

# **The Impacts of Migration: The Tajik Women's Experiences of Their Husband's Migration**

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## **Abstract**

Tajikistan is one of the highest migrant sending countries. The majority of migrants are men, whose families stay in Tajikistan. The absence of men in the patriarchal society affects the gender roles and leads to changes in social and familial organization, specifically the autonomy of women. The analysis is based on twelve in-depth interviews of women in the capital city, Dushanbe. The women varied in age, education, and the duration of their husband's migration. The interviews reveal several problems with labeling women as 'left behind,' which does not describe the decision-making process or role of women in Dushanbe. Men's labor migration causes an increase in women's level of autonomy, whose new roles remain stable even after their husbands return home. The autonomy of women varies with age, financial stability and the length of the relationship; however, the length of migration can create emotional hardship.

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## Introduction

*Oh you know how it is, everyone has an experience such as mine. All the families have at least a member who has migrated. So it is nothing new. People do not look at you differently if your husband is a labor migrant.*

Madina, in her fifties, a mother of five children, shared her experiences of fifteen years of her husband's migration, who returns home once in every two or three years for a visit of one month. Her husband's migration is not a unique occurrence, as migration has become a common experience in the lives of Tajik people. The majority of migrants are men, who predominantly leave to work as unskilled laborers in Russia. The absence of men in the patriarchal society of Tajikistan results in changes, effecting the social formation, familial organization, and gender relations. The literature on migration provides rich analyses of the effects of men's migration on non-migrant family members around the world, but the differences of the effects puzzle the predictions of outcomes in the case of Tajikistan.

Migration is considered as both 'gendered' and 'gendering' (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, Boehm 2008). In the Tajik society, migration is gendered that compliments male masculinity of a provider, while the gendering process implies the space for women to deepen their autonomy. Unlike cases where women are displayed as isolated in their homes, lacking agency in the discussion of the effects of men's migration, the experiences of Tajik women provide a different insight into the subject of analysis. Tajik women took strong presence in the development of socialism and prosperity in their nation, attained high level of education, and built leadership, as did men. But the break of the Soviet Union, and the rise of religious conservatism affected the traditional norms of gender roles that dominate the inequality nowadays. Thus, the interest of this research is on the effects of men's migration on women's autonomy, whether wives of migrants deepen their autonomy or depend on their husband's dominance.

The purpose of this research is to present the effects of men's migration on women in Dushanbe, specifically focusing on the level of autonomy of non-migrant wives. As a result of men's migration women increase their level of autonomy but the responsibilities of carrying out the roles of a mother and a father is challenging. The structure of this research is based on the following presentation. The theoretical framework of Chapter 1 presents the findings on the effects of men's migration on women left behind and shows the gap and reasons for conducting this research. Chapter 2 provides the background information to familiarize the reader with the context of the research. Moreover, the discussion of the gendered processes of migration is also present in this chapter with the analysis problematizing the use of women as 'left behind' when discussing men's migration. Chapter 3 presents the data and methods, which was collected by interviewing twelve women who experienced their husband's migration. The respondents vary in age, standard of living, educational and employment backgrounds, ethnic groups, and the duration of their husband's migration. The following chapter 4 is the core of this research where I present the measures of women's autonomy and analyze the findings. I conclude by stating that the effects of men's migration on women in Dushanbe are of permanent nature as men leave back to the host county to continue their work. Women's autonomy increases as a result of men's migration but the complexity of long distance relationship between the husband and wife is problematic.

## Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

International Migration is a movement of people across national borders. For a long time the event of migration was recorded as men's act, referring to women as passive followers or left behind and only later did the analyses of women's active role became a part of such phenomenon. Even though the majority of Tajik migrants are men, women are involved in the process of migration either by not migrating, migrating independently, or with their families. Tajikistan is a patriarchal society where men's migration affects the social formation, gender relations and familial organizations, pressuring and resulting in changes. I aim to investigate the effects of Tajik men's migration on their wives who do not migrate, and examine whether the changes in women's roles are permanent or temporary upon the return of their spouses. Before I present an analysis of the effects of men's migration on women in Dushanbe, I will discuss the arguments and views offered by empirical research on migration.

The literature on migration has emphasized the gendered nature of such the movement. Migration has been identified as both "gendered and gendering" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, Boehm 2008). While the gendered migration highlights the characteristics of 'male', the gendering side provides women a space to acquire and deepen their autonomy, and "enhance their agency and well-being" (Datta and Mishra 2011, 463). Women experience development in autonomy and authority and in many instances take on the role of a decision-maker. The migration of a Mexican male household head to the United States increases wife's autonomy and authority, who perceives the role of the decision maker in regards to family affairs, spending and production (Durand and Massey 2004). However, in other cases the role of the head of household performed by men transfers to their extended family at the time of migration. The authority of the extended family increases, where the wife does not experience an improvement

in her autonomy and freedom, “as long as they are living in an extended family” (Desai and Banerji 2008, 350, Brink 1991, Shahzada and Khadaker 2004). The debate on the effects of men’s migration on women that stay behind provides a set of diverse outcomes, which in applying to Tajikistan complicates the predictions of possible effects of men’s migration on women who reside in Dushanbe.

In the study of women’s experiences of their husband’s migration the focus in the majority of literature, that I came across, placed on rural areas as a larger space of analysis. In applying, the interpretation of rural areas to the analysis of Dushanbe would lead to misleading results, even opposite findings, as the conditions between the rural and urban areas are very diverse. At the same time, the line between an urban and rural area can be challenging to define. Leela Gulati in the study of men’s migration from Kerala (South-West India) to West Asia (Gulf region) focuses on the impacts of men’s migration on the households left behind (1993). The target of her study, Kerala, holds a part in the top five of highest states of human development index (India HDR 2011), and migration takes various types, not limited to unskilled. Gulati argues that men’s migration lead to women’s empowerment, resulting in the break of women’s isolation and increasing their mobility in the spheres outside their homes (1993). Women experience more responsibilities and perform the management of finances and household tasks that were originally performed by men. Overtime, women of migrant households become self-reliant and independent from the support of their extended family (Gulati 1993). Her study of Kerala where men’s migration dominates the flow reflects the Tajik society, but the agricultural environment of Kerala differs from Dushanbe city, where women’s living arrangements and employment are diverse compared to the agricultural production and living with extended



families. Her study also serves an example to show the differences amongst women; even though the development of Kerala is strong, there are still women of subordinate position in the society.

### **1.1 Decision Making**

Men's migration impacts women's decision-making responsibilities. In some experiences women perceive higher level of autonomy, in others men's influence continues from abroad. Amrita Datta and Sunil Mishra in the study of the impacts of male migration on women in rural Bihar investigate whether women experience changes in decision-making and management of the household and farm affairs (2011). Women in Bihar became more involved in taking decisions in regards to household affairs, as of foods and clothing, children's education and control of remittances, as well as being responsible for the use of the land, hiring of the laborers and the management of the farm. However, Datta and Mishra also show that 52% of women either spoke to their husbands regarding the decisions, or the parents in law took on the authority (2011, 471). Their study also touch upon the discussion of the caste system, where women of the upper caste did not report a change, while 52% of women of lower caste took on the management of finances (Datta and Mishra 2011, 471). The variations in the traditional institutions around the globe portray the complexity of studying the effects of migration on women, and the absence of caste system in Tajikistan might provide different outcomes of men's migration as the contextualization plays an important part in the analysis.

The literature on migration presents a commonly shared experience throughout different studies that men's migration and formation of nuclear families are positively linked. Abadan-Unat in the study of migration effects on the emancipation of Turkish women argues that independent household emerge while different interpretations result in family formations (1977). Women gain authority over the use of the family land and come in contact with different

government agencies, as well as having control of remittances and autonomous decision making of its use. Even though women of migrant households decide on the parenting of their children when it involves major decisions such as marriage, engagement, education, etc., the help of the extended family is present (Abadan-Unat 1977, 49-50). The author speculates the emergence of nuclear families more in the cities, which is shared amongst migrants in Tajikistan who leave to accumulate savings for a purchase of a house. However, for the families that already reside in nuclear families the reasons of other market failures cause the event of migration.

Louhichi's study of Egyptian wives of migrants also shows similar results to Abadan-Unat's analysis, where women gain authority over the decision of family's budget and property (1997). The author reveals that 74% of women have control over the use of remittances and decide on the family budget, showing an increase from 37% to 86%, and control of the family property from 37% to 57%, all in urban areas of Egypt. While in rural areas, the role of the extended family persist in regards to the financial decisions, and 26% said no control over remittances (Louhichi 1997, 327), implies the importance of specifying the location. However, Maharjan et al. in the study of two rural districts in Nepal state that women experience greater level of decision-making, which leads to their empowerment (2012). The authors also emphasize that women experience empowerment if they live in nuclear families, and in their study show that women of migrant households in comparison to women of non-migrant households experience greater level of decision-making, measured in the areas of children's education, savings, agricultural activities, and food spending (2012, 118). In the case of Yemeni migrant households, major decisions on investment are not made in the absence of men (Myntti 1984). In the district of Syangja women are perceived as "more empowered" since they perform less physical work and more of decision-making, but do not have control of non-farm investments

(Maharjan et al. 2012, 121), which Khalaf also observes that migrant men hold on to the decision of family property (2009). The research on migration discusses the control of investment and property by men, showing that women do not act independently. However, in applying such a concept to Dushanbe, it is important to untangle the complex relation and determine whether the control of investment, property or any item that requires a large amount of money solely reside in men's power, or women do not act independently because they want to discuss such matters with their husbands, as both are the formation of a family.

## **1.2 Childcare**

The migration of men results in mothers and children living behind. Children as well as their parents are involved in the process of men's migration, in some instances replacing men's absence, and taking on their tasks. Khalaf analyzes how the decisions in regards to an investment or purchase of property lay in the hands of men, who either decide when their return or via their son (2009, 112). Through children, specifically male children, migrant men establish gendered supremacy and continue male dominancy over women. However, Khalaf also brings another discussion where women who have limited educational background share the financial decision-making with their sons (2009, 114) that could be seen as sons replacing their father's responsibility of financial management, or supporting women in gaining experience in new tasks. As Abadan-Unat observed the consultation of extended family with women with regards to children's life changing decisions, Khalaf observes that a wife's involvement in raising the children is stronger than of a migrant husband, but he is present in the decision to children's employment, marriage, etc. independent of his financial contribution (2009, 113). Surinder Jetley's study of the impact of male migration (rural-urban) on rural females in India shows similar results to the effects of men's international migration, where women and children during

men's migration take on the work previously performed by men (1987), where male children eventually continue men's responsibilities.

In the result of men's migration women developed higher authority in raising their children. Louhichi in the study of Egypt discusses women's authority over their children's upbringing, where 61% of women in urban, and 51% in rural areas, expressed higher authority in the time of their husband's migration, but with challenges (1997, 327-28). Particularly in urban areas mothers in migrant households experience difficulties in disciplining their children, as they go through "psychological and academic problems" in the absence of their fathers (Louhichi 1997), as Egypt is an example of a patriarchal society where men stand as protectors of their families. Father's role is also crucial in the context of Tajik family, where he is perceived as a protector of the family and in his absence, the protection is weakened. Desai and Banerji also observe that wives of migrant households in India who live in nuclear families attain mobility and autonomy in daily decisions and in regards to their children's "long term well-being" (2008, 349). The status of women is linked to the well being of their children. As Caldwell states, "when women's position is relatively good, so usually is that of children" (1986, 186). He analyzes the link between women's autonomy and mortality rates, and argues that in the societies where women have a strong level of autonomy there is a decline in mortality. Moreover, women of migrant households showed no difference in treatment of their sons and daughters, without giving preferences based on their sex, whether it concerns their health or their education (Caldwell 1986). There is a positive link between men's migration and children's education. Sadiqi and Enaji's analysis of Moroccan migrants to Europe show that children from migrant households study a 'modern type' of education than religious, or short-terms (2004, 73). In migrant households women gain control over finances and their children's future by "influencing

the migrant's choice as to the type of education" that women wish for their children because sons are seen as "guarantee of financial security" in the future (Sadiqi and Enaji 2004, 73, Mondain et al. 2011). The relationship between children's future and parent's well-being is strong, thus parents invest in their children so they have a better future. Children are also caretakers of their parents when they reach their old age, and it will be interesting to consider how the relationship develops between the children and their father who migrates, compared to their mother who is by their side.

### **1.3 Freedom of Mobility**

Migration can also serve as a facilitation of change. There is an increase in women's mobility in the absence of their husbands, even in traditional rural settings where women's mobility was under the supervision of men. Datta and Mishra display that women's independent mobility in rural Bihar increased; they went to the doctor (48%), to the market (45%), to their children's school and visited their relatives (9%, 4%) (2011, 467). They also observe the presence of a caste system, where women from upper and lower Muslim groups all experienced an increase in their level of mobility, compared to half of women from upper caste (Datta and Mishra 2011, 467), to which the possible explanation in the lesser experience of mobility amongst the upper caste women lays in the discussion of their living arrangements. Once again, the interpretation of the effects of men's migration brings different results to women of nuclear families compared to those living with in-laws.

Women gain autonomy in the course of their daily activities. Egyptian women after their husband's migration experience an increase in the freedom of movement to perform responsibilities of shopping, paying for bills, going to the market, and dealing with governmental organizations (Louhichi 1997). However, the independence in the responsibility of family affairs

does not reflect the freedom of movement of personal wish. Women experience less freedom when it becomes the matter of personal desires of visiting their friends, family or going out, which Louhichi identifies in relation to the traditional practices and believes of the family and the husband, or the extend of overwork put on women (1997, 332). Women in Dushanbe already portray a higher level of mobility, compared to Datta and Mishra's or Louhichi's studies, but the question remains whether women's mobility diminishes in the absence of their husband, or increases since their responsibilities rise. Living with extended families eases women's burden of responsibilities as their family member help on with the tasks, of course cases of reverse claim are present, but do women in Dushanbe ask for help or independently carry on their old and new responsibilities is a questioned that will be observed.

#### **1.4 Access to Information**

The gendered division of labor in many instances assigns women to the realms of the home, while men perform responsibilities of the public sphere. At the time of men's migration, changes take place where women experience new responsibilities and roles. Gulati observes that women in migrant households become more mobile, but argues that if these women were "properly empowered in the ordinary course of things" that men occupy, women would better deal with the absence of their husbands (1993, 145). The access to information and experience of responsibilities are beneficiary for one's level of self-esteem and confidence to carry on the tasks.

Women experience stronger level of self-confidence as they improve their skills and perform men's tasks. Shahzada and Khadaker in the case study of left behind wives of Bangladeshi migrant workers discuss the changes in women's status, responsibilities and living conditions (2004). Women's power and confidence rises as they become familiar and know how

to perform the tasks that were carried out by men, and in nuclear families, women show control over the use of remittances and decision-making (2004). Women's access to the broader sphere of the society might influence their political, social and economic ideology. Abada-Unat shows that women from migrant households display a political participation, where "84% of the wives decide independently which political party to back" (1977, 52). Greater level of access to information results in women's rise of involvement. In some instances, women's access to networks may influence their wish to migrate. Sotelo's analysis of the experiences of Mexican women and men that are shaped by gender shows cases where the social networks of women provide help in "persuading husbands about women's wish to migrate so he agrees to it" or even assist if women wish to migrate (1992, 405). Research shows that networks are a source of migration and if women gains access to networks the circumstances might change.

Men's migration can also result in changes further leading to women's isolation. For instance Myntti discusses the new patters of seclusion where migrants return home with religious interpretation of Islam, placing women in the realms of their home and secluding from the public sphere, "insisting that his wife wear long white robes and scarves, such as women wear on the hajj" (1984). Nevertheless, there are also instances where men's migration affects women's greater mobility and independence. Gulati quotes an interviewee, Hameeda, a wife of a Muslim migrant to Saudi Arabia, who expressed the changes resulted from her husband's migration (1993, 23-32). For the short visit, Jama-Hameeda's husband takes her out for movies, and "never insists" for her to wear a scarf, even though the people in the village hold conservative views (Gulati 1993, 31). The changes brought by her husband from the religiously conservative country is a paradoxical act and raises a question whether his actions were just to the like of his wife since he would leave soon and won't affect major changes. However, the interviewee claims that

some women started uncovering and wore “short-sleeved blouses” (Gulati 1993, 31) that portray changes. In the case of Tajik migrants, their time in Russia might affect their views towards their wives back home, but will also depend on how much interaction migrants have with the local population.

### **1.5 Labor Force Participation**

Men’s migration leads to various effects on women’s labor force participation. Binzel and Assaad find a decrease in women’s wage work in migrant households, especially in urban areas, while women in rural areas move to unpaid or family work (2011). In the absence of husband’s labor in rural areas, the wives take on their husband’s share of labor, which results in women’s engagement in unpaid family work. For other women, the income effect of remittances leads to a drop in the number of women wageworkers. The authors state that women’s status “is not associated” with her paid economic activities, however her financial contribution might influence her bargaining power (Binzel and Assaad 2011, 109). Louhichi also finds similar results of the outcomes of men’s migration on women’s economic activities. He observes a decline of women’s labor force in urban areas, and an increase of unpaid family work in rural areas (1997). Louhichi proposes the reasons to be associated with women’s refusal to work that as often as women receive remittances the less likely they are to work. In addition, the social pressure that follows the traditional gender roles and believes that “women wage work is a sign of poverty” in the status of urban women (1997, 331) result in the low participation of women in the labor force. Bringing in comparison a previous research done in Tajikistan shows the women’s active involvement in the labor market during the absence of their husbands, but gender stereotypes are prevalent even after the migrants’ return where women are perceived to occupy the domestic work and raise the children (ILO 2010, 37). However, in comparison to



women who took part in the labor force even prior their husband's migration might provide different outcomes in regards to the gender roles. Women hold important roles in the absence of their husbands but their autonomy becomes problematic when the husband returns and finds the difference in the expectation of traditional view of women depending on her husband in full scale (ILO 2010). The traditional views continue to hold the autonomy of women on a superficial base, where pressure results on women's subordination to men. Some women of migrant households that are economically secure (lower castes) in India "look down upon women's work" and do not go to work on the farm if conditions are improved (Datta and Mishra 2011, 473-74).

The literature on men's migration shows that as women's autonomy increases so do her economic activities. Durand and Massey portray how the migration of men created more job opportunities for women in the cities and women might enter the labor force as there is no supervision over the family activities (2004, 8). In some circumstances women's labor force participation increases with their age and educational background, an intersection of categories affecting women's salaried employment. Women of age and strong educational background are more likely to work, as women who own large lands work, but those that possess small lands are "almost three times more likely to work for wages" (Lokshin and Glunskaya 2009, 495).

Women's economic contribution is important for the growth of the economic sphere but also crucial for the well-being of many families. Sadiqi and Ennaji state that the development of women headed household resume by them looking for a job, whose financial contribution to the households and their work is common but as long as they role "does not clash with society's gender role assignment", since the powerful spheres continue to be in the hands of men (2004, 72-74). With men's migration, women can afford to schedule their time more efficiently.

Abada-Unat brings into light women's level of consumption and how women avoid "work of time consuming activities" (2011, 53), but the author does not further develop how it reflects on women's schedule or what they occupy themselves with more time in hand. The involvement of Tajik women in the labor force is not of a new occurrence, rather a development of socialism, but the effect of men's migration could bring a new light to the analysis of women's labor force participation.

### **1.6 The Use of Remittances**

Another aspect of men's migration is related to the use remittances and how it affects women's role in the absence of their husbands. The effect of remittances displayed on various aspects of women's lives, sometimes improving and motivating for new roles, and other times in burdening with overwork. In some cases, the insufficiency of remittances causes women to become economically active and join employment in informal sectors (Sotelo 1992). Dorantes et al. in the study of impacts of remittances on female labor participation in Mexico indicates a decline in women's informal and non-paid labor, as the remittances become a source of income women use to "purchase time away" from un-enjoyable work (2006, 225). Kim also observes that households, especially women headed, that receive remittances work less time than those that do not receive remittances (2007, 7). Even though in some cases remittances affect women's decline of labor supply, a positive increase have been analyzed in girl's education. Acosta in the case study of El Salvador records an increase in girl's education but no difference on boys, indicating a presence of gender differences in the use of remittances (2006). Women that have younger children are more likely to stay home, as well as if there is a male in the household. Those women that have entrepreneurial ability might use remittances to establish a business (Acosta 2006), that sets a development towards women's greater role in the economy.

Women's improved level of independent decision making and autonomy can serve as a misguided evaluation of her independence. Willis and Yeoh in the study of rural poverty and women-headed households claim that outmigration of male provides women with more responsibilities that may prove to be a "double edged sword" (2000, xv). The absence of husband may provide greater economic role and lead to freedom, but can also lead to economic disadvantages if their financial contribution is seldom. The financial contribution from migrant husbands keep women dependent on them, which does not imply their freedom (Agardjanian et al. 2007). Agardjanian et al. find that the financial resources from migrants are not invested into productive sources, and no major differences were observed in the comparison of standards of living and level of ownership between the migrant and non-migrant households in Armenia (2007, 14). Remittances compose a large percentage of Tajikistan's national GDP and serve a source of income for many families around the country. It is important to determine the use of remittances by migrant's wives in Dushanbe and analyze if their autonomy depends on the financial contribution of their husbands.

### ***1.7 The Longevity of women's changed roles***

The effect of men's migration on non-migrant women takes various forms, some aspects shared between nations and others being specific to a region and its traditions. However, the question of the longevity of women's autonomy needs an investigation as it provides a look into the stability of women's new roles. Yabiku et al., after the survey of married women from migrant households in 56 villages of Southern Mozambique consider a positive relation to women's level of autonomy and claim that their autonomy "may persist even after the men return" (2010, 293). The authors emphasize that the conditions of necessary skills, availability of jobs, social acceptance of changes and employment help women to pursue changes in their lives

and such changes are not easily returned to how it was before when their husbands return (2010). Sotelo discusses how in separation wives and husbands perform responsibilities that were previously done by the other, such as men performing the household responsibilities and women independently caring for household decisions, as a result men adjust to “concede to their wives’ challenges to their authority” (1992, 411).

Men’s migration can also result in temporary changes in women’s role. Van Rooij in the study of rural Morocco claims that changes in women’s responsibilities and higher authority were temporary and were reassigned back to their husbands when they returned home from migration (2000). Some women saw their “double responsibility” as “burden” and expressed that their new role was “not the right position” for women to adapt, which could result in their exclusion and criticism in the society (Rooij 2000, 15). Taylor also observes that husband’s power and dominance in the household remain even after he returns from migration (1984). Women transfer their husband’s responsibilities to hired personnel to do the land work and market visits (Rooij 2000), or older sons take on the tasks performed by their fathers prior to their migration (Abada-Unat 1977). In some cases women gain independence but their actions come under a control when their husbands return. Brink observes how women’s independence in visiting their friends and family increased when their husbands were gone, but when the husbands returned they had to inform and “ask his permission” to go somewhere (1991, 206). Women also return living with their extended families during their husband’s migration, not experiencing much difference in their lives (Brink 1991, Datta and Mishra 2011). Nevertheless, what happens when the migrants return home for a short period of time and leave back to work in the host country, since it is a common occurrence in the lives of migrants in Tajikistan?

The literature on the effect of migration on women left behind provides a rich analysis, in many instances sharing the same results and in others having opposite findings. The study of various regions and the presentation of the effects of men's migration on women left behind complicates the speculation and assumption of possible outcomes from men's migration in Tajikistan, specifically Dushanbe. The majority of literature that I came across in researching for the effects of men's migration on women left behind present an examination of rural areas, and only few in comparison touch upon the urban areas, which displays the differences of outcomes. While in many cases the analysis of women present them isolated in their homes provides a misleading assumption of what are possible effects of men's migration on Tajik women, especially in urban areas. A common environment of women left behind is built upon their seclusion and isolation from the realms of the public sphere, who do not hold a strong educational background and fully abide by their husband's and in-laws living arrangements, but the analysis of Tajik women will provide a different interpretation. Tajik women in Dushanbe were part of the development of socialism and took part in attaining high level of education, as did men, who also actively contributed to the building of a communist state. However, after the break of the Soviet Union and a rise of religious conservatism might indicate different outcomes of the effects of men's migration on women in Dushanbe, which is challenging to research as there are limited academic sources focusing on Tajikistan, besides the international organizations. The different analyses of economic and political sides to the macro outcomes of migration are very crucial but the outcomes of micro-level imply changes of complex interpretations that are in need of analysis.

## Chapter 2: Migration in Tajikistan

Tajikistan is considered the poorest state in Central Asia. The transition to national independence in 1991, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, followed a five-year long civil war (1992-1997), resulting in the death of up to 100,000 people (Ranjbar 2009). The devastated economy and infrastructure made the transition to market economy challenging, while the rising rate of unemployment, poverty and inflation weakened people's livelihood. Tajikistan is the smallest country in the region. It is mostly mountainous and lacking productive natural resources. The national GDP composes half of its growth from remittances, estimated in 2006 the inflows at 39.1% and in 2013 at 48% of GDP. Tajikistan's growth depends on the remittances sent by the migrants, compared to any other country in the world (Ratha et al. 2013, 15). The concept of migration revolves around a complex understanding of reasons for why people migrate. As a result, varieties of theoretical models have been developed to provide an insight into the migration flow.

One macro-level theory of migration is the 'push-and-pull' model, which emphasizes the wage and employment differentials between the origins and host country (Massey et al. 1998). The underdevelopment in Tajikistan presents the 'push' factor, where people leave their vulnerable livelihoods in a search of better conditions, while the 'pull' factors function in developed countries with higher wages and labor demands, in this case, Russia. The push-and-pull model is a particularly good fit for Tajikistan because of high unemployment. The unemployment rate in Tajikistan shows high numbers, but sources provide different results. According to the State Statistics Committee the unemployment rate between the years of 2000-2007 was at 2.3%, while the Labor Force Survey stated in 2004 to be in 7.4%, and Tajikistan Living Standard Survey claimed to be at 9.5% in 2007, considering Piracha et al. findings that

the measures didn't include labor migrants into the calculations (2013, 3). Based on a survey carried out by the UN Tajikistan Living Standards, the unemployment in 2008 composed 48%, where 53% of the population lived in less than \$1 a day (Ranjbar 2009, 3). From a study, it was revealed that 60% of migrants were unemployed in their home country, while 15.6% were searching for a job (Brown et al. 2008, 47). The statistics reveal that unemployment serves as a strong 'push' for people to labor migrate.

The wage differential between Tajikistan and Russia is the second condition of the push-and-pull model. The data provided by the UN shows that the GNI of 2005 composed USD 458 and increased to USD 1236 in 2011 (UN Data 2014), while the average monthly per capita income in real terms was 119 Somoni (USD 40) in 2003 and 150 Somoni (USD 43) in 2007 (Piracha et al 2013, 3). The rising cost of living serves as a reason for people's migration, whose remittances are used as a source of income for many families back home.

Another theory, the segmented labor market theory considers migration to be based on the demand of the industrial economies, while the world system theory views international migration as a result of the global capitalist structure (Massey et al. 1994). These theories include different reasons for the same cause of migration and serve as a relevance to the North-South debate. The majority of Tajik migrants leave for Russia, as the Post-Soviet state operating on a visa-free regime, a model emphasizing the immigration policies of the host country as a determinant of international migration (Czaika and de Haas 2014). The macro-level theories of international migration provide a bigger picture for the reasons why people migrate but an examination of micro-level is necessary to determine people's decision to migrate.

On the micro-level, the neoclassical economics consider migration as an individual decision to maximize income. The theory centers on the wage differentials between the original

and host country and measures the cost-benefit analyses of such action (Douglas et al. 1994).

While this theory could be applicable to the prediction that the departure of sufficient number of migrants would eventually raise the wages in their home countries, such results have not been observed in Tajikistan. In 2009 it was estimated that 1.5 out of seven million people were migrants (Ranjbar 2009, 3), which has increased to more than 2 millions in unofficial statistics. Another theory of international migration focuses on the human capital as a selective process of migration, but such reason for migration is minimalistic considering the Tajik migrants leave for hard physical work.

In contrast to the neoclassical economics and human capital theory, the new economics of migration considers migration as a household decision in response to market failures and conditions that lead people to migrate, which helps to analyze the case of Tajikistan. Instead of looking at migration as a decision of an isolated individual, who aims to maximize income and minimize the risks from the country of origin's market failures, the new economics provides a bigger picture into the reasons associated with conditions forcing people to migration (Douglass et al., 1998, 17). In applying the theory of new economics of migration to the case of Tajikistan where the agriculture serves as a main sector of employment for people, the environmental factors have become another reason to migrate. According to a research conducted by Olimov and Olimova, districts that are affected by environmental degradation show the highest level of migration (2012, 9). They also reveal that the level of distraction serves as a course of migration, whether internal or international, where in the case of extreme natural disasters affords can't cover the cost, thus people migrate internally. The villages that have a high level of natural disasters have lower level of international migration (Olimov and Olimova 2012). In relation to the urban migration, the rising cost of living and insufficiency of wage to cover the costs, the



absence of efficient insurance and mortgage systems lead people to migrate. Furthermore, the population growths, careless of resources, shortages of food supply create social and economic challenges. The respondents of this case study indicate that the low-income level, unemployment, rising cost to accommodate their living standards, children's education, and plans to purchase a house played significant roles in reasons for their husbands to migrate from Dushanbe.

### ***2.1 Gendered Migration: A path to strengthen one's masculinity***

International migration of Tajik people is dominated by men. Even though female migrants have been present in such phenomenon, it remains the domain of men. The statistics emphasize that 93% of migrants are men, where 66.7% are between the age of 16-34 years and 76% represent the rural areas, who predominantly migrate to Russia (Brown et al. 2008, 46). In 2007 it was determined that at least one family member has migrated for labor in every third household (Olimov and Olimova 2012, 23), becoming a normal occurrence in people's lives. Migrant men occupy various sectors but the majority work in construction sector, composing 74.1%, following by trade 10.8% and agriculture 5.4% (Brown et al. 2008, 49). Even though 22.3% of migrants have higher education (Brown et al. 2008, 46) the Russian job market prevents the non-citizens from competing on the same level with the locals. The level of education deteriorated at the time of Tajikistan's transition to independence and attendance of females has been a concern. In the secondary education, females composed 54% in 2003-04, and for university degree female attendance decreased from 34% in 1991-92 to 25% in 2003-04 (JICA 2008, 13). Various reasons have been examined in relation to female decline in higher education, such as the cultural gender roles, value to boys education, rising religious believes,

and marriage (Rokicka 2008, 43). The traditional norms and beliefs place women to the private domain of household responsibilities, while men occupy the economic activities.

The majority of migrants are married, but rarely do they take their families with them (Piracha et al. 2013, 4). Since the Tajik migrants serve as a cheap labor in the Russian labor market, the income received by migrants is low compared to the income of local workers. Thus their wages are not sufficient to accommodate and cover the living expenses of the whole family, so the money earned by the migrants are sent to the home country where the expenses and living standards are more affordable than in Russia. Migration has become a source of manhood for Tajik men by which the men are able to continue their role of a breadwinner, expectation built upon by the society and family. In the Tajik society, men and women have equal access to property rights, as well as marriage, divorce and parental care, but men have a higher status in the hierarchal stand in the patriarchal society.

The legal rights in Tajikistan uphold the equality of sexes. The Constitution of Tajikistan (1994) promotes equality in different spheres of society: equal right for labor, equal payment for the same work (Article 25), no special preferences, nor declining a work place because of gender (Article 7 of the Labor Code), maternity and paternity leaves (Article 46 of the Labor Code), and discrimination against women with young child (Article 155 of the Criminal Code). Furthermore, in 2005 a Law on 'State Guarantees of Equality between Men and Women and Equal Opportunities' was implemented to strengthen the equality of sexes in the workplace, representation in different branches of state power and prevention of discrimination (JICA 2008, 46). However, the legal equality does not imply the practice of implementing the laws on the ground in terms of equal treatment. There is a large gender gap in the labor force between men

and women, showing the lowest at the ages of 20-29, when women leave for childbirth and leading to economic productiveness only by 25% (JICA 2008, 42).

Migration is gendered and for Tajik men serves their masculinity. West and Zimmermann introduce the notion of gender, the product of daily social behaviors and practices establishing a 'natural' male/female dichotomy (1987). People undertake the 'doing' of gender as members of society, and they are accountable to structures of naturally occurring constructions of gendered behavior. The authors argue that "gender is not a sets of traits," nor roles, but rather created by social performances (West and Zimmermann 1987, 29). It is a reflection of traditional social expectation, and something that is not fixed but created in interaction. People carry on 'gender work' using practices of what is 'masculine' and 'feminine'. For Tajik men being a migrant labor associate with masculinity, whose hard physical work is a symbol of masculine strength and ability to provide for the family as expected by the society. Through migration, the meaning of masculinity shifts where those men that are able to provide for the well-being of their families back home are viewed more masculine than those that could not keep up with the social expectations.

Migration enables men to endorse masculinity by labor and support of their family. Women hold higher number in the level of housework participation, composing 60%, while men hold 20.3% of economic unproductiveness, which also means that out of total population above 15 years old "every third women and only 6% of them are men" who are not occupied with housework (JICA 2008, 43). Deborah Boehm in the study of migration in the Mexican community emphasizes that men are expected to migrate and those that do not, their masculinity is "called into question" (2008, 20). For the studied community "to be a man, one must migrate" and men who become a citizen of the host country gain higher level of masculinity and power

(Boehm 2008, 21). She problematizes the idea that migration can serve a positive effect on women because it disturbs the gender roles, and finds out that women gain more power but also experience their men's domination (2008). In comparison to the Tajik society for many families, especially in rural areas, migration serves as a source of income and men migrate to protect their families even if their job (no protection, hard physical labor, low paying, etc.) and situation (harassment from the police, xenophobia, poor living conditions, etc.) in the host country demasculinizes them. Even if men migrate for labor they continue to hold their authority and in many instances constantly call their families back home and control their decision-making, while other women experience new freedom.

## **2.2 Tajik Women and Migration: Are Women 'Left Behind'?**

The inclusion of women into migration discourse has been long emphasized. Women are not seen as passive followers, but rather mobile and in control of their agency. While the study of migration considers the gendered aspect into the discussion, the women 'left behind' have been receiving little attention. Caroline Archambault explores the title of 'left behind' and why women in Ugweno remain in their farms, while their husbands migrate (2010). She considers women's place in Ugweno as a part of "an empowering strategy" that provides women with economic autonomy and social well-being that they would not find if they migrate with their husbands (2010, 920). Her discussion of the problematic view developed in the literature regarding the labeling of rural wives of migrants as left behind is actively present in the interviews I conducted during my fieldtrip. I will build upon Archambault's study of "left" and "behind" references and apply the concept to the Tajik women who do not migrate with their husbands.

The transition from the Soviet Union to national independence in Tajikistan greatly affected men and women, but women experienced more challenges from values clinging towards patriarchal practices and rising of religious practices of Islam (JICA 2008, 3). The female educational attendance, presence in the decision of economic and political importance, inequality of wages, violence etc. have challenged women's equal status with men but migration does not serve to privilege their well-being as does to masculinize men. Women dominate the sectors of education and healthcare with lower wage and compared to men their income is unequal (JICA 2008, 14). At the time of socialism women held high positions in governmental levels but their political life has declined, "constituting less than 30% of civic servants" (Public Organizations of Tajikistan 2013, 6). Even though the employment rate for women is lower than for men their participation in the labor force is an indication of their presence.

In analyzing the experiences of Tajik women of their husband's migration presents an interesting case because the labeling as 'left' behind-as abandoned- misleads their experiences. Such emphasis builds an idea that these women did not chose to stay behind but were rather left, "a lack of agency on a woman's part" (Archambault 2010, 293). In the interviews with Tajik women whose husbands migrated for work particularly showed this aspect of women's choice to remain in Dushanbe. The majority of interviewees indicated that they did not think of migrating themselves, either for reasons related to work or child bearing. Moreover, Tajik women are actively aware of all the challenges in labor migration to Russia. The International Federation for Human Rights (fidh) and the Anti-Discrimination Centre "Memorial" (ADC Memorial) conducted a study on the situation of Tajik migrant workers in 2011 that explicitly describes the difficulties of migrants working in Russia. There are numerous examples of 'forced labor', where the employers confiscate migrant's passports, refuse to pay their salaries. The working

conditions are very hard and demand intensive physical labor without weekends and working hours exceeding regulations. There are problems with the police, their status and housing, no medical insurance in the case of illness. Xenophobic attacks are on the rise and serve a danger for the migrants. The study reveals that in 2010, 37 people were killed and 368 were injured in relation to hate violence (2011). At such conditions, why would women who have built social networks, domestic lives, and enjoy access to resources (health care, education, water, etc.) choose to migrate?

Women who are left 'behind' enjoy better living conditions than majority of labor migrants in Russia. I am referring to the women whom I have interviewed and visited their homes, and even though they might not be representative of all migrant families they do portray the living standards of families in Dushanbe. Archambault problematizes the use of "'behind' to connote the rural environment" (2010, 923), which still applies to the comparison of what would be discussed in the debate of Tajikistan and Russia as one underdeveloped and the other modern and progressive. Although Tajikistan in many comparison falls behind the development acquired in Russia the living standards of labor migrants in Russia are below to the experiences of families in Dushanbe. The study by fidh and ADC Memorial claims that access to housing for migrants are limited and as it was observed the majority of migrants live either in construction sites, or apartment rooms illegally rented with overpopulated migrants (2011, 16). Adding to that the housing in many instances offered no running water, gas or electricity, which result in migrant's health risks (cases of tuberculosis). The experiences of women of migrant households living in Dushanbe did not resonate to the label of 'left behind'-as abandoned, as it does not represent the reasons for why women remain in their hometowns.

## Chapter 3: Data and Methods

I conducted in-depth interviews with twelve women who have experienced their husband's migration. The study was carried out in the duration of two weeks at the end of April 2014. To obtain a diverse sample of respondents of economic and social backgrounds, I interviewed housewives, part-time and full time employees, without predetermining their age, education background, duration of their husband's absence, nor the success of his migration. As the focus of my research is based on an urban area I chose to collect samples from the capital city of Tajikistan, Dushanbe-as it hosts nuclear families of different ethnicities and practices. I am native of Dushanbe and have pre-existing kin relationship that helped me to get in contact with women for my prior research who I contacted for a recommendation of potential interviewees for my thesis. The next respondents recommended more interviewees who might agree to be contacted, causing a technique of snowball sampling (Coleman 1958).

The respondents varied in age, youngest being approximately in their yearly thirties and oldest in their fifties. While their age, standard of living, duration of their husband's migration varied their experiences related in many aspects. The interviews lasted approximately for thirty-to-forty minutes and took place either at the respondent's house or place of work. The respondents do not represent a specific group of the social strata; some are graduates of a university, while others are graduates of high schools. Their professional occupation varies but predominantly the women who were interviewed work in governmental organizations. Out of twelve respondents- two women are part-time workers: one considers herself a housewife but take part in economic activities.

Prior to the interviews, I explained my interest and the general idea of my thesis, and notified that I was not looking for a right or wrong answers so that the interviewees were more

relaxed in talking about their experiences. The questionnaire was conducted either in Tajik or Russian languages, and sometimes a mixture of two, which then was translated to English. Their responses were recorded and then transcribed with an agreement that their identity will remain confidential. Out of twelve interviewees one didn't want to be recorded, so I had to write down any important points she raised and transcribed them in details once I returned home.

The interviews started by women describing the structure of their family, the number of children, their occupation and the duration of their husband's migration. Questions focused on changes, challenges, decision-making, and reflection on their lives and their role in the absence of their husbands. At the end of the interviews, the respondents were asked a general question about their standard of living, whether the changes improved, worsen or remained the same since their husbands migrated and they adapted new roles.<sup>1</sup> The use of interviews and their applicability depend on the themes identified in the analysis.

My Tajik identity and knowledge of culture served me the benefits of creating a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewees and be accepted as 'one of us' in the communities, which might be challenging for a foreign researcher. However, my identity as an insider also served a challenge because at times interviewees took my identity for granted and assumed that I have shared their experiences, as it was a common occurrence for families to have a family member migrate. At times like this, I maintained my background of studying abroad for almost a decade to serve a distance from the interviewees, and maintain an outsider presence (Rashid 2013, 88). However, occurrence of such instances happened nevertheless.

The qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with twelve women does not specifically apply to using my conclusion as a true interpretation of the effects of men's

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix



migration on women left behind in Tajikistan because the geographical location and family structure would possibly give different interpretations. There are many cases where men migrate for work and never return back, permanently abandoning women (IOM 2009, Panjbar 2009), but my research focused on families whose men are in active marriage and return home. Since most of the migrant workers return home and go back to work in Russia, their time specific absence was not specifically studied and was rather an independent variable. This research analyzed through interviews highlights and challenges women's position in a patriarchal society and helps us to understand women's interpretation of their positions and the ways men's migrations affect their lives.

**Table 1:** Migrant Data from the Interviews conducted in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in April 2014

Interviewee (pseudonym)	Age (approx.)	Family structure (#of children)	Worked prior to husband's migration	Occupation	Migrant husband's absence (approx. years)
Madina	50	5 (2F, 3M)	Part-time	Informal	15
Parvina	50	2 (1F, 1M)	No	Government Organization	19
Sabrina	30	2	Yes	Government Organization	1
Zarina	30	2 (1F, 1M)	Part-time	Government Organization	3
Mahina	40	3 (2F, 1M)	No	Housewife, Part-time	15
Manizha	40	6 (M)	Yes	Teacher	16
Sitora	40	2 (1F, 1M)	Yes	Government Organization	10
Firuza	35	2 (1F, 1M)	Yes	Government Organization	3
Maryam	30	1(F)	No	Government Organization	1
Shahnoza	35	1 (M)	Yes	Government Organization	4
Nilufar	35	2 (1F, 1M)	Yes	Government Organization	2
Lola	30	1 (M)	No	Housewife, Part-time	2

## Chapter 4: Analysis of Men's Migration and Autonomy of Women in Dushanbe

International labor migration of temporary nature often requires its participants to leave their families behind. In Tajikistan, the migration of men and their constant absence in the patriarchal society begs the questions of who takes on their responsibilities and how do families organize in their absence. The leading question of my research tackles the effects of men's labor migration on women's autonomy, using different factors that are built upon from the literature and applied to the Tajik context. This chapter will have a following structure. I will provide a discussion of autonomy and how other research measure women's level of autonomy. I will develop the basis for measuring women's autonomy in the context of Dushanbe, which will focus around the issues of decision-making, raising the children, mobility and access to information. The effect of men's migration and the level of women's autonomy will also be examined in relation to women's labor force participation, remittances and the longevity of wives and husbands changed roles. Women's autonomy rises at the time of their husband's migration and their changed roles remain permanent upon the return of their husbands.

The discussion of autonomy has occupied various spheres of academia. Scholar examine the context of autonomy and apply to the philosophical, psychological, political, sociological and economic doctrines, building its own interpretation and applying to the debates. *Autonomy* is a simple word, yet contains various domains that are important to revise. According to political scientists, autonomy refers "to the right or power to self-government", while in sociology, the context applies to one who is seen as a "rational, self-determining social actor" who does not follow "determinism" but "expresses his/her own goals and interests" (Gordon 1994, 31).

Autonomy refers to one's psychological, social and technical capacity to gain material and use it to make decisions of one's affairs. Following that, equality of autonomy amongst people involves "equal decision-making" (Dyson and Moore 1983, 45). Jejeebhoy and Sathar also provide similar interpretation of autonomy, which in the discussion of women is defined as "control women have over their own lives", equal standing with their husbands in decision making in regards to their family affairs, independent authority to make decisions, freedom of movement and mobility, access to knowledge and information, and control over resources (2001, 688), which ultimately describes people's human rights. It has been proposed that an increase in women's autonomy could result in lesser discrimination against them, and lead to the decline of mortality rate (Potter and Volpp 1993, 151). When discussing women's personal autonomy it does not "equivalence to men" but rather about a woman's authority and independence of herself and her doings beyond mothering (Schlegel 1972, 23). Those women are autonomous who "retain a sense of self-direction and self-determination that grows with the help of affiliation and connection with others, rather than in competition against them" (Humm 1995, 18).

The literature on the discussion of women's autonomy provides a wide range of items to determine women's independence of decision-making. While certain measures are commonly used amongst the scholars, some research adds new tools that are contextualized to their case studies. Schlegel in the study of sixty-six matrilineal societies discovered that only fourteen of those societies have 'autonomous' women, who are not controlled by their male family members. Her measures of the degree of female autonomy lays in the discussion of plural marriages, sexual restrictions, social positions, menstrual restrictions, and preferential marriage (1972, 87-93). Others consider women's autonomy to be determined by her control over fertility, productive economic activities that result in their economic power (Blumberg 1984, 72-86).

Caldwell in the examination of Sri Lanka, Kerala, and Costa Rica identifies the relationship between female autonomy whose high level of autonomy works in relation to mortality declines, equal treatment of daughters and sons, low fertility (1986). The dimension of women's personal autonomy structured around freedom of movement (Dyson and Moore 1983, Ghuman 2003, Mason and Smith 2000), equal autonomy for decisions of their children's health and their survival (Ghuman et al. 2004, Dyson and Moore 1983), economic decisions (Mason and Smith 2000), violence by husband (Ghuman 2003), ability to inherit property and decide on its use, deciding on their partners (Dyson and Moore 1983), and the ability to make contraceptive choices (Mason and Smith 2000). A level of 'high autonomy' is identified as the "ability to influence and make decisions covering the full range and household affairs" (Dyson and Moore 1983, 46).

Autonomy represents the right to make a decision and stand by the consequences of that decision. The list of items determining the level of women's autonomy is very long, whether the measure relates to the domestic sphere as controlling reproduction, deciding on who to marry or when to divorce, equal share of household power and decision making, or the public sphere in regards to freedom of movement, work, access to education and political participation. While a wide range of measures meet the criteria to identify women's autonomy I chose to focus on specific items as they closely relate and contextualize Tajik women's experiences. The above discussed literature provide various mechanisms to measure women's autonomy I will base the measure by women's decision-making, child care, mobility, access to information, labor force participation, control over remittances and longevity of women's new roles. These items do not indicate a women's complete subordination to men because in many spheres of their lives, women in Dushanbe possess some level of autonomy but it will be interesting to analyze the

changes caused by men's migration. Moreover, these measures provide an insight into the private and public domains of women from migrant households. Caldwell makes a valuable point that autonomy should not be equated to status or respect (1986, 202), which relate to the environment of this case study as autonomous women do not possess the title of the head of the household.

#### **4.1 Decision-Making of Financial Spending**

Male labor migration affects women's role in the decision-making of household and public affairs. Some women take the responsibility of everyday decision making in the home and in the farm, as a result, these women have emerged as the head of the household (Adebusoye 1993). Before men's migration in the majority of households in Dushanbe men perform the duties of financial concerns, such as shopping in the market, paying for the bills and dealing with governmental organizations, but in their absence women take on men's tasks. A question persists whether women make autonomous decisions in the time of their husband's migration, or whether the dominance of their husband is present from miles away. The answer to the question lies in relation to men's financial contribution but women experience increased level of freedom to make independent decisions.

Tajik men are perceived to be the head of the household, following the long tradition of gender roles expecting men to be the breadwinner of their families. However, the history of socialist state affected women's subordinate position and unlike many women around the world that were under the control of their husbands the Tajik women actively took part in the pursuit of their education and career goals. Thus, men do not solely possess the full control of the decision-making in family affairs, nor are the only providers, but hold a higher status in the patriarchal perception of the Tajik society. In the nuclear households of Dushanbe the approach to the

decision-making does not lie on asking permission to pursue an act, rather involves a discussion between the husband and a wife. In the result of men's migration women take on the decision-making, but when the decision requires a large sum of money then wives consult with their migrant husbands. An interviewee, Madina- a mother of five children, experiences her husband's migration for more than a decade now. She works in the informal sector and reflects on the issue of decision-making:

*There are small things that I would talk over with him, when it came to children's enrollment to institutions [that requires a large sum of money], marriage, property...when it is a big decision. However, the everyday expenses and decisions that I can handle myself I do not consult over.*

Another interviewee, Mahina-a mother of three who works at a part time job reflects on her experience of her husband's migration, who has been visiting his family and returning to Russia for more than a decade now, situates her decision-making in his absence:

*If it [decision] an easy decision I would do it myself, but if it is something harder than we would discuss. 'Hard' related to money, I would tell him to help me since my wage was not enough. 'Easy' related to the house, neighbors, wedding I decide on them myself, whether I should go or not or how much to spend.*

Considering that these women have been living in the absence of their husbands for more than a decade shows that their autonomous decision of everyday expenses, clothing, buying a new object for the house, paying for utilities lay on them, but the financial spending of large value or decision that would change someone's life goes through consultation as their husband financially support the well-being of their families. It is important to note that women can also be the owners of their houses, which is practiced amongst Tajik people, thus I speculate that in the purchase or sell of a property the men discuss the issue with their wives, than autonomously deciding on the matter.

The longevity of experience of international migration affects women's decision-making. A young interviewee, Maryam, whose husband has migrated for a year in reply to her autonomous decision making stated "yes [I ask my husband in decision making], *how can you not ask?*" The possibility of their young marriage and inexperience of knowing how one and the other would take decisions independently results in husband's stronger role in his wife's decision-making. The discussion of intersectionality addresses Maryam's experience, where her gender and age interact forming her experiences that are different from women of older age.<sup>2</sup>

The frequency of communication also shows an effect on women's autonomous decision-making. The more frequent is the communication between the wife and the husband the higher is the possibility of the husband to have an effect on his wife's decisions. Sitara's experience is an example of the effect of communication on women's decision-making. Unlike other women's experiences and husband's labor migration for hard skilled labor, Sitara's husband is employed on legal terms in Russia, portraying a different case to the majority of Tajik migrants. Her everyday communication via Skype results on her limited autonomous decision-making, as they discuss their daily activities. Even though they jointly decide on the financial spending, the everyday decision making of food expenses, spending on utilities could serve as examples of some level of autonomy.

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<sup>2</sup> Crenshaw introduced the term intersectionality and used the concept in order to address the problems resulted from identity politics that failed to consider the difference within a group (1991). The term intersectionality was to "denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's employment experiences" (Crenshaw 1989, 139). Further, she applied intersectionality in the context of violence against women and examined how fundamentally the "violence that women experience is shaped by other dimensions "of their identity than just gender, for instance race and class that are categories of one's self (1991, 1241). The use of intersectionality is applicable to the study of power structures, the positioning of advantaged and disadvantaged in the hierarchy.

The level of men's financial contribution affects women's autonomous decision-making. Yabiku et al. in the examination of the link between men's labor migration and women's autonomous decisions making indicate that an increase in women's autonomy relates to the economic outcomes of their husband's migration (2010). They observed that women whose husbands were 'unsuccessful migrants' - who didn't send remittances in a year (2010, 299), affected women's level of autonomy, meaning women attained a greater level of autonomy when their husbands were unsuccessful migrants (Yabiku et al. 2010). Based on the analysis of my data two possible environments resulted from men's labor migration and women's decision-making. The more regular is men's financial contribution to his family the stronger is his presence in the decision-making. The regularity of migrant's contribution becomes associated with greater influence, a result that Yabiku et al. observed in the study of villages of Mozambique. An interviewee, Shahnoza-a mother of one child, shortly and precisely answered that her decisions are autonomous and she does not consult her husband, rather "*he knows at the end*" when the decision is already taken. She also stated that her living conditions have not changed and in the past seven years her migrant husband who at the beginning left for educational purposes and then remained for low skilled work recently started financially helping his family. Another interviewee, (secretary), a mother of two young children whose husband's financial contribution is seldom and "*sends money when he wants*" stated that "*very rare* [that she asked her husband in order to make a decision], *he trusts me and supports my decisions, and also approves my thoughts.*" Parvina also expressed a similar experience, whose husband contributed "*sometimes*" and she "*never* [talked to him about her decisions] *and autonomously decided on everything.*" Despite their age difference, experience of their husband's migration these women shared a common effect of migration that was related to infrequent financial



contribution from their husbands, which results in women's greater level of autonomy and independent decision making of any sort.

In families where the husband's contribution is irregular and women, hold greater independence in decision making the outcome of such effect results in deteriorating relationship between the couples. It does not apply that migrant's irregular contribution is the only cause of weakened relationship because there might be other side effects, but the communication between the migrant husband and wife certainly suffers consequently. Such living arrangements might cause some women to consider a divorce, as there are studies conducted on abandoned wives in Tajikistan of migrants who build family abroad (IOM 2009, Panjbar 2009, fidh 2011, BBC 2012, 101 East 2013). Even though the interviewees did not directly state that their marriage was at the edge of a breakup I speculate an affect to divorce since the lack of communication, the absence of financial and emotional support from the migrant husband result in women performing double responsibilities of a mother and a father.

#### **4.2 Raising the Children**

The migration of Tajik men results in their wives and children staying behind. In families, the fathers are perceived to hold a higher authority, and commonly mothers in the time of crisis with their young children's behavior would threaten by stating '*wait until your father comes*' so that their misbehavior would stop. As in many families around the world, Tajik women are responsible for raising the children and fathers are commonly occupied with work and would be seen at home at the end of their working day, but hold part in disciplining. The question arises of what are the effects of men's labor migration on the lives of children and how do the decisions in regards to children's future gets decided. As a result of men's migration

women hold a greater role in raising and disciplining their children even if their migrant husband's financial contribution is present in their lives.

Wives of migrant households in Dushanbe experience greater level of autonomy in the decisions concerning their children. Statistically eight out of twelve women stated that their husband's contribution was of financial basis, not in relation to raising or disciplining their children. As Madina describes about her situation, which reflects other's experiences, demonstrating the division of responsibilities in raising their children:

*My husband's contribution was just of financial part, but not with raising the children, because he did not have time. He talks on the phone, but I decide on their health, education, clothing, etc. He comes only for two weeks or maximum for a month and goes back in order to keep his job.*

As stated above women perform the responsibilities of both parents, in terms of disciplining, while the husband provides the financial means. Even if the father wished to be involved in raising the children, the short-term visit and conversations on the phone do not constitute mother's active presence in their lives.

The increase in women's authority over the children in Dushanbe is also present in the discussion of Egyptian women of migrant households who experience higher authority in the time of their husband's migration. However, unlike Louhichi who discusses the challenges of mothers with disciplining their children the findings in the case of Dushanbe provide an opposite occurrence. Interviewees of older age who have longer experience of their husband's migration expressed a closer relation to their children and did not indicate major problems in relation to their children's upbringing in the absence of their husbands. Madina, who has been parenting independently their five children for more than a decade now, expresses a positive relationship:

*The children became closer to me; they treat me as their father and a mother. They respect me, and approach me with any questions even if their father has returned from migration.*

The time of father's migration affects his relationship to his children, and as quoted above, the children form a closer bond to their mother who have been physically present compared to short visits of their father. Another interviewee, Parvina stated that her two children "*started respecting me more, even though my son isn't scared of me he listens to me and does not retaliate because I am not his father.*" The discussion indicates that children of more mature age form a closer bond to their mother knowing of all the hardship they go through, even though they highly respect their fathers' contribution they equally appreciate their mother's work. Two other interviewees who have children of school age described some difficulties but it was not specific to migrant households, rather challenges of adolescences that would not listen to their parents. Four other interviewees have children of young age in which case their father's parenting from miles away would not lead to any changes and as one of them, Maryam- a mother of one child, states "*I have a young daughter and I am capable of raising her*" has built a strong bond with her daughter. None of the interviewees describes academic problems in their children's life caused by their father's absence.

The rest of the three interviewees expressed their husband's presence in raising the children, which took place through phone conversations or Skype video calls. One of the interviewee, Sabrina shared the experiences her husband's migration of a year now and since his absence is shorter in comparison to other women who have shared about their husband's migration for more than a decade could explain his regular communication and presence in his children's everyday decisions. Other interviewee, Sitora by using Skype video calls communicated with her husband about their children's behavior, who takes active role in their lives, "*we Skype everyday so we ask him for an advice. He is the head of the household, so we do not exactly act independently.*" Her experience of her husband's migration is not of recent even,

but his work atmosphere and the kind of job he performs places them on better conditions to communicate on daily basis.

The decision concerning children's life changing events is communicated between the mother and migrant father. Women who have older children explained that they talked to their husband when it came to their children's entry to university, marriage and other events that requires a large sum of money as their husbands contribute financially and the blessing of both parents. Since the parents are still married, the decisions are taken on mutual agreements. Such observation of father's presence in big decisions is also present in non-migrant families but the difference lays in the level of mother's power. The physical absence of father in home provides the mother with a power that could not be challenged. For instance, if a child asks for a permission to go for a concert and the mother does not agree then it is the final decision, while in non-migrant families the father could challenge the decision.

Women of migrant households portray no difference in the treatment of their children based on their sex in the patriarchal society in Dushanbe. As Caldwell in the analysis of women's autonomy and mortality rate showed that women of migrant households showed no difference in the treatment of their sons and daughters, whether it came to their health or education (1986) was a comparative finding in Dushanbe. Following the traditions of Tajik people, young brides leave their parent's house and move in to live with their in-laws, leaving the care of their parents to their brothers. Thus in families following old customs parents give more preferences to the upbringing of their sons, as they will remain to take care of their parents. Even though such practices continue to exist, many families recognize that daughters could care for their parents as much as their sons, even more in some circumstances. Observing the families of the interviewees who had daughters of adult age showed no difference in their treatment based

on sex. One of the daughters attends a law school, the other daughter of the interviewee studies nursing, and a daughter of third interviewee graduated from economics, as their sons were actively pursuing their dreams. As Sadiqi and Enaji's study of Moroccan migrants' families showed that sons are seen as a "guarantee of financial security" in the future of their parents (2004, 73), in the study of Tajik culture serve more than the financial side. The expectation and practice persist that as parents care for their children, the children will pay back to their parents once they stand on their feet. By investing in their children mothers of migrant households aim to hold a close connection to their children, not just the financial support but also the close relationship when it comes to listening to the advice of their parents. The physical help and emotional support are also crucial for parents to strengthen with their children.

#### ***4.3 Freedom of Mobility***

Men's migration results in women's greater level of mobility. Women of migrant families become more mobile as they gain the responsibilities and tasks previously held by their husbands. However, the question is whether their mobility requires their spouse's approval or carried on by women autonomously? Women of migrant families in Dushanbe autonomously decide on their mobility and do not require their husband's permission, but the travels of long distance is discussed between the spouses. The argumentation also lies accordance with women's age, where women of older age expressed less constrain or need to inform their husbands about their mobility or ask for travels.

Women in Dushanbe are part of the public sphere and their level of mobility is not constrained to their homes. They actively take part in the labor market of various sectors; some hold high positions in the government and affect the segregation of jobs by sex. They also hold positions in their communities, visit their families and friends and occupy themselves with

activities. There is no exact data of how the household responsibilities are divided between the couples, but it is common for women to care for cooking, cleaning and washing, while men are responsible for fixing, paying the bills, buying food and dealing with governmental organizations. As a consequence of men's migration women in nuclear families in Dushanbe take on their husband's tasks and perform their duties. Gulati in the study of women from migrant families in Kerala claims that in imposing a question in regards to women's level of mobility does not result in a "straightforward answer" (1993, 133), which showed a different result in this study, where the interviewees directly indicated an increase in their mobility.

Parvina's reply covers the aspects of other interviewees' reply:

*I am a woman and a man. He used to help me in the household chores, I never went to the market, nor did I go to the children's schools or dealt with their university. But since he is gone I am responsible for all the tasks. I go to the market, handle the construction of my house, went to my children's parents meeting in their school and now go to my son's university if needed.*

Madina also expressed same tasks:

*I became a father and a mother. I deal with paying for utilities, go to the market, go to children's parents meetings, find an electrician, go shopping for children, and attend events (marriage, death...).*

There are cases when men's migration does not influence women's level of mobility, but even in such cases that are one in many reflect some level of change. Shanoza's case does not share the general experiences of people but could serve as an example.

*Nothing really new has changed, I was the man in our family. We used to do everything fifty-fifty and sometimes I used to do the 75% of all the work in the private and public sphere. So his migration was practically not evident.*

The freedom of women's mobility also plays in accordance with their age. In the interviews with three women who were in their early thirties indicated that they took autonomous

decisions in their daily life but when it came to long distance travels they discussed with their husbands. As one interviewee, Nilufar- a mother of two stated:

*I do not ask him whether I can go to pay for utilities or go to the market, I was mobile even when he was here. But then I would tell him where I went and now that he is away small things do not need much attention. I visit my friends and family, but if I decide to visit my parents that live two days of travels needs my discussion with him.*

The women did not discuss their husband's refusal to their travels because their discussion is more of informing and consulting, than asking for a permission. The intersection of women's age and gender creates an experience different to those of young age, who unlike older women experience more pressure to consult with their husbands in regards to their long travels. Their categories create different experiences that place them lower on the hierarchal system compared to women of older age.

An increase in women's mobility and their responsibilities affect their level of self-confidence. Rooij in the study of Moroccan migrant families discusses how the wives of migrant husbands would hire personnel to handle the agricultural work of rural area that was previously carried out by their husbands (2000). In comparison to women in Dushanbe where the increase of responsibilities to some extent burdens women and would ease their daily tasks through someone's help. However, in reply to the help from relatives, the majority of women indicated their independence and some said to be associated with financial concerns. The independence of women from help may also be discussed as women showing their strength at handling the tasks, whose self-confidence grows in the patriarchal society.

#### **4.4 Access to Information**

*In the beginning, things were challenging, especially issues related to money. I had feelings of insecurity and doubts of how I would carry the responsibilities all by myself, whom to talk if I have problems with the electricity...or getting my son and daughter to*

*university, but overtime I figured how things work. I started using the bank for my finances, arranged for my children's enrollment, and even moved to a bigger place.*

The above quote is from an interview with Madina who expresses her access to new information that resulted in her efficiency and self-esteem in carrying out the tasks in the absence of her husband. Women's confidence and power can be affected by their knowledge of how the society and organizations function, thus women of migrant households in Dushanbe expressed greater level of self-esteem as they had access to information. When women are informed of how to deal with practices of life, they do better in handling the responsibilities assigned to their men, and by performing them independently improves women's self-confidence. Gulati argues that overtime women of migrant households become self-reliant and independent from the support of their extended family and if they had previously experienced the tasks carried out by their husbands, they would face fewer challenges (1993).

Women's access to information increases their leadership in the private and public affairs. One of the interviewee discussed the changes in her life as she became familiar with services offered for her children:

*I used to take my daughter to kindergarten as it was close to my work, but when she went to school the location disadvantaged my schedule and her father became responsible to handle her schooling. My daughter just went to school and came home, not attending any activities nor did I know were offered. When my husband migrated, I started taking my child to school and learnt of extracellular activities that were offered outside her school, which I obviously took advantage of. She started doing gymnastics and art classes, to which he stated that, were unnecessary.*

Even though her husband did not think drawing and gymnastics were useful, Nilufar continued with her daughter's activities, as she herself took part in the labor force and contributed to the family, example of "women's economic power is the strongest predictor of their degree of household power" (Blumberg 1984, 73). In the public sphere women of migrant households in the absence of their husbands, take more leadership role. Shahnoza and Madina are from the



same neighborhood where women's leadership is on the rise. Madina described an event that captures women's leadership role. The government in the city of Dushanbe was carrying out a project of cutting down old trees and consequently many people did not agree with such renovation. The women and fewer men in their neighborhood fought with the government employees who started cutting down the trees and were successful at preventing further actions. For some families in the neighborhood men came to represent their voice but the families of migrant households' women took the leadership. Schlegel states, "greater autonomy in the home [does not] necessarily correlated with high status in the broader socio-cultural sphere" (1972, 92), but these women were able to affect the project and were not ignored because men are perceived as a head of the household.

As a result of men's migration, women become more informed of the global affairs. Since the majority of Tajik migrants travel to Russia, their families back home follow the news to be informed of the circumstances in the host country. The channels do not require a purchase of cable and televise two Russian stations free, making it easier for families to watch international channels. Sitora's interview can serve as an example:

*The communication between my husband and me is very strong. He actively takes part in children's lives and makes sure they do not feel his absence that much. We communicate via Skype every day and even able to see each other.*

Even though Sitora's case does not represent the majority of experiences of migrant's wives, it could be applied to some families whose economic circumstances are better off, have younger children to show the use or dependent on women's age where younger women are better informed of the use of technology. Further mentioning their progress, women of migrant households are also well aware of the legal basis of immigration policies of host countries or

what legal paperwork is required to apply for a qualified position abroad. These women follow the international news and men's migration has affected their interests and perspectives.

#### **4.5 Women's Labor Force Participation**

An economic stability provides power and influence in decision-making. Blumberg states that for women "the river of power...goes from economic power to some degree of influence over other spheres..." (1984, 47), and one way of attaining economic power is through labor market. Studies have shown that women's presence in the labor market affects an increase in their decision-making; an example is shown in the use of contraceptives in Puerto Rico as an exercise of women's greater role (Blumberg 1984, 69). In the study of women from migrant families in Dushanbe shows that the majority of interviewees worked even prior to their husband's migration, but those that were housewives and economically unproductive influenced their entry into the labor force.

Women's labor force participation increases in the absence of financial security. A number of interviewees who are full employees in governmental organizations indicated that if the financial contribution of their migrant husband were more efficient to improve the standard of their living they would prefer to stay home. For Parvina the reasons of staying home was in relation to her grandchildren, "*if he [her husband] was able to financially support me in better terms I would not work and rather stay behind and look after my grandchildren*" whose care were in the hand of nannies than their grandmother. Sabrina indicated if she had a choice "*and if everything was provided I would stay home,*" who also stated her husband's dislike of her working status that he "*does not exactly like that I work but what can we do, we need to work.*" The double work of household responsibilities and work place effect women's well-being and could explain the choice of staying home and continuing the responsibility of household affairs

than of two places. Louhichi's study of Egyptian women of migrant households provides reasons for women's refusal to work, one formed in association with the traditional view that "women work (paid) is a sign of poverty" in the urban areas (1997, 331). The interpretation of women's paid labor as a sign of poverty could be experienced in some communities around Tajikistan, but the reply of other interviews that indicated their wish to work states that such beliefs aren't commonly shared. Mahina, who works part time, indicated her choice of staying home but her reason was associated with her educational background:

*I work when he works. I like working it is good. If however, finances were secured and efficient for our living I would prefer to stay home. I do not have a diploma so I have to work part time in a restaurant washing dishes.*

Considering that "better educated women had a higher prosperity to work" (Lokshin and Glinskaya 2009, 485) implies the intersection of education, as an indicator of higher status, and gender, where women of low-level of education provide a different response to employment, knowing that with low level of education they will not be able to apply for better paid jobs. Women provided various reasons for their choice of staying home than working, but the reasons have stronger meaning than feeling of laziness or unproductiveness. The majority of women whose husbands are migrants indicated that even if the financial support was enough they would choose to continue working.

The labor force positively contributes to women's well-being. Four out of twelve women who either worked part time or stayed home before their husband's migration indicated their choice of continuing working. The rest of five women who worked prior to their husband's migration also indicated that they will continue working even if the financial resources were enough. They provided various reasons for why they prefer working but the overall emphasis linked to their sense of self-worth, productiveness, contribution to the family, and meeting

people of similar interests. Sitora, who even worked prior to her husband's migration stated that she would continue even though his financial contribution is efficient:

*I worked before we got married and did not oppose me working even after he left. I would choose to work regardless even if we did not need any money. It is boring at home, at work, at least you get distracted and you meet new people. There is a progress when you interact with people than staying back home and doing the same housework every day.*

For Nilufar, her workplace helped her to better manage her time and be more productive “*I am more productive when I have a job than staying home. You get everything done when you work; both the housework and government work, and get an income earned by you.*” For some, staying home and not taking part in the labor force is an extreme case, Shanoza's reply “*I like working and I would die if I do not work and be occupied by household responsibly only.*” For others the influence and lessons taught by their parents reflected their growing up under the socialist state.

Firuzza shared her growing up that affected her future choices:

*My husband is modern and is not against me working. Even if he could financially fully provide I want to work because my parents taught me to work and earn my money than depend on someone's giving.*

A workplace provides a space for escape from the prison of household tasks that become technical, and for wives of migrants it increases women's self-esteem as she contributes to the well-being of their families and growth of the country. The data from the World Bank shows that female labor force participation rate has increased from 58% in 2000 to 59% in 2012, composing 43.6% of the labor force in 2012. The male labor force participation has also increased from 75% in 2000 to 77% in 2012, both resulting in the labor force growth of 3.3% (World Bank 2014). Even though female labor force participation is below males, their increase positively affects the growth of the country. In comparison to the neighbouring countries, such as Kyrgyz Republic the rate of Tajik females shows a positive outcome. The female labor force participation rate in Kyrgyz Republic did not change between the period of 2000 to 2012, staying in 56% and

resulting in the female labor force rate of 42.7%, while there was an increase in male's labor force participation, increasing from 74% in 2000 to 79% in 2012 (World Bank 2014). The statistics do not serve as a direct argument stating that all the women of migrant households start taking part in the labor force, but considering that millions of Tajik migrants work outside and there is an increase in female participation rate serve to consider the link.

#### **4.6 The Effect of Remittances on Women's Autonomy**

Women of migrant families take on or continue their part in the labor force and the use of remittances commonly serves to the well-being of their children. Agardjanian et al. argue that the financial contribution from migrant husbands keep their wives dependent on them and the remittances are not invested in the productive sources of the economy in Armenia (2007). Such findings are applicable to families where the migrants supply the financial resources for short and long terms expenses, but in migrant families where women take part in the labor force gives different interpretations.

The dependence of women on remittances is not a common occurrence amongst the women in Dushanbe. To the question of the use of remittances, the majority of interviewees indicated their children's well-being and education as the primary use of remittances. Manizha, a mother of five sons who teaches in a public school of Dushanbe shared her experience of using the remittances. As other teachers of Tajikistan, her wage does not cover their living expenses, but she contributes to the family with the help of her migrant husband:

*My younger son was ill and despite an operation in the local hospital, he did not feel well. So we decided for my husband to migrate for work and send money so we travel to another city and go through another operation. Thankfully, after the second one my son got better. The other reasons of my husband's migration are in relation to my children; they are growing and need financial spending. My older son needed to enroll in the university, requires money for that. My other son is actively involved in sports and we provide for his travels to tournaments. It is difficult to live in Tajikistan, jobs do not pay well and you cannot do anything without money.*

The remittances sent by her husband were foremost spent on her children's well-being and educational purposes than as an income effect to replace her wage. Manizha, who works part time in a restaurant, also claimed that her husband's income foremost goes to their children's future and well-being:

*His remittances are used towards my children's education. My son studies and that require payment on yearly basis. My daughter attends a medical college, who also needs money. They need clothes and things do not get cheaper but more expensive. For household payment and food, I use my income.*

The remittances are spent on children's well-being and as Shahnoza indicates, "*the money of my work and my husband's work is usually for my child's education and transport...food is the last thing that I use the remittances for and I can take care of that myself.*" Blumberg discusses how an income controlled by women is spent on education, nutrition, and other "basic human rights" in contrast to income spent by men on alcohol, items of technology, sex and "perhaps some toys for children" and "maybe" food showing a difference of spending (1984, 72). Migrant husbands that regularly send money home do not resonate the men who spend their income on their personal preferences but the remittances that wives control is distributed for their children's education and growth then food and household items. Acosta observes that remittances increase girl's education and do not affect boys as women gave more preferences to use of remittances on their daughters in El Salvador (2006), which does not imply to the study of Dushanbe. As interviewees spoke of their experiences, no distinctions in the use of remittances were made based on their children's sex differences.

There is no link between an increase of remittances and decline of women's labor force, but remittances could be used to take time away from undesirable jobs. Dorantes et al in the study of female labor force participation in Mexico indicate a decline in women's informal and

non-paid labor where remittances serve as a source to “purchase time away” from such work (2006, 225). Her study resonates Mahina’s choice to remain home if the remittances were efficient and she did not have to work part time. Her educational background leads her to work in low paying jobs, which she does not consider is equivalent with high status.

#### **4.7 The Longevity of Women’s Autonomy**

Men’s labor migration result in women’s greater level of autonomy, but do men upon their return reassigned their roles and responsibilities back to themselves and challenge women’s autonomy? The experiences of women of migrant households in Dushanbe indicate a permanent change of their role. Women continue their autonomous decision-making upon the return of their migrant husbands and their roles are not challenged, nor reassigned back to men who hold the status of the head of the household.

The absence of men affects women’s decision-making, child bearing, mobility, access to information and their labor force participation. Upon the return from migration, men adjust to a status of a guest without challenging women’s autonomy in their presence. Six interviewees described the return of their migrant husband as a ‘guest’, who stays for a short period and returns back to the host country. Shahnoza states that:

*My role and responsibly did not change when he came back. He only visits for a month, and once in 2-3 years. He would sleep all day long and even said not to disturb him because he was relaxing. He adapted a guest status.*

Firuza also shared similar insights “*he is more like a guest and he does not stay for long and travels back to Russia, so he can’t exactly take his role and responsibilities back. He stays as a guest and leaves.*” The return of migrants are not permanent as they cannot earn money to improve their standard of living in Tajikistan, nor are new jobs created with wage equivalent to rising prices. Thus, men migrate back to Russia to continue the financial support that they cannot

provide working in Tajikistan and to keep their jobs they return home for a short visit to spend time with their family and relax from brutal work conditions.

The presence of older children in the house serves to the benefits of parents who experience excess of responsibilities. Madina in her interview emphasized the help of her children in her responsibilities in the absence of men's contribution of carrying out some tasks when he returns from migration.

*He [her migrant husband] feels like a guest, did not raise any concerns to reassign the roles and take on tasks, and preferred everything to remain the way it has become in his absence. He did not mind the differences created in his time away, and the children are grown up now and help a lot with my tasks.*

Older children repay their duty of caring for their parents but women experience burden from their husband's guest status and inability to help women when they return. There are also families where migrant men upon their return take on the tasks previously carried on by them. Mahina expressed the ease from her husband's contribution when he returned from migration.

*He took his role and responsibilities back to himself. I like that he carries the bags and if needed fixes the house, brings in an electrician and eases the amount of work I do in his absence.*

Sitora as well expressed positive remarks of her husband's return and role in their family.

*Of course, he reassigns the roles and performs the tasks he used to carry out before he migrated. As a result, my work and responsibilities are less of worry. If he works nine month abroad and stays here for three months I feel relaxed because I am not alone to do the work of both parents.*

The women enjoy their autonomy and greater role in the private and public spheres but prefer their husband to remain by their side than be separated for months or even years. Women experience challenges in carrying out the responsibilities of the household, child bearing, public affairs and the labor force. The tasks that are supposed to be divided between the couples, but end by being carried out by women while men financially support but physically and emotionally



is absence from women's lives. Men's migration affects women's self-esteem and power indicating that women as well as men can carry out the responsibilities that are segregated by gender in the society. Difficulties persist amongst women who perform the double role of parenting but the effect of migration indicates an increase on women's autonomy.

## Conclusion

The labor migration of men results in changes in the patriarchal society of Tajikistan. While the impact of men's geographical move has a temporary nature on certain changes, the increase of women's responsibilities and autonomy takes on permanent effect. The positioning of women around Tajikistan varies in discussion, but the autonomy of women in Dushanbe was measured by the domains of the private and public spheres. The analysis reveal that women's level of autonomy increases during their husband's labor migration, and the temporary return of their husbands do not lead to the reassignment of roles.

The gender roles in Tajik society assigns men to carry on the role of the provider, and act on the behalf of the head of the household. Women, on the other hand, are foremost assigned to the bearing of children, as well as the household responsibilities. However, during the state socialism, and before the break of the Soviet Union, women, as well as men, equally participated on the educational achievements, and the building of the communist state, but the consequences of the civil war and rise of conservatism deepened the gap of inequality. Women residing in Dushanbe enjoy certain level of share with their husbands when it comes to the decision-making and in many cases women take part in the labor force and show a level of mobility in the public sphere. And consequently during their husband's migration their role becomes more autonomous living in nuclear families.

The influence of husband on the decision making of non-migrant women in Dushanbe relates to the financial contribution of the husband. In families where the husband's contribution is irregular, women hold greater independence in the decision-making of financial concerns, but deteriorating relationship is evident in such families. In the autonomy of raising the children, women portray independent parenting, where they perform the role of the mother and a mother.

Some interviewees indicated of their husband's presence through communicative systems, but the long distance has many barriers. Unlike the practices of providing more for the well-being of the son, women of migrant households showed no difference in the treatment of their children based on their sex. In terms of the level of mobility the intersectional analysis of gender and age is applicable as it shows how younger wives experience less autonomy in movement compared to older women. Following another measure of women's autonomy in Dushanbe, the analysis showed that women's access to information increases in the absence of their men, which might lead to their greater leadership role in the private and public affairs. Women also become more aware of international news and the policies of immigration of the host country. In relation to women's labor force participation, the level of education plays a part in women's choice to be employed. The intersection of the educational background as a status and gender place women of low education in less desirable jobs, thus they prefer to be occupied with household responsibilities. The majority of non-migrant wives indicated their desire to continue working even if the financial resources sent by their migrant husbands are enough for their standard of living. Women's labor force participation increases in the absence of financial security, but remittances are not used to replace their wage, rather invested in their children's future. The temporary absence of men and their fewer visits result in the changes of women's responsibilities on permanent nature, but the long distance relationship and absence of the physical and emotional natures results in questioning of the purpose of marriage.

The study of Tajik non-migrant women that remain in Dushanbe, while their husbands leave for migration, fills a gap in the literature. This study corrects for a bias in the literature, which is focused on rural migration, or blurs the line between rural and urban environments. Here I focused on an urban capital, Dushanbe, where migration is a common occurrence. This

research tackled the effects of men's migration on the autonomy of Tajik non-migrant women, but further analysis is necessary to generate a bigger discussion. One recommendation for further analysis would be to take an approach from the husband's side and integrate their view towards the changing roles and increased autonomy of women in Dushanbe, or Tajikistan in general. A second recommendation is to increase the data pool. This research was based on twelve in-depth interviews and to verify its applicability to the larger population I recommend an in-depth study of a larger group.

## Appendix

### The Interview Questionnaire

1. When did you husband migrate? How did you come to the decision for your husband to migrate?
  - Did you ever considered to also migrate, or migrate instead of your husband (while he stays back and looks after the children)?
2. How did your life change once your husband migrated (what were the changes in your role)? What responsibilities did you take?
  - Were there any challenges?
3. Do you like your new role?
4. How did your neighbors react to your new roles?
5. How regular was your husband's contribution to the well- being of your family (financial and in terms of raising the children)?
6. What did you spend the remittances on in the first place?
7. Did your relatives help you out when your husband was not around?
8. How did your relationship to your children change?
9. Did you ever think of joining the labor market? What were his views if you decided to do so?
10. Do you usually talk over to your husband if you were to take a decision in his absence?
11. Did your new role change when your husband came back from abroad? Did he reassign the roles to himself and made everything go back to how it was?
12. How did your living conditions change since your husband's migration?
  - Improve/worsen/remain the same?

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