

Migrants' Households and Their Use of Social Media: A Study on Nesarabad Upazila

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Abstract

Migration has become a common phenomenon for the last couple of years in Bangladesh. Migrants and their households are playing important roles in the society. Migration has brought a lot of socio economic changes in the society. This study has examined the usage of an important technological factor; social media by migrant's households. Social media has removed the barriers of the distance around the globe and leads the thought, news, attitudes and changes in recent times. Being distant from social media is isolation from updated thoughts whereas being connected with it leads to modernization. To find out the usage of social media, a survey was conducted among 120 migrant's households. Besides, two Focus Group Discussion and several case studies were used. The study has found a significant change in social media usage after migration of the family member. This study has found that majority of people are using social media after migration whereas a small number of people used social media before migration. By analyzing collected data, the study has found that the migrant's households use various social media such as Skype, Facebook, Viber, IMO, Twitter etc. after migration. Using various social media people can bring significant changes in attitudes, thinking, and increasing connectivity around the world and so on. As the number of social media usage has increased, this will impact the society as well. So, the upcoming societal change will be resulted because of this increased usage of social media due to migration. Therefore the study also focuses on the use of social media and its long-term effects on societal change.

Keywords: Migration, Communication, Social Media, Migrant, Migrant's Households, Modernization

Introduction

Bangladesh is in a position of surplus manpower with a mixture of qualified, expert, skilled, semi-skilled and less-skilled labor force. Also, as a third world country, it consists a the limitations in education and living standards. For the sake of work, education, security, living standards and other reasons a lot of people change their geographical location. This phenomenon of changing one's geographical location for any reason is known as migration. Migration has become a very common incident for ages. During British period people started to migrate to UK and USA for higher studies, trade and business. However, after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 migration from Bangladesh to other countries has been increased. Literature have shown that there are two types of international migration occur from Bangladesh currently. The first one is generally to the industrialized West and the second one to the Middle East and South Asian countries. Due to oil exploitation of Middle East Countries during the mid-1970s there was huge

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demand for skilled and unskilled workers. The destination of the migrant workers is mainly in the countries of Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Malaysia and Singapore. Also, a huge number of higher study aspirants find their destination in North American countries. In between the years from 1976 to 2002, over three million Bangladeshis migrated for the sake of work. The average yearly flow is around 226000 (Tasneem S., 2003).

The migration is growing steadily over the last few years making some important impact on the family, society and country. Some of them are reduction of unemployment, quality graduates from abroad, remittance inflow, improved lifestyle of migrant's households etc. In a migrant's family only one of two family members migrate. But, the person's ties remain in the homeland. These people are known as migrant's households. Migrant's household involves the family members of the migrant. Most of the migrant's households highly depend on the migrant. Also, geographical change can certainly change the distance but can not change the affection of the households. For that reason, communication between migrant and migrant's household is very vital.

For many years, international migration meant a radical detachment from one's community of origin (Faist, 2000). However, the advancement of long-distance communication has inherently changed this situation. Early migrants kept in touch with family and friends in their place of origin by sending letters and packages by mail. Sometimes this would take months to arrive. However, nowadays cheap international calls serve as social glue connecting migrants and non-migrants all over the world (Vertovec 2004; Horst 2006). Migrant's families have relied heavily on available communication technologies to bridge physical distances and communicate with the migrant living abroad. This is inevitable that the communication is a major factor but the cost of maintaining that communication has always been a big concern. Recent innovations in and diffusion of, information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as broadband internet and mobile phones have made transnational communication more affordable and intensive than in the past. In today's network society, the speed and intensity of information and communication flows have increased tremendously and are shaping our everyday lives to an ever-greater extent (Castells 1996; Wellman 2001). This revolution in information and communication technology (ICT) is of particular significance for migrants and non-migrants who live geographically dispersed but often remain connected through transnational networks (Mahler, 2001). As the Internet evolved as a social medium, it makes it possible to access a wider range of individuals to whom people are weakly tied (Haythornthwaite, 2002). Therefore, in contrast to traditional mass media and communication media, social media can serve to bridge activities: 'the telephone might be a more intimate way of interacting with old friends, but it is not nearly as effective in developing new relationships as the computer' (Hiller and Franz, 2004). Via social media, people can look up people with whom they have lost contact and reconnect with them.

Over the last few years, social media has become part and parcel of modern life. The most common examples of social media today are Skype, Facebook, Viber, IMO, Twitter etc. These smart phone applications are offering a large number of facilities. These social media applications have made communication easy at a very low cost. A number of communication medium like

calling, texting, video communication, voice mails etc are being enabled. Beside these, social media also help to maintain passive communication with home ties. Now-a-days, people share daily life, events, interests, activities, hypes etc. By being connected in social media, an immigrant can monitor his affiliations passively.

The need and circumstances of maintaining continuous communication with the migrant outside, migrant's households have felt the need of using social media. Migrant's households who didn't use in earlier days, now need social media to maintain the communication. The ease of communication and cost benefits are main reason behind that. So, the use of social media must have been affected by migration.

Objective of the Research

The objective of the research is to investigate the impact of migration on the use of social media among the migrant's households. The study also focuses on the communication system of migrants with their family members through social media.

Social Media

In the globalization age, the relations among nations seem to be borderless. Citizen mobility has become a necessity. While working in abroad migrant's parents and children live far apart from them. To catch concentrated attention and supervise the children's development, it requires media that can be used as a means to establish communication between the two parties. The media used to solve this condition are application program relief devices and long distance communication media, namely mobile phone media and internet. Social media are online technologies that strengthen communication and generate social ties among people. Social media enable users to share words, images, and videos with one other. Also, they are critical information distribution and receiving channels. Social media are particularly useful for people that live geographically dispersed but require transnational networks to remain connected. For this reason, communication is essentially linked with migration: migrants build social, financial and communication bonds between home and host countries as well as other places. This link is underlined by the transport and communication technologies that facilitate migrants' connections with their country of origin. Therefore, migrants and their households use social media to communicate both locally and globally. Meanwhile, information and communication technology has been recognized as critical for the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities. In recent decades, social media have become a facilitator of mobility.

Social media is a new public sphere in the daily lives of millions. Social networking sites enable individuals and communities to share, discuss, organize, plan and operate in a digital space. It changes the nature of communication among the individuals and within the society, hence, reshapes our social lives. The invention of these alternative communication channels is surely invaluable for migrants who decide to leave their families, friends and their home behind. Advancement of information and communication technologies is helping migrants and their

households to be connected with each other (Diminescu, 2008). Basically, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Skype serve to maintain strong ties with the home country, construct and sustain transnational networks, rapidly spread information and ensure more evident linkages. Migrant's households can now call and text the migrant several times a day, using social networking sites to communicate and achieve a sense of co-presence. Skype, in particular, with the use of webcams, has revolutionized communications. Constant communication through digital media often helps the migrants to solve the family conflicts.

Literature Review

A number of empirical studies have been carried on uses of social media by the migrant's and their households to communicate. No clear pattern has emerged yet regarding the circumstances. A growing body of research examines the implications of mobile phones, social networking sites, and other ICTs for family communication, and for family life more broadly. Livingstone (2002) refers that ICTs have become part of the infrastructure of family life by affecting the spatial definition of the home as well as the temporal definition of everyday family routines. Kennedy and Wellman (2007) documented how personalized and networked connectivity can facilitate coordination of household's decision making, fostering a sense of reliable connectedness and family continuity.

Rudi et al. (2015) reported that parents of young children in particular routinely use ICTs to share visual artefacts of events with faraway family members. Furukawa and Driessnack (2013) indicate that communicating via video on Skype and Face Time enhances perceptions of virtual copresence for separated family members by providing nonverbal and contextual cues during mediated interactions. Vertovec (2004) described international phone calls as the "social glue of migrant transnationalism", positing that they had the most significant impact on the global linkage of any communication technology to date.

Madianou and Miller (2012), noted that transnational families often develop media literacy skills to facilitate communication with distant loved ones. They suggest that technology adoption and engagement for transnational communication is shaped by more than structural factors such as cost and access; family continuity itself becomes a motivating force behind tech adoption and related skills development.

As the Internet evolved as a social medium, it allowed communications to become more widespread and less one to one. Social media make it possible to access a broader range of individuals with whom we have weak, or even no, ties (Miyata et al. 2005). Social network sites organized through relationship and social media organized around communities of interest converge and overlap. Therefore, in contrast to traditional mass media and communication media, social media can serve to bridge activities: 'the telephone might be a more intimate way of interacting with old friends, but it is not nearly as effective in developing new relationships as the computer' (Hiller and Franz, 2004). Via social media, people can look up people with whom they have lost contact and reconnect with them (Boyd et al. 2007; Hiller and Franz 2004).

Benítez (2006) documents that internet communications help disrupt national boundaries and create transnational spaces of experience.

According to Diminescu (2008), increased dependence on ICTs to maintain transnational connections has thus transformed familial and cultural bonds into what calls “virtual bonds,” enabling immigrants to maintain familiarity with the details of family members’ everyday lives. Pearce, Slaker, and Ahmad (2013) note that family members who are “left behind” are also more likely to adopt and engage ICTs. Through virtual co-presence, digital technologies thus have the potential to buffer the emotional effects of migration on familial connectedness for both the migrant and his or her family members.

Gallego & Mendola (2010) surveyed in two southern regions in Mozambique on labor migration and social networks. They found that households with successful migrants (receiving remittances or return migration) are more engaged in community based social networks.

Lee Komito, (2011) conducted a research on 65 Polish and Filipino non-nationals in Ireland about their communication with homeland relatives through social media and technology. This form of communication helps them to be acknowledged about their friends and acquaintances who share bonding in the community. Social media has made it possible to monitor others passively, through the circulation of voice, video, text, and pictures that maintains a level of mutual alertness and supports a dispersed community of affinity. This research revealed that social media use helps non-nationals to maintain ties of affinity (regardless of geographical distance), also helps them to participate in the community where the person had grown up. This facility of maintaining affiliation by migrants with local community predictably has implications in the process of integration and migration.

Research Methodology

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary information sources were used to complete this study. The primary data are interviews and discussions with different migrant family members; remittance records and observing practical work; informal conversations with the people involving with migration and migrant’s family members. The secondary data are the website information of migrants, various published documents of Bangladesh Bank and other renowned research organization on migration and foreign remittance.

Research Design

This exploratory research is designed to get the extensive insights of remittance to the migrant’s households implying both quantitative and qualitative methods. As this research design is characterized by the combination of the qualitative and quantitative research component, it is known as mix methods research design (Johnson et al., 2007).

Sample Size and Sampling

Almost 1000 people from Swarupkathi Upazila (including ten unions) are migrants, and there are many households where more than one family member is abroad. Total number of migrant's from Nesarabad Upazila is the study population, and the Swarupkathi Union is the sample of the study. So, here 120 families from Swarupkathi union purposively with at least one emigrant member and these migrants' families are taken through the snowball sampling. These 120 migrant's families were the sample of the survey method. Besides, ten respondents have also been selected from five villages of Swarupkathi Union to conduct the case studies, and among them, four respondents are migrant himself, two of them are the father of two migrants, two of them the mother of two migrants, one of them migrant's wife and another is migrant's son. Two focus group discussions (FGDs) are also held in that study where first team of focus group discussion has consisted of seven women and all of their husbands are living abroad. All of these women were cordially invited to the village home to get information about from their personal experience. Another focus group discussion has been held in Swarupkathi bazar with ten respondents, and here all of the respondents are male. Among ten respondents, five of them are migrant's father, two of them are migrant's son, and three are migrant's brother. The 120 households with at least one emigrant member are selected as the sample of the study, and every family is considered as the unit of analysis of the study.

Technique of the Research

To conduct this empirical study, various techniques are followed as survey, participant observation, FGD and case study. The survey method is a very popular technique to gather quantitative data in the social sciences. So this method has been selected to collect the original data from the population. Besides, sample survey is a method that is used to study of a representative portion of a population. For this empirical study survey, case studies with an in-depth interview and FGDs with the respondents of the study area were need. The survey questionnaire was close-ended as it saves the time of the respondents. Each interview time for the survey was on average, one and half hour for each case study and almost three hours for each FGD.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

For any experimental study validity and reliability are very important issues. For any experimental research work validity is a crucial issue as it uses the scientific method for research design and also for data collection. On the other hand, the reliability of a research work must meet up all the necessary criteria of the study such as universality that is the ability to generate the same result using different time and location. In this perspective, the present study has maintained its validity and reliability.

Results and Discussion

Media of communication facility of migrant's family members

Table 1: Medium of communication facility

Medium of communication	Frequency	Percent
Mobile	107	77.0%
Telephone	6	4.3%
Both	9	6.5%
Others	17	12.2%
Total	139	100%

(Source: field work)

From Table 1, it can be seen that only 4.3% of the families use telephone for communication. The majority 77% use mobile and 6.5% use both for communication.

Communication by using social media with migrants from family members

Table 2: Communication by using social media

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Yes	77	67.5
No	37	32.5
Total	114	100.0

(Source: fieldwork)

From Table 2, it is observed that out of mobile users 67.5% use social media in migrant's households and an amount of half of that about 32.5% do not use social media. Lack of availability of broadband connection, a relatively high price of mobile data and also a lack of knowledge about using social media are reasons behind the others for not using it. The table shows that out of 114 family members 77 members use social media to communicate with migrants and another 37 do not use social media for communication.

Types of social media to communicate with migrants by family members

Table 3: Types of social media used for communication

Name of Social Media	Frequency	Percent
Facebook	60	32.3%
Skype	71	38.2%
Viber	39	21.0%
Twitter	2	1.1%
Others	14	7.5%
	186	100.0%

(Source: fieldwork)

The table 3 shows that 38.2% use skype, 32.3% use Facebook, 21% use Viber and 7.5% use other social media to communicate with migrants. Many families use more than one apparently. The table suggests that most of the families use Skype. Facebook is second on the list and then Viber and Twitter consecutively.

Time Duration of using Social media by the migrant's households

Table 4: Tenure of using social media

	Frequency	Percent
Before migration	23	19.2
After migration	97	80.8
	120	100.0

(Source: fieldwork)

The table 4 above describes the time duration of using social media after migration from when the migrants are using social media. Among the 120 respondents, 97 (80.8%) respondents said that they started to use social media after going abroad. Other 23 respondents informed that they were using social media before going abroad.

While using mobile, social media comes as a byproduct. With the development of Mac OS and Android, some applications have gone viral overtimes. As a result, the persons using mobile is very much likely to be a part of social media. Also, a major reason for being part of a social media is the huge advantage of being connected with the emigrant living outside free. As it is proven that the migrant's households use mobile and hence social media, it is required to know whether they have been using it from past or the pattern has changed recently. Initially, the study has found that 77% of migrant's family members use mobile phone and 6.5% use both (mobile and telephone) as the medium of communication. Out of them 67.5% use social media and 80.8%

of migrant's households are using these media after migration. So the use of social media has increased significantly and that is because of their migrant's family members.

Findings

In this modern era of the world, the greater changes have been brought by social media. Being away from it will make distance and tough to keep legs ongoing towards social development. The importance of using social media has been proven so many times in recent studies. This study has analyzed the using pattern of social media by migrant's households in Nesarabad Upazila. The result found is positive and significant. The rate has gone up significantly. A Small number of people were using social media earlier. However, after the migration, one of their family members has forced them to find a communication medium for them. Most of the families use mobile and only a handful use telephone. The increased number of mobile use has enabled access to social media apps like Facebook, Skype, Twitter, Viber etc. and they have been using those opportunities. So, the number has increased in Nesarabad due to migration. The impacts are visible already and will take place more day by day. This will have some impact on people in Nesarabad Upazila and the primary reason behind that change is migration. Migration has brought positive change in use of social media in migrant's households. The further studies should focus and analyze if it brings any social change. Future researchers are recommended to work on that.

Conclusion

Migration has become a common phenomenon for the last few years in Bangladesh. This has benefited us in plenty of ways. Remittance is a major source of income for Bangladesh. Migrants send money to their family members. This obviously has impacts on the economy, but most importantly it impacts on the migrant's households. It brings a high impact on the economic condition of the family. Also, it has some social impacts as well. Many studies have been conducted and proven these facts. This study was aimed to identify if migrant's households are aware of social media or not. In other words, whether they were aware of social media from very early or migration has an impact on that. Social media has become an integral part of everyday life. Today people's thought, events, changes etc circulate centering social media. Anyone away from social media is considered isolated from updated events and thoughts. On the contrary, if a person starts using social media recently but not connected earlier will have a change in attitude. If this thing happens in large numbers, then the impact will spread to the society as well. This leads to social changes. The study area was Nesarabad Upazila where a lot of migrant households are available. The data were taken by the survey, FGD and interview. Results show that the migrant's households were not concerned about social media before migration of their family members. After the migration, they started using mobile phone to communicate with them. With mobile usage, they got introduced with social media for easy communication and this has led to social interactions. This is evident that migration has caused the increased use of social media. So, in future, if any change in social behavior caused by social media is observed, this positive impact of migration will be the reason behind that.

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