenses. Part of her statement such as, “I do not ask anyone for help” illustrates the transformation or empowerment of women due to migration and remittances because earlier she used to consult

her husband and ask relatives for help. The second part of the statement shows that for some major decisions such as children's marriages, loan repayment, and business investments, she consults and discusses with her husband because these matters need mutual discussion and additional funds. However, this does not mean that she is totally detached from these decisions because the phrase 'consultation' that she used in her narration means that she can and is influencing these decisions. For example, sharing her experiences during the interview, she further stated, "Despite my husband's wish and his family's pressure who wanted my daughter's engagement in their relative (husband's family side), I influenced the decision and got her engaged in my relatives (her parental family side)". This is significant in the local context because going against family pressures and influencing husband's decisions display active and influencing roles of wives hence illustrating the ongoing social transformations because of migration. Thus, the empirical analysis mainly corresponds with Gulati's (1987) argumentations that women are independent to decide remittances management for both current consumption¹³¹ and larger outside savings (Gulati, 1987). In response to my question regarding women's decisions about setting priorities of remittances utilization in nuclear households, one woman responded,

"Yes, women are more independent and empowered regarding remittances management in nuclear families but this does not mean that in extended families they are not taking part in the remittances management. For example, one of my friends (Jaweria Bibi) is living in extended family; yet, she is quite independent in using remittances over herself and children needs. Her husband sends her money separately that she only consumes on her needs. Like us (women in nuclear families) she also makes suggestions and influences her in laws regarding where and what to do with remittances" (female respondent UC, *Malakpura*).

Likewise, another woman stated, "Migration of husbands has some impact on wives whether they are in nuclear or in extended families because after all, the husbands send money and we have the first right over their income". These narrations show that women, whether in nuclear or extended families, are equally deciding remittances priorities (see chapter no. 6 for remittances priorities in extended families).

¹³¹ Current consumptions includes expenditure on food items, education, and health (Awan et al., 2013).

Generally, women in union council *Malakpura* hold important positions in nuclear households because they take important decisions and manage household expenditures. Similarly, Sultana's narration is important to explain the scenario of remittances management. She states:

“My husband migrated to Dubai some 10 years ago. He visits home after every three years just for few months. Major part of his life has passed in migration. Due to his long detachment from home and household related affairs, he hardly takes any interest in routine household needs. He is abroad, and I am here, thus, I better understand what we need and what we do not. Furthermore, my husband always says that his duty is to send money, the rest I know better (*mera kaam hai bhejna, baqi tum jano*). Thus, I manage the everyday household expenses and if by any chance I ask my husband, he recklessly replies, ‘it’s your headache to handle the household matters’” (Sultana Bibi No.9B UC, *Malakpura*).

Analysis of Sultana's narration illustrates that remittances and husbands' prolonged absence from households give spouses the opportunity to manage most of the household's decisions independently which consequently make women more independent and empowered in household's matters. Additionally, the analysis also suggests that time plays an important role in this context because husbands' prolonged absence from homes makes women household heads. Sultana's statement about her husband, ‘My duty is to send money, the rest you know better’, has two important analytical interpretations. Firstly, it allows her to act freely and decide about household matters and secondly, after migration, her husband's behavior is significantly changed, allowing her to take household responsibilities. This means that social remittances in the form of changing behaviors is also happening as a result of migration. Thus, it gives women opportunities to negotiate gender relations in the union council.

The empirical findings illustrate that many migrants' wives see the decision powers regarding remittances management and the additional responsibilities as possibilities of changing local gender relations. For example, one woman narrated, “Before migration, I was not allowed to go outside in the community and interact with strangers whether they were shopkeepers, male teachers, and doctors. However, now after migration when responsibilities came on me, I decided about everything including my children's education, investments and other household needs. This is only possible because of migration and the responsibilities that fell on me”. Another respondent during interview stated,

“Before migration, I asked my husband many times to get me admission in a driving school but he denied and usually replied that there is no need to learn driving when he was here because he looked after all the outside responsibilities. After his migration, I took admission in the driving school and learnt to drive. Now, I drive a car to pick and drop my children from school, and when I need go to market and doctors. Initially, after my husband’s migration, I used to rent a taxi for outside mobility” (Anam Bibi No.10A UC, *Malakpura*).

Analysis of these narrations shows that the decision making powers about remittances expenditures and the responsibilities migrants’ wives face as a result of male out-migration and remittances are taken by women as possibilities of changing gender relations in the long run in the union council. As already mentioned, women are actively participating and managing remittances and household tasks after male out migration. The next section examines the changing behaviors regarding education and healthcare, and women’s role in managing these tasks after migration in the union council.

5.3.3 Significance of Women Involvement in Education and Healthcare Management after Male-out Migration

This section examines women’s remittances management for education and healthcare of family members. Likewise, in this part, I also analyze the changing behaviors and perceptions of people towards education and healthcare practices, and patterns in the union council after the migration.

Regarding woman’s role in remittances management for education, two questions are significantly important to consider. Firstly, who takes decisions regarding children’s education such as selection of schools (for both boys and girls)¹³², management of education relating expenditures, and woman’s role in it? Secondly, do migration and remittances increase equal access of both boys and girls to education in the union council? And thirdly, are community behaviors and perceptions are changing towards education of both boys and girls? These

¹³² Generally, there is a dual education system in Pakistan, public and private. The public institutions are government run and have no tuition fee whereas the private education system have high tuition fees and additional expenses. Further, bifurcation of education system is based on gender such as separate institutes for male (boys). For example, separate infrastructure (schools, colleges and universities) for male (boys) and vice versa. However, there is also a combine education (co-education) for both boys and girls where they study together, and this combine study system is called the co-education system.

questions are analyzed against the available empirical data. Moreover, migrants' spouses' role in the entire process of education and healthcare management is also examined.

The empirical data demonstrate that education in union council *Malakpura* comes under the basic household need category. Expenditures on education are perceived as productive investments for the future. The local people believe that 'education is a must for a successful future,' (*Achy mustaqbil k lye taleem zarori ha*), nevertheless, the concept varies depending on the prevailing local gender norms, cultural and religious orientations, and the socio-economic conditions of different groups in the union council. The empirical findings suggest that generally, education is a collective household venture in the area. For instance, parents, children (young), and sometimes relatives also take part in the consultation processes regarding education such as decisions relating to admissions and selecting schools and colleges for boys and girls. Examples from the empirical data show that usually parents decide about the choice of school or education system (private, public, or religious education) for children according to their socio-economic conditions. For example, one migrants' wife narrated, "Before migration it was my husband who took education related decisions. After his migration, I usually discuss education related matters with him on phone and later we mutually come to a decision about education of our children. As he is not around, I follow the process of admission and other educational needs".

In union council *Malakpura*, the government has provided education facilities (up to grade ten according to Pakistani education system) for both genders. Moreover, private schools are also present in the area (see for example chapter no.2 for details). The empirical data reveals a common pattern of education based on the socio-economic classification of households largely prevailing in the area. For example, one woman respondent stated, "Children from low-income households mostly study in public (government owned) institutions. Middle-class families prefer private education; however, the economically well-off people send their children to the so-called well-reputed private education institutions in big cities with very high tuition fees". Apart from the prevalent modern or as locally called the formal education system, some children especially from low-income households also seek religious education which is mainly informal¹³³ and free of cost. For instance, it also takes place in a local mosque or *madrasa*¹³⁴

¹³³ Two terms *Dunyavi or wordly* for modern education and *Deni* for religious education are commonly use in Pakistan. The part time informal (religious) education consists of basic learning such as learning and reading of the holy book (Quran) and Arabic language for performing basis religious rituals (empirical data).

¹³⁴ Madrasa means seminary. Teaching in madrasa, in the tenth and eleventh centuries primarily devoted to the teaching of law, Islamic sciences and philosophy. The current version of Madrasa most common in Pakistan run

and has no formal degree¹³⁵. In the community mosques, the *molvi* or the religiously learned person gives basic religious education to the community children. The *madrassa* is a bigger and more formal religious institution where children from different parts of the region and country receive Islamic learning of Quran, *hadeeth*¹³⁶ and *fiqa*¹³⁷.

The empirical data shows that in the absence of migrants, women are responsible for most of the educational management tasks such as fee payment, stationery arrangement, school uniforms, and attending teacher-parents meetings. Many empirical examples (from both low and middle-income groups) reveal that along with routine education tasks of children, migrants' wives also perform additional responsibilities. For example, one woman during an interview responded, "I pick and drop children to school and attend teacher-parent meetings when called by the principal of the school. Similarly, I also take decisions relating to children's admissions and shifting of children from one school to another". Another woman during an interview stated, "Previously, my children were receiving religious education. After my husband's migration, I admitted my children in a local private school because through modern education they can compete in the market and can get jobs". This narration shows that migration and remittances are changing educational priorities of people. The increase in family income through migration and remittances has largely changed educational priorities of people. For example, the above narration illustrates that after her husband's migration, their economic condition improved, and she transferred her children from religious to modern (formal) education. Moreover, this also shows the changing social circumstances and educational priorities in the origin societies because migration and transnational experiences allow parents to improve education of children. Likewise, another woman from the group said, "We (including her husband) understand the importance of education that's why my husband always asks about children's progress at school". This statement shows that both the migrant and his wife are concerned about their children's education and are paying more attention to it after migration. Moreover, migration and remittances are considerably changing local perceptions and behaviors regarding education. Some women from the group stated that education related matters are mainly decided by wives after male out migration; however, they also ask children (if they are old enough) about their choice of schools and colleges. In some cases, wives, having

on charity funds where children receive Islamic learning (mostly Quran, *Hadeeth* and *Fiqa*) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/madrasah>.

¹³⁵ Some *madrasas* also give formal degree of some specialized fields of religious education such as *Fiqa* (Muslim Jurisprudence). However, in union council *Malakpura* it is informal i.e., without degree awarding.

¹³⁶ Sayings of the prophet of Islam Mohammad (SAW).

¹³⁷ Islamic jurisprudence

no or less education, seek help of relatives and community people regarding selection of good schools and colleges. Additionally, the data findings state that women are attending parent-teachers meetings at schools which is significant for them. For example, one woman during an interview stated, “I attend the parent-teachers meetings at schools which were previously attended by my husband because usually men go for such outside interactions. After migration, I have been responsible for all education related matters which is significant for women especially in the context of women’s interactions. This also gives me a sense of being an independent woman who is doing men’s job”. This means that patterns of women interactions and working are also changing in the union council such as women are interacting with different people and spaces.

Regarding women’s involvement in decisions making about children’s education especially in nuclear households, many women from the group stated that after migration they are managing children education and taking decisions. For example, one woman from the group narrated,

“I cannot sit idle and wait for my husband and other relatives to come or give me suggestions about children’s education. Soon after my husband’s migration, I took on all the responsibilities including children’s education. As I live with my children in a nuclear family, I take independent decisions about family members. For example, the first thing I did after my husband’s migration was to shift children to another school. Currently, I get up early in the morning, drop children to school and pick them after the school time. I have arranged a private tutor for my children who comes home in the evening. I arrange everything for my children which was previously done by my husband” (female respondent UC, *Malakpura*).

Another woman stated,

“For women especially in nuclear families, men’s migration is an opportunity for them to explore men’s world. There are some challenges in the form of criticism from same ethnic group members (relatives and neighbors), and other challenges because of women’s young age, religious norms of *purdah* and additional responsibilities. Nevertheless, because of my husband’s migration and despite these challenges, I am quite independent in decision-making whether these are about household management or children’s education. When my husband migrated, I was young. Initially, my in-laws used to manage

everything but after some years when my children grew up, I got separated from my in-laws. Now, I decide about household affairs and education of both boys and girls” (female respondent UC, *Malakpura*).

Likewise, another woman narrated, “Before migration, our income was not enough to afford education of all children. Therefore, my daughters were not admitted in schools; however, after migration, I also admitted them. Initially, I faced criticism from my in-laws that I am wasting money over girls’ education but I was determined and did not pay attention to their criticisms. Now, my children are studying and they are proceeding well in education”. Another woman respondent stated, “In nuclear households, mainly wives decide and manage everything whether about education or other household affairs”. Analysis of these narrations illustrates that despite some challenges, migrants’ wives in nuclear households are largely involved in education decisions and management after migration of husbands. Thus, gender relations are considerably changing as shown in the above narrations.

In order to analyze the second question about the remittances and gender access to education, it is pertinent to understand the general patterns of education system in the area. Despite persisting efforts of the government of Pakistan, progress in education is still at too slow (I-SAPS, 2015). According to a report of the Institute of Social and Policy Sciences Islamabad (2015), “Unfortunately, the overall literacy rate of Pakistan is unsatisfactory, and especially women’s literacy ratio is considerably low in comparison to that of males in Pakistan. As far as district Abbottabad is concerned, it stands high in literacy ratio in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan; nevertheless, gender inequality is still largely prevalent in the literacy ratios” (I-SAPS, 2015, p. 18; see also for example chapter no.2). The district’s education officials during a group discussion said, “A few decades ago, Abbottabad had very low education ratio for the reasons of unavailability of sufficient education infrastructure, low population density and gender disparity in education. Thus, the district’s older generation and particularly women have largely remained uneducated” (I-SAPS, 2015, p.28)

Currently, the district’s education ratio has comparatively improved, but gender disparity still exists in education system. The empirical data shows that in union council *Malakpura*, education in general and particularly female education is significantly determined by the prevailing socio-economic and religious factors. Moreover, the local perceptions of gender division are equally important for giving females proper access to education. Generally, male education is considered a future investment for the family whereas females are commonly

perceived as “*Paraya Dhan*” or others’ wealth¹³⁸. Majority men in informal discussions during the field research stated, “What is the use of girls education? After all (after marriage), they will take on household responsibilities (*larkio ko par k kya krna ha. Akher ma ghar he sambalna ha*)”. Thus, boys have more opportunities to get higher education whereas girls mostly quit education after a certain even in some well-off families in the union council. For instance, the empirical data shows that girls mainly get educated up to high school or until under graduation¹³⁹. These gendered behaviors toward female education consequently influence gender priorities and access to education, which eventually affect women’s status and academic progress.

The above stated patterns and behaviors regarding education in the union council cannot be generalized because the empirical data illustrate cases of high female education in some households from both low and middle-income groups in the union council. For example, improvements in girls’ education ratios are seen after migration of household members. Similarly, many women from both middle and low-income groups stated, “Remittances are important for providing good education to children (both boys and girls), because without financial resources we would not be able to fund it”. This shows that remittances are important for the education of both boys and girls because as discussed before, education is an expensive endeavor and the remittances help families to continue their children’s education. Likewise, social remittances or changing behaviors after migration are also very important for giving equal access to boys and girls education. For example, one woman narrated, “Yes, finances are essential for education but people’s perception is equally important which is significantly changing after migration”. Likewise, another woman stated, “In the past, female education was neglected because of gender differences and religious norms, and even my husband was against female education; however, after migration, his perception about education has changed and now he wants his children to get educated whether they are male or female”.

The empirical data states that remittances are important for education in union council *Malakpura*. Many women from middle-income group stated that they are giving equal education to their children (to both male and female) because of remittances; otherwise, it would not be possible to continue their children’s education. Similarly, women from low-income group stated that education is very expensive these days and it is difficult to give good education to children without proper economic resources. The empirical data show that

¹³⁸ Women particularly daughters are perceived as “Others wealth” means, that after marriage they will take everything (all investment on them) with them to their husband’s homes.

¹³⁹ 14 years education

migration and remittances are changing local perceptions regarding education; for example, now people give equal education opportunities to both boys and girls. One woman from the group stated, “Before remittances, we usually made girls drop out of school after attaining some education (until grade 5th, 8th and grade 10) because of financial restraints and religious and cultural norms. However, after migration, local circumstances are changing and people are paying more attention to education of both genders”. Analysis of the narration shows that the ongoing transformations because of migration and economic and social remittances are changing local perceptions regarding education and especially girl’s education. Many women during the interviews confirmed that in the current era, whether boys or girls, need education to cope with the socio-economic challenges. Therefore, education in general and female education in particular is important to maintain the social equilibrium. One female respondent from middle-income group narrated, “Education especially of girls improved after remittances. Now I can bear the cost of education which was previously difficult to meet.” Another woman stated during the interview, “Credit of children’s education goes to wives because they never give up despite many challenges (cultural & religious) and continue their efforts of getting their children education. Initially, I had many responsibilities of households because my children were young and dependent on me. I faced criticism from community but with the passage of time, local circumstances have largely changed. Now, my son is in university and will soon graduate, and my daughters are in college”. Likewise, another woman during the interview stated,

“In the past (before migration from area) people were culturally and religiously more conservative. Education and especially female education was largely discouraged because of cultural and religious restrictions. For example, I still remember my neighbor’s daughter took admission in college, everyone was gossiping, and the local *masjid Imam* (religious leader of community) went to her father to withdraw her daughter from college. However, now after migration people’s perception has changed regarding education, and they understand the importance of education” (Hajra Bibi No.10B UC, *Malakpura*)

The summary of above analysis shows that generally boy’s education was the first priority of people in the union council; however, now girls are also getting educated. The analysis illustrates that migration has significantly changed local behaviors and perceptions about education, and helped people to overcome the financial constraints regarding the same. Moreover, the analysis also shows that despite challenges like gender differences, religious

norms of *pardah*, responsibilities and criticisms from relatives and community people, male out migration gives women opportunities to take independent decisions and make outside interactions which consequently change local gender relations.

Remittances are also significantly important for healthcare needs of people in the area. This part of analysis examines women's role in remittances management regarding healthcare provision and decisions after male out migration. The main question this section includes is, "Are remittances making women independent enough in managing healthcare, and making decisions regarding healthcare?" The empirical data from the union council reveals that women's remittances management regarding healthcare depends on the availability of funds, nature of illness, availability of healthcare facility and the local gender norms of mobility. To understand the nature of illness and the healthcare system in union council *Malakpura*, it is important to understand the local perception of illness and the healthcare system in the area.

Although there are differences in local perceptions of illness, but the majority people in the union council agree on three levels of illness and its severity. Each level of illness is treated according to its nature of severity. For instance, the empirical data show that less severe illnesses include flu, headache, normal fever, and stomach pain. The second level of illness includes some chronic diseases and fevers such as diabetics, blood pressure, and fevers such as malaria and typhoid. The third level of illness includes heart attack, cancer, and major chronic diseases. According to many female respondents, the first stage diseases such as flu, headache, normal fever, and stomach pain are less severe and are mainly treated at home through traditional home remedies¹⁴⁰. However, the second and third stage illnesses are considered severe and referred to local health facilities and doctors.

The local healthcare system¹⁴¹ is based on three hierarchical tiers such as primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare. Primary healthcare includes basic health units (BHUs), rural health centers (RHCs), mother and child health services (MCH) and lady health workers (LHWs). Primary healthcare is available at community or union council level. Secondary healthcare consists of Tehsil¹⁴² headquarter hospitals and district headquarter hospitals. These facilities are located at tehsil and district levels. The tertiary health facilities are more comprehensive

¹⁴⁰ The empirical data show that people in the union council mostly keep some medicine at home for minor illness. Some people also use natural herbs and traditional and spiritual practices for treating different illnesses (empirical data)

¹⁴¹ This is the structure of public healthcare system in the area. Apart from this, there are also many private health facilities in the area

¹⁴² Administrative sub-unit of district.

and specialized (Hassan et al., 2017). These facilities are located at the district and provincial levels (see chapter no. 2).

The empirical findings of study show that generally, women are independent to manage some health decisions and expenditures. Mostly, minor illnesses are treated with traditional home remedies or at the local basic health units (BHU). Primary healthcare expenditures and decisions are part of routine everyday life in the area. Therefore, women mostly take independent decisions regarding primary health care. As stated already, these healthcare facilities are locally available, and women can go alone; however, for support and company, they usually take someone with them to the health facility as revealed by empirical data. For instance, many women from low-income groups stated that they mostly manage minor health complications at home. Either they treat them with home remedies such as traditional herbs and practices, or by going to the local doctor. Another woman from the group stated, “Minor illness is treated locally and does not need special permission from men because these are routine matters, and we cannot ask our husbands every time. I saw many women from non-migrant households waiting for their husbands to get free from work and go with them to doctors but migrants’ wives mainly handle these matters on their own”. Likewise, another woman narrated, “I do not need anyone’s permission regarding illness because I have finances and I am independent, and know that my husband cannot come from abroad to help me. Thus, I do whatever is necessary for treatment”. These statements confirm that migrants’ wives being the household heads in the absence of men are independent in handling primary level healthcare matters. Moreover, the analysis shows that male out migration increased women mobility and interaction regarding healthcare which are consequently changing gender relations. For example, women are managing healthcare which was previously men’s responsibility.

Migrants’ wives usually discuss and communicate secondary and tertiary health problems, and related expenditures with husbands because these involve important decisions regarding the selection of hospitals, management of finances and access to health facilities. The empirical findings illustrate that many women from both groups communicate and consult serious health issues with their husbands because these involve frequent and long-distance mobility (sometimes to other cities), interactions with people and places, and require additional finances. During an interview, one woman stated, “Initially, after my husband’s migration, I usually asked someone from the relatives and neighbors to come and help me in dealing with health emergencies. In such situations, I needed someone’s help because I was not familiar with the system as before migration my husband was managing the healthcare of family members.

However, with the passage of time, I started to manage the family's healthcare" (Nazima Bibi No.11B UC, *Malakpura*). This narration shows that initially women were not familiar with the healthcare system and dealings with men such as healthcare staff and other individuals outside the community. However, after migration, women largely took over these responsibilities and are currently managing the healthcare of family members. Interestingly, it is important to mention here that previously migrants' wives have been largely detached from the secondary and tertiary healthcare management, thus, dealing with healthcare matters were new experiences for women. For example, one woman stated, "Initially after the migration of my husband, whenever I had some health emergency, my husband's first question was about who will go with me to the hospital." This shows that previously, after the migration of husbands, women needed support of husbands and help of relatives in managing healthcare. For example, women needed financial and moral support from husbands, and social support from relatives such as the relatives usually helped in arranging transportation and medicine¹⁴³, and in dealing with hospital staff. However, later these responsibilities have been taken over by migrants' wives, and currently they are quite familiar with the healthcare system because of outside mobility and interactions. For example, one woman during an interview said, "I personally handle things after my husband's migration. Of course, I faced many challenges in the beginning because these were new experiences to me; however, later I got used to it and now manage everything myself". The analysis illustrates that many women after male out migration experienced outside interactions. Initially, it was difficult for them to understand healthcare management and its process; therefore, they needed help of family members under such circumstances. For example, another woman during an interview said, "Initially, it took some time to understand the process because being a woman I had little outside exposure and experiences before the migration. Once I understood the process and the healthcare system, I became independent in healthcare matters". Likewise, another woman narrated, "The mobility and interactions regarding healthcare management after migration largely changed my previous position from 'a dependent woman to an independent woman' because now I have the freedom of independent decisions, and I know how to interact and deal with others".

Analysis of the above empirical data (regarding migration, remittances, and healthcare) states that though there were some challenges for women initially, male out migration created some possibilities for migrants' wives. For example, as mentioned above, the migrants' wives gained

¹⁴³ Medicine mainly buy from private pharmaceutical stores located in the marketplace, which requires mobility and public dealing. According to the public healthcare system, some mandatory medicines are free of cost in public hospitals. However, major portion of medicines people get from private pharmacies. The private medicine people buy themselves and does not cover by public or private insurance companies.

significant freedom of outside interaction and participation in healthcare matters. Moreover, particularly relating to healthcare decisions and management, the analysis finds that migrants' wives are now quite active and independent in healthcare management. The freedom of outside interactions and participation in healthcare matters after male migration increased women's outside experiences and interactions thus gradually changing the local gender relations as shown above.

As mentioned already, male out migration significantly increased women's interactions and experiences; consequently, women started to enter into different fields of everyday life such as women started independent economic activities. In the next section, I discussed women networks and committees that they started after husbands' migration for income generation and social contributions.

5.4 Women's Networks and Economic Committees

The empirical findings show that women take part in different social networking situations and make contributions such as gift exchanges on marriages and birth, charity and community development fund. Women also invest surplus remittances in women economic committees in the union council. As the empirical data has shown, women face some challenges such as gender and religious norms which restrict their participation in some social events. Nevertheless, the empirical analysis of nuclear families of migrants illustrates that despite some challenges, male migration and remittances are changing local gender relations. For example, migration of husbands gives women opportunities of independent economic activities which empower them economically. Likewise, as a result of economic empowerment and migration, women started to represent their husbands and households on different social occasions, and contribute to the community.

In the union council, women's networks are mainly formed for two major purposes such as for community contributions and for women's economic committees. Likewise, the empirical data found two commonly prevalent expenditure and investment patterns among women from migrants' households in the union council. Firstly, remittances expenditures on social obligations such as participation in different social events like marriage, death and birth rituals, and contribution to community welfare and development including the construction of sanitation lines, streets, and community roads. The data findings suggest that all community members belonging to migrant and non-migrant households participate in social events and contribute to community welfare and development; however, these are significant especially

for migrants' families because mainly women from migrant families take part in these events. Secondly, women's investments in 'women's economic committees' I'd also significant. Based on the above discussion, I argue that male out migration and remittances are increasing women's participation in women's economic committees and social contributions. In the current section, I add women's perspectives on women's committees and social contributions which are then empirically analyzed.

Lefebvre (1990) in his study in Pakistan states, "Households cannot break the chain of reciprocal exchange without serious social consequences. All in all, the establishment of a ceremonial fund has the household priority. To save money for financing social and religious rituals is a must in a society where one permanently must reaffirm and strengthen one's cultural identity through the accumulation of honor and prestige" (Lefebvre, 1990: 13). Like Lefebvre's (1990) explanation, ceremonial funds are significant in the local context for maintaining and strengthening socio-ethnic relations and networks. The empirical data shows that ceremonial funds are institutionalized in the community through a system of 'mutual reciprocal exchange' that operates at both micro (household-to-household level) and macro levels (extended *biradhri* level). For example, as already mentioned, there are different ceremonial funds in the area such as ceremonial funds for marriage, death, and birth rituals. In the current section, I discuss the important ceremonial funds such as ceremonial funds for marriage and death rituals because some ceremonial events relating to birth rituals are currently nonexistent or seldom practiced in the community.

In the local context, ceremonial funds for mutual or reciprocal exchanges at marriages are called *Nendra*¹⁴⁴. *Nendra* is still functional and widely practiced in both urban and rural areas of Abbottabad. *Nendra* mostly consists of cash money as an exchange (contribution) during marriage ceremonies. For instance, within the same *biradhri*, individuals from the same ethnic group give money to the wedding family. The groom's family keeps record of people and households who participate and contribute to the event and in return, they also contribute (money) in marriage ceremonies of these households. The empirical examples show that the *Nendra* amount varies; for instance, contributions from immediate relatives and close friends are always higher than individuals from extended ethnic groups. In the absence of migrants, the left behind spouses contribute on behalf of their husbands and represent their households. For

¹⁴⁴ The data findings show that *Nendra* is somewhat different from *vartan bhanji* mentioned by Zakiya Eglar (1960) in her ethnographic study in Punjab province in central Pakistan. *Vartan bhanji* has exchanges of both gifts and services whereas *Nendra* mostly include cash money on the occasion of marriage in the close and extended relatives

example, before migration, mainly men (migrants) participate and give *Nendra* money. The data findings reveal that after male migration, women give the contribution money and personally participate in the events. For example, one woman from the middle-income group stated, “It’s a cultural obligation to take part (physically and materially) in the community events. Before migration, my husband was participating in them and currently, I am taking part in these events to represent my family”. This narration shows that in order to maintain group relations and to strengthen group membership, participation in social events becomes an obligation for group members because these are close ethnic group communities in which contributions and networking connect members to the larger group. The narration further illustrates that after migration, wives are representing husbands by participating in these ceremonial events. The empirical data found that in migrants’ households, women being the remittances managers after migration always save some extra money for such events. Regarding women’s networking especially in nuclear households, one woman from the group narrated, “Social networking is very important especially for women in nuclear families because they help in times of emergency. For example, during the 2005 earthquake, my husband was not around. The community people helped us a lot by providing food and other necessities”. Another woman from the group stated, “Local women networks are very important and helpful in times of need. Last month, I became bedridden because of illness, and the community women especially my friends used to visit me every day, cooked meal for my children and washed clothes”. Analysis of these narrations shows that social networking is quite significant in the community because apart from participation and household representation these also help in times of emergency.

The ceremonial funds also cover some religious rituals such as death ceremonies. The empirical data found that in rural areas in general and in urban areas in particular, participation in social events like marriage and death rituals is paramount for group unity because these uphold, unite, and connect households and people together. Therefore, they regularly participate in important social events. There are ethnic and community-based management systems called committees for managing some social events in the union council, for example, committees for community welfare and development¹⁴⁵ and for managing social events. The committees usually select members¹⁴⁶ from the community with mutual consultation who are then responsible to represent

¹⁴⁵ The community development committees for example include committees for the provision of drinking water and sewerage problems. Such committees put before the concerned public authorities, the community issues and try to find mutual solution to the problems (primary data).

¹⁴⁶ The committee has different positions such as president, vice president, general secretary, and finance secretary. The community people selects the committee members (male members only). However, the socio-economic and

the entire community or ethnic group. Each community (*muhala* or *biradhri*) has their own committees in the union council.

The committee responsible for the management of social events such as for managing death rituals, extends financial help to the bereaved family especially when they are poor, give them meals (for almost first three days), and bear other relevant expenses. Households included in the committees contribute a specific amount of money on monthly basis, which is then used for the above-mentioned purposes.

The empirical data reveals that there are committees of men and women; however, women's representation and participation in some committees is quite minimal. This is especially the case in committees for managing religious¹⁴⁷ events because of local cultural and religious norms due to which women cannot take part directly in some religious processions in public. However, women actively but indirectly participate by giving funds to these committees, and represent their husbands or households by visiting the bereaved family. During an interview, one woman said, "Before my husband's migration, I was completely detached from these events. After migration, somehow I take part in them by giving money to the committee, by visiting the family for condolences, and to represent our family in the absence of my husband". This shows that after male migration, the local circumstances are changing for women who are currently in one way or the other part of, and contribute to these committees because in the absence of their husbands, they are responsible for the management of religious funds. Similarly, another woman from the middle-income group stated, "Soon after receiving remittances, I set aside some money for social obligations such as for monthly contribution¹⁴⁸ to the committees. Personally, I cannot take part in some public events; however, I attend religious events and ceremonies that take place at homes. I am independent in the financial matters, and committee members come to me for monthly collections". Analysis of this narration reveals that the local cultural and religious norms are limiting women's participation in some religious processions. For example, women cannot directly take part in some ritual processions held in public as it is forbidden in local culture and in Islam. However, they take

political influence, age and active participation in community work also plays vital role in selection of committee members (primary data).

¹⁴⁷ In Islam, women are not allowed to participate in public religious rituals. For instance, attending funeral prayers and going to the graveyard along with men for burial. Nevertheless, after the funeral and burial they can visit the graveyard (primary data).

¹⁴⁸ There is no fix contribution amount. The contribution amount varies according to the household economic condition for example, some rich families donate more while others give less (field data).

part in the committees through economic contributions. Additionally, women can participate in rituals organized at homes.

The above discussion regarding women's participation in religious committees states that some local, cultural and religious norms restrict women's participation in religious committees and rituals; however, in comparison to women from non-migrant households, migrants' wives are more independent and involved in the process of committees, for example, in decisions regarding savings and managing money for the committees, and representing husband's family. The important point emerged from the empirical analysis is that despite some cultural and religious limitations, the remittances and male out migration give migrants' wives relatively more freedom. Thus women directly and indirectly become a part of the wider social process (committees and social events) that are considerably influencing and changing gender relations in the union council. For example, women are taking over men's roles and responsibilities by representing their families and participating in social events.

There are also women's committees and networks consisting only of women members such as women economic committees. Women economic committees are very common in the union council and are present almost in every *muhala* and locality within the union council. The economic committees are different in function and formation. For instance, these are highly gendered¹⁴⁹ and socio-ethnic such as only women are members of such committees and strictly based on same ethnic and income groups. For example, women from same ethnic and income groups form their own economic committees. In general, both men and women from migrant and non-migrant households can form economic committees. Nevertheless, as the data findings show, these committees are especially very common among migrants' wives because they have remittances money and decide about contribution to the committees. The savings from committees can be used for both personal and household expenses. However, the empirical data reveals that many women from both groups mainly use committee income for their personal needs such as buying shoes, clothes, cosmetic items, and jewelry.

Local women call these committees 'women committees'. The committees usually consist of a group of 8-12 likeminded women who have same socio-economic status. Group members mutually select the head of the committee. Committee members deposit a fixed amount (for example, PKR 1000 or more)¹⁵⁰ of money every month with the committee head. The collective

¹⁴⁹ Men have separate economic committees

¹⁵⁰ The amount for committees varies. Some committees deposit more while other less. Pakistani rupee (1000 is almost equal to USD 6 dollars at the time of calculations) (primary data).

amount of the committee rotates monthly among the group members; however, with mutual consensus, one can draw money from the committee in times of emergency.

Similar committees are called '*chitties*' mentioned by Gulati (1987) in her study about the Indian labor migrants in the Gulf countries. Gulati (1987) stated that men's prolonged absence considerably increases women's knowledge about a range of services, goods, and alternative saving methods. One most commonly used method is the formation of local '*chitties*', where women make small contributions of certain amount to a committee "which one of the members of a *chitty* (committee) would then bid for or take in rotation" (Gulati, 1987: 45). Generally, Gulati's argumentation corresponds with the empirical findings of the current study. For instance, women in union council *Malakpura* also contribute small portions from remittances money to the committees as an additional source of income. However, a narrower analysis of Gulati's (1987) argumentation presents a slightly different interpretation of the functions of committees. For instance, Gulati (1987) states that income from '*chitties*' is used for a wide range of goods, services, and investments, which do not completely correspond with my empirical data because my empirical findings suggest that income from 'women committees' is mainly for women's personal use, and sometimes for children and emergency household needs.

The empirical data shows that majority migrants' wives from both middle and low-income groups stated that contributions to the committee are minimal but their benefits are more because they consider it as their "own money" which they can spend freely on personal, and children's needs. For example, the empirical data illustrates that women mainly use savings from committees on children and personal expenses such as clothes, jewelry, and social networking (gifts and loans to community women). Likewise, they also use some money to buy household items, however, this is optional because as stated already, this is "women's own money".

During interviews, majority of the women from both groups (middle and low-income) stated, "Committees are a suitable source of additional income for women because we cannot freely participate in business activities such as real estate, transport business and large-scale investments as these are time demanding, and are considered inappropriate for women because of local cultural and gender norms". This means that in the union council, business activities mentioned above are mainly associated with men because these require full-time duty and large-scale public interactions. Under such circumstances, women committees are suitable sources of

income, social networking and interactions for women because these are time saving and free from criticism.

The empirical findings, however, show that apart from committees, women are also running small businesses. For example, women talked about businesses such as selling ladies garments from homes, opening small grocery shops, and sewing women's clothes. Women are doing these activities along with other household responsibilities. For example, one woman from the group stated, "After my husband's migration, I opened a small grocery shop at home. Mostly, the community women visit the shop and buy everyday household things. I started this shop with savings from women economic committees". Another woman during an interview said, "With the saving from remittances and women economic committee, I bought a sewing machine and started sewing clothes for community women". Likewise, another female during the interview stated, "I am above fifty years of age now. I have not seen women being so active in social and economic affairs as they are now, and this is because of male migration that women took on men's responsibilities. After my husband's migration, I became a part of women economic committee and saved some money from it. Later, with this money, I bought embroidery material and started supply of embroidery items to the local market. Currently, despite some limitations, women are looking after both household and community matters". Analysis of these statements reveal that apart from contributions to women committees, women are conducting small businesses. For example, there are some limitations for women to take part in some businesses such as real estate and transportation. As mentioned already, male out migration and remittances are creating possibilities of small-scale businesses and interactions for women despite some social pressures.

The analysis of women economic committees and business activities discussed above shows that women's participation in large-scale income generation activities are generally discouraged in the local context. For example, businesses like real estate and transportation demand full time duty and extensive mobility and interactions which is difficult for women to manage because of household responsibilities. However, women can participate in investments and income generation activities on a small level from their homes. The analysis in this section corresponds with Haas and Rooij's (2010) argumentation that women in nuclear households have comparatively more control on their husband's income. They are usually independent in routine expenditures and small investments (Haas & Rooij, 2010). The analysis states that although committees and businesses only include women and cover women specific activities within women's circles, these activities are increasing migrants' wives' presence outside homes, for

example, new possibilities and experiences of outside interactions such as dealing with men for buying grocery items, sewing material, and clothes for their home-based businesses which are consequently influencing and changing gender relation.

In this empirical chapter, I examined migrants' wives in nuclear households who, after male out migration have taken over men's responsibilities. The empirical analysis shows that despite various challenges discussed above, women have become more active and empowered in everyday household and community affairs. Furthermore, the analysis illustrates that women's mobility, everyday interactions and decision making have increased after migration which are significantly changing the local gender relations as shown above. In the next empirical chapter, I examine migrants' wives in union council *Nawansher* of district Abbottabad.

Chapter 6

ANALYZING GENDER RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION AND REMITTANCES IN UNION COUNCIL *NAWANSHER* DISTRICT ABBOTTABAD

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, gender relations are analyzed in the context of migration and remittances and the process initiated by migration and remittances (see chapter no. 5) in extended households in union council *Nawansher* in district Abbottabad of Pakistan. Through empirical analysis, two major areas of remittances process are examined: firstly, remittances receiving patterns and behaviors, and the possibilities and opportunities these processes are creating for migrants' wives; and secondly, remittances' management in extended households. Remittances process and management have been studied in relation to the categories emerged from the empirical data such as family status and honor, remittances' management, and decisions-making. Furthermore, these categories are analyzed in the context of local factors like extended household structures, and local gender and religious norms. The analysis of these categories helps in understanding the interfaces between migration and remittances, and the changing gender relations in the union council.

The empirical findings show that there is a gender and power hierarchy in the extended households in the union council. According to data findings, male members such as household heads of and other income-earning males are at the top of the hierarchy followed by senior women and migrants' spouses. Thus, senior women and migrants' wives, due to their age and relationship with migrants, have comparatively higher positions than other women in the household. As mentioned already, women in the union councils were mainly confined to homes and household duties before the migration of their husbands (see chapter no. 2 and 5). Before male out migration, women primarily performed household work like preparing and serving meals, cleaning, and looking after the children. They were mainly under men's surveillance (see for example Dannecker, 2002) while going outside homes, and were not allowed to attend or participate in socio-political and religious gatherings in public (see chapter no. 2). The situation was even stricter for women living in extended families of some groups because the senior male members had the important positions to make decisions before migration (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). However, as the empirical data has shown, after migration of men (husbands), women especially migrants' wives became socio-economically active even in

extended families. For example, their mobility and decision-making increased, and they started different income generation activities after migration (see section 6.3 & 6.4). The empirical findings related to changing gender relations in extended households largely negate or contradict the findings of Ganguly and Negi, 2010; Datta & Mishra, 2011 and Gartaula et al., 2012, who argue that in extended households, the migration of husbands has no significant change in the positions of wives because other men in the family take over the positions in the households after migration (Ganguly & Negi, 2010; see also Datta & Mishra, 2011; Gartaula et al., 2012).

As already discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter no. 5), despite different social constraints, migration and remittances, and the resulting process create possibilities and opportunities for women. In this chapter, I examine women's mobility, decision making and empowerment under different circumstances such as in extended families. In this chapter, I have chosen extended households of migrants for analysis for different reasons. Firstly, in district Abbottabad, there are two main household structures such as nuclear¹⁵¹ and extended households. Unlike nuclear households (see chapter no. 5), the circumstances are different for women while living in extended families of some status and religious conscious groups (Jadoon and Syed groups¹⁵²) where women are mainly under men's surveillance (see chapter no.4). Thirdly, majority of the migrants' wives are from low-income groups so circumstances are largely different for these women (see managing remittances section 6.3). And finally, the widely held argumentations in migration literature especially in the context of Global South regarding women's passive role in extended households after migration of husbands (Gartaula et al., 2012; Shattuck et al., 2019; Yabiku et al., 2010; Menjivar & Agadjanian, 2007; Ghimire et al., 2019) need to be analyzed. These argumentations are important especially when studying local gender relations in the context of dominant discourses of migration and development.

As stated already, in this chapter, I examine gender relations in extended households of Jadoon and Syed groups. The sample population consists of migrants' wives from two communities or *muhallahs*¹⁵³ such as *Muhammad Zai and Dhodehal muhallahs* of the union council. The participants are divided into two categories (A & B). Category (A) consists of women from middle low-income Jadoon and Syed groups, and category (B) comprises of women from low-income Syed and Jadoon groups (see chapter no.4).

¹⁵¹ Already discussed in empirical chapter no. 5

¹⁵² The Jadon are politically influential whereas the Sayed have religious significance in the area. Thus, both these groups are status-conscious for maintaining their political and religious position in the community.

¹⁵³ The *muhallahs* are smaller residential units within the union councils (see chapter no. 4).

In the next part, I examine the remittances receiving patterns and their influence on gender relations in union council *Nawansher*.

6.2 Analysing Remittances and Gender Relations in Extended Households in Union Council *Nawansher*

Generally, migration and development literature focuses on women migrants working and sending remittances back home. However, women being the recipients and managers of remittances in the origin countries especially in Pakistan are less focused in migration literature (see for example Arif, 2009). In the mainstream migration and development literature, two discourses can be commonly found on the above issue. Firstly, the discourses that largely believe in empowerment of women after migration of husbands include Hugo (2008), in his study of Indonesian migrants, argues that “the role of women has changed in East Flores as a result of the heavy migration to Sabah. This is not only a result of women themselves participating in migration but also of their changed roles due to the absence of a father, brother, or husband” (Hugo, 2008, p.01). Likewise, Graham (1997) explains that “traditionally women did not work the gardens which produce local food. However, the migration of men to Malaysia has resulted in them working in gardens and in gaining de facto control of the land of men away in Malaysia” (Graham, 1997 c.f. Hugo, 2008, p. 61). Nagla (2008) states that “the absence of husbands for months and years at a time created a new situation. Women got confident and got more decision-making power; they are now able to manage the inflow of income and manage their resources quite successfully. They even take big decisions like purchase of land which used to be beyond their imagination. The remittances from migration have provided them a sense of economic autonomy. Women have become equal partners in handling the financial matters and managing to operate these” (Nagla, 2008, p. 21). Rajkarnikar (2017) demonstrates that because of men’s migration, women gained considerable access to social and economic resources which have significantly increased their bargaining power (Rajkarnikar , 2017; Raghuram, 2008). In a study in Pakistan, Saleemi (2020) suggests, “Men’s migration and remittances affect women’s participation in household decisions. Women are more likely to participate in household’s expenditure decisions if they receive remittances. Women’s participation in household decisions appears to be instrumental in reducing inequality” (Saleemi, 2020, p. 168). Secondly, the discourse that focuses on male out-migration and its impacts on women empowerment mainly in the extended or in non-nuclear households, shows that “Women living in extended households have a higher level of restrictions than on women who live in nuclear families. Thus, the migration of men does not produce a significant level of

empowerment among the left behind women” (Maity et al., 2018, p. 466). Likewise, Ahlin & Dahlberg (2010), argue, “Remittances do not seem to empower women, at least not in any direct way. Neither does the absences of husbands give women increased influence over family decisions or a greater freedom to make choices on their own life situations, at least not in general” (Ahlin & Dahlberg, 2010, p. 23). These and many other argumentations have posed different reasons for women’s unchanged situation even after migration of husbands. For example, Yabiku et al., (2010) state that this is because of the residential patterns such as living in extended families where the co-residing in-laws hold significant household power even after migration. Maity et al., (2018), argue that male out-migration does not contribute to women’s empowerment especially in extended families. They demonstrate that “the most general factors which increase women’s mobility, decision-making power and relatively fewer social restrictions are age, education, marital duration, residential status and occupation” (Maity et al., 2018 p.01). Furthermore, Fakir & Abedin (2021) argue, “Women from higher income households may potentially face greater control from men than those from low-income households because they need finances to support families and, hence, do paid work” (Fakir & Abedin, 2021, p. 520; see also Menjivar & Agadjanian, 2007). Regarding remittances receiving behaviors in extended households, Haas and Rovij (2010) argue, “In extended families, remittances are rarely sent directly to the migrant’s wife, but to one of the men in the household such as the father-in-law or a brother-in-law” (Haas and Rovij, 2010, p. 53). Likewise, Lefebvre (1990) states, “Remittances are not sent to women (wives) but to the head of the household. They benefit less from them and have lesser control over them than other members” (Lefebvre, 1990, p. 83).

From the above discussion, several important points or argumentations emerged some of which correspond with my empirical data while others do not. For example, factors that correspond with my empirical data relate to remittances receiving patterns, family’s low incomes, women’s ages, marital durations and residential status (see Maity et al., 2018; Fakir & Abedin, 2021; Haas and Rovij, 2010). However, the empirical data which support the argumentations regarding women’s passive role in extended families after migration of husbands do not conform with my empirical data. For example, my empirical data illustrate that after male out migration, women in extended households become considerably independent in income generation activities, mobility, and in decision-making (see sections 6.3 & 6.4).

In the context of above discussion and perspectives on women’s empowerment and remittances receiving practices, in the following part, I argue on the basis of categories developed through empirical data that remittances’ receiving and management are creating possibilities for women

in the extended households of Jadoon and Syed groups, and thus changing local gender relations. In the next part, I examine the remittances receiving behaviors in the context of categories emerged through the empirical data such as family honor and status in the extended households and the possibilities for women.

6.2.1 Remittances, Family Honor and Status: Possibilities for Women in Jadoon and Syed Groups

As already discussed, Jadoon and Syed groups are the so-called status and religious conscious groups because of their political influence and religious affiliation (see chapter no. 4). The Jadoons are politically influential group whereas the Syeds are more religious. Men, especially heads of the household, hold dominant positions. In order to maintain their socio-political and religious status in the community, these groups are strict towards women hence leading to unequal gender relations (see chapter no. 4). The data findings state that mainly men from middle-income Jadoon and Syed groups are receiving remittances from labor migrants (sons, fathers, and brothers). However, as the empirical finding demonstrates, circumstances are changing in these groups for women after male out-migration. Regarding women's role in remittances receiving and management process in the extended households, Sabeen Bibi¹⁵⁴, a female respondent from a middle-income Jadoon ethnic group stated:

“Women can directly receive remittances if they are living in nuclear households. As far as extended households are concerned, mainly men being the household heads receive remittances. However, there is also some share of money for migrants’ wives which they receive indirectly from the heads of the family such as father-in-law or other male members of the household. For instance, my husband is working in Dubai and he is sending remittances to my father in-law who is the head of the family. He manages the household affairs and necessities. I also receive some money for my personal expenditures from my father in-law. Before migration, all the household matters and expenditures from grocery to clothes for women were my father in-law’s responsibility. Initially after my husband’s migration, I faced many criticisms and confrontations when I asked for separate money for my children and myself because it was challenging men’s authority, honor and family status in the local ethnic and community contexts. However, later, the situation changed with the passage of time when my children grew up. Currently, I have a separate share in

¹⁵⁴As mentioned already in chapter no. 5 pseudo names for respondents are used

the remittances through which I fulfill my and my children's needs. Despite some social constraints, I have the freedom of independent mobility and interactions. Being a migrant wife, I have an advantage over other women in the family that I receive separate money and manage my personal needs with it because other women are still largely dependent on their husbands or in-laws for many everyday necessities" (Sabeen Bibi, No. 1A UC, *Nawansher*).

Sabeen's narration explains that women are directly receiving and managing remittances in nuclear families and the situation is different in extended families where men are receiving and managing remittances because they are the household heads. The narration states that women are indirectly receiving remittances from men for their personal and children's needs. For example, Sabeen is receiving some money from her father in-law which is significant in the local context, and means that she is occupying an important position in the household in comparison to other women of her age who are largely dependent on men. The empirical analysis confirms that apart from migration, factors such as age and marital duration of migrants' wives are significantly important for determining their position in the families. Some of the above factors of age and marital duration of migrants' wives that my empirical data identified correspond with the findings of Maity et al., 2018 and Shattuck et al., 2019 who demonstrate that factors like age of women, their marital duration, and residential patterns put fewer social restrictions on women thus largely empowering them (Maity et al., 2018; see also Shattuck et al., 2019). The analysis shows that these factors are not only significant in the households but also in the wider community because elderly women have more respect and high social status. Likewise, Sabeen Bibi also holds an important position in the household because of her age and migration of husband. The narration further demonstrates that migrants' wives are using part of the remittances for personal needs which means that they are independent in using the money. During an interview, while asking about the role and position of Sabeen Bibi in the process of remittances receiving and management in the household, she replied, "In comparison to other women in the household, my in-laws take extra care of my children and me, and I am quite independent in making my own decisions and choices. Furthermore, receiving separate money and then consuming it according to one's own wishes especially for women in joint families is significant where women are largely under men's control". This indicates that Sabeen's husband's migration largely improved her position in the family, and the family members (in-laws), especially men, are treating her differently and with more care, respect, and importance in the household (see for example Siegmann, 2010). However, as the analysis reveals, this does not mean that women can freely make outside

interactions and directly receive remittances from individuals and money changer's offices. For example, regarding remittances receiving and outside interactions, Sabeen Bibi stated, "We are living in the same ethnic group where people are always trying to find some weak point of families and raise questions on family honor. My family has respect and a strong political background in the area, and women's free mobility and outside interactions can harm the family's reputation and honor". As mentioned already, remittances receiving is a public activity that needs outside interaction because of frequent mobility (see chapter no. 5). Therefore, family's status, honor, and political influence are largely attached with women's honor (see for example Siegmann, 2010 and Lefebvre, 1990). Women's mobility and public interactions can harm a family's social position in the community especially in the same ethnic groups where families are closely connected with one another. Thus, men usually discourage women's mobility and outside interactions. However, as the empirical analysis showed above, despite some limitations such as honor, and socio-political and family status, migration and remittances are creating some possibilities for migrants' spouses.

The empirical data found that previously the remittances processes such as sending and receiving remittances were significantly controlled by men in the middle-income extended households. For instance, men were mainly controlling both remittances sending and receiving because of local norms of gender mobility, family status and honor that were largely shaping the remittances sending and receiving behaviors in the union council. As mentioned already, men were controlling remittances but women, especially migrants' wives, are now significantly influencing the process by receiving separate money for personal expenditures. Regarding this, Shumila Bibi (migrant's wife) from a middle-income Jadoon group stated:

"My husband is working in Dubai and he sends remittances to his brother who also manages the household affairs. Since my childhood, I saw men's involvement in major household decisions. Likewise, men also control the financial matters. Regarding remittances, I have my separate share that I receive through my brother in-law. Before migration, the situation was very different because men had all the powers and decided the fate of other household members. For example, before migration, only boys were allowed to go to schools and colleges, and girls were mainly deprived of equal education opportunities. Likewise, women were mainly confined to homes and even I did not have any say in my personal and my children's matters. However, after migration, circumstances gradually changed. Now, everyone gets equal medical care and education. For example, like boys, girls are also getting education. This

change mainly came through migration and remittances, and my personal efforts when I demanded for separate money for my own and children's needs. I told my husband and brother in-law that I was over forty years of age then. How long would I have to ask for money, and what would be the use of such money and efforts (migration) if I was not free to use it? Despite many hurdles, I raised my voice against the traditional gender and family norms of honor and social status, and successfully achieved equal rights for boys, girls, and women. At present, I personally manage education and healthcare of my children; for example, I personally go with my children to their school and health facilities. I am also free to contribute in the social events of marriage, birth and gifts to friends and relatives. The migration and remittances brought transformation in women's mobility and decision-making because now I can make independent decisions and move independently" (Shumila Bibi, No. 2A UC, *Nawansher*).

Shumila Bibi's narration presents a classical example of male dominance in the pre-migration Jadoon ethnic group. However, after migration, women, especially migrant wives, are influencing household matters as shown in the above narration. The empirical analysis illustrates that family status and honor are very important in the local socio-ethnic and political contexts because they earn respect and socio-political support for families. As mentioned already, honor is an important parameter of a family's socio-political status and influence in the community, and is closely attached to women's honor (see chapter no. 3 & 5). Jadoon group is a socio-politically dominant group in the union council, and is thus more status and honor conscious. Allowing women's free mobility and outside interactions would damage their status, political support and influence in the community. Therefore, mainly men look after the household and community matters. Although men have a dominant position but this does not mean that women are strictly confined to homes because as shown in the above narration, circumstances are changing for women after migration. For example, as Shumaila Bibi narrated, "I challenged the traditional men's authority and successfully got control over decisions and expenditures related to my children and me such as clothes, shoes and other needs of children. I also have the freedom to utilize some money for external social events such as giving gifts to relatives and friends on the birth of a child, and on occasions of marriage ceremonies and social gatherings". This transformation in women's role such as the choice of decision-making and mobility is significant in the context of Jadoon group who are mainly male dominated. The analysis reveals that despite local norms of honor and status of family, migration and remittances are creating possibilities for women as shown above. Another

important point of analysis is the age of women, especially of migrants' wives, that significantly empowered women after migration. This part of analysis largely follows the findings of Acharya et al., 2010; Abbas et al., 2019 and Siddiqui et al., 2003 who state that age is one of the important factors of women's empowerment (Acharya et al., 2010; Abbas et al., 2019 and Siddiqui et al., 2003).

Apart from the above-discussed factors, another considerably important factor of gender differences in everyday life in the union council is the religious significance of Syed group. The fieldwork observations and empirical data state that unlike Jadoon group who are politically influential, the Syeds (decedents of the holy men) are more religiously conscious. The Syed group has religious significance in the community and people respect them because of their lineage with the Prophet (SAW) of Islam¹⁵⁵. The religious affiliation makes Syed group different from other groups in the union council. Likewise, this affiliation is an identity for them, which consequently maintains their social respect in the community. However, unlike the more conventional and conservative Syed groups in some other parts of Pakistan (see Ahmed, 1986; Kazuo 2012), Syeds in union council *Nawansher* are comparatively less conservative in terms of religious manifestation because of their long migration history, and living in urban setup among different ethnic groups. For example, according to an elder of Syed group, "We settled some two hundred years ago in this union council, and because of our long detachment from the origin area and group, we are considerably less conservative". The empirical data found that like the Jadoon ethnic group, the Syeds also follow some strict gender norms in order to maintain their distant socio-religious status which is evident from the fact that women who belonged to Syed group are not allowed to meet and talk to outsiders, especially men or *namehram*¹⁵⁶ (individuals, not Syeds or not blood relatives). For instance, for me as a male researcher and an outsider, it was a major challenge during the fieldwork to interview women from this group. However, with the help of my female colleagues (research assistants), I conducted interviews with women from this group (see chapter no. 4). As mentioned already, according to Islamic practices, women should be veiled while going outside homes or in public. As the Syed group has religious affiliation, they put many surveillances on women (see chapter no. 2). Thus, in order to maintain their influence or status because of religious affiliation, the Syeds in comparison to other groups in the community put more checks on women such as on their decision-making, participation in everyday matters and mobility. However, the empirical

¹⁵⁵ The decedents of the holy prophet (SAW) of Islam

¹⁵⁶ *Namehram* includes individuals (men and women) not included in the incest category and with whom the marriage bond is possible. As the Syed's identity is religious, therefore they also follow the *namehram* phenomena (empirical data).

data found that circumstances are largely changing and are different in different Syed households; for example, in migrant and non-migrant Syed households.

The data findings show that Syeds are involved in different income-earning activities and businesses such as construction, transportation and internal and international migration. The Syeds are more inclined to business and migration because in comparison to other local groups such as Jadoon and Tanoli,¹⁵⁷ they have less land and political hold in the area and are thus mainly dependent on remittances and small businesses. Regarding the remittances receiving behavior and its influence on women, one migrant wife narrated:

“The Syeds are mainly endogamous and women mainly live with in-laws after marriage. Generally, men have a dominant position in all household matters and women are discouraged to go or take part in public events because it is against the group’s norms, and can possibly damage the group’s social status. The respect and social status we have in the community is due to our religious affiliation.

Since my marriage, I have been living with my in-laws. Initially, after my husband’s migration, my father in-law was managing all the household and community matters from remittances receiving to everyday household groceries. However, after some years of my husband’s migration, I realized that I am over-dependent on my in-laws, and wondered who will take care of my children if, God forbid, something happened to my father in-law. My brother in-law has his own families and priorities. Thus, I gradually started to manage and influence household affairs. In the beginning, my in-laws resisted but I did not give up and told them that it’s my husband’s money, and his wife and children have a right over it. At present, I am quite independent in decisions regarding myself and children; for example, education, health and marriage decisions of my children (both boys and girls). I am also free to go outside for my personal needs such as shopping and meeting friends, and neighbors. After migration of husbands, women, especially migrants’ wives, even from Syeds are quite independent in many matters and influence household’s decisions” (Malika Bibi, No. 3A UC, *Nawansher*).

¹⁵⁷ Local groups in district Abbottabad

The first part of the narration discusses the general characteristics of Syed group where women's free mobility and interactions are largely discouraged and can possibly harm family status and respect in the community. This is a typical overview or a general impression of the group for an outsider. However, the second part of the analysis explains that circumstances are changing for women despite religious norms, family's respect and religious status. The analysis illustrates that migrants' wives are gradually becoming a part of the everyday life after migration. Such as they have started to move independently, make decisions on different matters (education, marriage and health), and influence household decisions. Furthermore, as narrated by Malika Bibi, "The migration of husbands considerably changed women's positions even in Syed extended families where previously women were largely under men's surveillance even inside homes". Thus, the analysis of the narration shows that migration is gradually changing women's role and position in households, and creating possibilities of independent mobility and decisions-making for them. The data findings of this study contradict the argumentations of many studies which suggest that migration of husbands does not bring changes to women's positions in the extended families because the in-laws mainly control family affairs after migration (see for example Singh et al., 2013; Choithani, 2019).

As further evidence, another woman from Syed group stated:

"I am living in the extended family of Syed group. My husband migrated to Dubai about five years ago. I am quite independent and free to take part in the household decisions whether they are about the remittances management and other household affairs such as education and health decisions. Off course, being a member of a group, one has to follow and respect group norms. I also respect the group norms but when it comes to one's survival, then you have to make a choice that is important for you. No one bothers about the group if their interests are in clash with group norms. Hence, I prefer my freedom and children over group norms. We are a middle-income family and it's difficult to meet our needs with the remittances. Thus, I stepped in and took household matters in my hands. I even started embroidery work from home which helped us to lessen our household's financial burden. I faced criticism from relatives and community but I did not stop. My in-laws were also not happy with my interference in household matters but they did not openly criticize me because they are financially dependent on my husband" (Eman Bibi, No. 4A UC, *Nawansher*).

The narration shows that despite group norms and limitations from family and relatives, male out-migration brought significant changes even in the extended families of Syed group. After migration of her husband, Eman Bibi gained considerable importance in the family, and she is now influencing important household decisions. The narration illustrates that despite religious norms and social status of a group, migration and remittance are transforming women through which they are challenging the local norms thus creating possibilities for themselves as the narration revealed. The empirical analysis suggests that male-out migration even from religious groups brings transformation in women's everyday dealings. For example, Eman Bibi faced many criticisms when she took household matters in hands and started financial activity from home after migration of her husband. The analysis also demonstrates that although people, especially migrants' wives from middle income groups, are aware of local socio-religious norms, but they prioritize personal freedom and children's wellbeing over group's norms. Furthermore, the analysis reveals that after male-out migration, women became quite independent, and the remittances created possibilities for them. For example, Eman Bibi started a business from home, and she is independent in decision making and mobility as stated in the narration. The analysis and empirical findings of my study largely contradict with the findings of studies which suggest that migration does not change women's positions in some religious groups and communities. For example, they noted that migration did not bring significant changes in women's mobility, employment and decision-making especially from some Muslim communities (see Rodriguez, 2007; Gulati, 1987).

Apparently, the analysis of the above four narrations from Jadoon and Syed groups illustrates a gendered pattern of receiving and managing remittances in the extended households in union council *Nawansher*. For example, mainly men from both Jadoon and Syed groups are receiving remittances because of political, ethnic, honor and religious factors that largely influence the everyday activities of both men and women. However, the empirical analysis presents interesting points of changing circumstances and ongoing social transformations in both groups especially in the migrants' households. For instance, migrants' wives are receiving separate portions of remittances for personal and children's use. Furthermore, the male-out migration and remittances provide some space and create possibilities for migrants' wives because of which they are more active in everyday household matters, and influence decisions even in extended households of Jadoon and Syed groups. Thus, the analysis is largely contradictory to the argumentations of studies which state that residential arrangements such as living with in-laws in extended households significantly influence women's everyday activities because they are largely under male surveillance, passive and inactive in household decisions and matters

while living in the extended families even after migration of husbands (Sinha et al., 2012; Desai & Banerji 2008; Lefebvre, 1990).

In the next section, I examine the variations in remittances receiving and management patterns revealed during interviews with women from both Jadoon and Syed groups in the union council.

6.2.2 The Changing Remittances Receiving Patterns in Extended Households

The remittances receiving patterns and behaviors are discussed differently in the mainstream migration literature. For example, some studies suggest that migrants mainly send remittances to wives (see for example Orozco et al. 2009; Orozco & Paiewonsky 2007 c.f. Ekra et al. 2011; Jately, 1987 and Ramírez et al. 2005), whereas others state that remittances are usually sent to male members of the household. In this section, I examine women's role and participation in the migration and remittances process that have been largely ignored in the Pakistani context. Based on the empirical findings, different categories are developed for analysis such as migrants' wives role and influence in the pre and post migration process, the changing remittances receiving behaviors and management, and the changing local gender relations.

The empirical data such as field observations and interviews with women demonstrate that women such as migrants' wives, mothers and sisters are part of the larger migration process especially in the pre- departure and post migration process in both Jadoon and Syed groups. For example, women manage travel preparations (luggage and other necessary things for traveling) of migrants, and provide psychological support to migrants. Women also manage funds for migration, for example, through their personal belongings such as jewelry and personal savings to sponsor the migration endeavor of their husbands (see for example Gulati, 1987). In the post migration situation, migrants' wives mainly look after children and manage remittances for personal and children's needs.

As discussed, women's personal belongings include jewelry and other valuables they bring in dowry from parental homes to their husband's. Women usually give the dowry to sponsor husbands' migration in case they have no funds. Many women from both groups during the interviews stated that they usually get back the money and jewelry equal to dowry after migration through remittances. The empirical data found several other functions of dowry especially for women. For example, on one hand, this is women's share in the parental property which they get during the marriage, and on the other hand, this is also considered as their social security. The empirical data show that women usually do not get a share of the ancestral land

from their parental families because this will transfer the land outside the family mainly to husbands after marriage. Thus, the dowry women get in marriage is considered their share in parental property. Also, dowry is a social security for women because this is a financial support for them after marriage. Many women stated that they consider dowry as their share in the property and do not demand a share in the parental land after marriage despite having a legal claim because their demand may surely lead to conflict with parental families. In such circumstances, they will lose socio-economic support of parental family (parents, brother and relatives) in times of need. Therefore, they are happy with the dowry and do not demand parental property after marriage¹⁵⁸. As stated before, dowry has multiple functions. For example, the empirical data found that women use the dowry money for personal savings and expenditures; they also use it for education and health emergencies in case they have no money to pay the bills. Likewise, some women also contribute a share of dowry to finance migration as stated already. Therefore, dowry is multifunctional, and gives women a sense of social security and economic support to strengthen their positions in the families. As the empirical finding state, women play a significant role in financial support for migration, however, informal discussions with men in the community largely neglected women's role and responsibilities in migration process because of their male ego and local gender norms.

The data found that in the local context, migration management is a broader process and covers a wide range of activities and individuals. In the present section, I examine the remittances receiving patterns among women (migrants' wives) in the extended households. Interviews with migrants' wives from low and middle-income Jadoon and Syed group show that migrants' wives are also receiving remittances from their husbands mostly indirectly through men (male heads of the households), sons, and parental family members such as brothers and fathers. This money is sent separately for wives and intended only for migrants' immediate family such as wives and children. The empirical finding shows that in majority of cases, the money is sent through wives' parental family members like brothers and fathers and is mainly kept secret from the rest of the extended household members because it might lead to intra-household conflicts between the heads of the household (male) and migrants' wives, and between migrants' wives and the remaining household women especially migrants' mothers, sisters and

¹⁵⁸ According to the state and Shariah (Islamic) law, women/daughters will get one share of the property in comparison to sons who will get two shares of the parental property. However, there could be more possibilities regarding women share in parental property. For example, if there is only one child (daughter) in the family. In such case, she will get half of her father property. Secondly, when there are two or more than two daughters (no male children) in the family, the daughters will get two third share of the property. Finally, if there are both daughters and sons in the family, the daughters will get one share of the property and the sons will get two shares of the property (<http://islamicencyclopedia.org>).

sister in-laws. The pattern of secrecy is mainly prevalent in some middle-income households because of household norms where men manage household matters.

The data found two largely prevalent patterns of remittances receiving process. These patterns can be further divided into two parts, the ‘remittances collection part’ and the ‘remittances receiving part’. For instance, remittances collection means collection of money by individuals from banks, moneylenders, and online transaction offices mainly by men. The second phase of receiving remittances means that women receive remittances from men in their households. As discussed already, migrants’ wives mainly receive remittances from men and use these on personal expenditures such as buying clothes, jewelry, social networking (gifts and loans), and on children’s needs. The empirical data shows that although migrants’ wives receive remittances indirectly through men, but they are quite independent over its use. For example, in a relatively similar situation, Aneesa Bibi from a middle-income household narrated:

“My husband migrated to Dubai about twenty years ago. Earlier, my husband used to send remittances only to my father-in-law who would then utilize it on various household needs. My father-in-law handed over some money to my mother in-law who would then give us some money. Like other women of the family, I also received very less amount for my personal expenses. However, my children have grown up now, and they have more demands and expenses which are difficult to meet with the amount I used to receive through my in-laws. Furthermore, being the migrant’s wife I have more right over the remittances (husband’s money). Therefore, I asked my husband to send separate money for me. Initially, my husband was reluctant because of family pressure but after sometime he agreed. At present, my husband sends separate money for us. My elder son receives the money and hands over to me. I keep this money with me and use this on personal and children’s needs. Sometimes, taking advantage of my social status such as age, and being the migrant’s wife, I go myself for collection of money from online transaction offices. Older women and migrants’ wives have comparatively less social compulsions and more respect and say in households. Previously, I kept remittances secret from the rest of the family because it could have led to family disputes; however, now I do not bother and everyone knows that my husband is sending separate money for me” (Aneesa Bibi, No. 1A UC, *Nawansher*).

Aneesa Bibi's narration explains that some women, especially migrants' wives, are receiving separate remittances from their husbands. Analysis of the narration shows that local social circumstances are gradually changing because of migration and remittances even in extended families of some strict ethnic groups such as Jadoon group. The analysis reveals that local norms and peoples' behaviors are changing after migration and receiving remittances. For example, initially after migration, Aneesa's husband was reluctant to send separate money to his wife because of local norms. However, after some years of migration when his children grew up, he started to send separate money. According to Aneesa, "This might be because of two reasons: firstly, because of his outside experience of migration that changed his behavior; and secondly, because of his children and my continuous demand and pressure". The analysis demonstrates that the act of sending separate money to wives shows the influence of socio-economic remittances on people (migrants and people in the origin communities) which are changing behaviors of people locally and transnationally. As the narration states, giving separate money to women was considered against family norms and even husbands were reluctant and did not send separate money to wives. But now because of factors such as transnational experiences of migrants, wives' age and the influence of remittances on both migrants and wives in origin areas bring social transformations. Aneesa Bibi used to keep the separate money secret from the remaining household members to avoid criticism and conflicts in the family that could lead to tensions between her and the rest of the household members. For example, conflict with the head of the households (father or brothers-in-laws), and women such as mother and sisters-in-law. A few years back (a decade or two), secrecy was an essential part of receiving separate remittances in extended households but at present, migrants' wives do not keep it secret because they are quite independent now. As Aneesa Bibi narrated above, "I do not bother and everyone knows that my husband is sending separate money for me". This statement and others, for example, "Sometimes I collect remittances myself", show that Aneesa Bibi is now taking independent decisions and has mobility which is significant in the context of extended families. Furthermore, interview responses with other women (migrants' wives) from the group also reveal that in majority cases, the household members overlook the issue of separate money for migrants' wives to avoid tensions in the households.

In Aneesa's case, her age and marital status such as being the wife of a migrant are very important for changing her position in the family and overcoming challenges. Analysis of the narration illustrates that age and marital status are some of the important factors for migrants' wives to receive separate remittances and change their positions (see section 6.2). For instance, Aneesa Bibi stated during the interview, "For some women, age and being wives of migrants

is a privilege and an 'Entry Pass' to the everyday social life" which means that they are free in independent interactions, mobility, and taking independent decisions. Aneesa Bibi's case is unique because she mostly collects remittances herself when her son is not around which means that she is quite independent. Aneesa Bibi's narration shows that despite certain social pressures and limitations such as local household structures, prestige, honor, and local gender norms, migration and remittances have significantly changed her position and status. Hence, she influences social situations such as independent mobility, separate money, and decisions over her personal and children's needs. Many points of the analysis largely contradict the findings of studies which mainly present no significant changes in migrants' wives' positions after migration of husbands from extended households (see for example, Gartaula et al., 2012; Datta & Mishra, 2011; Ganguly & Negi, 2010).

The empirical data found different patterns of remittances receiving by migrants' wives. For example, they receive money mainly through in-laws, parents and siblings. However, as mentioned above (in case of Aneesa Bibi), some aged women can also receive remittances personally. As discussed before, migrants' wives are receiving remittances; however, in majority cases it is different (through in-laws, fathers and brothers) because of various reasons. Through empirical data such as interviews with migrants' wives, several different reasons of remittances receiving by women are revealed. For example, some women stated that they receive remittances differently because of local norms of gender and honor, and household conflicts such as conflicts with other women in the household. For instance, receiving remittances through fathers in-law lowers the chances of conflicts among women because of their dominant position in the family. Others stated that this is because of extended household structures and male's dominant position (household head) in the extended families. For example, in extended families, mainly men are responsible for managing outside matters. Furthermore, some women stated that they receive remittances through men by choice because it's easy for them to receive remittances at home. Regarding the remittances receiving behaviors of women, one migrant's wife from low-income extended household stated:

"My husband sends separate remittances for me and my children. In the beginning, i.e., first three to four years of migration, he would send remittances to my father-in-law who then gave some money for my personal needs. Previously, my father-in-law being the household head received the remittances and looked after all the household matters. Later, I asked my husband for separate money because I could not ask my father-in-law all the time. My

husband easily agreed for sending separate money because he changed after migration and became very flexible to me. Since then, I have been receiving separate remittances, and I am free to use them. My husband sends my share of remittances either to my father-in-law or my brother. My husband migrated about ten years ago. Before his migration, we were in dire financial straits, I sold my jewelry for my husband's migration. Before migration, I suffered a lot because my in-laws were blaming me for bringing bad fortune that led to their financial problems. After his migration, I again went through very hard times because of my in-law's rude behavior and strict rules. However, circumstances changed after some years of migration when I demanded separate remittances (money), and forbade the interference of in-laws in my personal matters. Usually, aged women especially migrants' wives have the advantage of more influence in the family, however, despite being young, I got the freedom of free decisions making. Now, I am quite independent in my personal affairs. How long can one remain in such a situation and under the influence of others? Now being the migrant's wife, I have more respect because my in-laws are financially dependent on my husband and my husband listens to me after migration because of changed behavior due to transnational experience" (Kalsoom Bibi No. 1B UC, *Nawansher*).

Analysis of the narration confirms that local circumstances are gradually changing for women. For example, in the above narration, Kalsoom is receiving separate money and she is free to use it. Previously, before migration, for women to demand additional or separate money was considered against family norms, and it was like challenging men's authority, especially that of the household head because men take these changes (separate money for women) in the traditional patterns as interference in their everyday matters or authority. However, as already stated, circumstances largely changed for women, especially for migrants' wives, after migration of husbands. For example, the changed circumstances include changes and transformation in women's positions in that they have now become more independent and they are influencing and making family decisions as revealed in the above narration. Changes in in-laws behaviors and dealing with migrants' wives especially of men (household heads) because of financial dependency over migrants. Furthermore, many migrants' wives during the interviews stated that they noticed considerable changes in their husbands' behaviors after migration. For example, after migration, because of men's transnational experience, the migrants become very lenient and ready to give more freedom to women in their everyday

interactions and dealings.

The second part of the narration illustrates the challenges for women in the pre migration, and initial years after the migration of husbands, for example, the rude and strict behavior of in-laws toward Kalsoom Bibi. However, after migration Kalsoom Bibi received separate remittances and became quite independent in her matters as the narration revealed. Furthermore, the analysis shows that despite young age, Kalsoom challenged the local norms, received separate remittances, and took independent decisions regarding expenditures. Part of the above narration such as “freedom of decision-making” by Kalsoom Bibi after migration mainly corresponds with migration and development literature especially in Pakistan, which positively relates the changing remittances receiving behaviors of women with women’s empowerment (see for example Iqbal et al. 2014; Arif, 2009).

Analysis of the two narrations in this section the gradual transformations and changes in gender relations in the households, especially changes regarding migrants’ wives’ roles and social position that considerably changed after migration. For example, as discussed in the above narrations, migrants’ wives are receiving separate remittances, and personally performing their everyday activities. The analysis states that factors such as the age of migrants’ wives are challenging the local norms and gaining more independence thus changing gender relations within the households. Furthermore, the analysis shows that migrants’ wives have more privileges in the family in comparison to other women (wives of non-migrants). For example, the family members always try to treat migrants’ wives with more care and show less opposition when they act independently or take independent decisions especially when the family members are dependent on migrants’ remittances. The analysis also demonstrates the changing relationships between husbands and wives because of migration (transnational experience) which allow women to demand separate remittances and freedom of mobility and decision-making because husbands largely support wives after migration. For instance, some empirical examples illustrate that in case of restrictions from in-laws or less money for personal expenses of wives, migrants support their wives. For example, one migrant’s wife shared her experience and stated:

“Before migration, and even after some time of my husband’s migration, my in-laws put many unnecessary restrictions on me such as I had to get their permission for visiting my parents and neighbors. They did not even allow me to give opinion in ordinary household matters. However, after some years of my husband’s migration, when he came on his yearly visit, I talked with him

regarding my in-laws' strict behavior and told him that I would not tolerate this anymore. Later, he discussed this with his family and now I am free to make my own choices. I will say that the change in my situation is due to my personal determination and my husband's migration that largely changed his behavior in thinking about women because before migration, he was also like other men in the family" (Female respondent UC, *Nawansher*).

Analysis of the narration shows that wives gained support of husbands after migration because of which wives became independent in decision-making even in the extended households. Many women during the interviews stated that migrants' changed behaviors (flexible) and support to wives is because of their transnational experiences. This empirical finding contradicts with the findings of Taylor (1984) and Myntti (1984) for Egyptian and Yemeni sending communities. Their findings suggest, "that the position of women might have worsened due to social remittances brought back by return (male) migrants, resulting in the growing influence of conservative, Wahabite interpretations of Islam in Egyptian and Sudanese rural areas" (Taylor, 1984; Myntti, 1984 c.f. Haas & Rooij, 2010, p. 45).

In the above section, I analyzed the changing remittances receiving behaviors in extended households. In the next section, I examine the remittances management for households and investments such as for income generation activities.

6.3 Migration and Managing Remittances: Possibilities and Challenges for Women in Extended Jadoon and Syed Groups

The empirical finding reveals that migrants' wives in extended households of Jadoon and Syed groups invest some money from the remittances (personal remittances) in various income generation activities like women's economic committees, livestock management, stitching, and embroidery. The empirical data found several reasons of increased investment activities of migrants' wives after migration of men especially from this union council. My personal observation and interviews with women show that migrants' wives are more inclined to investments especially from this union council because majority people are from low and middle-income backgrounds. The interview responses of migrants' wives identified several reasons of investments, for example, some women stated that they invested part of their remittances to increase income for their personal expenses such as to buy more jewelry and clothes. Others, especially women from low-income households, stated that they invested to lessen financial burden of households. Additionally, some migrants' wives invested to become

independent and self-sufficient in their everyday dealings. In the next part, I examine the above-mentioned investment patterns of migrants' wives and their role in changing gender relations in Jadoon and Syed groups.

Starting with women's economic committees, as discussed already, women especially migrants' wives contribute some remittances in women-specific economic committees¹⁵⁹ to meet their personal and children's needs. The income from economic committees is mainly women's personal money; however, sometimes they also use part of the income (from committees) for daughters' dowry, routine household needs, and for social obligations such as exchange of gifts, donations and loans to other women in the community (see also chapter no. 5). Social obligations for women are basically the social networking tools that increase their participation and interactions in the community. Additionally, participation of migrants' wives in social events of charities, donations, and loans increases their social status and respect. For example, the data revealed that migrants' wives become more influential and have more respect in the community because of community welfare and helping others.

Regarding income from women's committees, one migrant's wife from a middle-income Jadoon group stated:

“Participation, and the income from committees makes women independent in many ways. For example, now women are supporting and sharing household expenses and responsibilities. They are also helping other community women by giving them charities and loans. Additionally, women, especially from low-income families, save some money from committees for personal needs, children's education and marriages. For example, I am from a middle-income family. When my husband started to send me separate remittances, I invested part of them in women's committee. Now, the saving is enough for my personal needs and sometimes, I also help my friends by giving loans. Everyone in the community respects me because of my helping nature, increased influence after migration of husband, and investments in committee. Women from the local community also seek my advice regarding investments” (Sadia Bibi, No. 2A UC, *Nawansher*).

¹⁵⁹ See chapter no. 5

The narration states that investments in committees largely make women independent and increase their participation and interactions in the community. For example, women from low-income groups are supporting their families which means that they are doing men's job by sharing responsibilities, giving money for children's education, and arranging dowry for daughter's marriages. The data finding reveals that household expenses and dowry arrangements for girls are mainly men's responsibility; nevertheless, in certain situations, such as in low-income households, women also contribute in dowry arrangements to lessen the economic burden of men. Analysis of the narration shows that women's participation, interactions, and support in household matters is only possible because of remittances which allow women to invest in committees (investments) after the migration of husbands. Furthermore, analysis of the narration illustrates that women's investments, and their role in the community by helping others earns them respect and more influence. During the interview, Sadia Bibi further added, "I gained more respect and influence in the family and community after earning through committee. For example, now, I influence decisions like children's education and marriages because now I am also giving money for these ends".

Likewise, another woman from a middle-income group during an interview stated, "Functions of women committees are more than just income earning. For example, this gives migrants' wives opportunities of social networking and outside interactions which consequently increase their mobility and confidence, and make them realize that they can do things they have never done before like income earning and supporting families and other community members". This narration demonstrates that apart from income generation, women's investments in committees increase their mobility, social networking and interactions thus changing gender relations in the extended households. For example, women are now also taking part and contributing in household finances. Furthermore, analysis of the narration demonstrates that committees are important for women because these give them economic support and possibilities of interactions due to which they take over new roles hence strengthening their positions and influence in households' decisions. Regarding the role and influence of committees on women's positions and changing gender relations in some low-income households, one woman during an interview shared her experiences and stated:

"I recently separated from my extended family because I was not happy in a large family. My husband is a labor migrant, and his income is not enough for supporting a big family. Thus, I demanded a separate residence as now my children have grown up. I helped my husband in the initial expenses of setting a

new residence. For example, through the income from committee, I bought new furniture, utensils, and other household items for our new home” (Jameela Bibi No. 2B UC, *Nawansher*).

Analysis of the narration illustrates that decisions such as separation from extended families are not easy and only possible when one is sure about their influence (power of decision-making) and economic conditions. For example, they have enough decision-making powers and money for starting a new family, otherwise, it is difficult to challenge or go against the local power structures (male dominance and extended family structures) and norms of family honor, and respect. For instance, in the above scenario, Jameela Bibi got separated from the extended family because of the influence that she gained through independent earning from committee after the migration of her husband. The empirical data found that independent income earning of women after migration of men is one of the important factors that enabled and encouraged women to take independent decisions. This analysis largely corresponds with the findings of Fakir & Abedin (2021) who argue, “Overall, migration of the primary male does, on average, empower the women left behind by providing them with opportunities to manage assets and finances, and the right to exercise greater physical autonomy. Without such an opportunity, the women themselves may not have ever been provided the scope to explore and realize their own potential for empowerment” (Fakir & Abedin, 2021, p. 573). The findings of my study are also in agreement with Yabiku et al., (2010) who positively relate husband’s migration from Mozambique with wives’ autonomy even in extended families (Yabiku et al., 2010). My findings, however, do not correspond with the results of Desai and Banerji (2008) who demonstrate that migrants’ wives living in extended families do not show improvement in their status after migration of husbands (Desai & Banerji, 2008). There are two possibilities of difference in results presented by Desai & Banerji (2008). Firstly, this might be because they mainly took a large quantitative sample from national survey; and secondly, the possibility of difference might be the time duration as the study was conducted in 2008, and since then, these societies have experienced significant changes. The empirical findings show that before economic committees and migration of husbands, women in Jadoon and Syed groups faced many challenges and constraints in everyday life as they were mainly dependent on men for routine needs. However, migration of husbands (stay abroad and changed behaviors), remittances, and women’s earnings through economic committees brought considerable changes in the households. For example, one woman from Syed group stated:

“Before migration and self-earning through committees, I had no say in the family because mainly men were controlling all the household affairs. Men took the decisions regarding education, health and marriages. After my husband’s migration, I am influencing decisions relating to me and my children. For example, my father-in-law wanted to fix my daughter’s marriage while she was studying. I intervened in the matter and told my father-in-law that I will not agree until she completes her studies. Once, I became financially independent, I spent more money over my children’s needs such as health and education. For example, my children were studying in local schools. I admitted them to good schools and paid for the additional expenses of new schools. Now my in-laws treat me well and consider my say in household matters” (Sakina Bibi No. 3A UC, *Nawansher*).

This narration illustrates that migrants’ wives are challenging decisions in the family. For example, women can give opinions and influence decisions relating to them and their children as shown in the above narration. Furthermore, analysis of the narration illustrates that despite various challenges such as local gender norms and power relations, the migration and remittances are creating possibilities for women, especially for migrants’ wives. As a result, they take over new roles and responsibilities of financing children’s needs, and deciding about their education, health and marriage priorities thus changing gender relations in the households.

The next significant part of women’s remittances utilization includes investments in livestock management, and earning through domestic skill activities such as sewing/stitching and embroidery. Generally, and as the interviews responses show, women can take part in income-earning activities from homes because these are mainly women-based activities. The empirical finding reveals that women have comparatively low representation in remunerative occupations and jobs outside homes. However, some selective occupations such as teaching and healthcare are considered appropriate for women in the area because these jobs have social acceptability and people see these professions with respect. In fact, women’s low representation and participation in income-earning activities and jobs decreased their overall labor force participation in the Pakistani economy (IUCN, 2004). Regarding job acceptability, Siegmann (2010) in her study in the Northwest of Pakistan states that gainful employment outside homes such as teaching is acceptable for women “if the local norms of appropriate behavior for women are respected” (Siegmann, 2010, p. 351). As observed during the fieldwork, and stated by some women during the interviews, women from the community, work in different professions such

as nursing, daycare, teaching and running different businesses. Like Siegmann's (2010) findings, these professions are acceptable in the area, however, following the local norms (veiling and little or no interactions with men) is quite difficult for women because they are working under different circumstances as stated by some women during the interviews. For example, it's difficult to veil all the time and not to interact with men while working in hospitals, schools, business, and banks.

The empirical data confirm that migrants' wives from both low and middle-income households of Jadoon and Syed groups invest some remittances in livestock. The data findings show that majority groups in the area still have some rural connection which means that these groups are in regular contact with people in rural areas¹⁶⁰. Likewise, women also have social networks in the rural areas that help them in managing their personal investments in livestock. The migrants' wives invest a part of remittances in livestock. They handover the livestock to relatives and poor women in the rural areas who then look after it and the resulting dairy products¹⁶¹. The income from selling the livestock and dairy products is distributed equally between migrants' wives and the women who look after the livestock. Migrants' wives directly receive a share of income from livestock and use this on their personal needs. Many women during the interviews confirmed that both parties (rural women and migrants' wives) are earning good income from the investment that helps them to meet their needs. In this context, one woman from the group stated:

“Migration and remittances created many economic opportunities for women. Before migration, I could not even think about earning money. However, after my husband's migration, I invested some money in livestock through which I am receiving additional income and it is helping me to meet my needs” (Khadija Bibi No. 4A, UC, *Nawansher*).

This narration illustrates that migration and remittances are changing women's economic positions by creating economic possibilities and allowing women to start small-scale business activities such as investments in livestock. Moreover, analysis of the narration states that women are becoming independent after starting their own businesses and controlling the income through these investments.

¹⁶⁰ Have rural backgrounds because these groups migrated to Abbottabad city from rural areas and villages.

¹⁶¹ Migrants' wives cannot keep the livestock at home because of congested urban residence

The empirical data also illustrates that some migrants' wives, particularly from low-income households also invested remittances in income generation activities like stitching and embroidery. Migrants' wives in the union council run these activities from homes. For example, they stitch clothes for community women and become sort of local lady tailors. These lady tailors are personally involved in the whole process of buying material and machines for stitching. As a result, women's mobility and outside interactions increased because for buying material and machines, they visit markets and deal with men (traders). Regarding women's involvement in small-scale business activities, one woman from a low-income group stated, "In order to financially support my family, I started sewing clothes for community women". This confirms that women are contributing financially to support their families which is only possible because of the money they save from remittances and invest in some income generation activities. The data finding shows that income generation activities through remittances increase women's mobility and interactions. Likewise, one woman from a low-income group during the interview stated, "I personally buy sewing material from the market. Now, the community women come to me for stitching clothes which increases my interactions and social networking". This illustrates that even work from home increases women's interactions and social networking, and improves their economic positions. While buying stitching material, women interact and bargain with male shopkeepers which means that they are becoming more mobile and independent in decision-making, and becoming more economically self-sufficient. Moreover, the data findings show that lady tailors mainly work within a *muhallah* or local community and give services to the local women thus increasing their social networking.

Another important area of remittances investment includes the embroidery business of women. Like the above stated investment activities, women operate the embroidery work from homes, however, the services and products from this business reach the local market as women sell embroidery items in the local markets. The empirical data reveals that women do all the outside dealings themselves such as the delivery of embroidery work to the local market, payment receiving, and dealing with the customers including men and women. Moreover, some well-off women in the community also give personal embroidery orders to these working women for which they directly pay to them. Many working women related to tailoring and embroidery in low-income migrant households stated that due to economic constraints they were unable to run self-income generation activities before migration. However, after migration, they are saving some money and starting to work from home. One woman from the group stated:

“As my husband is a labor migrant, he is earning less which is not sufficient to support the family. Thus, under the circumstances, I started a small-scale embroidery business through which I meet my personal and children’s needs. Additionally, I also contribute in the household expenditures by buying everyday household items like grocery and utility bills payment” (Aysha Bibi No. 3B UC, *Nawansher*).

Analysis of the narration demonstrates that women become breadwinners for families by taking on men’s responsibilities such as income earning after receiving remittances. For example, as the above narration shows, Aysha Bibi is supporting her children, and also contributing to the household expenses. The analysis further illustrates that women mainly started these activities after migration of husbands, and after receiving separate remittances. In relation to women’s investment and income generation activities such as through women’s committees, livestock, tailoring, and embroidery work, the empirical analysis identified two possible reasons for starting these activities. Firstly, women started such activities only after migration because of additional income from remittances and husbands willingness because of transnational experience, and secondly, these investments and income generation activities helped to lessen financial burden especially of low-income families. Additionally, the analysis reveals that these activities mainly deconstruct the traditional perceptions regarding women’s work and interactions through women’s contribution in business and household expenditures. Hence, women’s participation in these activities are creating opportunities of outside interactions, financial contributions, social networking and mobility thus changing gender relations as stated by women during the interviews.

Crossland, et al.’s, (2021) finding regarding women’s increased participation in farm management activities after migration of men largely corresponds with my findings. Crossland, et al., (2021) argue that despite different social constraints like gender norms, household position, and age, “women are becoming increasingly engaged in farming both in terms of labor and management decisions. At the same time, women’s participation in agricultural training has led to increased recognition of their capabilities as farmers and in their own confidence in managing the family farming enterprise, challenging the notion that women are primarily interested in subsistence farming” (Crossland, et al., 2021,p 20). However, Lokshin & Glinskaya’s, (2008) findings in Nepal indicate that migration of men decreases women’s market work participation (Lokshin & Glinskaya, 2008). Regarding women’s low participation, they identified different reasons such as increase in women’s workload after migration of men and

the flow of remittances after migration. In another study in Pakistan's metropolitan city of Karachi, Sayeed & Ansari (2019) found a strong relation between women's labor force participation and the existing socio-cultural factors that largely limit it. For example, they found that "the relegation of women's labor force participation only to certain acceptable occupations or by keeping women at home entirely, unquestioningly indicates that gender norms play a role in shaping women's labor force participation in Pakistan" (Sayeed & Ansari, 2019, p. 21). This might be true for women from some particular groups, however, in one of their findings, Sayeed & Ansari (2019) argue, "The degree of autonomy and patriarchal mores varied significantly across each locality, and can be traced to socio-cultural values specific and predominant to each" (Sayeed & Ansari, 2019, p. 21). Giving example of women in the Lyari locality of the city, Sayeed & Ansari (2019) state, "Women in Lyari seemed to enjoy greater degree of agency and mobility in comparison to other localities we studied" (Sayeed & Ansari, 2019, p. 21).

The above are some of the common patterns of small-scale remittances investment and management of migrants' wives in the union council. The empirical finding shows that apart from small-scale investments, migrants' wives are also influencing and challenging the existing patterns of remittances' management by men, and want to take control over their husbands' money thus challenging men's power and authority. Regarding changing gender relations, one woman from a middle-income Jadoon group narrated:

"I was living in an extended family after my marriage with a migrant. My husband is working in Dubai and we married some five years ago. Soon after the marriage, I demanded separate money and residence from my in-laws because my husband was living away from me while all his earning was going to his parents and brothers. What is the use of such a life for woman if she has no control over her husband's money? Initially, my husband refused to accept my demand because of pressure from his family and relatives. However, later, I filed a divorce petition in court. The case remained in the court for six months but was finally resolved when my husband and in-laws agreed to my demand of a separate living arrangement. At present I am living in a separate house" (Shaheen bibi No. 6A UC, *Nawansher*).

The narration points to some important and frequently occurring situations after migration especially in the migrants' households. For example, migrants' wives are challenging men's authority and powers which were previously not very common in the local context. The analysis

shows that after migration and remittances, power relations especially in the households are changing which were different before. For instance, in the above narration, the migrant's wife questioned and challenged men's authority by demanding a separate residence and control over her husband.

The data findings show that some middle income and socio-politically high-status families in the area are resisting the ongoing changes and transformations especially regarding women's influence, interference, and attempts to control the family affairs, however, gender relations are changing as the narration showed. For example, in the above narration, the migrant's wife demanded separate residence and money in return of keeping the marriage intact because divorce is culturally inappropriate as it questions family honor. However, women are taking this extreme step of divorce for changing their social positions and getting control over their husband's income. Furthermore, taking family matters to court, especially the divorce cases, is considered against family honor, however, migrants' wives are using these as a negotiating strategy for changing their status as the above narration revealed. The analysis shows that circumstances (separate residence, decision-making and control over remittances etc.) are changing for women after migration and remittances even in socio-politically influential families; for example, women are demanding access to their husband's income and independent decision-making.

As stated above, local circumstances are changing for women in the union council. The data finding from Syed group shows that migrant's wives in Syed group are also challenging men's authority in the household by getting control over remittances and separate residence. Explaining the above situation, one migrant's wife from Syed group stated:

“Women can also manage household affairs if they have freedom like men. When women try to challenge and get control over their personal and household matters, disputes among family members, especially with men, arise which result in family disintegration. For example, in my case, initially my in-laws were very caring but when I asked for separate remittances and residence, they turned against me. However, after my husband's migration, I had the courage to stand for and demand whatever I liked.” (Noor bibi, 6A, UC, *Nawansher*).

Analysis of the narration illustrates that women from Syed group are also challenging male dominant position in the households by demanding independent residence and money. For example, women demand separate residence so they can become free from men's influence,

and exercise independent decisions. The analysis states that women believe that they can handle household matters and remittances' management if allowed. For example, according to Noor Bibi, the migration of husband encouraged her to ask for independent living and control over his money. Furthermore, the analysis illustrates that migration and remittances are significant in the local context because they give migrants' wives some space to influence and negotiate gender relations.

Analysis of the above section on possibilities and challenges for women in extended Jadoon and Syed groups (section 6.3) shows that some migrants' wives are receiving separate money and are largely independent in consuming these on personal needs. They are also investing remittances in small-scale income generation activities like livestock, women's committees and skilled labor due to which women are taking the roles of men and become income earners for families thus increasing their participation, mobility and interactions, and changing local gender relations.

The analysis reveals that some migrants wives', despite strong opposition from family and relatives especially from men, are challenging the prevailing local gender and power norms, and gaining control over remittances through separate residences (see also, for example, Haas & Rooij, 2010). Migration and remittances, in this context, play an important role in negotiating local gender relations. For example, some of the factors identified by Sinha et al. (2012) such as marital status and nature of occupation of women (Sinha et al. 2012; see also Haas & Rooij, 2010) mainly correspond with some factors discussed in the above narrations (for example in analysis of narrations of Jameela Bibi No. 2B, Sadia Bibi, No. 2A, Sakina Bibi No. 3A) which are important for increasing their decision-making, mobility, and interaction (Sinha et al. 2012: 73; see also Haas & Rooij, 2010). Moreover, the data found some factors that are limiting women's social positions in the union council such as strong ethnic affiliation, honor, and the socio-religious and political status of groups. However, as discussed above, despite these limitations, the empirical narrations show that migration and remittances are gradually changing the dominant social structures and creating possibilities for women within the existing structures for maneuvering gender relations.

As discussed already, mainly men dominate the everyday household and community affairs in district Abbottabad (see chapter no. 2). However, the above empirical analysis of data shows that migration of men is creating possibilities for women because of their new roles and responsibilities that are changing gender relations. Women's new roles and responsibilities as a result of male out-migration are largely debated and discussed in the gender and migration

literature. For example, some scholars state that migration significantly empowers women because of the new roles and the decision-making powers they gain (Sotelo, 1994; Rajkarnikar, 2017; Hugo, 2008; Saleemi, 2020). While others argue that women empowerment is temporary and largely subject to existing socio-cultural setting (Ganguly and Negi, 2010; see also Datta and Mishra, 2011; Gartaula et al., 2012). According to Bastia & Busse (2011), gender relations are essential to understand the migration process such as migration decisions, experiences and the changes resulting from migration (Bastia & Busse, 2011). Therefore, Piper (2009) suggests that there is a need to analyze gender and migration through different angles, especially the micro dimensions and changing social relations; for example, same and different gender relations in the migration context (Piper, 2009).

In the context of changing gender relations and women's empowerment through economic participation, SIDA's report (2009) illustrates that women's economic empowerment is a process that increases their influence over economic decisions which consequently increase their influence over their lives and priorities in society (SIDA, 2009). Mayoux (2000), largely supports and relates economic empowerment of women with overall women's empowerment. Mayoux (2000) states, "Economic empowerment is one of the defining dimensions of women's empowerment because women's economic empowerment is usually about increased access to financial resources, income-generating assets or activities, savings, increased financial decision-making powers and more economic independence" (Mayoux, 2000, c.f. Ngezahoghora, 2013, p.25). Women's empowerment is measured and passed through different indicators and related parameters, for example, women's economic participation and the resulted empowerment (Fakir & Abedin, 2021; Rajkarnikar, 2017; Hashmi, et al., 1996), and women's empowerment because of decision-making powers and mobility after migration of men (Snijders, 2009; Hameed, et al., 2014; Abbas, et al., 2021; Saleemi, 2020). However, Hashemi et al., (1996) constituted a detailed framework of women's empowerment indicators in their study of "Rural Credit Programs and Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh". They presented eight major indicators of empowerment "including mobility, economic security, ability to make small and large purchases, involvement in major household decisions, and relative freedom from domination by the family, political and legal awareness, and participation in public protests and political campaigns" (Hashmi et al., 1996, p. 638). The empirical evidences and analysis of my data in the above section show similarities with some of the indicators Hashmi et al., (1996) used in their study. For example, in the context of women's mobility, economic security through their own investments, participation in household decisions, personal expenditures, and freedom from domination, women showed

considerable changes after migration of husbands. It means that when analysing in the context of indicators Hashmi et al., (1996) presented, women in my study area positively acquired many of the indicators of Hashmi et al., (1996) which can be translated into women's empowerment as also stated by many women during the interviews.

Generally, women's empowerment is extensively debated in the literature, however, "There is a nexus of a few key, overlapping terms that are most often included in defining empowerment: options, choice, control, and power. Most often these are referring to women's ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to themselves and their families. Control over one's own life and over resources is often stressed" (Malhotra, et al., 2002, p.05). "Thus, there is frequent reference to some variant of the ability to "affect one's own well being," and "make strategic life choices"" (Malhotra, et al., 2002, p.05). Kabeer (2001) treats empowerment as a process of social change and argues that it is difficult to measure empowerment. According to Kabeer, "Empowerment refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Kabeer, 2001, p. 19). Regarding women's empowerment, Kabeer suggests "three interconnected dimensions of empowerment such as access to and control over resources; agency (the ability to use these resources to bring about new opportunities), and achievements (the attainment of new social outcomes)" (Kabeer, 2001, p. 19). In the context of Kabeer's (2001) definition of empowerment, the empirical analysis of my data finding suggests that migration of men significantly increased women's access to resources (remittances and investments); using their agency, they are largely attaining new achievements. For example, with remittances, women started different investments and income earning activities as Kabeer (2001) termed 'the resources to create new opportunities'. In this context, women's economic contribution, especially through their income generating activities, is largely related with women's empowerment because they are now making their own 'strategic life choices'. For example, the empirical finding shows that women, both from low and middle-income households, mainly consider income through investments as their own money, and they are largely independent over its consumption for their personal and household's needs. For instance, as shown in the analysis, women utilize this money on various personal and children's needs such as health, education, and household consumptions which shows that women acquired new roles and responsibilities that were usually performed by men before migration. Furthermore, the data finding confirms that these investment opportunities largely changed the gender relation, and the patterns of women mobility, interactions and decision-making, and empowered them.

In the next part, I examine migrants' wives role and decision-making regarding different household matters in the union council.

6.4 Who Decides What? Women Decision-Making in Jadoon and Syed Extended Households

In this section, I analyze migrants' wives decision-making in extended households in union council *Nawansher*. The main domains of women's decision-making include decisions regarding their personal expenditures (clothes, food), healthcare, and education to see how much they are independent or influence these decisions after migration of husbands and receiving of remittances. The main question this part includes is whether husbands' migration and remittances increased women's decision-making in the extended households. The main argument of the section is that migration and remittances have made women more independent in decision-making in the above mentioned domains.

The data findings show that previously there was a common perception among men and they saw women as 'vulnerable individuals' who needed men's protection and support for socio-economic survival. Additionally, the differences based on gender, class, and socio-economic status significantly isolated women from the mainstream socio-economic and everyday social life in the union council (see for example ADB, 2000). The empirical data reveals that before migration, generally the decision-making powers rested with men, especially with the head of the household. The head of the household could be father-in-law, husband, and son in the extended households who took decisions about the family and family members, and regarding ethnic or community affairs. However, as stated already, social changes are gradually occurring in the community thus changing women's roles and positions in the household and community.

The empirical data illustrates a common pattern of decision-making in the extended households before migration. For example, during the interviews, many women said that previously, men had most of the decision-making powers. They decided about women's needs and priorities such as buying clothes, and deciding about children's education and healthcare. However, after migration, some variations are observed in the empirical data such as changes in decision-making patterns in some extended households of migrants. For example, women, especially migrants' wives from middle and low-income Jadoon and Syed groups are influencing and taking independent decisions regarding the above-stated domains of personal expenditures, education, and health choices and priorities.

The empirical data shows that after migration, migrants' wives from low and middle-income Jadoon and Syed groups are largely independent in decisions regarding the selection and choice of food and clothes for themselves and their children. For instance, one migrant's wife from a middle-income Jadoon family said:

“Food and clothes of choice for women and children was mainly done by men before migration. At present, migrant's wives buy these things themselves because they have personal money (remittances) and know what is good for them and their children. Previously, my father-in-law used to bring clothes and shoes for me and my children, and arrange food and groceries for us. After migration, I buy these things myself because my choice is quite different than my father-in-law's as he used to bring old-fashioned clothes and shoes that I did not like” (Tahira Bibi No. 5A UC, *Nawansher*).

Analysis of this narration states that previously men bought everyday necessities for women whether they liked it or not. As their choices and preferences were not considered by men, they had to accept these things because they had no say in household matters. However, after migration and receiving remittances, migrants' wives are deciding about their likes and dislikes which means that they have become independent and decide about their own and children's needs and choices.

The data findings show that things relating to personal consumption like food items, clothes and other necessities of women and their children come under the routine household's tasks which are mainly performed by migrants' wives after their husbands' migration. One migrant's wife from Syed group stated, “I go to the market and buy whatever I like for myself and children”. Likewise, another woman from Syed family during an interview stated:

“My father-in-law is the head of the household and I can directly ask him for the things I need such as clothes and food items. However, for personal use items like cosmetics and clothes, I do all the shopping myself because sometimes I need products of a particular brand such as branded clothes, cosmetics and food items that my father-in-law does not know about or has limited understanding. For instance, I use particular company (brand) products (milk, diapers and cereals) for my baby that I buy myself” (Nisa Bibi No. 6A UC, *Nawansher*).

Analysis of these two narrations illustrates that women's personal choices and independent decisions increased after migration. For example, they buy branded products themselves which

was previously not included in their preference list or they had no access to these items because of economic and mobility restrictions. However, as many women during interviews stated, now they easily get these things. Additionally, the analysis shows that these activities of buying and shopping increased women's mobility and interactions that they did not have before the migration of husbands. This means that migration and remittances are not only making women independent decision-makers but also increasing their mobility, interactions, and choices.

The field observations and interviews' responses confirm that social circumstances such as mobility, decision-making and interactions are gradually changing for women in the union council consequently making women more independent in majority everyday decisions. Moreover, the analysis found that migration and remittances are additionally accelerating women's activities. For example, Iqbal et al., (2014) regarding the post-migration situation of migrants' wives states, "Women have free will to spend money on family needs such as food items, home construction etc." (Iqbal et al., 2014, p. 484). In this context, my data finding mainly corresponds with Iqbal et al., (2014). For example, my interviews with women from both Jadoon and Syed groups demonstrate that women have become quite independent in decision-making after migration which means they are performing men's duties thus changing gender relations.

The second important area of women's decision-making is regarding education decisions of children in extended households. This section includes questions like who takes education related decisions in the households, what role migrants' wives have in these decisions and whether migrants' wives influence decisions after the migration of husbands. The empirical data demonstrate that migrants' wives role and influence over education related decisions of children have significantly increased after migration and receiving remittances. Furthermore, the data shows that migrants' wives have more say and their decisions are more valued after the migration of husbands. For example, interviews with migrants' wives illustrate that they take active part in decisions about their children's education. For example, one migrant's wife from low-income Jadoon group stated, "Previously, men decided about everything in the family. Men used to take education and many other decisions of households. However, after migration of my husband, I take decisions regarding my children's education like I suggest which school is good for my children, and I allocate separate money for education from the household budget". Analysis of this narration reveals that migrants' wives are not only influencing but they are taking decisions about their children's education. Likewise, as the narration shows, they are also keeping separate money for education. Studies in Pakistan suggest that migration and remittances have a positive relation with education. For example,

they increase enrolment ratio of children and help families to meet education expenses (see Khan & Khan, 2016; Khan, 2016). Another migrant's wife from middle-income Jadoon group stated:

“What is the use of my husband's migration and the money he is earning if his children are without education? Previously, only my sons were in schools but once my husband migrated, I told him that I will also admit my daughters in school because education is equally important for both boys and girls. Initially, my in-laws resisted but I was firm on my stance that I will not leave my daughters without education” (Tasleema Bibi 7A UC *Nawansher*).

This narration illustrates that after migration, women become more confident in taking decisions, especially regarding their children's education. Furthermore, the narration pointed to an important issue of girls' education which was previously neglected in the area because of its secondary importance and financial issues. However, now women are stressing and deciding about equal opportunities for both boys' and girls' education which is an important development especially in education behaviors after migration.

The empirical finding shows considerable changes in attitudes towards education and women's participation in education related decisions. For instance, one female respondent from middle-income Jadoon group during the interview stated:

“My father-in-law manages all household matters however, when it comes to my children's education, he takes my opinion because of my importance in the family as the migrant's wife and because of my own academic qualification. For example, last year, my daughter successfully passed her high school exam, and wanted to take admission in college. I searched good colleges for her in the district and finally admitted her. I made all the necessary arrangements for her like college uniform, books, and even visited the college for personal satisfaction” (Noreen Bibi No.8A UC, *Nawansher*).

The analysis shows that although her father-in-law manages the household matters, he always seeks his daughter-in-law's opinion before taking decisions regarding her and her children. Another important point in the narration is regarding 'educated women' who have the advantage and experience of education and are more concerned about their children's education. Thus, they have more influence regarding education related decisions in the households. The analysis reveals that along with migration, education (if women are educated)

is an additional positive factor for women for taking and influencing education related decisions of children. Furthermore, the analysis shows that women are not only taking decision about the selection of schools and colleges, but are also taking active part in the whole process such as admissions, children's progress at schools and colleges, arranging education related material like stationary, and school uniform, which means that women are performing multiple tasks at the same time. Interviews and discussions with migrants' wives illustrate that they are equally utilizing remittances on girl's education after the migration which was largely neglected in the past; thus a positive change and increasing trend of girls' education has been observed in the area especially in the migrants' families. Migrants' wives during the interviews stated that like their sons, who are usually perceived as financial supporters of families, they have expectations and belief that their daughters they can also become their families' income earners. Many migrants' wives during the interviews stated, "Remittances are very important for both boys' and girls' education. If we have enough money, only then we can afford good education for our children; otherwise, it is very difficult to give education to children". This narration illustrates that remittances are important for education especially of girls. Furthermore, the empirical data found that though there are some 'gender mobility norms' in the union council that are affecting girls' equal access to education opportunities, migration and remittances (economic and social) are gradually changing these mobility norms through social transformations and developments especially in behaviors of people related to education in the area.

The next important point of women's decision-making is regarding their healthcare related decisions. In this part, I examine whether migration and remittances made migrants' wives independent in healthcare related decisions in the area. The empirical data produced two main areas of analytical interest in this context. Firstly, the data shows who decides about the health facilities and preferences (choice of doctor and clinic or hospital), and secondly, the extent to which women are independent in health care decisions. The main argument in this section is that women are influencing and deciding healthcare provisions after migration of husbands.

The empirical data found that before migration, mainly men used to take healthcare related decisions about the household members. Men decided about the doctors and health facilities such as which doctor, male or female, they should visit and what kind of health services, private or public, they should avail. However, as the empirical data shows, after migration, migrants' wives became quite independent in healthcare related decisions whether related to selection of doctors or the healthcare facility such as clinic and hospital. For instance, one migrant's wife from middle-income Jadoon group during the interview narrated:

“Previously, my brother-in-law used to manage healthcare matters of all family members. However, after migration, I told my husband that I cannot ask my brother-in-law about health problems because he usually goes to the local health facility which is not well-equipped and the doctors are not good and qualified. Since last year, I took healthcare matters in my hands and currently, I go to the main hospital in the city that has all the facilities” (Najma Bibi No. 9A UC, *Nawansher*).

The analysis reveals changes in healthcare management and behaviors after the migration. For example, previously, it was mainly managed by men through local doctors. The women respondents during the interviews stated that previously men managed the healthcare matters because these included outside mobility, and interactions with doctors and health staff. From the beginning, men were considered fit for this job thus nobody (women) objected it. However, now women are also managing healthcare and taking health related decisions. They usually go to more advanced health facilities and specialized doctors. For example, during the interview, Najma Bibi (a migrant’s wife) stated that though men were performing health duties but now mainly women have taken on these responsibilities in hand because women better know what is good for them. Another migrant’s wife from low-income Syed group said:

“I usually go to public health facilities because they charge less, however, if the illness is serious and a specialized doctor is needed, I go to private clinic or hospital. My husband sends separate money for my medical expenses and with that I manage personal and children’s healthcare. My father-in-law manages the healthcare matters of other household members, however, in my case, he always asks me about the doctor and hospital of my choice. Unfortunately, I lost my first child because of a local doctor’s negligence. Since then, I have gone to private hospitals, and clearly told my husband that I will not accept any interference in health matters from household members. All of this is only possible because of migration and remittances as I receive separate money for personal maintenance and take independent decisions. If I was not receiving separate remittances, and was dependent on my in laws, I would not be able to take independent decisions” (Samina Bibi, 4 B UC, *Nawansher*).

Analysis of the narration shows that women are largely independent in health decisions after migration. They are independent in selecting doctors and health facilities as shown in the narration. The above narration states two interesting dimensions of healthcare system in the

area. Firstly, men especially the heads of the households mainly take decisions regarding healthcare of members (men and women) except migrants' wives which means that women especially migrants' wives are becoming independent in health decisions. Secondly, migration and remittances are very important for determining health preferences and selection and thus empower women to decide and choose health facilities which is clear from the above statement, "I will not accept any interference in health matters from household members". Furthermore, the analysis reveals that the migrant's wife is receiving separate remittances and has support of her husband which is significant in the local context because this means that she is influencing the person (her husband) who is providing economic support to the family thus directly increasing her importance in the family.

Similarly, another female respondent from middle-income Jadoon group said:

"Nowadays, women are masters of their own will and they have their own priorities and choices. There was a time when men called the local doctors and midwives for treatment and deliveries. Currently, women go to expensive health facilities and using expensive products such as diapers for children. I am receiving remittances from my husband and apart from health decisions, I am also independent in many other everyday matters such as shopping and visiting my parents and friends in the community for which I previously needed my in-laws' permission. However, these are not mainly considered women's duties but I and many other migrants' wives are doing this because we better understand what we need. This would not have been possible if we were not economically independent and did not have strong support of husbands after migration (Naima Bibi, 7 A UC, *Nawansher*).

Analysis of the above narration illustrates that migrants' wives are receiving separate remittances from their husbands, and they are largely independent in decision-making about themselves and their children. The in-laws, especially the father-in-law, mainly manages the household tasks and does not interfere in her matters because he is economically dependent on his son, and conflict with his daughter-in-law means conflict with his son. The in-laws only give opinion and provide help in times of need as mentioned by Naima Bibi during the interview. Analysis of the narration also highlights an interesting point that after migration, women largely gained their husbands' support which means that transnational experiences have largely changed men's behaviors. As a result of this, migrants' wives became significantly independent not only in health decisions but also in many everyday social affairs such as independent

shopping and visits to friends and parental family without consultation and permission of in laws. Furthermore, the analysis shows that it is not only about the health decisions women are taking after the migration, but these (healthcare related decisions) also include a number of other related activities like outside interactions and experiences which are increasing women's exposure. The analysis reveals that despite different social pressures such as local gender and mobility norms, migrants' wives are empowered enough to take independent decisions thus changing local gender relations.

Analysis of this empirical chapter shows that although men have dominant positions in the local social setup, but migration and remittances are significantly changing the local socio-economic dynamics thus making women independent in everyday affairs. For example, as shown above, migrants' wives, after migration of husbands and receiving remittances, are considerably influencing household's decisions in both Jadoon and Syed groups. Furthermore, the analysis illustrates that women, despite many constraints like ethnicity, social and religious status and political influence, are becoming independent in many household matters and taking independent decisions.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Male out-migration and remittances have profound and complex socio-economic implications, and bring socio-economic transformations and changes in the origin societies. In this study, I examined the changing gender relations, especially the changing roles, responsibilities, and social positions of migrants' wives after migration of husbands and receiving remittances in two union councils of district Abbottabad. The changes in gender relations are mainly due to male out-migration and remittances because these have significantly increased women's mobility, decision-making, economic participation, and the ratio of women's bank accounts. This study is mainly guided by research questions such as how women in two different union councils under different socio-economic circumstances, through migration and remittances, challenge and negotiate, and create possibilities of economic participation, decision-making, mobility and outside interactions. For this study, two union councils of district Abbottabad in Northern Pakistan were selected since these were ethnically, economically, and socio-politically diverse areas. The district Abbottabad in particular and northern areas of Pakistan in general have been largely neglected in the existing body of literature, especially in the context of women's empowerment through migration and remittances.

For the last few decades, because of growing poverty, unemployment, and political instability, a substantial portion of the male population migrated to different countries of the world. For example, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC), Europe and North America are among some of the popular destinations for Pakistani migrants. However, the majority are labor migrants and around 96 percent of these Pakistani migrants are in the GCC countries (BE & OE, 2021). They are mainly temporary male labor migrants who leave behind their families in the origin country, but are continuously engaged and connected to their families and origin communities through frequent visits, migrant's networks and remittances to their left behind families and communities. Remittances are an important source of social changes and financial support for many people in the two selected union councils of *Malakpura* and *Nawasher* of district Abbottabad. As it is mainly male-migration, thus it is essential to examine the changing gender relations afterwards.

In order to systematically analyze the process of changing gender relations because of migration and remittances, which is one of the most important aspects of this research, I adopted a theoretical framework mainly based on concepts from mainstream migration literature such as migration and development, and transnationalism or transnational perspectives. Despite many

historical debates and several discourses, the concept of migration and development has been extensively discussed and refined in recent years. Currently, because of migration and remittances especially in the case of district Abbottabad, the origin societies are passing through significant socio-economic changes and transformations thus incorporating concepts from migration and development, and transnational perspectives is more relevant to this study.

The empirical data mainly identified two phases of women's involvement in the migration and remittances process. Firstly, they are involved in the preparatory or the pre-migration phase such as managing funds for migration of husbands mainly by giving their personal savings and by selling jewelry that women bring with them from parental homes as dowry. They provide socio-psychological support to migrants regarding their journey by taking care of children. Furthermore, women also make necessary pre-migration preparations like preparation of luggage and clothes for migrants. Secondly, women are involved in the post-migration or after the migration phase such as the overall remittances' management like receiving, utilization, and investment. This study provided interesting information and discussions over women's experiences and participation in two different phases of migration. However, in the recent years, the migration scholarship expanded and included the perspectives of multiple localities and diverse experiences of migrants and the left behind family members, but these discourses mainly focus on the post-migration experiences of migrants and the left-behind family members (Bieteru, 2019; Fatima & Qayyum, 2016). Women's role in the migration process as migrants and as left-behind wives received attention much later in the scholarly circles (Morrison et al., 2007, c.f. Archambault, 2010, pp. 921-22). Previously, women, whether migrants or left-behind wives, were largely neglected and unrecognized in the migration discourses (Pedraza 1991; Chant 1992b, c.f. Archambault, 2010, p. 921). According to Hugo (1992, 195), "Women's role in migration has been viewed as 'associational', i.e., occurring purely as a passive addition to the real decision-making which was done by males" (Hugo 1992, 195, c.f. Archambault, 2010, p. 921). It is important to note that this study presented nuanced discussions over women's role and participation in the pre-migration stage especially in the context of Pakistan. For example, the field research confirmed women's active participation and management regarding migration preparations and financial support for funding migration of husbands. These results of the study largely correspond with the findings of Gulati (1987) who argues that, "The assets which married women brought with them as dowry are either sold or mortgaged to raise funds to meet the migration expenses" (Gulati, 1987, p. 42). These interesting empirical findings of my study regarding women's role and participation particularly in the pre-migration period have been largely neglected in the mainstream migration literature especially in Pakistan. Thus, findings

of this study will expand and diversify the ways to look into and analyze women's role in the pre-migration phase through different theoretical methodological lenses. Furthermore, the unique finding of this study regarding women's activities in the pre-migration stage will give new research dimensions, and diverse arenas for future researches, and scientific debates not only in the northern region of Pakistan but beyond.

The central aspect studied in the empirical chapter 5 is about changing gender relations and women's empowerment in nuclear families in union council *Malakpura* after the migration of husbands. Empirical finding of this study confirmed the transformation and changes in gender relation in migrants' families. For example, in nuclear families of migrants, the left-behind wives opened personal bank accounts for receiving remittances, took over men's duties by supervising construction work, made contributions to community funds, checked the progress of children's education by visiting the educational institutes, and started economic participation through women economic committees. These results are largely in line with the mainstream migration literature regarding changing gender relations and women's empowerment in the post migration situations. For example, Gerry (2019) argues, "Women, ranging from migrants themselves to the families of migrants to community members, are becoming empowered through shifts in gender roles and expectations catalyzed by Gulf migration in Kerala state of India. Women, whether migrants or left-behind, experience material, personal, and professional success; and also those who are faced with less advantageous circumstances can all garner increased autonomy, agency, and independence by way of their relationship with migration" (Gerry, 2019, p. 49). Likewise, Rajkarnikar (2017) states, "Through men's migration, women can gain increased access to economic and social resources, and higher bargaining power" (Rajkarnikar, 2017, p. 256; see also Sheikh et al., 2016; Yabiku et al., 2010). My study suggests that women's activities such as economic participation, inspection of construction work, independent visits to schools and healthcare facilities, and opening women's personal bank accounts that started after the migration of husbands in nuclear families significantly empowered women because they enabled them to take on men's duties and to gain empowerment. Likewise, these activities are also used by researchers in studies as main indicators to measure women's empowerment (Mittra et al., 2019; Yabiku et al., 2010; Hameed, et al., 2014; Hashmi et al., 1996). In this study, women's economic participation, especially in nuclear families through economic committees, is largely seen by women as attainment of empowerment because they have access to and control over resources, and make strategic life choices (see for example Kabeer, 2001). The fieldwork confirmed that these activities significantly increased women's outside interactions, mobility and choices of

decision-making. Furthermore, this research found a unique and interesting point regarding women's personal bank accounts especially of migrants' wives. This is important for two reasons especially in the context of developing countries like Pakistan. Firstly, as stated by women during interviews, women's personal bank accounts are considered as factors of increasing women's empowerment (see also Sheikh et al., 2016; Arif, 2009). Secondly, bank accounts of women are important especially in Pakistan where efforts are underway to encourage and include more women in the formal economic sector under financial inclusion policies including the financial inclusion programme of Pakistan (NFIS). This policy strategy (NFIS) of Pakistani government aims at increasing women account holders thereby including more women in formal economic sector (SBP, 2018). Additionally, this is also important from the policy perspective regarding remittances regularization to Pakistan as this is one of the major concerns of the current Pakistani government to regularize remittances through formal channels particularly through banks and women bank accounts to achieve this policy goal (SBP, 2018). Therefore, the study concludes that these points are very important from empowerment and development perspectives and also from the policy part especially in the context of Pakistan.

Regarding nuclear families in union council *Malakpura*, this study found some local factors which are potential sources that help to increase women's empowerment. The field research and respondents confirmed factors of family structure, ethnicity, household income, networks and age of women as major factors especially in nuclear families. For example, women during interviews confirmed that a specific age limit (mainly above forty years) is an advantage for women for achieving more access to physical mobility, outside interactions and decision-making. Age in the local context is a sign of respect for both males and females. The more age one has the more respect they get inside homes and in the community (see for example Maity et al., 2018). Likewise, factors such as ethnicity, duration of husband's absence from home and nuclear household structures are equally important that helped women to quickly takeover matters in hand. For example, women residing in nuclear family and in different ethnic community are free from kin interference and gossips, and thus have more freedom of social networking and economic participation. Additionally, the study concluded that women's education and social networks as additional positive factors which help women to quickly get control of the household decision-making and resources. Generally, the factors identified in this study are largely in line with factors discussed in the mainstream migration literature (Desai & Banerji, 2008; Ekra et al., 2011; Maity et al., 2018; Menjivar, 2007; Sayeed & Ansari, 2019; sheikh et al., 2016; Rajnikar, 2017). However, some of the local factors such as ethnicity and

social networking are important but are not really considered in the literature when discussing remittances and changing gender relations especially in the region and in Pakistan. This study's results, especially in the context of migrants' wives, do not correspond with the finding of Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) who argue, that women irrespective of age, status and household structures, share a secondary position in the socio-economic and political sphere of social life (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). Their findings might be true for women under different circumstances as their sample population showed. For example, their sample from Pakistan included women from large agro-economic zones of Punjab province who are mainly under feudalistic influence, and rural and urban divisions. However, my study results suggest that the above discussed factors positively influence women and as a result they gain considerable influence over decision-making, household budgets, and economic participations which have largely empowered them. Thus, this finding of my study will add new information in the context of male out migration and women's empowerment in Northern Pakistan.

In chapter 6, I focused on women/migrants' wives responses in relation to the implications of migration and remittances while living in extended families in union council *Nawasher* (the second area/ union council of the study). The local circumstances such as residential arrangement (extended families) and socio-economic conditions are different in this union council. For example, there are mainly different income groups, strong ethnic affiliations, *pardah* and more political active groups in the area. However, analysis of the empirical data shows that after migration of husbands and receiving personal remittances, women's participation in household decisions, mobility and investments in different income generation activities significantly increased. Additionally, women, during the fieldwork, also confirmed that after migration of husbands, they gained freedom of physical mobility, control over remittances and greater economic participation. Women translated these transformations as changes in gender relations and empowerment of women which were largely denied to them before migration (see Kabeer, 2001). These results of the research are not in line with some studies which mainly argue that in extended families, women are merely passive individuals (Maity et al., 2018; Sinha et al., 2012; Lefebvre, 1990). Thus, this study concludes and suggests that as in nuclear households, gender relations in extended households have also changed; however, local factors such as income differences, ethnic affiliations, and local norms of *pardah* differently influence gender relations in extended households as discussed in the final part of this chapter.

The study confirmed women's active role after the migration of husbands in extended households. For example, women started to receive separate remittances for personal maintenance and children's needs of education, health, and other everyday routine necessities which significantly changed women's roles. Women respondents confirmed that after migration of husbands they receive separate remittances which they use on different needs. For instance, through remittances, women buy things of personal use like clothes, beautification items, and jewelry. Women also use the remittances over children's education, health, food, and other necessities which could be translated as a productive use of remittances in human capital. Additionally, the remittances investments by migrants' wives are considered as productive by many women during the field work because the investments significantly changed gender relations and empowered local women. These findings are very important from the policy point of view because they largely support the contemporary views in migration and development literature which argues positive development implications of remittances at macro-level. Likewise, remittances also reduce household poverty through more investments in human capital (Pant, 2010; AdamsJr. & Cuecuecha, 2013).

The freedom of receiving separate remittances and their independent use have two important aspects especially in the context of migrants' wives in the extended families. Firstly, as the fieldwork confirmed, control over remittances and the consequent activities like independent mobility, interactions and decision-making significantly changed gender relations which are largely taken as important indicators of women's empowerment in the migration literature (Ramírez et al., 2005; Rahman, 2012; Shwe et al., 2020; Khalaf, 2009). Secondly, women confirmed during the interviews that before migration, they were largely dependent on husbands or other male members of the family because of which they had less decision-making powers and outside interactions.

The analysis concludes that migrants' wives' decisions are considered seriously in family matters as well as issues related to their children after the migration of husbands, for example, decisions regarding children's education, health, and marriages. The study found that migrants' wives even successfully get separated, and form new nuclear families in case they face confrontation from in-laws regarding implementation of decisions because extended families are dependent on remittances from migrants. Thus, migrants' wives in some cases become even more powerful. Another interesting point this study concluded is about the changes in behaviors and support of husbands after the migration. Women translated these post migration changes in husbands' behaviors because of migration and transnational experiences which mainly support

the growing views in the literature regarding social remittances and transnational exposure of migrants that bring changes in migrants' attitudes and changes in the origin societies (Levitt, 1999; Hadi, 2001; Levitt, 2001). These findings are not in line with the literature which argues that migration to Gulf countries makes migrants even more conservative (Myntti, 1984; Taylor, 1984). Thus, this study suggests a contextual inquiry regarding the impacts of social remittances over local communities in origin countries because the flow of social remittances varies according to migrants' countries of destinations. Likewise, its impacts are also different and context specific. This study concludes some important points that have received less attention in the literature discussing the implications of social remittances over changing gender relations in the research area and in Pakistan.

As argued in the empirical chapters (chapter no. 5 & 6), there are some local factors such as norms of honor, *pardah*, social status, ethnicity and duration of husband stay abroad that tend to limit women's empowerment especially in union council *Nawansher*. However, the study found that despite these factors, male-out migration and remittances significantly changed gender relations and empowered women. This is very interesting and unique finding because the mainstream literature in Pakistan largely discussed the categories of honor, *pardah*, ethnicity, and extended families as factors that significantly confine women empowerment (Sayeed & Ansari, 2019; Lefebvre, 1990; Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001).

Furthermore, the study finding concludes that women, especially from low-income households invested remittances in different income generation activities like economic committees and small-scale businesses like embroidery and sewing clothes. Women, during the interviews, confirmed that the income through these investments largely made them economically self-sufficient, and enabled them to contribute in households' expenditures. Analysis of the finding shows that women's investments have additional important implications. For example, the investments increased women's outside interactions and mobility which gave them confidence of dealing with men regarding their business. The study found that women took over men's duties by financially supporting their families which became only possible after the migration of husbands and receiving remittances. The changes in women's roles and responsibilities after husbands' migration have largely empowered women.

Additionally, the study concluded an important finding which is quite relevant to migration policies and current scientific discussions over migration and development. For example, the majority contemporary migration, gender and development literature argues that women's double role, and responsibilities that they assume in the absence of their husbands should not

be considered as improvement in women's overall status and empowerment because these responsibilities are additional burdens for them (Yay & Nangia, 2005; Gorden, 1981; Menjivar & Agadjanian, 2007; Haas & Rooij, 2010). However, my study concluded that women from both nuclear and extended families consider and see the increased responsibilities and dual role as enhancement in their empowerment.

To briefly summarize, the present study reveals how the current socio-economic changes because of male out migration and remittances in the North Western part of Pakistan changed gender relations at different levels in the society, produced new social roles, and changed local power relations. This research is the first attempt of its nature especially in this region (district Abbottabad of *Hazara* region) to conduct a qualitative study using migration and development perspectives to study the changing gender relations and empowerment. Additionally, this study emphasizes the significance of women's agency with one of its main strengths bring the focus on women's role in the migration and development discourses because the mainstream literature and policy documents in Pakistan have largely neglected this aspect. Generally, the migration and development nexus in Pakistan mainly focuses on economic development instead of social changes. The mainstream migration literature in Pakistan, and the country's politics¹⁶², mainly revolve around the economic outcomes of migration, and see migrants' remittances as a major source for increasing the country's GDP, and improving the income status of local communities (see for example, Amjad & Arif, 2014; Arif, 2009; Ahmed et al., 2008; BE & OE, 2021). Likewise, the government's migration policies are largely gender blind¹⁶³ that mainly neglect women as a potential human resource (labor migrants), and their role in managing remittances after male out migration. Although there are studies on social transformations because of migration and remittances, but it has received less attention in the literature¹⁶⁴, politics and policy documents in Pakistan. Thus, the study suggests to consider current global trends and local challenges, and proposes a more holistic and systematic approach of integrating

¹⁶² The government of Pakistan's migration policies largely encourage male out migration because migration is seen as a major source of foreign investments to Pakistan. The policies also aims to channelize remittances to Pakistan. Likewise, the organizational setup like the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BE&OE) of Pakistan work to facilitate migrants for example, special consulate attaches deployed in different Gulf states, introduced e-passport, and digital remittance accounts in Pakistan. Additionally, the government encourage investments from overseas Pakistani in real estate and industries.

¹⁶³ The Pakistan's migration policy mainly focus on male migration which is evident from the fact that until 2020 there were only 1727 women migrated from Pakistan for employment purposes. Interestingly, the share of women migrants from the North Western province of Pakistan is very low e.g. 2.95 percent whereas the ratio of male emigration from the province is considerably high (BE & OE 2020).

¹⁶⁴ Some of the major studies over social transformation and transnational connections are mainly in the context of Pakistani diaspora in Europe (see Erdal, 2012; Erdal, 2014; Ballard, 2003; & Ballard, 1999).

contemporary migration and development discourses, and local circumstances for broader understanding.

Furthermore, in this study I analyze gender relations in two different areas (union councils or research sites), and under different circumstances such as by taking two different residential settings (nuclear and extended households). This is unique with reference to the research area and there were multifold reasons for studying gender relations or women's empowerment this way. Firstly, to analyze gender relations under different socio-economic circumstances and categories largely focuses on; for example, under different ethnic, economic, and household structures because these factors are equally important while studying the impact of remittances over gender relations. Additionally, these categories influence gender relations differently in nuclear and extended households. Analyzing gender relations this way will produce nuanced and interesting findings. Moreover, this study for the first time takes different household structures in a single study for analysis in this part of Pakistan. Secondly, women are largely seen inactive or no improvements in their status after migration of husbands in extended households (Maity et al., 2018; Sinha et al., 2012; Lefebvre, 1990). The present study contextualizes the local situations, analyzes gender relations in extended households, and produces different results. Finally, local factors such as age, ethnicity, migrants' absence and duration of stay abroad, honor, and income differences influence gender relations differently in nuclear and extended households. Thus, this study has combined all these important points in a single whole that is shaped my scientific approach and methodological decision to take two different household structures from two different localities to get nuanced information that may be useful for other studies in Pakistan and beyond.

My analysis concludes that households are not homogenous units, therefore, the gender relations are changing after out-migration, and power relations are changing even further because extended families are mainly dependent on remittances from migrants. As mentioned before, there are some local factors namely age of women, duration of out migration, social networks, *purdah*, and social status which are important when studying remittances and gender relations. The study concludes that these factors are equally important in shaping gender relations in both categories of households. However, some factors operate differently according to household structures. For example, the time period or migrants' duration of stay abroad is one of the important factors while studying remittances and gender relations which differently affects gender relations in nuclear and extended households. For instance, in nuclear families, women quickly take over household duties as soon their husbands migrate because there is no

one to support or assist them. On the other hand, in the extended households, the factor of time or duration of migrants' stay has minimal influence over changing gender relations because there are other individuals in the family to take up household's responsibilities. Migrants' wives in this case are largely dependent on other family members until or unless they receive separate remittances and start independently. However, some of the local factors such as ethnicity, and social networking are important but less focused in the mainstream migration and development literature especially in Pakistan. Thus the study suggests that there is an important relationship between remittances, gender relations, and the local factors; however, this needs more careful and contextual analysis while conducting a qualitative study. Furthermore, many of these factors are taken in the mainstream literature but in the Pakistani context, especially the way these are influencing gender relations at different levels, are not fully considered. Therefore, this study suggests that these should be included in studies conducted in other areas.

Furthermore, the study concludes that the responsibilities of women vary according to household structures and should not be confused because women experience these responsibilities differently in different household structures. For example, women living in nuclear households perform many duties alone being the head of the household in the absence of their husbands. However, in extended households many of these responsibilities are shared by other extended family members like the male household head, other women, and extended relatives. Thus, the increased responsibilities or dual role of women should not be considered the same in two different residential settings, and as this study concludes, these vary according to household structures. These important findings will help to deconstruct the previous conceptualization regarding women's dual responsibilities as burden for women in general especially in the Pakistani context. Thus, the study presents some important points for further scientific debates and future research. As stated already, basic research over migration and changing gender relations in this part of Pakistan is in the initial stage. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that young researchers from academia and policy institutes in Pakistan are critically working over different socio-cultural and economic aspects of migration and development. The present study aims to motivate and inspire new researches from the Northern region of Pakistan and beyond.

The empowerment approaches and the parameters set for measuring empowerment mainly correspond with my study (Kabeer 2001, Schuler & Hashemi, 1994; Mahmud et al., 2012; Mittra et al., 2019; Hashmi et al., 1996). However, there are some contextual factors such as family social status, ethnicity, and different social class-based groups highlighted by the current

study are especially important when studying women's empowerment and gender relations in connection with migration and remittances especially in societies like Pakistan. Furthermore, it is important to consider the sustainability of empowerment when analyzing under specific circumstances such as when women are mainly empowered through migration and remittances, and to see whether the empowerment is sustainable or does it end with the return of male migrants¹⁶⁵. Additionally, some studies like Hashmi et al., 1996, Schuler & Hashemi, 1994, Mahmud et al., 2012, and Mittra et al., 2019 mainly study and use economic activity or different credit schemes for empowering women that might produce different analytical results when compared with studies that use both economic as well as social indicators to measure women's empowerment. For example, this study analyzes and measures women's empowerment through social and economic remittances, and migration. Thus, this study suggests that analyzing and measuring women's empowerment is complex and we need to study it in a more careful and systematic way by considering the local context and dynamics because integrating global aspects and local dynamics provides a more powerful and refined analytical framework for understanding women's empowerment in a specific and global settings.

¹⁶⁵ This research largely contradict studies which suggest that women empowerment is temporary because as soon the husbands return, wives resume their previous household roles. The present study concluded that even after return of migrants to origin countries, women continue to perform the duties and influence household decisions as they were doing during husbands' migration.

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ANNEX 1: ABSTRACT

Migration has remained an important aspect in the history of humankind. People migrate from one place to another for various reasons, which not only affect the demographic structure of societies but also bring many socio-economic and political transformations in both origin and destination countries. The process of migration is further accelerated by globalization through modern means of communication. In Pakistan, labor migration to Gulf cooperation countries (GCC) started in the mid-1970s and since then, about 10 million Pakistani workers have gone abroad for employment, mainly to the Middle Eastern countries. Labor migration is a significant source of foreign investment for Pakistan and the resulted remittances have always been a major determinant for emigration from Pakistan. The remittances to Pakistan have increased from US \$1 billion in 2001 to US \$12 billion in 2011. The more recent figures of 2020 and mid-2021 show an increase in the remittances to US \$26.1 billion. Apart from the economic benefits, these growing remittances are also bringing about changes in the social arena such as gender relations. This study focuses on the role of remittances in changing gender relations in two union councils of district Abbottabad in the Northern Pakistan. While migration and remittances have been discussed in the mainstream literature, the district Abbottabad in Northern Pakistan has been largely neglected. Therefore, union councils *Malakpura* and *Nawansher* of district Abbottabad were selected for this study. A field research work stretched over several months from April 2016 to July 2016 was conducted in district Abbottabad, focusing on changing gender relations as a result of migration and remittances. The qualitative study adopted the theoretical framework based on concepts from migration and development, and transnational perspectives. The impact of remittances was qualitatively assessed through three different but interconnected analytical concepts of receiving, managing and investing of remittances by migrants' wives. These concepts are reflected upon and are embedded in the whole structure of this study. Through these concepts and factors, gender relations are qualitatively analyzed such as the data analysis shows that the process of remittances improved women's social status and positions, and increased their mobility, decision-making and economic participation in the left-behind nuclear and extended households of migrants. The study revealed that despite local norms of gender and *pardah*, ethnicity, household structure, and political influence, migration and remittances are gradually changing local gender relations and creating possibilities for women. For example, migration and remittances and the process initiated by these such as women's bank accounts, mobility, decision-making, receiving, management of remittances and women's economic committees have significantly increased women's participation,

interactions, mobility and decision-making in nuclear and extended households after migration, thus changing gender relations and empowered women.

Zusammenfassung

Migration ist nach wie vor ein wichtiger Aspekt in der Menschheitsgeschichte. Menschen migrieren aus unterschiedlichen Gründen von einem Ort zu einem anderen, was sich nicht nur auf die demografische Struktur von Gesellschaften auswirkt, sondern auch viele sozioökonomische und politische Veränderungen mit sich bringt, sowohl in den Herkunfts- als auch in den Zielländern. Der Migrationsprozess wird im Zuge der Globalisierung durch moderne Kommunikationsmittel weiter beschleunigt. In Pakistan setzte die Arbeitsmigration in Länder des Golf-Kooperationsrats (GKR) Mitte der 1970er-Jahre ein, und seither nahmen etwa zehn Millionen pakistanische Arbeitssuchende Beschäftigung im Ausland auf, vorrangig in Ländern des Nahen Ostens. Für Pakistan stellt die Arbeitsmigration eine bedeutende Quelle ausländischer Investitionen dar und die aus ihr resultierenden Rücküberweisungen waren stets ein vorrangiger Grund für die Auswanderung aus Pakistan. Die Rücküberweisungen nach Pakistan sind von einer Milliarde US-Dollar im Jahr 2001 auf 12 Milliarden US-Dollar im Jahr 2011 gestiegen. Jüngere Zahlen aus den Jahren 2020 und Mitte 2021 belegen den Anstieg der Rücküberweisungen auf 26,1 Milliarden US-Dollar. Neben wirtschaftlichen Vorteilen bringen steigende Rücküberweisungen auch Veränderungen im gesellschaftlichen Bereich mit sich, etwa in Geschlechterverhältnissen. Diese Studie beleuchtet die Rolle von Rücküberweisungen in der Veränderung von Geschlechterverhältnissen in zwei Union Councils (kleinste Verwaltungseinheit Pakistans) des Distrikts Abbottabad im Norden Pakistans. Obwohl Migration und Rücküberweisungen in der Mainstream-Literatur diskutiert werden, wurde der Distrikt Abbottabad im Norden Pakistans weitgehend vernachlässigt. Daher wurden für diese Untersuchung die Union Councils *Malakpura* und *Nawansher* des Distrikts Abbottabad ausgewählt. Im Distrikt Abbottabad fand von April 2016 bis Juli 2016 eine mehrmonatige Feldforschung statt, die sich mit den sich aufgrund von Migration und Rücküberweisungen verändernden Geschlechterverhältnissen auseinandersetzte. Als theoretischen Rahmen berücksichtigt die qualitative Erhebung Konzepte der Migration und Entwicklung sowie transnationaler Perspektiven. Die Auswirkungen der Rücküberweisungen wurden qualitativ entlang von drei unterschiedlichen, aber miteinander verbundenen Analyseebenen bewertet: wie Ehefrauen der Migranten die Rücküberweisungen erhalten, verwalten und investieren. Diese Ebenen werden reflektiert und sind in die gesamte Struktur dieser Studie eingebettet. Über diese Konzepte und Ebenen werden Geschlechterverhältnisse qualitativ analysiert. Die Datenauswertung belegt, dass der Prozess der Rücküberweisungen den sozialen Status und die Position der Frauen verbesserte, und deren Mobilität, Entscheidungsmacht und wirtschaftliche Teilhabe in den von Migranten zurückgelassenen Kern- und erweiterten Haushalten erhöhte.

Die Untersuchung zeigt auf, dass trotz lokaler Normen hinsichtlich Geschlecht, *Parda*, ethnischer Zugehörigkeit, Haushaltsstruktur und politischem Einfluss, die Migration und Rücküberweisungen lokale Geschlechterverhältnisse allmählich verändern und die Möglichkeiten der Frauen erweitern. So haben etwa nach der Migration der Ehemänner und deren Rücküberweisungen sowie die durch diese initiierten Prozesse (wie eigene Bankkonten der Frauen) die Partizipation, Interaktion, Mobilität und Entscheidungsmacht von Frauen im Kern- und erweiterten Haushalt signifikant erhöht, und damit Geschlechterverhältnisse verändert und Frauen ermächtigt.

ANNEX 2: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
BEOE	Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment
EU	European Union
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDR	Human Development Report
HIES	Household Integrated Economic Survey
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KNOMAD	Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOP	Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis
NELM	New Economic of Labor Migration
PKR	Pakistan Rupee
PSLM	Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement Survey
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom

UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
USA	United States of America

Glossary

Abaya	A long robe for covering body
Biradhri	Extended Family
Burqa	Dress for body concealment
Carry-dhba	Vehicle use as taxi for transportation
Chadar	Piece of cloth for covering head
Chunri	Piece of cloth, Stole
Darawal	Same residence
Dhabah	Small café
Ghar	Home
Ghunghat	A veil cover the face
Hazarawal	A regional ethnic group
Hundi	Informal channels for sending remittances
Izzat	Honour
Jatuk	Son
Jirga resolution	Council of elders (male) of the community for dispute
Khandan	Family
Khat	Letter
Madrassa	Seminary
Makan	House
Muhallah	Residential units
Namoos	Gender boundaries
Na-mehram	Individuals other than siblings, parents and uncle
Nendra	Ceremonial funds for mutual exchange at marriages

Odhni	Head scarf
Pashtun	Ethnic group in the North Western part of Pakistan
Potohari culture	A culture of the Punjab province in Pakistan
Prah	Brother
<i>Purdah</i>	Veil
Putar	Son
Thana-Kachari	Police station and courts