

INDONESIAN LABOR MIGRATION: SOCIAL COSTS TO THE LEFT- BEHINDS

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PUSAT PENELITIAN KEPENDUDUKAN LIPI

Background

- Labor migration → significant contribution to the economic wellbeing of left-behind families in areas of origin through remittances
- However, the migration also has impacts on caregiving arrangement of left-behind children
- Save the Children (2006): “parental migration could violate a child’s right to development, survival and education”

- P2K LIPI's study in 2011 aimed to understand the social cost of Indonesian labor migrants, particularly to the spouse and children left-behinds
- The research was conducted at two villages, Juntikebon & Juntikedokan, in Indramayu. Both villages are main sending areas of international labor migrants in the district.

DATA COLLECTION



Survey:

Interview with 201 selected left-behind households & their left-behind children

Focused Group Discussions

Male children left behind, female children left behind, wives left behind, husbands left behind, local government institutions

Profile of Respondents: Migrants & Their Left-Behinds

- The migrants:

Mostly female (86%), more than half have worked abroad for more than 4 years, mostly work in Middle East countries

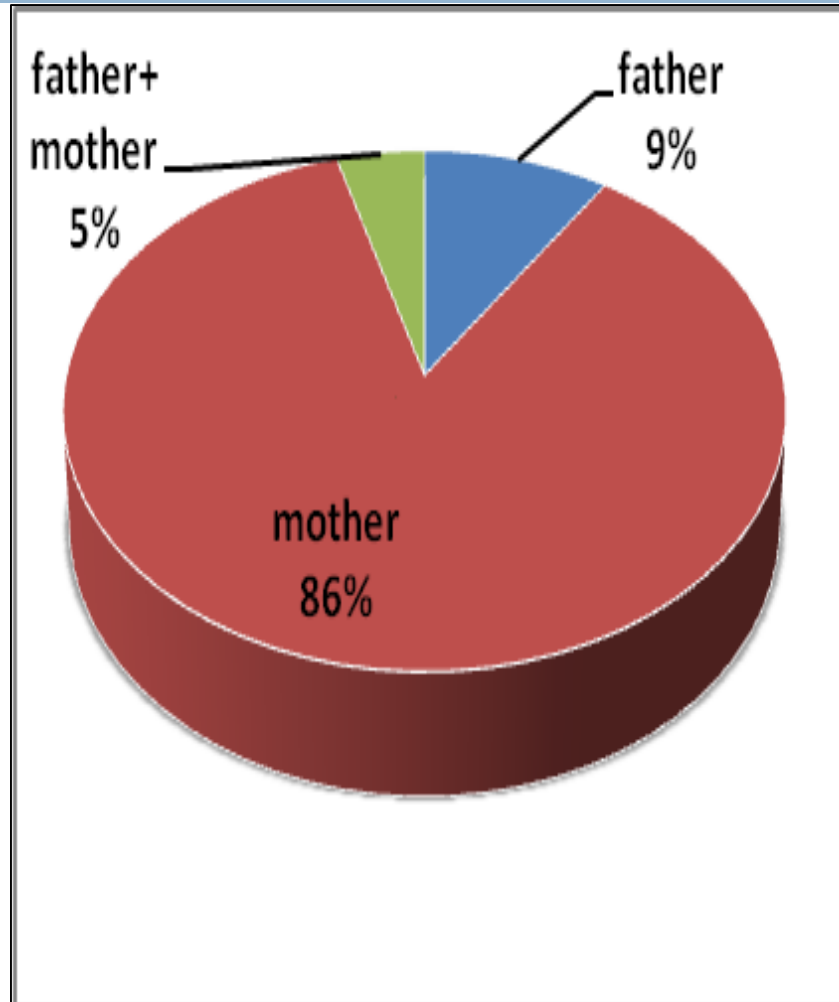
- The spouse left-behind:

Mostly husband, 90 percent of them are in the main productive age (40-49 years old), low level of education, work in insecure (financially) type of job

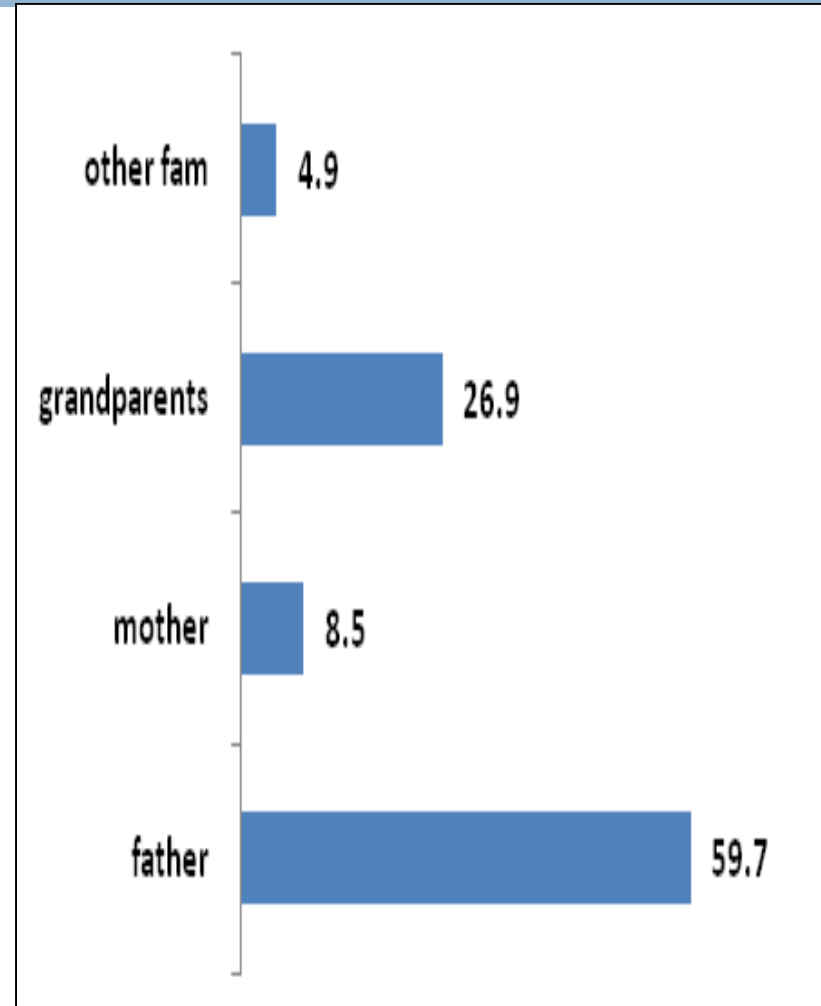
- The children left-behind:

More male, 70 percent of them are 13 years old and above, still in school (mostly in junior & senior high school)

Who's migrating?



Who's taking care the children?



Social Dynamics of The Left-Behinds

- ❖ The decision-making process on migration
 - The process mainly involved the prospective migrant's immediate (nuclear) family, especially the spouse
 - Children were only informed their parents intension to work overseas
 - In fact, there was no really decision making process → no family discussion to ask approval of all members.

- *“My mother only told me that she would go to Saudi Arabia to work. My parents did not ask whether I agreed to my mother’s leaving. Everything was decided by my parents, particularly my mother. Honestly, I was not happy with my mother working away from home, but in the end, I accepted it, since my mother would be leaving not to satisfy her own pleasures but to support my education and my family’s needs”. (Ay, a 17-year-old girl left by her mother).*

❖ Changing structure of the family

- Shift on the husband's role → no longer a breadwinner and responsible for all household tasks.
- Childrearing and childcare became part of husbands responsibility → this prevented them from working outside home to earn money, particularly those with younger age children.
- Some have to earn money while waiting for the remittances from wife abroad.

- *“I do all kinds of jobs while waiting for the money from my wife. I wait for the money sent by my wife to buy all the goods needed by the family. I cannot go out for work, since I have to do household chores, such as cooking, washing clothes and caring for the children. My youngest son cannot be left at any time. I borrow money from our neighbor if necessary while waiting for my wife’s remittance”.* (Da, a 41-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

❖ Communication Dynamics

- Communication between left-behind children and their guardian mainly about daily live matter and on general issues.
- Specific issues such as learning in school and relationship with friend were not commonly shared with the guardians.
- Children left behind kept communicate with their parents abroad.

Impact on Children: Resiliency and Vulnerability

- ❖ Resilience and Coping with Separation
 - Children left behind, mostly by their mother, tend to face social and emotional or psychological problems.
 - Parental absence implies loss of parental affection, attention and support → feeling of abandonment

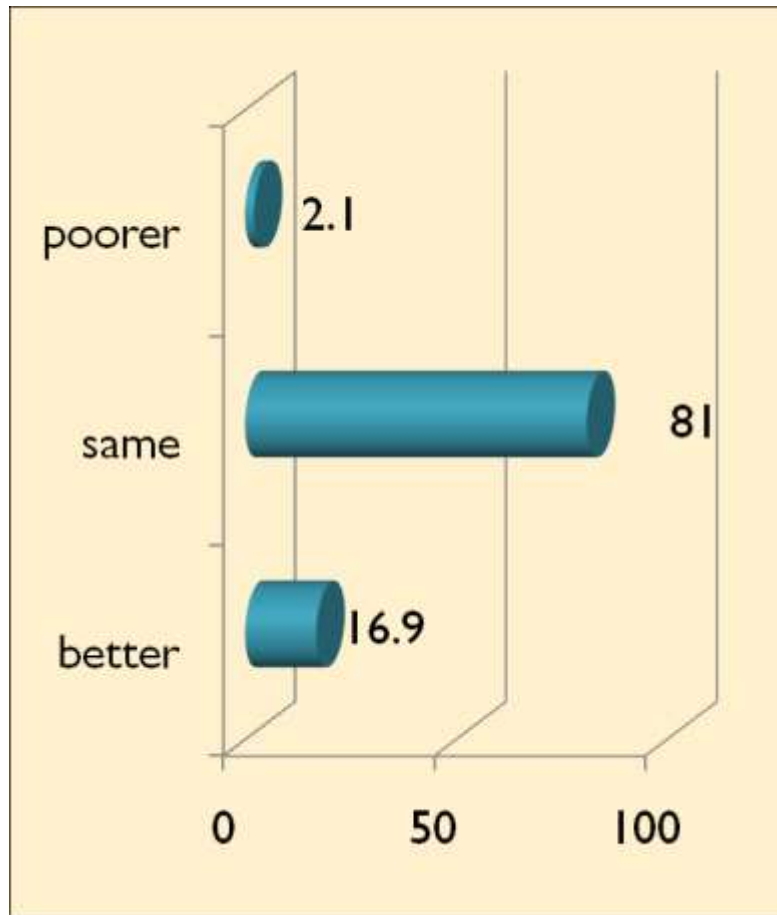
- “. . . It feels different without a mother around. For instance, when mother was at home, she usually looked for me whenever I was late in coming home for a few hours. Things are different now with my father. He is not aware if I come home late at night. He is rarely angry. He also seldom gives advice. My father just takes care of finances”. (Eng, a 16-year-old boy left by his mother)

- “. . . My mother pursued a job in Saudi Arabia. It’s okay because she wishes to provide for our needs, such as my school fees. But I was still young when my mom went abroad. I was in year four of primary school at that time. I cried a lot. It took me a long time to adjust [to my mother’s absence]. Even until now, I still feel sad and lonely, especially when I have some problems”. (Nov, a 15-year-old girl left by her mother)

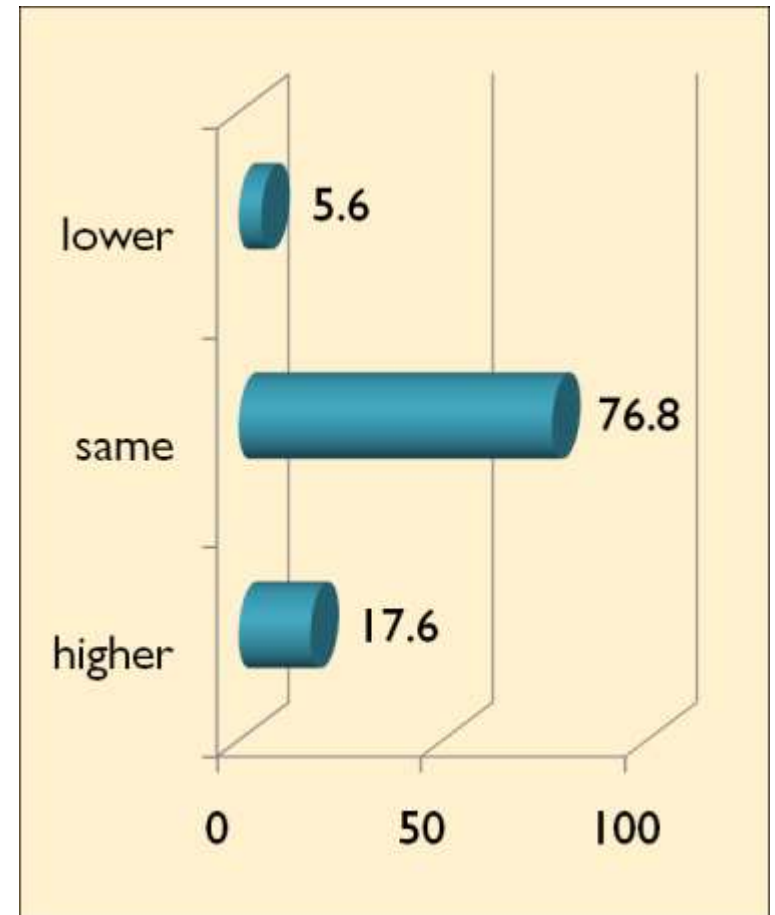
❖ Impact on Children's Education

- 71 % children respondents were still in school
- 20 % were not in school
- 9 % were dropouts → some have no money since remittances spent to fulfill other needs, such as house construction.

Percentage Distribution of Sampled Children Enrolling in School by Class Performance



Percentage Distribution of Sampled Children Enrolling in School by Grade Achievement



❖ Impacts on Family Relationship

- Regular communication between husband and wife abroad by telephone call and sms → to keep spousal relationship and solve daily problems
- Some husbands of migrant workers conducting negative behavior → remarried while their wives were working abroad.
- Such negative behavior was not conducted by interviewed husbands.

- *“I think I have no time to be bored. I am busy doing everything so I just fall asleep [at the end of the day]. I wake up in the morning, go to work and conduct household tasks, such as washing clothes. I have no time for things that are not worthwhile or a waste of time. I am scared and never think of going to a prostitute while my wife is away”.* (Un, a 42-year-old husband of a migrant worker)

❖ Impacts on Parenting Practices


- Parenting was undertaken solely by father → unfortunately differ from it was practiced by mother.
- Father tend not to care about the specific issues, such as learning problems and children's social life outside home.
- Grandmothers tended to spoil children to compensate for the absence of their mother → sacrifice of losing their mother's love and care for the survival of the family.


- *“Mother’s care is different from father’s. When there were instances in which I came home late, my mother would look for me and tell me not to do it again and to come home on time. This is not done by my father. He never looks for me even if I come home late at night. Sometime, I miss my mother’s attention”.* (Hd, a 17-year-old son of a female migrant)

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, some recommendations are proposed to improve the conditions of the family left behind (children, spouse and extended family members) as well as the migrant workers:

- For government (national to the local levels) to set up “crisis centers” where the family left behind, especially teenage children, can go to when they want to talk about their problems and find clarity and sense in their situation.

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- For government (national to the local levels) to develop a program on the management of remittances for the welfare of the family, especially the children, left behind, in collaboration with NGOs. This may be designed as a people empowerment program to improve the community's knowledge of how to manage household earnings and effectively address the children's nutritional and educational needs.

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- Implement socialization programs for relatives who have been entrusted to take care of the children left behind. This may help them share experiences and insight on how to handle the children especially teenagers.
 - Initiate a guidance counsellor program in school for children of migrant workers.
 - Future research on social cost to the left-behinds in regions with different migrants group typology (such as male/father labor migrants, skilled workers) are encouraged



THANK YOU