

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effect of Mothers' Migration to Arab Countries on The health of Families Left Behind in Butajira, Ethiopia: A qualitative study of lived husbands' experiences

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Abstract

Background: Despite the primary motive of migration which is to improve the living standard of a family at the place of origin, little is known about the effect of mothers' migration to Arab countries on the health of families left behind. Ethiopia is one of the countries where females' migration to Arab countries is highly a trend. This study is aimed at qualitatively exploring the effects of mothers' migration to Arab countries on the health of families left behind in Butajira, Ethiopia.

Methods: Descriptive, phenomenological approach has been used in this study. The purposive sampling strategy was employed based on wanting to interview people who have lived experience with the research questions. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Seven interviews were conducted and the thematic analysis method was done using atlas.ti qualitative analysis software.

Result: This study explored that mothers' migration to Arab countries has improved the livelihood of left-behind families. But husbands of the migrant woman were inefficient in their main work, stressed by household management, susceptible to HIV, and addicted to various substances. In addition, young children faced different incidents including illness, difficulty in keeping their hygiene, and getting nutritional food on time. Furthermore, they were abandoned and faced a range of accidents like poisoning, drowning, and submersion. Similarly, older children also faced sexual assault from their families, decreased performances in education or/and dropout from school to care for younger siblings or contribute to household labor.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Mothers' migration to Arab countries contributes positive and negative impacts on the health of families left behind. In this study, the negative effect is more pronounced than the positive one because it could be compensated by remittance. To minimize the effect during mothers' migration, providing education and support to left-behind families on household work management, child care, HIV/AIDS, gender violence at community levels could be essential. Moreover, retaining mothers in their local community by supporting and creating jobs would alleviate the overall negative impacts.

Keywords: Butajira, Health, Migration

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Background

Individuals might move as part of their effort to improve their lives and the lives of their families, learn new skills, gain new experiences, find jobs or flee insecurity, disaster, or famine [1]. Throughout the developing world, rural households who are unable to sustain themselves using local resources are more prone to utilize migration as a source of self-development [2].

In Ethiopia, migrations as a result of low job opportunities, poor living conditions, and surplus labor are often seen as a form of household income diversification [3]. The trend is usually some household members migrate to areas with better opportunities while other household members stay at their original location and benefit from the migrants (*ibid*).

The number of African women leaving their countries either as autonomous or dependent migrants to undertake domestic work is increasing [4]. According to the International Labor Organization, women migrate as much as men, as they represent almost half (48 percent) of all international migrants (224 million) in 2015 [4].

Historically Ethiopian women started to migrate to the Middle East countries as domestic workers in the late 1990s, primarily to Lebanon [5]. Their flow began to increase in the 2000s. It was reported that in 2011, a total of 40,419 Ethiopians went abroad to be employed in elementary occupations, such as domestic work [6]. From this number more than 95% of these individuals were women who migrated to the Middle East (most likely for domestic work), the top two destinations being Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (*ibid*). Moreover, another study conducted in 15 communities across five different regions of Ethiopia in 2011 showed that the Middle East was the primary destination for Ethiopian migrants [7].

At the place of origin has a migrant family member in an Arab country is seen as positive because he/she sends money to families as a remittance [8, 9]. This improves the family's income, household's nutritional requirement by having more food and enhancing their well-being [10].

Studies also showed that children of migrant households have better health than non-migrant households due to the use of remittances for their education and health needs [12]. Despite these economic benefits, if the migrant is a mother, that could hurt the growth of children. This is because children are more attached to their mother mainly at a younger age. At the same time, the absence of a mother could influence the roles played by children in and outside of the family [11, [12].

On the other hand, studies identified that parental migration has an impact on the mental and physical health, quality of care, medication, and feeding style of children [13- [16]. For example, a study conducted on students in rural China found that the annual injury rate among children left behind was more than twice that of children living with parents [16].

On the other side, studies showed that children of migrant parents were exposed to harmful consequences such as alcohol consumption, drug use, and sexual abuse. These were majorly related to the availability of pouch money given by migrant parents, peer pressure, and the absence of adequate supervision from parents [13, [15]. Moreover, parental migration also imposes psychological and socialization problems on children including over-load house works, anxiety, and loneliness [17]. These could result in lower academic achievement and school dropout [13, [15].

Studies have also found that separation from a spouse could change the husband's household role, cause depression and conflicting feelings such as dependency on the migrated member. These may lead to extramarital relations which in turn maximize health risks such as HIV/AIDS and other STDs [17, [18].

There are previous studies that were focused on-trend and determinants of migration in Butajira, but no study done before on the effect of mother migration on families left behind. Therefore, the present study explores the effect of mothers' migration to Arab countries on families left behind in Butajira, Ethiopia. This study is expected to

fill the knowledge gap and will serve as a base for implementing appropriate interventions.

Methods and Materials

Study approach, Data source, Study setting

In this study, a phenomenological approach was used since it helps to address the lived experiences of individuals. The study uses both primary and secondary sources of data. Interviews from selected husbands who have experience of living with their children by sending their wives to Arab countries were used as primary data sources. The primary data was collected from April 20-27, 2019.

Secondary information was obtained from the existing Butajira Rural Health Program surveillance data to identify migrant and/or returned mothers from the database. The Butajira Rural Health Program (BRHP) is one of the oldest demographic surveillance sites. It has conducted a census of the population in 1987 in sampled *Kebeles* to obtain the baseline population and establish a system of Demographic Surveillance Site with continuous registration of vital and migratory events at a household level [19]. The Surveillance *Kebeles* consists of nine rural and one urban peasant associations (PAs) which were selected based on probability proportionate to size technique [20]. Currently, BRHP has a population of 80,607 individuals comprising 14,347 households under surveillance. This study employed in-depth qualitative research methods in three Kebeles of the BRHP namely *Bati*, *Wurib*, and *Kebele 04* in Butajira town.

Sampling technique

Mothers who have experience of migration to Arab countries were first selected from the BRHP database and their places of residence were identified from the database. The purposive sampling technique was used to identify the husbands of those mothers. Appointments for participants were made in advance to ensure

that the interviewees were available and well prepared for the interview.

Data collection

Semi-structured questions were used to collect data. The data collection tool was first prepared in English then translated to the local language (Amharic). The interviews were conducted in a place chosen by the respondents that gave them the best possible privacy. A total of seven in-depth interviews were conducted among husbands of the migrant women where the saturation level reached. Each in-depth interview took 28 to 55 minutes to complete. The digital recording data were transcribed and then translated to English with careful edition.

Data analysis and interpretation

Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software was used for the analysis of the collected data and a thematic method was used for analysis. All interviews were read several times carefully to familiarize with the information and were coded independently. Then the coded data were grouped into three categories based on the informants' representation of the phenomena. Accordingly, the categories identified on the effect of mother migration to Arab countries were health, economic and psycho-social effects. These categories are considered themes for this study.

Ethical considerations

The interviewer aloud verbatim read the objective of the study and informed consent. All study participants consented to participate in the study and their consent was also requested to use a tape recorder during the interviews. Individual identifiers were removed during transcription to maintain the anonymity of information. Participants had the choice to participate or not to, and to withdraw from the study at any time if they wish to do. The records were kept in a locked place that only was accessible to the researchers. Finally, informed consent was taken from all participants through either a signature or thumbprint.

Results

Table 1 General information about in-depth interview participants and their families during mother migration

| S. No. | Respondent's Code | Husband's Age | Level of Education | Duration of stay of Mothers' in Arab countries | Children's left at home | | |
|--------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|--|-------------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| | | | | | Number | Sex | Age (year) |
| 1 | 01 | 38 | Secondary (9-10) | 2 years & 6 months | 3 | Female | 10 |
| | | | | | | Female | 7 |
| | | | | | | Male | 3 & a $\frac{1}{2}$ year |
| 2 | 02 | 30 | Secondary (9-10) | 4 years | 1 | Male | 1 & a $\frac{1}{2}$ year |
| 3 | 03 | 60 | Illiterate | 5 years & 2 months | 3 | Male | 9 |
| | | | | | | Male | 6 |
| | | | | | | Female | $\frac{1}{2}$ year |
| 4 | 04 | 33 | Primary (5-8) | 15 years | 1 | Male | 3 |
| 5 | 05 | 28 | Primary (5-8) | 1 & 6 months | 2 | Male | 7 |
| | | | | | | Female | 1 & a $\frac{1}{2}$ year |
| 6 | 06 | 26 | Primary (1-4) | 2 years | 1 | Male | 2 |
| 7 | 07 | 30 | Primary (5-8) | 3 years | 3 | Female | 6 |
| | | | | | | Male | 3 |
| | | | | | | Male | 2 |

Table 1 indicates characteristics of families at the time of mother migration and duration of stay in Arab countries. It can be seen that the highest number of children left at home with their fathers were 3 while the smallest number was one. The mother left a baby as young as 6 months which was the smallest age recorded while migrating to Arab countries. The highest duration of stay in Arab countries was 15 years and the smallest was 2 years.

Health effect of mother migration to Arab countries on families left behind

Children's Health: Incidence of illness

The health effect was one of the problems observed during mothers' migration on the left children at home country. The results showed that the majority of husbands were responsible for taking care of the youngest children at home. However, whatever care they gave for their children they could not satisfy their needs as their

mother. Because mothers spent most of their time with children, they can easily understand their problems earlier than their father can. Respondent code 06, age 26, expressed the effect of mother migration on child health as:

"I reached for my children after they become seriously ill because we do not have a chance to stay together for a longer time as I will be out for work."

Almost all respondents assured their children were seriously sick at least once when their mother was absent. Children also did risky actions like sleeping in the agricultural field due to the absence of follow-up from their caregivers. For example, a father of 1 and a half years' baby said:

"I saw my child sleeping in an agricultural field. It was a sunny day, and she was in a deep sleep. I knew that there were snakes and different insects in the field. I thought that if her mother did not go to Arab countries, my child would not suffer like this."

Moreover, older daughters in the household faced serious health problems when their mothers migrated to Arab countries. As Respondent code 04 said:

"There was one case in other Kebele that I heard it. A mother left two children with their father and went to Arab countries. After 15 days father raped his 12 years old daughter. He did this at different times, and she became very ill. Then their neighbors' heard while she was crying and brought her to the hospital. She was treated in the hospital for a longer time."

This study also highlighted that children would face different health problems when they sent to their siblings due to their mother's migration to Arab countries. For example respondent code 01 said:

"I sent my ten years old daughter to her aunt and she performed all the household works until midnight, fetch and carry 20 liters of water by herself. One day she falls while carrying the water and fainted out. They bring her to the hospital and get treated. But the pain is still there after one year."

Children's Health: Personal Hygiene

In this study, it is identified that mothers' migration to Arab countries affects children's hygiene. Interviewed participants explained that they did not get any support from their families or societies after their mother migrated to Arab countries. Furthermore, they indicated that they become responsible for the overall duties related to their families. For example, a 60 years old father explained his experience as:

"It is me who takes care of children's hygiene. Even I was not able to wear my trouser properly. I wrap it up to my thigh and make it like shorts and then I wash their body, their clothes, and yes, I was taking care of their hygiene properly."

Most of the respondents described the presence of personal hygiene management differences between children whose mothers migrated to Arab countries and those children who live with their mothers. For example, a 30 years

"Those children who have their mothers here wear clean clothes and they get a bath every time. But my child did not get our full protection. But if she (my wife) was here, she would have washed him every time."

Children's Health: Extent of care and Injury

Mother's migration to Arab countries results in a lack of appropriate care for children and leads to the occurrence of different accidents like poisoning, burning, and submersion. Half of the study participants reported that their children faced serious accidents due to the absence of their respective wives at home. One of the respondents (code 05) explained the accident that his one-year-old daughter faced as:

"One day we prepared poisoned food for a rat in the house. Then in the next day my daughter's body becomes swollen, it was because she touched or smelled the poison."

In addition, a 30 years old father described the accident that his one and a half years old child encountered as:

"One day, after his mother left, the child touched pitcher boiling water on the fire, and the hot water spilled over him and he got burned I took him to a health station immediately and get treated. His injury was serious. Because of that, I felt that it would not have happened if his mother was here."

Children's Health: Nutritional status and availability of food

This study also assessed and identified if there were difficulties in preparing nutritionally rich foods for children in the house when their mothers migrate to Arab countries. A father of 2 children, aged 7 and 18 months explained:

"I could not prepare nutritionally rich food for my oldest daughter that she will take to school for her lunch."

The majority of the interviewed participants confirmed the absence of food varieties in their

house compared to the time when their wives were with them. On the other hand, it was observed that mothers' migration to Arab countries affects the availability and intake of food among children. Food availability and feeding time of younger children were also dependent on the existence of their father or older siblings in the household. One of the respondents (code 01) stated:

"Children mainly eat breakfast early in the morning. Later, if my eldest daughter cooks something without being destructed by her friends, they will eat around 3:00 pm. If there is nothing prepared, they have to wait until something is cooked."

While explaining the impact of mother's migration on children's feeding time, a 30 years old man who is a father of 3 children said:

"Sometimes, children play outside for the whole day without coming back home for lunch, because no one is there to follow them like their mother."

Substance use and addiction

Mothers' migration to Arab Countries showed an impact on substance use and addiction such as chewing Khat and smoking cigarettes by husbands. All husbands interviewed for this study were chewing Khat before their wives left for Arab countries, and were never addicted to alcohol or smoking cigarettes. Some respondents indicated that their wives' migration affects the amount of Khat they use per day while some implied that they even stopped chewing Khat due to high household expenses. On the other hand, other husbands showed an increase in the amount of Khat they chew per day and faced confusion to define their living. One of the respondents who started smoking when his wife was not around indicated that he quit smoking upon her return. A 30 years old husband whose wife lived for 15 years in Arab countries said:

"I started smoking cigarettes. When I was thinking about her, I use smoking as a mechanism to forget her."

HIV/AIDS

Interviewed participants also discussed the possible impact of HIV on their wives who migrated to Arab countries. They suspect that their wives would face sexual harassment from their employers and could get HIV. Most of them were unstable and felt insecure about their wife's HIV status while they are in Arab countries. They also indicated that they discussed the issue and concern with their wives while they were in Arab countries. For example, the respondent (code 05) said:

"I was discussing HIV with my wife when she was there. And I always ask her what will happen if one of us get infected with HIV. But Allah saved me from this problem."

After their wives comes back from Arab countries, all husbands were tested for HIV together with their wives. But they were tested at different times after their wives' arrival. In line with this, the respondent (code 05) explained his experience as:

"Most men in our community suspect their wives could be related to HIV. And they lived together for some time after they returned, then they went to a clinic and tested."

Moreover, respondent code 01 shared his experience of testing for HIV as follows:

"My case is a little different. You know the first time she arrived, we went to Butajira town after putting our luggage with our relatives. We did not directly go home. We had our checkup. When they called from home, I told them that she did not arrive yet and I am waiting for her in Addis. Then, we have got our results and stayed in Butajira with relatives and went back home the next day. The result was great. I used to recommend this thing for many people, but they do not change it into practice."

Economic effect of mother migration to Arab countries on families left behind

Use of remittance

The result of the study showed that all mothers who migrated to Arab countries support

their families by sending money and hence, most families do not lack money. All husbands interviewed described that they spend the money they receive only for purchasing or constructing different assets in their communities or urban areas. In line with this, a respondent code 01 explained:

"We do not use the money for another purpose. Since I knew that she made the money through hard-working, I rather used to save it. I even build a house for her, bought land and water pump."

They also explained that they use the remaining money for household expenses including food, clothes, and school-related fees.

Husband's work

In the study area, it was depicted that activities such as child care, house and backyard keeping, and cooking are considered mothers' responsibilities. In contrast, husbands are primarily responsible for agricultural activities. However, mothers' migration to Arab countries forces husbands to take the overall responsibilities including the role of their wives. Most husbands responded that they were not efficient to accomplish all activities and expressed that they did not expect these many difficulties and burdens to accomplish their wives' roles following their migration to Arab countries. As respondent code 04 said:

"It is me who does all the household activities; I even could not do my job outside the home. I stayed home, I also left my job."

The respondents indicated that the time required for household activities and child care was one of the main reasons for leaving his job. With this aspect, a respondent (code 02) described his experience as:

"The baby could not eat any other thing and I should boil him rice, wash him, let him sleep and when he wakes up, I should feed him. I could not do all these things if I did not stay in the house. So it was my responsibility to do all this and that dragged my work in the farm."

Psycho-Social effect of mother migration to Arab countries on families left behind

Psychology of Husbands and children

Mothers' migration was found to have psychological effects on the husbands' mainly when they are stressed and miss their wives. The husbands indicated that they had various psychological and emotional feelings including loneliness, sadness, anger, insecurity, confusion, and madness. In addition, children continuously ask where their mothers did go and when they will return home. Due to this, the majority of the participants regret the decision they made to let their wives migrate to Arab countries. For example, respondent code 01 said:

"My children used to say 'bring our mother, it is you, who sent her to Arab, away from us. 'And another time they will say to me: 'when will she come back?'. I used to tell them: 'She will be back with money.' My youngest son used to cry saying 'my mother'. During that time, I also used to feel miserable and cry with him. When I look at it, it is wrong that she went away think the economy; however, it is a lot we missed while she is away. A mother shouldn't leave no matter what!."

Respondent code 02 described his feelings as:

"After she left, I feel angry every time I hear airplane's sound. I curse the day I saw her off and blame our poverty."

On the other hand, husbands were more stressed and busy with household chores. In addition, they felt frustrated to bring visible changes in the way of their living before their wives return. The psychological effect of mothers' migration on children is also explained concerning their new feeling or action. Children of migrant mothers were found to feel lonely, and express their feelings by crying mostly while calling their mothers. As respondent code 02 said:

"My baby had been feeling lonely. When he sees mothers care for others, he would feel lonely. He would tell me what the children's mothers did for their children."

Children's education and responsibility

The impact of mothers' migration on children's education and responsibilities was also assessed. In the study area, children showed poor performances in their education following their mothers' migration to Arab countries. Factors including shared responsibilities and the time they spend taking care of their younger siblings, preparing food, washing clothes, and housekeeping contributed to their poor performances in academia. In line with this respondent code 01 said:

"Before their mother left, they used to get the highest rank; like from 1st to 5th level out of 70 students in their classroom. After she left, their rank become like 37, 38 out of 70 students. They stopped those activities they used to practice while she was around like; There was a study time after school after 3:00 pm. Their study after school that they used to do by sitting under the tree has been stopped."

On the other hand, respondent code 01 said his wife trained their oldest daughter about household work when she started planning to migrate to Arab countries. The study explored that elder children who are at the age of 6 or older were responsible to carry out all household activities. In support of this respondent code 03 said:

"When she was here they have been learning but after she left I let them stay at home because I had no one to help me with the housework."

In the study area, it was also indicated that elder siblings' drop out from school brought a similar effect on younger children following mothers' migration to Arab countries. For example, respondent code 01 said:

"The other kids in the household say you made her (the eldest daughter) to leave school and you want us to go "We don't want to go!" Even when I asked the kids about education, they usually told me if they went to class or not, as well as about their attendance."

In addition to household work, the oldest daughter in this study area also left her education due to sexual abuse they faced from her father.

Socialization of husbands

All interview participants reported that their wives' migration has limited the social interaction and responsibilities they have with friends and the community. They showed that child care responsibilities and lack of community acceptance contributed to such effects. In line with this, respondent code 01 explained how he manages social gatherings and responsibilities as:

"I quickly leave from places like that. The people understand me; they say "He has children to take care of". This is because I know that once my kids are at sleep they don't wake up even if a beast comes and drags them. Thus I go to such places, even though I can't stay late as usual."

On the other hand, a 60 years old father who is taking care of his 6 months old baby described his experience as:

"For the past 5 years, I never had coffee in anyone's house. Because all of them had hated me, I would not go."

Marriage stability

The effect of mothers' migration to Arab countries on the stability of existing marriage was discussed with all interview participants. All interviewees reported that they did not face challenges to keep their marriage until the return of their wives. However, they indicated that they felt uncomfortable during those times and also faced peer and family pressures to start new relationships. The respondents said that their children might not let them engage with another woman. In addition, they fear that their wives could hear from other people including their own families regarding their new relationship status and hence, prefer to be loyal to their existing marriage. In line with this, respondent code 01 explained his experience as:

"After she left I couldn't get closer to anyone especially with women unless the woman is a relative. You know, even when I sell cabbage,

many women come from far areas to purchase the cabbage. Because I know what can be said to my wife by some of them, I just ask what they need; I go to the garden and send the cabbage by one of my children, asking them to bring the money too."

Discussion

In the study area, several impacts were observed on husbands and children who are left behind. This finding showed that mothers' migration to Arab countries is considered as a major source of income that could bring economic change in a family. It was indicated that migrated women and mothers send money regularly to help their families. Besides, husbands are responsible to use the money they receive and improve the living conditions of their respective families. It was observed that husbands use remittance mainly to build modern houses and to purchase farmlands and equipment. In addition, household and daily expenses including food, education, and health are also covered from the money they receive. Recent reviews suggested that families receiving international remittances spend less money on consumption goods such as food and more on investment goods including education and housing. Also, they are found to invest more in entrepreneurial activities [8, [9]. Therefore, it can be concluded that remittances can cover daily household expenses and improve the economy of one's family by improving investments.

Previous findings carried out in this study area, Butajira, Ethiopia, showed that activities including child care and other family members, housekeeping, cooking, and generating supplementary income are considered as the role of women. Comparably, men are primarily responsible for earning income largely from agricultural farming [21]. In this study, following their migration to Arab countries, it was found that the mothers' responsibilities were majorly shared by husbands and elderly children. A similar study in Vietnam showed a comparable result and indicated that fathers were the most important caregivers to their children following mothers'

migration [22]. In contrast, a previous study conducted in Sri Lanka and the Philippines showed that female relatives were the most important caregivers [12]. On the other hand, the present study found that mothers' migration made husbands limit their responsibilities and activities in their community. In addition, it made them worry and question their efficiency in household management and their overall work. In line with this, the study conducted in Vietnam also found that fathers were initially worried to take mothers' work on top of their usual paid work and that made their life rather challenging at least for the first three months [22]. Our study also found that husbands were experiencing stress following their wives' absence and hence, increased the amount of Khat they chew per day and also started smoking cigarettes to overcome the stress. It was indicated that such behavioral changes among husbands could affect their health and weaken their household responsibilities [23].

It was also found that fathers were not trained enough and ready to accomplish household tasks and stay with children at home for a longer time like their mothers. In addition, the study revealed that elderly children who spend most of their time on household activities lacked cleanliness and proper hygiene and faced different difficulties such as illness, poisoning, drowning, and submersion. Other studies also indicated that children faced various circumstances like malnutrition due to sudden termination of breastfeeding, accidents due to lack of attention, and morbidity following their mothers' migration [24, [25]. In contrast, other studies depicted that mothers' migration is a good source of income for left-behind families. However, the income alone could not solve the problem that older children face such as child care, cooking a variety of nutritional foods, and housekeeping due to their low experience and capacity [26-[28].

Also, in the present study, older children were found to share most of the household activities next to their fathers. Comparable studies showed that older children take inappropriate responsibilities that were beyond their capacities and faced anxiety, loneliness, and other psy-

chological and social problems following their mothers' migration. Also, mothers' migration influenced the regular school attendance and educational performance of older children and experienced family pressure to quit school until the return of their mothers [13, [15, [17, [24]. Studies also revealed that older female children faced sexual abuse and/or rape from their fathers and encountered different health problems following their mothers' absence [12, [24, [27].

The return of migrated mothers could also affect families' health. Previous studies revealed the impact of mother migration on HIV transmission to the families left behind following their return. Migrant women from three Asian countries were found to engage in consensual or non-consensual sexual relationships during their stay in Arab countries. It was indicated that economical and psychological factors including loneliness, insecurity, and homesickness contributed to such sexual relationships. In addition, sexual harassment and rape from employers and strangers were reported as contributing factors [29]. In this study, husbands were found to have basic knowledge about HIV and suspect that their wives could face similar circumstances during their stay. However, most husbands did not take immediate HIV tests upon the return of their wives from Arab countries. Hence, it can be predicted that such time lag could make them easily susceptible to the disease.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present study assessed the effect of mothers' migration to Arab countries on families in Butajira, Ethiopia based on the experiences of left behind husbands. It can be concluded that mothers' migration has a significant role in poverty reduction and improved livelihood to families. However, our study found that the negative impacts of mothers' migration could not be compensated by remittances and were found to dominate over the positive effects on the families left behind in Butajira. Hence, Providing education and support for left-behind families on household work management, child care, HIV/AIDS, and gender violence at the community level would be

important. In addition, creating local employment opportunities for mothers in their local area, providing follow up by health extension workers for the left- behind children regarding the signs and symptoms of different diseases will help to ensure the families health-seeking behavior and care attendance.

Assertions

Consent for Publication: Not applicable

Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Availability of data and materials

The datasets used/or analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Authors' contributions

ET participated in the coordination of the study, performed the data analyses, and drafted the manuscript. ET, RT, MM conceived the study, participated in its design and coordination, and helped to draft the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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