

Gender differences as per child's companion and type of activities performed during mother's absence and presence in migrant labour families

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■ **ABSTRACT :** The aim of present study was to explore the gender wise distribution of children of migrant families as per activities during mother's absence as well as presence. A self-structured interview schedule was interviewed on mothers of the selected 120 children of age range of 6-8 years. In the total sample, children were composed of two groups on the basis of their school attendance. One group of children, who were attending school (n=60) and another group was composed of those children who were not attending school (n=60). Each of these two groups further included equal number of boys and girls (30 boys and 30 girls). Data were statistically analyzed by using Z-test. The study showed that majority of the male children stayed with the siblings and spent time while playing whereas, majority of the females stayed with the friends/neighbourhood and in home and spent time either in playing or doing household chores during their mother's absence. Among both the groups, school going as well as non-school going, significantly larger percentage of boys were involved in playing and roaming as compared to girls. Significantly larger percentage of girls as compared to boys was taking care of siblings during their mother's absence. During mother's presence, boys as well as girls spent longer time in or around the home where as during mother's absence children spent more time away from home.

■ **KEY WORDS :** Gender differences, Migrant labour families, Migration, Sibling, Household chores

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The richness of human's development is determined by the way an individual spends his time and the variety and structural complexity of the activities in which he takes part. Despite the established fact that children's engagement in different activities has impact on their developmental outcomes (Bee and Boyd, 2004), little attention has been paid to the question of how children spend their time and its impact on their developmental status. The absorption of all of child's waking hours in dull and undesirable activity schedule represents severe impoverishment of experience. Children's time use is likely to be affected by their socio-economic status, and age, whereas, gender differences in activities begin to appear in elementary school. Work responsibilities increase as the child matures. Additionally the types of work activities children perform differ by gender, with boys performing more market oriented work and girls were performing more domestic labour. Family activities

including household work, household conversations and mealtime provide important opportunities for children to participate in household routines. Girls, specifically, appear to assume more of the extra work than boys in dual-earner families (Benin and Edwards, 1990). Girl's schooling in particular may be most sensitive to birth order. What a boy or girl learns and for better or worse, shape the men and women these children become (Kaur and Jaswal, 2009) in future. Family size and type may have positive and negative effects. In smaller families, parents may increase the time spent in educational and leisure activities (Blake, 1989). Research has found that children in large families spend more time in household work than do children in smaller families (Bianchi and Robinson, 1997).

Migration is a type of movement from one place to another and occurs because individual's search for food, sex and security outside their usual habitation. Machines

replacing men in Punjab seems to have become a reality both in agriculture and industrial sector with the state facing a shortage of labour (Sharma, 2011). To produce food, security and human reproduction of its species, human beings must, out of necessity, move out of their usual habitation and enter into indispensable social relationships that are cooperative or antagonistic. The labourers from Bihar used to migrate to Punjab in search of work that too in agriculture as these labourers are well versed with paddy cultivation, scope of employment in rural Bihar and Uttar Pradesh was very limited as a result migration for work took place (Chatteerjee, 2012). The movement from the poor states to the big cities makes it necessary for the women to join the workforce and to go out to earn for meeting their basic needs. In many low-income families, children are expected to become economically productive at an early age. Majority of the women in the economically weaker, migrant families work to help their families to make both ends meet, leaving their small children behind. Migration from one place to another place involves lot of adjustment on the part of the migrant families. Moreover investigation has been made on the relationship between seasonal distress migration and educational access in India where agricultural labourers migrate for short periods, often several times per year, while migrants to industrial and agro industrial employment follow a single cycle beginning after the monsoon, and lasting for 6-8 months until April or June and also identifies a number of ways seasonal distress migration prevents access to education, particularly in the Primary age group.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The sample for the present study was comprised of 120 children and their mothers of migrant labour families. The children were selected in the age group between 6 to 8 years and sample was purposively drawn from urban localities of Ludhiana city. Six slum localities were selected from the selected zone and 120 children with age range of 6 to 8 years and mothers working as domestic servants, were purposively selected from each chosen locality through snowball technique. The total sample was comprised of 120 mother-child dyads. Time use patterns of children of migrant families were examined by using a self-structured interview schedule.

The mothers of the selected 120 children were interviewed to record information about the target child's daily time use pattern. The interview schedule also included items designed to assess children's daily activities in which these children are involved, how they spend their time and where they spend their time. The scores were tabulated to conduct frequency, percentage and Z-value.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

For statistically testing the significance of difference between the two groups, Z-value was employed. The gender wise distribution as per child's companions during mother's absence in migrant families has been elaborated in Table 1.

Table 1 revealed that gender differences were non-significant as far as child stayed at home with grandparents and siblings however significantly ($Z=3.88$, $p<0.01$) larger percentage of school going females children (76.67%) stayed with the friends/ neighbours in their mother's absence, when they were going for work as compared to male children (26.67%). but it was assumed that the children who were left under the supervision of neighboring friends were all alone at home. It was noteworthy that the safety of boys was more important as compared to that of girls in these families. The table further presents that among non-school going children, gender differences were significant ($Z=2.58$, $p<0.01$) as far as child's companion in mother's absence was his/her sibling. Greater proportion of boys (86.67%) stayed with the elder sibling when mother was out to work, than girls (56.67%).

Table 2 revealed that significant differences ($Z=4.27$, $p<0.01$) in both the genders of school and non-school going children, as 46.67 per cent of the males were reported to be roaming in the absence of parents where as not even a single female engaged in this activity. It has been found that 93.33 per cent of the males engaged in playing as compared to 63.33 per cent of the females. The Z-value came out to be significant ($Z=3.67$, $p<0.01$). The figures for non-school going children make it clear that highly significant differences ($Z=6.55$, $p<0.01$) were observed in both the genders as 83.33 per cent of the males were roaming in the absence of their parents where as not even a single female was engaged in it. It was observed that 100 per cent of males and 63.33 per cent of females were engaged in playing in parent's absence. The differences were

Table 1: Gender wise distribution as per child's companion during mother's absence

Child's companion	School going (n=60)			Non school going (n=60)			Total, n=120		
	Male F (%)	Female F (%)	Z- value	Male F (%)	Female F (%)	Z- value	Male F (%)	Female F (%)	Z-value
No companion	5 (16.67)	6 (20.00)	0.33	5 (16.67)	7 (23.33)	0.26	10 (16.67)	13 (21.67)	0.70
Grandparents	2 (6.67)	3 (10.00)	0.47	2 (6.67)	5 (16.67)	1.21	4 (6.67)	8 (13.33)	1.22
Siblings	15 (50.00)	17 (56.67)	0.52	26 (86.67)	17 (56.67)	2.58***	41 (68.33)	34 (56.67)	1.32
Friends /Neighbours	8 (26.67)	23 (76.67)	3.88***	20 (66.67)	17 (56.67)	0.80	28 (46.67)	40 (66.67)	2.21

(Multiple response) *** Indicate significance of value at $P=0.01$

found to be significant ($Z=3.67$, $p<0.01$). When gender differences in overall sample were observed, it was apparent that highly significant ($Z=7.60$ $p<0.01$) differences were seen as 65 per cent of the males preferred to roam in absence of parents where as not even a single female was engaged in it. It may be noted that 45 per cent of the boys were also reported to be engaged in household chores as compared to 58.33 per cent girls.

Table 3 interprets the activities of the child during mother's absence and shows that half of the school going males (50%) spent time playing near the home whereas, 23.33 per cent spent time while playing in the home. 16.67 per cent of the school going males played far away from home while none of the females went playing far away from home and 50 per cent school going females were playing in the home and thus, gender differences were significant in these two category ($Z=2.34$, $p<0.05$ and $Z=2.14$, $p<0.05$, respectively). The results further revealed that significantly larger number of females (40%) of the school going females stayed at home and did

household chores as compared to only 10 per cent males and gender differences were significant ($Z=2.68$, $p<0.01$). The table further reveals that most of non schools going males (93%) were playing near the home and a large proportion was also playing in the home (53.33%) or far away from the home (46.67%) while 33.33 per cent were also performing household chores at home. Similar results were recorded in the overall sample as significantly larger percentage of males (31.67%) were playing far away from home as compared to not even a single female child ($Z=4.75$, $p<0.01$).

Table 4 presents gender wise distribution of the sample as per their place of activities during mother's presence. The data on school going migrant children reveal that majority of the males (36.67%) spent time playing far away from home as compared to 10 per cent females and hence, result came out to be significant ($Z=3.45$, $p<0.01$). As many as 40 per cent of the 6-8 years old boys and 20 per cent of the girls were playing far away from home. School going males were reported to play near the home in larger percentage (73.33%) as compared to

Table 2 : Gender wise distribution of children of migrant families as per activities performed during mother's absence

Activities	School going (n=60)			Non-school going (n=60)			Total (n=120)		
	Male f (%)	Female f (%)	Z-value	Male f (%)	Female f (%)	Z-value	Male f (%)	Female f (%)	Z-value
Roaming	14(46.67)	0(0.00)	4.27***	25(83.33)	0(0.00)	6.55***	39(65.00)	0(0.00)	7.60***
Household chores	11(36.67)	16(53.33)	1.30	16(53.33)	19(63.33)	0.79	27(45.00)	35(58.33)	1.46
Playing	28(93.33)	19(63.33)	3.67***	30(100.00)	19(63.33)	3.67***	49(81.67)	49(81.67)	0
Care of siblings	1(3.33)	4.00(13.33)	1.40	2(6.67)	5(16.67)	1.21	3(5.00)	9(15.00)	1.83
Going to school	7(23.33)	8(26.67)	0.30	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	NA	7(11.67)	8(13.33)	0.28

(Multiple response) *** Indicate significance of values at $P=0.01$ **Table 3 : Gender wise distribution of sample as per place of activities of migrant children during mother's absence**

Place of child's stay in mothers absence	School going (n=60)			Non-school going (n=60)			Total, n=120		
	Male f (%)	Female f (%)	Z-Value	Male F (%)	Female F (%)	Z-value	Male f (%)	Female f (%)	Z-value
Playing far away from home	5 (16.67)	0 (0.00)	2.34**	14 (46.67)	0 (0.00)	4.27***	19 (31.67)	0(0.00)	4.75***
Playing near the home	15 (50.00)	12 (40.00)	0.78	28 (93.33)	21(70.00)	2.34**	43 (71.67)	33(55.00)	1.89
Playing in home	7 (23.33)	15 (50.00)	2.14**	16 (53.33)	25 (83.33)	2.50**	23 (38.33)	40(66.67)	3.11***
Staying at home and did household chores	3 (10.00)	12 (40.00)	2.68***	10 (33.33)	16 (53.33)	1.56	13 (21.67)	28.00(46.67)	2.89***

(Multiple response) ** and *** Indicate significance of values at $P=0.05$ and 0.01 , respectively**Table 4 : Gender wise distribution of the sample as per place of activities during mother's presence**

Place of child's stay in mothers presence	School going (n=60)			Non-school going(n=60)			Total(n=120)		
	Male f (%)	Female f (%)	Z-value	Male f (%)	Female f (%)	Z-value	Male f (%)	Female f (%)	Z-value
Playing far away from home	12 (40.00)	6(20.00)	1.69	10(33.33)	0 (0.00)	3.46***	22(36.67)	6(10.00)	3.45***
Playing near the home	22 (73.33)	16(53.33)	1.61	23(76.67)	17(56.67)	1.64	45(75.00)	33(55.00)	2.30**
Playing in home	19 (63.33)	26(86.67)	2.09**	20(66.67)	30(100)	3.46***	39(65.00)	56(93.33)	3.82***
Staying at home and doing household chores	9 (30.00)	21(70.00)	3.10***	3(10.00)	30(100)	7.01***	12(20.00)	51(85.00)	7.91***

(Multiple response) ** and *** Indicate significance of values at $P=0.05$ and 0.01 , respectively

females, where as females were spending more time playing in home (86.67%) as compared to 63.33 per cent school going males. Thus, gender differences ($Z=2.09$, $p<0.05$) were significant in this case.

Table 4 further shows that majority of the non-school going males were playing near the home (76.67%) and in the home (66.67%) where as all the non-school going females were playing in the home or doing household chores during their mother's presence. One third of the non-school going males (33.33%) were playing far away from home where as not even a single female child was going far away from home for playing in their presence and hence, a significant gender difference was observed ($Z=3.46$, $p<0.01$). When mother of non-school going children was at home, all the females were doing household chores as compared to 10 per cent of the males and thus, again a significant difference was observed ($Z=7.01$, $p<0.01$).

Conclusion :

It is quite obvious that the data given here clearly indicated a difference as larger per cent of school going females stayed with the friends or neighbours as compared to school going males in their mother's absence when they were going for work. It is noteworthy that safety of boys is more important as compared to that of girls in these migrant labour families. Greater proportion of boys stayed with the elder siblings as majority of the school going as well as non-school going females were performing household chores at home. The figures for the non-school going children maked it clear that highly significant difference were observed as majority of the males were roaming in the absence of their parents whereas not even a single female was engaged in it. Majority of the girls were reported to be engaged in household chores as compared to boys in both school going as well as non-school going categories. Significantly larger number of school going females stayed at home and did household chores as compared to few males and gender differences were significant. Significantly majority of the males spent time playing far away from home as compared to very few percentage of females.

Majority of the non-school going males were playing near the home and in home where as all of the non-school going females were playing in the home or doing household chores during their mother's absence. Significant differences were observed as very few percentage of non-school going males stayed at home and doing household chores during their mother's presence where as all the non-school going females were doing household chores and helping their mother in household activities.

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