WIFE LEFT BEHIND: PERCEPTION OF BURDENED WIFE

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ABSTRACT

The wife (left behind) is burdened with problems such as running the home, bringing up children, looking after their education and carrying out socio-cultural responsibilities of close and distant relatives like attending a wedding ceremony, funeral ceremony and other social gatherings. Hence, the study aims at digging out the nature and magnitude of problems being faced by the wife left behind. It was a qualitative research approach in which exploratory design was used. For this research, judgmental sampling was used to conduct three FGDs and 10 IDIs with respondents (wives left behind) of different areas of Distract Khanewal in Punjab, Pakistan. The results reveal the husband's absence burden wife with problems like, handling children, children's poor performance at school, performing domestic chores, maintaining relationship with close and distant relatives and importantly wife empowerment at home. The results also highlight unfair interference of in-laws, unequal distribution of domestic chores, handling children's problems, sexual harassment and deteriorating physical and mental health of wife.

Keywords: *Wife left behind, Perception, Burdened Wife, Domestics Chores, Children education, Sexual harassment*

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of husband's labor migration on wife left behind has received a great amount of attention (Wurtz & Castañeda, 2024) and interest in Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia (Yabiku et al., 2010). The scholars have recently started to discover different dynamics of people left behind within framework of migration left behind nexus. Migration is a long and complicated process (Anggara et al., 2024) in which a migrant has to stay away from his family members for a long time (Al-Baldawi, 2010). Migrants have to leave their native city or village for better jobs (Regional Thematic Working Group, 2008; Gutierrez, 2024). The migration occurs across the country and also across the borders, seas and continents. In the beginning, people migrate alone if they find a suitable place to live (Rahayu, 2024); they have permanent settlement (Apatinga et al., 2022). A migrant has to send remittance to his family members

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(Akter et al., 2024). If he is married, he is responsible for his parents, wife and children's livelihood. He has to work a lot. Most of the married men who leave their family behind belong to military, corporate and construction professions (Hubinger et al., 2002). Male family members' migration affect the people left behind at home. A husband's migration involves the entire family in the boundary ambiguity (Ghimire et al., 2021), family not knowing who is in and who is out of the system (Boss et al, 1990). The family thinks a physically absent member is psychologically present or physically present, but psychologically absent.

In developing countries, mostly migrant men leave their wives and children at the place of origin (Desai & Banerji, 2008; Ikuomola, 2015). In the case of Pakistan, people migrate to big and industrial cities like Karachi (Iqbal et al, 2018), Lahore (Hameed et al., 2025), Faisalabad (Abrar et al., 2025) and other cities for better job opportunities (Iqbal .2012, Said, 2024), better business (Farooq, 2006) and trade opportunities (Hasan & Mohib, 2010; Iqbal et al., 2024) and livelihood (Hasan et al, 2002). In most cases, married migrants have to move alone and leave their wives and children behind (Aziz et al., 2024).

1.1 Research Objectives

1. Explore the domestic issues of the wife left behind.
2. Explore the nature of sexual harassment faced by the wife left behind.
3. Identify the level of empowerment experienced by the wife left behind.

1.2 Research Questions

The presence of husband at home is very helpful, supportive to the wife to address different issues and problems. But the absence of husband at home makes wife overwhelmed by different problems. The study is to dig out problems and capture the attention of researchers and social scientist to the issues. The study answers the following research questions:

Q1. What are the domestic issues?
Q2. What is the nature of sexual harassment?
Q3. To what extent are wives empowered?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The effects of migration reach far beyond the individuals participating in cross-border movement, often leading to changes in the family and community structure and roles (West et al., 2024). Among left behind family members, wives and children suffer most (He-Schaefer & Fan, 2024). It has been found that migrants' wives experience anxiety, depression and emotional disturbance on frequent separation of their husbands (Hossain et al, 2024).

Mostly the wives are successful at coping depression, but it has been noticed that wives' efforts to cope go unsuccessful (Jansen & Agadjanian, 2024). A term has been developed; IHS (Intermittent Husband Syndrome) which describes wife's (left behind) unfruitful efforts to cope depression, anxiety which she frequently experiences during her reunion and parting from her husband (Taylor et al., 1985; Arne, et al, 2007; Kohm, 2014). The study conducted on wives left behind in Aberdeen area shows that there is no difference between coping depression and anxiety experienced by wives left behind and wives living with their husbands. But according to another study conducted on miners' wives (whose husbands work at a long distance from their home) were found sad, gloomy and mentally disturbed. The Turkish wives have been found in strain and stress if their husbands do not send remittance or do not have good employment (Yabiku et al., 2010). The cycle of reunion and separation psychologically greatly disturbs wives (Robinson, 2024). On reunion, they are happy and on departing, they are sad. The mixed feelings make them mentally and emotionally disturb (Hubinger et al., 2002). Moreover, a study conducted on Norwegian seafarers 'wives reveal that husbands' absentees' does not have significant effect on marital satisfaction. The wives feel loneliness (Ulven et al., 2007; Arokkiaraj et al., 2021). A study conducted in Nepal reveals that wives left behind in rural area have to face problems such as bringing water from remote areas (Koirala & Bashyal, 2025). This affects their social status because when they go to the market, people talk about them and they feel uncomfortable. The migration of husbands also decreases fertility because their absence reduces frequent sexual interaction. This is also true that lack of father at home leads male children to interpersonal violence (Schwartz, 2003). The study conducted in Albania reveals that children left behind show poor attendance at school (Antman, 2013). Moreover, it has also been found that children's health and diet are also affected (Adhikari et al, 2022). The wives do not have guidance for children (Farooq & Zahoor, 2009). The wives left behind are sexually disturbed if they are married recently and in some cases, the conflict leads to divorce or extra marital affairs (Ullah, 2017).

Raising children is not an easy job for the wife left behind (Barczewski, 2022). It happens because a father occupies a very traditional role for children in the house (Nobles, 2011). His absence at home causes many difficulties for children (Scafidi, 2008; Carranza, 2022) and no leader at home (Nobles, 2011). The research reveals that without father's presence, children develop outside interest which may conflict the family norms (Hubinger, 2002, Wu et al., 2021). The role of father at home is very particular and it does not have any choice (Ghimire et al, 2022). According to a study conducted on Gay Association in Greece, a mother blamed that her husband's absence at home caused her son

to join gay association because her son did not find any male ideal personality; his father (Dendrinos, 2008). It means that the husband's absence creates many problems for the wife left behind (Sharma et al, 2021). The results of the study conducted by Gartaula et al., (2012) in Jhapa district of Nepal reveals that wives face problems regarding the discipline of their children. They (wives) believe that children sometimes need reprimand, but grandparents of children interfere and spoil the children (Kamal, 2024). But this does not happen when their husbands are at home and they feel this gap. The wives say that they cannot do anything without in-laws consent (Hena & Jahan, 2021). One wife tells that she can quarrel with her husband but cannot dare to say anything to his parents. A wife sadly shared that once his son took a piece of food, for which he was badly scolded by her sister-in-law (husband' elder brother wife) and she could not do anything, but just felt sad. It has been observed that the wives (Mexican) left behind say that their husband's migration is associated with the reduction of children polio vaccination (Biao, 2007), reducing breastfeeding (Bertoli, et al., 2024). In China, 47% children (raised by wives left behind) were found having poor performance at school (Biao, 2007). Moreover, children have been found either with withdrawn behavior or very aggressive (Wen et al., 2021). They are mostly physically weak and have low education level. The left behind children have to earn their living by collecting wastes and doing odd jobs (He & Ye, 2014). It has been found that children in the absence of their father are weak in decision (Apatinga et al., 2022) and show poor performance at school (Jenkins, 2009). The study conducted by Biao (2007) on China (Anhui province) reveals young girls being raped and children dying in accidents when their parents are away. A father's presence secures parent-children relationship (Booth & Tamura, 2009; Liu et al., 2022).

The study shows that young ones who take proper and regular attention from parents (father) have been found having healthy relationship with others (Benjamin & Turpin, 2008), but father's absence leads to psychological stress which deters children's personality (Boothroyd & Perrett, 2008; Freeks, 2017). It has been studied that the children who have been brought up in the absence of fathers likely to become unmarried fathers. Similarly, girls in the absence of their father are found indulging in sexual relationship of teenage pregnancy without any social bonding and marriage. A father's migration affects children's education (Farooq & Zahoor, 20009).

The wives also point out the inequalities of division of domestic chores (Fakir & Abedin, 2021). The husband's mother and sister do not show any interest in doing domestic chores. Some wives share that when guests have to visit, they are engaged in kitchen cleaning and dusting home, and when guests leave, they have to do the same thing again. It has been reported that while

living with the extended family, wives are not free to move or go alone without permission (Gartaula et al., 2012). They feel that they are confined. The wives say that they are treated coldly (Khalaf, 2009). It was also reported that in-laws' unfair and illogical interference affect their decision-making power. They feel as if they are servants at home. Their social life is restricted within the boundary of their house since their husband has migrated (Mumtaz, 1985; Antman, 2013; Arokkiaraj et al., 2021).

The wives face problems in managing crises and get involved in taking drugs (Ulven et al., 2007). They unfold it that if there are financial crises, they feel they are helpless (Desai & Banerji, 2008). Moreover, previous research found that increased remittance received by households does not always signify an improvement in the status of women in the family or community (Afzal & Das, 2023). This is particularly with those who have nucleolus family status. It has been revealed that the wives left behind are empowered to make decisions provided that they live without husband's parents (Lefebvre, 2014). The crises management gives them confidence but if they continually fail to manage it, they suffer from psychological problems. The study conducted by Khalaf (2009) reveals that most of the Lebanese wives say that their relationship with their respective in-laws are tense or bad. The wives say that remittance is not a substitute of emotional, caregiving and disciplinary roles (Lei & Desai, 2021). The wives say that their husbands do not send money and the mother-in-laws refuse to support them, even they do not provide meals to her children. There is also an issue of children row with one another and with other children. On the other hand, it has been found that the wives left behind is supported by in-laws if she lives in extended set up (Battistlla & Conaco, 1998; Bietsch et al., 2021).

Migration in China is male dominant phenomenon. Approximately 10 million children in China are looked after by either wives left behind or grandparents (Zhao et al, 2014, He-Schaefer & Fan, 2024). According to Yabiku et al. (2001), the Turkish wives left behind have been found competent in decision making managing home budget. It has been found that the wives left behind get emotionally disturbed due to the division of works, making arrangements for social gatherings, undue involvement of in-laws' intrusion in decision making and managing other house issues (Hugo, 2002; Charsley, 2005). This has negative impact on wife and children's personalities and she also faces many economic problems due to which she depends on her in-laws (Gulati, 1993, Farooq & Javed, 2009, Bietsch et al., 2021). Similarly, a study shows that in Pakistan the wives suffer mentally and physically in the absence of their husbands (Hamid, 2010; Khan et al., 2010) and their honor is sometimes found at risk (Erdal, 2014; Khan, 2016; Malik, 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research design best suits to the current study. The qualitative research approach is anchored mainly on three theoretical frameworks which are phenomenology, hermeneutics and ethnography (Muzari et al., 2022). Hermeneutics is a science of understanding, the skill of interpretation and the science of communication where the researcher is expected to analyze and interpret data for subsequent communication of the findings in a comprehensive manner (Gillo, 2021). The current study has adopted hermeneutic framework to obtain insights, meanings, perception and experiences of the wives left behind. The data is collected from IDIs (In depth interview) and FGD. The setting of the study was rural and urban areas of Khanewal district. The criteria was made to select left behind wives. It was ensured that the period of husbands' absence spans over at least 2 years. The husbands mostly live in Gulf Countries like UAE, Saudi Arabia. The migrants are labors who work under kafeel (guarantee). It was also ensured that the participants have at least two children. Most of the wives left behind live in extended families, but some wives have nuclear family system.

The sample size of the study includes 10 IDIs and 3 FGDs. The judgmental sampling technique was used to collect the data. The IDIs and FGDs were conducted in the houses of the participants. Due to the string social culture constraints, the researchers conducted FGDS and three IDIs. The remaining 7 IDIs were conducted by the female who was trained on the research instrument. The target population speak Punjabi language and very few can understand English, so the instrument was translated into the Punjabi language. The consents forms were signed to follow the ethical norm of the research. The mothers/sisters-in-laws wanted to sit, but they were requested not to join and they did it unwillingly.

Each IDI and FGD took 40-50 minutes. Some respondents declined the request to record the interviews. The note-taking technique was used where the recording was not permitted. The recorded data was transcribed. The thematic analysis (TA) of Braun and Clarke (2013) was applied to analyze the data derived from the transcription and note-taking. The TA consists of 6 steps; data familiarization, codes generation, themes development, reviewing potential themes, defining themes and producing the report (Byrne, 2022).

After extensively reviewing literature, the research tool was developed to address the psychological problems, children's issues, domestic chores, social gathering issues and in-laws interference. The tool was pretested. The collected data was analyzed by applying content analysis technique. The derived and inferred variables which have similar magnitude were described in the result.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The migrants leaving their homeland for better economic gains, the "left behind" family members (men, women, children, and extended family kin) have been increasingly recognized as a significant social consequence of such migration flow. It is argued that long-term separation caused by migration has been normalized to some degree in areas with massive emigration (Chen, 2022).

4.1 Mixed Feelings

In the urban setting, the results reveal that the wife is naturally excited when her husband is to return home. They mostly wear beautiful dresses and wear makeup according to availability and norms of the family and culture. Sometimes, they receive comments from their female family members that they (wives) do it to please their husbands. They do not answer but feel shy to answer. Some wives very boldly and proudly respond that they do for their husbands. They say that they feel uncomfortable when their dressing and make up are commented by the male members like brother-in-laws, or other cousins. Moreover, the wives feel sad when their husbands leave home and that night becomes gloomy for them. They get depressed and start feeling lonely.

Their husbands also notice it, but they say they cannot do anything. They feel very discomfort when their husbands spend much time with their other family members at night. Most of the wives are of the view that they miss their husband a lot. They know that their husband is not physically at home, but they feel their presence and try to engage mentally themselves in their memories. Whenever they are alone and have nothing to do, they miss their husbands' presence at home. They feel that they are nothing without their husband. Sometimes, the thought comes to their mind as to why they have got married when they cannot live with their husbands. Similar facts are found in the study of Chandawari and Nagnur's (2019) which found that approximately 87% of wives of migrant husbands living in North Karnataka report feeling lonely, and 49.5% report feeling anxious or depressed. However, another group, comprising 62%, reported fearing social security, domestic violence, and inappropriate behavior like taunts, comments, harassment etc.

But in the rural setting, the migrants' wives have been found shy and reluctant to share their feelings on arrival and departure of their respective husbands. Deep probing helped a lot to unfold their excitement and sadness on arrival and departure of their husbands. They are of the view that mostly they feel shy to wear new dresses and have make-up. This is because they are not frank and open enough to do these things. They believe that they will be

ridiculed and other family members pass their comments on them, but educated wives have been found confident and bold enough to these things. The uneducated wives avoided to share what they felt (missed) when their husbands were not at home. Similarly, Hussain et al. (2023) have discovered the facts in their study that the rural women face many challenges in the absence of their husbands; they are less educated and less self-assured, and find it challenging to leave their homes (Wu & Ye, 2016). Their mobility is restricted due to the social norms and so-called cultural bindings. They are dependent on other family members or neighbors regarding fulfilling their necessities. In this context, there was no remarkable difference between the wives who have nucleus family status and the wives who have extended family status.

4.2 Marital Satisfaction

The wives also shared their mixed experience of marital satisfaction. A very few said that their sexual desire was decreased. Most of wives said that their sexual desire increased when they heard about other wives bed sharing stories with their husbands. In the extended family set up, when their sister-in-laws and their brother-in-laws go to their bedrooms at night, they wish their husbands were at home and they would also enjoy the night. They also feel sexually disturbed when their menstrual cycle completes. The sexual desire increases, but it cannot be helped. A few said that they have illicit relationship with other men to satisfy their need. The justification is given that it is their biological need and they have heard that their husbands has also developed sexual relationship where they live so they do have. One wife said, *"More than two years have gone since my husband left me and he has not planned to get back soon, what can I do?"* The other said, *"We are human, we have passion, we have feelings, how can we control these feelings; we are young, we have tasted it and it has increased our thirst."*

One wife said that her husband suspects her virginity. Her mother-in-law gives wrong information about her (wife). So she lost her hope. She even has even forgotten what sexual desire is. She has killed it. She had no interest. But other wife expressed that she hysterically misses her physical presence. She said, *"I want him at home, I want to see him at home, I want to sit with him, I want touch him… In dream, I feel him with me."* The results of the current study are consistent with the study conducted in rural China. According to the study by Lei (2023) in rural China, wives who were left behind recounted their stories and expressed varying opinions about how low marital happiness has led to women entering into extramarital affairs in their communities. They shared a story, "A *man outside village come to haunt and seduce left behind women in*

the countryside, take an advantage of their emotional state and later steal their money." Unfortunately they cannot tell anyone about the incident because extramarital relationships are viewed as extremely disgraceful in the village since wives are hesitant to speak up, even if they have been robbed, even though their mistake is very less, but no one supports them, and they have to keep quiet. The study shows consistency with research conducted by (Sultana, 2014) in Pakistan. This study analyses their psychological and emotional problems, lack of spousal communication, their social wellbeing, adjustment within families, sexual frustration, and disruptive childbearing.

4.3 Physical Health

According to Lei and Desai (2021), due to the unequal gender relationships and female seclusion, husbands' absence may have a more negative impact on women's health in India than in some other countries with more egalitarian gender norms. The Indian culture and Pakistani culture have some similar characteristic. So, the results of the current study shows some consistency with Lei and Desai (2021). The absence of husband has negative impact on wife physical health. The emotional and psychological disturbance affects wife health. The cases have been reported where emotional and psychological disturbance has affected the wife health. One wife has narrated that one of her neighbor told her about her health. Another wife also has shared her sister and mother often discuss her deteriorating health. One wife has told that she weight has been reduced. The other wife also talked about her health that there is a remarkable difference of her health. When her husband was at home, she looks very attractive and smart but now she lost attraction and smartness. She does not care of her health because she is deadly engaged in domestic chores and looking her children. One wife told that when she got married she was quite slim and smart and very active. After her husband migration, she has been often sick and her color turned pale and yellow. The study of Sznajde et al. (2021) in Bangladesh reveals the decreasing left-behind wives' risk for under nutrition. In addition to making it harder to get healthcare because of logistical issues and possible exposure to violence and exploitation, a study by Mehmood (2024) showed that it raised stress, which led to physical disorders such headaches, stomach issues, and sleep disturbances.

4.4 Handling Children

Fakir and Abedin (2021) are of the view that migrants' are more independent and assume greater authority relating to household expenditure and welfare of the children. The most of the wives burst that it is not easy to

control and handle children without husband. The children need their father presence and they (children) miss their father. The youngest child and the daughter miss a lot. The wives are of the view that they face many problems to handle their children. Most of the wives say that their children have become stubborn and ill-disciplined. The children are found rude to their elders and are involved in disobedience. It is strongly believed that the presence of both parents help complement their productive and reproductive roles in their child's growth and well-being (Wu, et al., 2021). Studies have shown the pros and cons of children living with both parents and living with single parents (Apatinga et al., 2022). It is very difficult to engage children to complete their school homework. They make noises and sons shout and cry loudly if their wants and wishes are not fulfilled. The children make excuses for not going to school. As a result, their attendance at school is affected. Ultimately, their academic performance gets poor. The educated wives have shared that they have to give extra pocket money to send their children and engage them in their school activities. Though they are successful to keep good performance of their children at school, but they often get tired and exhausted. However, Wassink (2021) found that there are beneficial effects on children's schooling in another study that was carried out in Mexico. According to the report, father migration has been associated with higher educational attainment and a greater likelihood of finishing lower secondary school. Meanwhile, the wives in rural and in extended setting say that children's father/mother-in-laws' extra love and care have proven to be a major factor to spoil the children. The children spend most of their time with them (grandfather/mother).

4.5 Domestic Burden

Most of the wives (in rural setting) are of the view that they get exhausted doing different domestic chores. The time is mostly spent in kitchen, cleaning house (in rural, there are large houses), washing clothes. Their sister-in laws (husband sister, husband brother 'wife) come to assist. A few wives say that they are discriminated about distribution of chores. Most of the wives think that there is somehow equal distribution. Three wives told that mostly they were engaged in different activities by evening so that they (wives) could not take rest. They complained to their husbands, but they (husbands) did not listen and believed that their parents were right. One wife shared that her husband's elder brother keeps relax his wife. She further added that she was not well and the physician had forbidden her to do anything. Cconsequently, she (migrant wife) had to do all domestic chores. At night when she used to go to bed, she did not know when she used to sleep. The wife says, "At that time, my children want to talk to me but I just say, ok, yes, not more than it. At

night, my behavior with children affects children behavior and attitude." According to Chandawari (2019) research unveiled further that migrant wives undergo with severe domestic/household problems that could be insecurity due to the absence of her husband, and face domestic violence and abusive behaviors by the elders in the family. A wife reveals, *"The shopkeepers of our area know that my husband is absence when I go to buy vegetables; the shopkeeper charges high prices because he knows that I cannot go to other shops which are far away."* Another wife says, "*The shopkeepers of my neighborhood know my husband has not at home and he remarks unwanted comments on my dress and facial expression. I have to go because my children sometimes do not go to buy grocery items, soap, shampoo, oil etc. I try to ignore but it hurts me a lot.* Most of the wives say: *"We also assume our husband responsibility which also affects our physical health. "Another wife says, My husband has been a member of Tabligh congregation for many years, To fulfill my children's living and education expenses, I have to work multiple jobs, such as taking care of household chores, picking up my children from school, and even working as a washer and ironer in people's houses, in order to fulfill my family's needs."* In this case, wife is responsible to take care of the household, keep the household clean and secure it (Faizal & Nur, 2024).

4.6 Wives Empowerment

Empowerment is a concept that is associated with social power and skills, support system and practical approach to policy and societal change or simply a process through which individuals achieve control over their lives, and autonomous participation in the development of their community (Adil, et al., 2021). The left behind wives also say that they face problems to hold social gathering at home and attend such activities at other relatives' house. This problem is mostly with those wives who are not part of extended family and live in nucleus family. However, the wives with extended family experience it a little. A wife has shared that she often has to make arrangement whenever there is wedding ceremony of her relatives who are her neighbors. She has to look after guests, prepare food, making arrangement for night stay, cleaning washroom, the guests 'children noise and breaking household items, like crockery, decoration piece at drawing room-bother her a lot. She says she has no courage to forbid children. In urban setting, catering services are hired but in rural setting, wives have to do. A wife living in the extended family says, *"My mother-in-law is social activist and likes to arrange social gathering, like lunch, dinner, tea parties at home. We have a cook and servants at home, but I have to supervise each arrangement. I have to stand in kitchen and examine cleanliness at home. I often get irritate because I physically get exhausted. I have to with my*

mother-in-law to attend such kind of functions at other house, but I do not like. I have told many time to husband but he says he cannot talk to mother. I think it would be here the situation would be different." Despite the findings of the current study, the study on Iranian wives who were left behind by their husbands' migration was conducted by Aghajanian (2013). It found and presented totally different results that, when compared to case studies from other nations, the wives became temporarily the heads of their households and felt empowered. Wives in Iran who are left behind claim no physical or mental health problems and are very satisfied with their financial position. Generally women whose husbands migrate have poorer mental conditions than non-left-behind women in terms of stress, pressure, loneliness and fear (Wu & Ye, 2016). In rural areas, wives sadly say that the interference of either father/mother-in-law or husband brothers/sisters/wife of husband's brother irritate them very much. One wife says, *"My mother-in-law always thinks that she knows more and she is more experienced than me. She controls me. She wants I have to strictly follow her rules. But her father-in-law sometimes tries support her but his efforts always go unsuccessful because he also fears. She always imposes her decision on me. I am sick of her. I hate her."* In other words, the in-laws group tries to influence and direct what to do and what not to do. There interference is involved in children education, discipline, behaviors, attitude, shopping and dealing guests. A wife shares, *"My eldest son is rude and bad temper because of my husband's parent's undue love and cares."* A few wives say that their in-laws do not interfere much just they give suggestions but the suggestions are not imposed. One wife told, *"My eldest sister-in law (husband sister) is though married but most of time she stays at or home. She heads every matter. She decides where to go and what to do. Even her parents-in-laws do not interfere what she decides. She administers and plans our weekly budget. She shops for us. My husband thinks that her sister is very sincere and caring. She mostly receives my husband calls and when call goes to drop, she hands over cell phone to talk with my husband. I want to share something with my husband and talks about husband and wife relationship but I cannot do in her presence. This thing irritates me much."* The husband's migration harmed the left behind wives or women, which caused emotional distress to them.

The left-behind wives proclaimed that living with their father-in-law and other in-laws is both considered a stigma for the Pashtun society. Whenever in-law supports left-behind wives, there is a negative perception regarding their characters, which leads to emotional distress. The obeying orders of in-laws is also one of the leading problems that further creates emotional distress among left-behind. Left-behind wives cannot experience any freedom and their lives are controlled by the household head and

the illiterate household heads are more traditional and conservative in nature and not supportive of left-behind wives in the absence of their husbands.

4.7 Sexual Harassment

Chattoraj (2024) thinks that it is a widespread and routine matter for women to experience sexual harassment. According to Gyawali et al. (2023), the society perceives that women in the absence of their husbands are vulnerable to sexual violence, abuse or harassment. Approximately, one fourth of wives have shared that they have to face sexual harassment either at home or outside. The husbands' brothers, cousins or other neighbors show their bad intentions. Attempts are made to lure and seduce them. The socio-cultural constraints do not allow them to reveal before their husbands and mother/father-in-laws or their own parents. One wife says that one wife (left behind) has been found having extra marital affair with her husband's younger brother and another has been involved with neighbors because her father/mother-in-laws are very old and cannot look after her (wife).

One wife reports that she feels sexual harassment from her husband elder brother because he is all in all at home and she cannot share it with others because she belongs to a poor family and her brothers are very young. Similar findings were shared by Gyawali (2023), who found that men (usually husbands' friends or family) who are aware of wives are excluded from their social circles because men seem to believe that wives require sexual partners. In these situations, wives share mild to severe forms of sexual harassment with men when their husbands are not around, such as touching, teasing, forcing them to date and abusing them.

Patriarchal norms and practices dampen women's agency through patriarchal codes constituted of the power relations between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, restrictions on the physical autonomy of women and women's dependency on their male kin. Research revealed that when the mother left to work abroad, the father embraced their role in caring for their children. Filipino fathers are open to reversing traditional parenting roles.

5. CONCLUSION

In the study, an attempt has been made to highlight different issues and problems being faced and encountered by wives left behind in different areas of Punjab, Pakistan. Mostly wives have to go HIS (Intermittent Husband Syndrome). They miss their husbands a lot and get happy when they hear that their husbands is coming and get sad when the husbands depart from them(wives). Moreover, the wives reveal that children in absence of their

fathers go ill-disciplined, rude, misbehave with others, show poor performance at school and do not show any interest to attend their school. Moreover, the domestic chores, making arrangements for social gathering at home and undue and unfair interference of in-laws in decisions making and in other matters deteriorate their physical and mental health. The cases of sexual harassment also have been found.

Policies need to be supportive for women's access to resources and opportunities, including access to control over remittance inflows. Left-behind women and their shifting gender responsibilities in agriculture and the economy need to be recognized legally and culturally so that overall negative attitudes towards left-behind women and their contribution to society and the economy are minimized (Islam, et al., 2025).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

1. There is need to study on wife left behind based on properly urban and rural, newly married and old married, with large family size and small family size, uneducated and educated, arranged and love marriages.
2. It is suggested to conduct a study on wife left behind: husband perception about domestic and children problems at home.
3. The suggestion is also given to conduct study on wife (left behind) whose husband neither sends remittance nor gets back and cares about wife and children.
4. The study also recommends training for left behind wife to handle children and successfully manage domestic chores/other issues and how to handle/communicate in case if she feels or finds any sexual harassment.

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