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Husband Absenteeism and Changing Role of Women

A Case Study of Rehara, District Poonch, AJK



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Quaid-i-Azam University
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Islamabad – Pakistan
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Thesis submitted to Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Anthropology.

Quaid-i-Azam University
Department of Anthropology
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Abstract

This thesis contributes to the phenomenon of women empowerment by conceptualizing and analyzing husband absenteeism and changing role of women in the rural society of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. It was hypothesized for the research that husband absenteeism has negatively affected family life and has a varied effect on change of women role. The research focused on three main objectives covering the assessment of understanding and magnitude of husband absenteeism, identification of indicators and impact of husband absenteeism on women and analyzing women role transformation in context of women empowerment. The research was conducted in village Rehara, District Poonch. Methodology used in this research includes participant observation, in-depth interview, case study method, socio economic census and key informants with sample size of 33 respondents using purposive sampling including three case studies. The research found that the women face higher level of husband absenteeism particularly in rural areas. The problem aroused when their husbands had to move to the places with better employment/business opportunities. Society and family ties had key roles in strengthening women's new role. Moreover, women were enthusiastic to change their conformist role to contemporary role by fighting the challenges. These women faced psychological, emotional and cultural issues with increased level of responsibilities. However, research found that the movement of their husbands did not make them deprived but enrich their capability and identity in family and society with financial autonomy, decision making power and freedom of mobility.

Key Words

Husband Absenteeism, Gender Role, Women Role, Women Empowerment, Migration

Table of Contents

Abstract	I
List of Figures	V
List of Tables	VII
Acronyms & Abbreviations	VIII
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Statement of the problem	3
1.2 Significance of the study	4
1.3 Hypothesis	5
1.4 Objectives	6
1.5 Analytical framework	6
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Gender role	7
2.2 Economic development and migration	9
2.3 Husband absenteeism and its impact on women	10
2.4 Changing role of women	13
2.5 Women empowerment	14
2.6 Theoretical paradigm of the research	16
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	19
3.1 Rapport establishment	19
3.2 Key informants	19
3.3 Participant observation	20
3.3.1 Participation in local events	21
3.4 Sampling	22
3.5 Socio economic censuses	23
3.6 In-depth interviews	23
3.7 Case studies	24

3.8	Audio recordings.....	25
3.9	Secondary sources.....	25
4.	AREA PROFILE	26
4.1	Population	26
4.2	Infrastructure facilities.....	27
4.2.1	Roads and other facilities.....	27
4.2.2	Access to the village – Rehara	28
4.2.3	Communication and power	29
4.2.4	Health and medical facilities.....	30
4.3	Demographics	31
4.3.1	Language.....	31
4.3.2	Education	31
4.3.3	Climatic condition.....	33
4.3.4	Family structures and marriage patterns	33
4.3.5	Casts and other ethnic groups	34
4.3.6	Religious affiliations.....	34
4.3.7	Land ownership, crops and irrigation	34
4.3.8	Economic conditions and medium of livelihood	34
4.3.9	Social life, events, dress and food patterns	36
4.3.10	Household information	37
5.	HUSBAND ABSENTEEISM	38
5.1	Perception about absenteeism.....	41
5.2	Husband absenteeism.....	43
5.3	Changing gender roles and their implication	46
5.4	Kinship chart of changing responsibilities.....	48
6.	CHANGING ROLE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT.....	50
6.1	Traditional to contemporary role	50

6.1.1	Decision making	52
6.1.2	Financial and economic autonomy	53
6.1.3	Length of migration and decision-making	54
6.2	Challenges faced by women due to husband absenteeism.....	55
6.3	Social capital and women socialization	56
6.4	Technology and dynamics of social relationships	57
6.5	Time utilization and average mobility of women	58
6.6	Case studies.....	60
6.6.1	Case study of a rural business woman	60
6.6.2	Case study of a house wife.....	63
6.6.3	Case Study of a self-empowered working women	65
7.	ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	67
8.	CONCLUSION	74
	REFERENCES	75
	ANNEXURES	84

List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Rehara, District Poonch	28
Figure 2: Rehara Bazar, District Poonch, AJK	29
Figure 3: A view of Dispensary, Rehara, Poonch, AJK	31
Figure 4: A view of Boys Higher Secondary School Rehara, Poonch, AJK	33
Figure 5: Rural Household Activity in District Poonch, AJK	35
Figure 6: Household Activity of Women in Village Rehara, District Poonch, AJK	36
Figure 7: Housing Pattern in District Poonch, AJ&K.....	37
Figure 8: Respondent's Age.....	38
Figure 9: Respondents' Level of Education.....	39
Figure 10: Respondents' Occupation.....	40
Figure 11: Respondents' Family Structure	40
Figure 12: Level of Husband's Education	41
Figure 13: Husband Location.....	44
Figure 14: Magnitude of Husband Absenteeism	44
Figure 15: Responsibilities before and after Husband Absenteeism in Joint Families.	48
Figure 16: Responsibilities before and after Husband Absenteeism in Nuclear Family	49
Figure 17: Technology Support for Women in Village Rehara.....	58
Figure 18: Daily Time Utilization of Working Women on an Average Day	58
Figure 19: Time Utilization of House Wife on Average Day	59
Figure 20: Average Monthly Mobility Chart (Working Women) in Nuclear Family ..	59
Figure 21: Average Monthly Mobility Chart (House Wife) in Joint Family System ...	60
Figure 22: Women Working in Rural AJK.....	85
Figure 23: Village Life of Women at Reahara, Poonch, AJK	85

Figure 24: District Capital, Rawalakot, AJK..... 86

Figure 25: A View of Rehara Bazar, Poonch, AJK 86

Figure 26: Map of Village Rehara, District Poonch, AJK..... 87

Figure 27: Map of AJK 88

Figure 28: Map of Pakistan..... 89

Figure 29: Map from Islamabad to Village Rehara, District Poonch 90

Figure 30: Map from Village Rehara to Rawalakot, District Poonch..... 90

List of Tables

Table 1: Parameters for Sampling.....	23
Table 2: Population of District.....	27
Table 3: Medical Facilities at District Poonch.....	30
Table 4: Education Facilities in District Poonch	32
Table 5: Understanding about Husband Absenteeism	42
Table 6: Support from Family during Husband Absenteeism	42
Table 7: Purpose and Nature of Movement	45

Acronyms & Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
CMH	Combined Military Hospital
DHQ	District Head Quarter
ERRA	Earth Quake Rehabilitation Authority
FBS	Federal Bureau of Statistics
GAD	Gender and Development
Govt.	Government
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
KM	Kilometers
MCH	Maternity Child Health
PMD	Pakistan Metrological Department
RHC	Rural Health Centers
SCO	Special communication organization
TMA	Tehsil Municipal Administration
WAD	Women and Development
WAPDA	Water and Power Development Authority
WB	World Bank
WID	Women in Development
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
UAE	United Arab Emirates

1. INTRODUCTION

Research issues related to migration, low economic development, rural development, and several others have been raised by many researchers who worked in rural areas of AJK however effects of migration on families left behind, husband absenteeism and role of women have remained low focused areas. This research examines the women's role in family, children affairs and society in male absence and mainly the problem faced by the women during male absence. The research study focuses on three major concepts: husband absenteeism, its impact and changing role of women in relation to women empowerment. This new role of women resulted into several new challenges and opportunities for the development experts to develop the policy and indigenous projects keeping in view the women role. The research has come up with the baseline for building and strengthening the women capacity for coping new challenges using society and community level involvement for women and rural development.

For many years deep rooted issue of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) affected the development of local people. This long-lasting and persistent issue of Kashmir between Pakistan and India costs the people of AJK in particular. This issue caused low socio-economic development of the local people. People of Kashmir have to fetch their livings from major cities of Pakistan and abroad. Agriculture low productivity and less economic opportunities results into movement of people to urban areas from rural areas especially males who is the head of household. Movements of people searching for a better livelihood and family life may result into changes in the family structures and gender roles. Migration is a complex phenomenon that features societies for many centuries. Poverty, law and order situation, social dissension, political instability, and less economic development results into the migration of people from one place to other. People movement occurs mainly from countryside to metropolitan cities with in the country and outside the country. Generally, relocation of the only husbands to other cities for monetary benefits has a substantial effect on the families who left behind entailing of wives and children. This leads to placing the women in entirely new situation.

After finalization of objectives, the investigation started with the desktop research. Literature from different books and articles was studied to build in-depth understanding

of the topic. After understanding the concepts from literature interview guide was prepared according to the statement of problem, objectives and significance of study. The field work started with the rapport building in the locale. Key informants were identified and individual briefings were conducted with the key informant to explain the purpose of study. Target women for this research were identified through purposive and stratified random sampling. As the target women were those whose head of the family (male) is absent from home due to any reason. This was the only characteristic that developed base of finding target respondents in urban as well as rural areas of the locale. In-depth interviews were conducted from women in the locale for collection of information according to the guide. 33 in-depth interviews were conducted during the field work. Participant observation was made to complete the field work while attending the local events. The information was collected through case studies of the target women as personal stories reflect social changes, values and cultural practices. Three case studies were prepared during the field work. Details are explained in Chapter 3.

Since the mainstream of the inhabitants in the affected zone of AJK hold out themselves with agrarian activities, the earthquake had a gigantic impact on their living capabilities (ADB/WB 2005). Majority of the livestock, to which food and income of people was dependent, were killed in the earthquake in 2005 (ERRA 2006a; IUCN 2006). Moreover, the earthquake caused extreme environmental destruction to the agricultural area for crops as well as for cattle grazing (ibid). Furthermore, irrigation systems and water resources were also badly affected (IUCN 2006). Pakistan side of State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has eight districts and district Poonch is well known because of its scenic beauty. District Poonch was the locale of study having capital Rawalakot famous city of AJK also known as mini Kashmir. District Poonch has total 855 sq km area with the total population of 573,000 people. On an average 7 to 8 persons live in one household. Rehara is small village where field work was conducted. The village is having basic facilities but with less economic activities. As it is situated in hilly areas therefore there are very small pieces of cultivated land and people are unable to survive on their agriculture income. State of animal holding is high but generally managed by the women. Long-standing and intractable issues of low economic activities in village resulted into movement of people to urban areas. People of Rehara mainly work in other cities and countries to earn their living. Most of the

women are facing husband absenteeism in the village. This small village has population of approximately 1200 individuals. Details on locale are explained in Chapter 4.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Absenteeism is a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation. In this research male absenteeism is taken as head of the family (male household) who is away from his house due to work, job, business etc for either short or longer period of time.

Relocation causes a lot of problems to the kinfolks predominantly wives of the migrants. These can be personal, psychological, managerial, and social and children related discipline. On the other hand, it empowers women not only socially but also economically. Economic empowerment and social participation of women play pivotal role in global efforts to eliminate poverty, hunger, and malnutrition and achieve sustainable development. Economically empowered women are in the better position to perform their role decision making process and are better equipped to protect their interests and their families. This study is chosen for research to explore the different issues and problem faced by the women due to male absenteeism. This study explored the level of male absenteeism and its impact on local women in the locale.

Usually men are not supposed to take part in household work containing child rearing. Such chores are considered to be the private sphere of females. Males are categorized as having the following potentials: power, stamina, manly/powerful daring, confidence and the capability to encounter the outer world. Such abilities were revealed in the varieties of work that man spoken for. Husbands or males were liable for all what was assumed as “heavy” work. So men are provider for their families (Bernard 1981; Aweda 1984; Carrigan et al, 1987; Stock 1995; Silber Schmidt, 1999 etc.). Females supervise the domestic chores. They kept houses, managed and prepared all foods. They also work for the planting and picking of food crops and cash crops. Their first duty is to bear and rear children men were only known as to support when unusual hardship comes (Aweda, 1984).

In rural locales, women instigate to take a primary role in making decisions related to agricultural matters (Gordon 1981; Boehm 2008). Development enterprises must know the reality that roles and responsibilities keep on changing and that may be different in different societies. This also applies on men and women who belong to earthquake area.

“The predominant societal structure in the earthquake affected areas is deeply patriarchal” (ADB 2000). By tradition men and women connected to different domains of the society which define their roles and duties. Home is primarily demarcated to be women’s space, while men dictate the world outside the home.

In the absence of male everyday jobs of woman may increase. General hypothesis is movement of husband changes the gender role is not acceptable in a society like Pakistan. In India, most of the studies noted that absence of husband resulted in increased autonomy of women and their decision making ability. Migration has changed gender role in India by introducing higher responsibilities to female daily business. Female are supposed to take care of animal and also work on the family farm in the absence of male (Jetley 1987; Paris et al. 2005).

In Pakistan particularly in rural areas where there are low economic activities for men to earn the living for their family and children problem of husband absenteeism arises. In absence of husbands, women have to take care of several responsibilities. It may include tasks related to household, animal handling, children rearing and family related matters. Husband takes the financial responsibility and rest of the responsibilities is shifted to wife of that person. Living in rural areas with less formal education and training to handle the complex real life issues, women are exposed to the real world in which she never dealt before. Increased responsibilities and lot of work is expected to be done by women who are not trained in that way. This results into several challenges for women to learn and build their capacity and cope with these issues. Problem of husband absenteeism and changing role of women has its utmost importance in triggering the social development process.

1.2 Significance of the study

Literature reveals that migration has several positive and negative impacts on the migrants and their family members. Women who left behind always remained a neglected area from the researchers. This research explains the husband absenteeism and challenges faced by the women who are left behind covering three major areas. First of all, husband absenteeism along with causes and impacts have been discussed. Several causes have been explained during the course of study which may help the researcher to know about economic development activities in the rural areas of AJK. The research also suggests that the human capital which is affected by the phenomenon

of brain drain and migration can be utilized to create ripples in the local economy for the betterment of community.

Secondly research explains the challenges faced by the women due to husband absenteeism. These issues in view point of rural women are dealt with confidence. State of women in the rural areas is also explained by the research. Migration resulted into social, cultural and economic changes in the rural community of AJK. These changes affected the role of women in the family and society. The changing role is explained in detail in the research. This new role is linked to the economic as well as social benefits to the women. This study examines the Women's Role in family, children affairs and society in male absence. Absenteeism gives strength and independence to the women left behind contributing in scope of decision making, access to financial resources and opportunity to grow her cultural framework in society. Research findings reveal that how women of rural community get empowered due to husband absenteeism with the passage of time. The husband absenteeism makes them empowered socially, economically and culturally. New role of women results into several new challenges and opportunities for the development experts to develop the policy and indigenous projects keeping in view the women role. This study will help the researchers to build strategy for women development particularly in rural areas. Women empowerment may act like double edge sword in prevailing social norms and practices. The research leaves some of the future areas for other researchers to find out the possibilities to design and create capacity building opportunities for women living in rural areas in context of their changing role and how these opportunities may be established by utilizing the social capital and local resources? Women empowerment may affect the local customs and norms may result into the other challenges like loss of self-esteem of male house head or there may be several cultural and social issues. This research may create starting point on how to create opportunities for personal wellbeing of women may be a challenge for the policy makers and change agents by utilizing the strength of social norms and customs and how the roles of family ties and society elders may be enhanced to overcome the arising rural dilemmas.

1.3 Hypothesis

In rural societies of Pakistan women have to take care of several responsibilities during the absence of their husband. All the tasks related to household, animal handling,

children rearing and family related matters are managed by women left behind. Husband takes the responsibility of bread winning and rest of the responsibilities is shifted to wife of that person. Living in rural areas with less formal education and training to handle the complex real life issues, women are exposed to the real world in which she never dealt before. It may affect family life of wives and their children. It was hypothesized for the research that husband absenteeism has negatively affected family life and has a varied effect on change of women role.

1.4 Objectives

Following are the objectives of the research:

- 1- To assess the understanding and magnitude of husband absenteeism.
- 2- To identify the impact of Husband Absenteeism on women.
- 3- To analyze women role transformation in context of women empowerment.

1.5 Analytical framework

Following is the details of variables, indicators, parameters and criteria for analysis:

Independent Variables: Husband Absenteeism

Dependent Variables: Family Life, Women's Role

Indicators: Husband Absenteeism, Rural Women, house wife , Decision Making, Economic Pattern, Mobility, Personal well-being, Women Empowerment, Women Development

Parameters & Analysis Criteria:

1. Family Structure Wise Analysis: Nuclear/Joint
2. Education Wise Analysis: Educated/Uneducated
3. Age Wise Analysis: Different Age Cohorts
4. Location (Wife) Wise Analysis: Rural/Far Flung Area
5. Relocation Type Wise Analysis: With in country/Out Side Country/any other

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A lot of research has been done on gender issues, migration and women empowerment. There are several aspects of research related to these important areas. This chapter explains the different aspects of research themes that have already been used related to "Husband Absenteeism and changing role of women". Gender roles, husband absenteeism and changing role of women has been explained through different research articles. The main objective of this exercise was to develop a theoretical framework for the present research.

2.1 Gender role

The situation of women in the family is hypothesized in terms of the sexual division of labor and authority in the family. Decision making and women participation in family have always been neglected area, as Bolak (1995) states, kinship relations play a predominantly critical role in Turkey, and the kin may simply get tangled in the decision-making processes.

Men and women especially husband and wife as family play pivotal role in the process of development and adoption. They strongly mold the directions of development to upward and downward. From the histories gender roles is of much importance till today's modern era. These roles are mainly decided by the society norms or with in family norms. However these roles have changed with the passage of time.

Gender roles are attitudes, cultural values, society and family norms that are suitable for men and women. These roles change the behaviors related to marriages that how men and women perform their duties. In egalitarian marriages where everything is considered to be shared equally by men and women and on the other side in customary marriages where women take care of household tasks and men are considered to be the breadwinner for the family. Prentice and Carranza (2002) explains about gender roles that "The stereotypic belief that women are warm and caring is matched by a societal prescription that they should be warm and caring. Similarly, the stereotypic belief that men are strong and agentic is matched by a societal prescription that they should be strong and agentic."

In the rural society men and women have demarcated responsibilities however women have intricate responsibilities. They are involved in almost every aspect of life starting

from rearing children to income generation activities. Oppong (1980) explained the different roles performed by women including marital, parental, household, work-related, communal, kin and individual roles. Beside the fact that women is performing several key characters however women are deprived in many parts of the world. Generally, these roles are not considered to be important part in the developmental process.

These conceptual notions of men and women are set by culture and religion (ibid; Aikman and Unterhalter 2005). "It is not so much the specific kinds of work men and women do – they have always varied from time to time and place to place – but the simple fact that the different genders do different kinds of work, whatever it is, which is in and of itself important. The division of labour by sex means that the work group becomes also a sex group. The very nature of maleness and femaleness becomes embedded in the sexual division of labour. One's sex and one's work are part of one another. One's work defines one's gender" (Bernard, 1981).

Lupton (2000) also stressed this argument in his work that was basically on how manhood is distinct, preserved and confronted in jobs and business. In fact, he claimed that manhood might be regarded as a role that is informally accomplished indorsed and replicated by dialogue. Also that it can be accomplished by both men and women, because of its vigorous nature can be considered by observation of action and interpretation of discourse (Kvande 1998). So in his views this is the notion of work that determines the masculine characters which provide extrinsic and intrinsic rewards by way of which manhood can be judged by others or by himself. He stated following argument that the reproduction of (hegemonic) masculinity underpins "the social definition of some kinds of work as 'men's work or women's work' and the definition of some kinds of work as more masculine than others".

Gender is made (Ortner, 1996), shaped (Kondo, 1990), executed. (Lynn Stephen 1991) claims that "gender is fluid over time and ... within different social situations," and says that masculinity and femininity "are not original, natural, or embalmed states of being; they are gender categories whose precise meanings constantly shift, transform into each other, and ultimately make themselves into whole new entities." It is just because of such litness and variability and other ways in which fluctuating gender biases are

interrelated to migration that it is pertinent for researchers to record and hypothesize the role of gender in international communities.

The Swaziland PPA notes, "The pressures of poverty are experienced very differently by men and women. Men have experienced a threat to their social status, self-respect, and confidence in their economic role as providers for their family". There are many cases of those family heads who have faced financial crises like debt which they are not able to pay back or incapable of provision for their families, had left their homes.

People living in a household unintentionally keep on changing the ideas of gender roles according to the environment they live in, which again is influenced by the wider recognized setting in which households exist, such as the government, the market, and the communal. Women as compared to men may easily go beyond their conventional role for their children. For instance, in Latvia men may be embarrassed to do habitually women's task, but "society pardons a woman for doing men's work when she does so to feed her children. The 'breadwinner' of the family is now anyone even children who procure work and income, and this role gives a commensurate authority in the family". If a man loses his job the conflict situation is likely to arise among the family members. Likewise, it may be more culturally right for women to ask for help. "When the situation is desperate, women will ask as discreetly as possible for gifts from relatives or their women's group. Men will not do this, but for women it is more acceptable because 'they do it for their children and the children belong to the community'".

2.2 Economic development and migration

Ahmad (2008) investigated the causes of transnational movement in Pakistan. Income discriminations and insufficiency were the foremost causes of international migration. The deviating conduct of international migration in Pakistan was primarily accredited to the financial circumstances of sending as well as the host states. The relocation from Pakistan was found absolutely related with joblessness and inflation rate in the country and was adversely related with actual wage amount.

Who moves out, how and why relocation occurs and what impact the relocation will bring on sending place and on receiving place is decided by gender role, relations and inequalities. Experience indicates that movement can provide new openings to improve women's lives and change tyrannical gender relations. However, migration can also

establish traditional roles and inequalities and rendering women to new helplessness as the result of unjustified legal standing, segregation and isolation. (Jolly and Reeves 2005).

Outcomes from various surveys conducted in Pakistan have shown the finding that the prevalent migratory flows in Pakistan are from rural areas to urban areas. PIHS 1998 results suggest that almost 40 percent of the male migrants are rural to urban followed by rural to rural movement (Memon, 2005). Pakistan Socioeconomic Survey (PSES) data also show the direction of migration from rural to urban and rural to rural (Arif, 2005). These results have been increasing day by day. There are several reasons for male migration and same are the effects and results.

Agriculture in rural areas is primarily affected by population mobility over the decades. Researches reveal that there are essentially two major perspectives on the subject. One perspective focuses on the negative aspects of migration, particularly on the increased dependency of rural people on remittances, and the consequent loss of food self-sufficiency at the village level (Shankman 1976; Duany 2001). In the *Laws of Migration* journal, it was stated that brain-drain in AJK has risen higher due to low economic development in the area.

2.3 Husband absenteeism and its impact on women

It is not doubtful that absence of the migrant from the household, especially if he is a family head, can have serious allegation for the residual women both socially and economically (Sekher, 1997). However, there are diverse views about the change in position of women in the family due to husband absenteeism. At one side it is believed that women become more powerful and controller in decision making (Gulati, 1987; Findley and Williams, 1991) whereas on the other side it is believed that husband absenteeism do not considerably change women's decision making power in the place she resides (Shaheed, 1981).

When man leaves, women is entitled to accomplish the duties that was done by him while he was here, this leads her to make decisions by herself and in the public sphere "migration may have resulted in the 'feminization of the family', it has also reaffirmed the essence of the traditional gender ideology, which perpetuates the situation in which

women are financially dependent upon their male folks, despite some superficial changes in the realm of activities they may perform" (Hoodfar 1996).

Strain faced by the women is greatest if her husband was absent for a longer time. In some instances, these anxieties were so serious that Gordon (1981) writes, it is tough, hence, to perceive the inference of greater obligation as being a positive force in the life of these women. Financial problems may also get to your feet when husbands are away. Generally, males move out for the economic benefit to families, but if they are not able to find good employment, condition of families may become worse (Sadiqi and Ennaji 2004).

So, the scenario may be not the same in Pakistan because movement of people is directly related to the poverty and unemployment, so migration may result in positive effect on the economic life of migrant's family but can negatively affect the behavior of their children, their wives may feel insecure, unsafe and isolation in the absence of their husbands. It may have strong positive effect on social protection of family who is left behind in Pakistan, however mainstream families feel loneliness and uncertain in the husband absenteeism.

Farooq (2009) found that primarily relocation of husband surges the accountabilities of the wife and she feels isolation without her husband. Children also feel lonely and deficiency of assistance in the absence of their father. The responsibilities of women in India increases in the absence of man and she has to take care of many other matters which otherwise should be done by her husband (Gulati 1993).

Anderson (1990) stated that there are few "old heads" that have influence in every society and can perform a powerful role in socializing young people. He further explains that these "old heads" can support to the families who are facing husband absenteeism.

The women left behind face loneliness due to increased responsibilities, also effecting education of the children and increased anxiety for communication. Moreover, they face psychological stresses when their husband left them at origin. It not only changes their role as household but also gives several more responsibilities to the women behind. How women's labor force involvement affected family relations and the

dissection of labor within the household (e.g., Beneria and Roldan 1987; Dwyer and Bruce 1988)

Male migration has raised particular concerns with respect to feminization of agricultural labor and poverty among female-headed families. In Africa, Agesa and Kim (2001) find that rural-to-urban migration in Kenya is more likely to split the family geographically, rather than resulting in family migration, when husband moves from rural to urban area for higher income, a situation of conflict is seen among the families, left behind wives are seem to remain at the rural setting and accept the faraway living from their husbands because of high residential cost in urban area. This results in increased responsibilities of agriculture for women. The women work in farms is nothing new-fangled. But the women having to practically converted keepers of their land in the absence of men, is somewhat different. Consequences of this process of “feminization of agriculture” are largely under-explored but they are about to change indigenous employment market in form of absence of male work force could drive women and children into the labour market under critical circumstances (Katz, 2003).

Absence of father will be more harmful to male levels of violence because of the deficiency of positive male role models and the existence of an authority figure (Reiss 1986; Wilson 1987).

Even though extended-family living keeps dominant in India, and in our survey over 90 per cent of women started marital life by living with the parents of husband, with time families often split, predominantly as kids are born and parents decease. “In the India Human Development Survey, nearly half the households are nuclear, the rest are extended. However, it is considered unusual for women to live alone and husbands’ migration may be feasible only if young women are able to live with other family members” (de Haan 2006). Additionally, it would not be satisfactory for a young woman to live only with older male kin of her husband; presence a female kin would be compulsory. Thus, the gender effect of male migration on women is moderated through family structure, with high level freedom in households where no older woman is present.

If it is talked about the Spousal associations among couples are troubled for parting by distance. Subsequently, conflict and emotional distance, separation, and extra marital

activities is experienced by some couples, even then some truly develop passionate ties throughout the time they live apart (Chee, 2003).

Farooq and Javed (2009) intended a study to examine the complications of the drifting families living behind in the countryside areas of Pakistan. It was detected in the study that women primarily stroked isolation and hindered as they expected the new burdens and responsibilities in the absence of their husbands, predominantly about the male children. Therefore, they confronted mental and emotional strains when their husband left them at homes. It was further discovered that children felt seclusion and lack of assistance in the absence of their dad.

2.4 Changing role of women

A number of scholars of South Asia are of the view that women's physical movement is strictly constrained in many parts. Customs of female seclusion identified in "ghunghat" or "purdah", but even for women who do not exercise purdah, there is anticipation that they will pursue consent from their husband or elder members of family to go for shopping or to see her friends (Bloom et al. 2001).

Abadan Unat (1977), in a study stated that decision making power of women especially in the absence of her husband is associated with the family structure she lives in, she would be more free for decisions if she resides in a nuclear family. Because the additional obligations need to fulfill by women who left behind start to work together with groups and associations that they might not have used before, such as banks and administration.

In her book, Ester Boserup (1970) also hints at the probability that cultivating societies established diverse social standards and conjugal arrangements well-suited with a different value of women in society. Her idea was not new, as anthropologists have long posited that the origins of household establishment rules relate to both equipment and yield. Aberle (1961), concludes that "the origins of matrilineal systems are probably to be sought in technology, division of labor, types of subsistence activities and the ecological niches in which these activities occur" Goody (1976) has related the need for wives to the productivity of women in agriculture: in female agriculture societies, a man with more wives can cultivate more land than a man having one wife. Therefore, polygamy seems to be more practiced in societies with unstable cultivation.

In women agriculture societies bride price is paid by bridegroom; on the contrary, where women are less engaged in agriculture, marriage expenses come generally from the girl's family.

If women are not given the position they deserve, they would feel frustrated, their personality development would be lacking, and they would not be able to make valuable decisions. Women are deficient in practice of decision making and management in the community pitch, as girls, unlike boys, remained socialized to perform inactive roles and given slight chances to make choices or develop supervisory skills outside the private context (Lorraine, 1997).

2.5 Women empowerment

Abdullah and Zeidenstein (1979) also described that women were living within the vicinity of a house and their endeavors were typically to bear and nurture children and do household tasks. Irrespective of the numerous responsibilities fulfilled, women are deprived of the honor they deserve, from the in laws, till the time they had a male child. Moreover, biasedness for women in the distribution of foodstuff and health care inside the home was one of the most important hitches encountered by womanhood in South Asia (Cain, 1994).

Labenes women feel that their increased responsibilities have changed their customary role in the absence of male therefore migration changed the structure of the family. Although the income sent by her husband from abroad given rise to her social position but if there comes a crises situation and husband is not able to send the money it can put women in trouble by introducing change in gender role. She has to work in farms or whatever because now she is the only breadwinner for her family with additional responsibilities of household work.

In the absence of men, women have to do her own tasks as well as tasks of her husband (Grawert 1992; Khaled 1995; Boehm 2008). Here it is surprising that how the new roles within the family affects women's well-being, particularly when one considers its negative impact on her relaxation time, so, whether her new status should be taken into account as "a sign of increased empowerment or increased hardship" (Olmsted 2005).

It should be pointed out that the term "empowerment" is used here not as it is defined in the Beijing Platform of Action, i.e. as "removing all the obstacles to women's active

participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making" (UN 1995).

Empowerment of women is regarded rather as a process intended at changing "the nature and distribution of power within a particular context" (Bookman and Morgen 1988), the situation in this case being the Lebanese family where the patriarchal system still prevails and could be endangered by upward mobility of women, and where self-assertion on their part could clash with customs and mores (Zurayk and Saadeh 1995).

If significant importance is known to women to her due prestige, they can perform key roles in most of the daily goings-on about human and society development. These behaviors will consequence in most promising outcomes. As well trained women, having salaried jobs, be vested in well developed areas and nuclear families had more power to make household decision than uneducated, untrained, jobless women living in rural and developing regions (Sathar and Kazi, 1990; Mumtaz, 1990; McWilliam et al., 1990; Mujahid and Mukhtar, 1991). Hence, it is important to understand the position of women and their rendered unrewarded services in the society for healthier progress.

The chances for greater autonomy created by men's absence may be at least partly balanced by the exercise of substitute authority by others in the community (McEvoy 2008), or by other local men or relatives. In extended families, another family member may have substantial influence in the absence of the migrant husband (Desai and Banerji 2008), though this is more likely to be the case in cultures where women are not usually given much freedom of mobility (De Haan 1997). However, researchers tend to agree that, because the substitute influence of a husband's male or female relatives is not fully equivalent to that exercised by a resident husband, women typically see their autonomy increase when their husbands migrate without them. Rather more independence for women is generally seen as a positive effect of men's migration; some adverse consequences of men's migration on the women who stay after have been recognized. (Gordon 1981; Roy and Nangia 2005)

It is a common thought that the education level has a positive effect on enhancing the capability of women who wanted them to be empowered in both public and private sector. Sherifa Zuhur (2003) Pakistan is currently going through a period of economic growth. The Pakistani state repeatedly expressed its commitment to gender equality, protection of women's rights and support for women's involvement in decision making

on all levels. However, women continue experiencing obstacles in economic empowerment and community based activism. In the course of this research will find out the transformation in women's role due to absence of male members in the family, it will also explain the importance of women's role in the family and society, in decision making, socio economic development for Family, Women themselves, family and Children's Affairs, gender sensitive issues.

It would be realistic to believe that the absence of husbands has a profound impact on women's lives. Many studies of women's empowerment in India have noted restricted autonomy and decision-making ability of women (Desai 1994; Mason and Smith 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Bloom et al 2001). We expect that in their husbands' absence women may have a majestic role in family decision-making and may be able to put aside norms of female isolation since the husbands' absence would upsurge the necessity for their contribution and management in the everyday matters of the family. Moreover, absenteeism may lead new philosophies and attitudes in men which may eventually alter gender roles in the household. Second, while male absenteeism in the form of migration may be associated with a higher likelihood of remittances, women may need to fill in for absent husbands in several ways with care of animals, and work on the farmhouse or in the domestic business (Jetley 1987; Paris et al 2005). Besides, in some cases the irregular nature of payments may also force women to make cash income through remuneration work (Gulati 1993).

“There are three indicators of women's empowerment, women's say in household decision-making, freedom of movement, access and control over resources”.

If the women get control over the wealth of family, she gets more powerful in making decisions and planning their future. Control of women on economic resources provides them power to employ their cash in keeping with their own wishes. Hold on money also raises their position on household decision making, expenses on family health, safety and happiness, and a number of combined activities for social change instigated by women. (Khanam, 2004).

2.6 Theoretical paradigm of the research

Women in Development (WID) refer to global agenda on women involvement in process of development started in early 1970s. This theory is negated by the research

as it was found that women may find extreme level of difficulty without the support of their husband to play their role in family and society in rural areas.

This research is associated with the theory of Gender and Migration. "Feminist theorizing has made fewer inroads into explanations of why certain people migrate while others do not. This research generally remains mired in sex role theory, conceptualizing gender as a static category in which fixed roles for men and women shape their migration behaviors" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Cranford 2006). "There are notable exceptions to this, in which feminist migration scholars have connected normative gendered expectations to macro-structural forces and individual agency of women and men. In her work on migration originating in Asia, Oishi (2005) proposes what she calls an 'integrative approach' in which she combines structural elements (mostly state policies) with cultural norms and women's access to power within their families to explain differential rates of women's migration from countries that are similarly located in global economic systems".

Gender and Development (GAD) approaches the gender and development rather focusing not only on women but both genders. It focuses on responsibilities of male and females in socio cultural, economic and cultural aspect of development because of their biological differences. This research envisages the gender roles and their responsibilities in the demarcated society of rural AJK. Women and men, culturally and socially have different responsibilities. Male is considered to be the head of the family and have major responsibility of financial earnings for the family and household needs. Other matters related to society are dealt by men. Generally, he is less associated with the household work. On the other hand, rural women of AJK have responsibilities related to household work, children and in some cases related to economic responsibilities. The scenario explained in this research studies that level of responsibilities depends upon many factors. The state of women is different when she is living in joint family system and she is not working women. However, situation is entirely different with the women who are living in nuclear family and also a working lady.

Gender and Development (GAD) is applicable to this research which was conducted in rural area of AJK. Both men and women play a key role in family formation, society role and developmental process. In addition to men and women participatory

community involvement is supporting the changing role of women who are facing husband absenteeism. Women playing a key role while fulfilling the major household responsibilities with the support from society and other relationships.

Gender and Migration theory is applicable to the research. Gender and migration is inter-dependent phenomenon as both genders are affected by the movement. In social context in which migration occurs, family relations are strongly influenced by the migration behaviors. Gender roles play key importance in decision making of individual to move due to any reason. Financially dependent women are vulnerable and have adverse effect on their roles. This research is associated with gender and migration theory in both development and feminist perspective. It analyzed the gender roles, behaviors and responsibilities of gender which are changed due to migration of the male members of family. This research also examines the main stream of gender and migration theory while covering the social relationships between men and women, society involvement and impact of male migration on women. This research is evident to gender specific aspects of migration and change in women role.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research can be defined as “an activity that involves finding out, in a more or less systematic way, things you did not know”. “Methodology is the philosophical framework within which the research is conducted or the foundation upon which the research is based” (Brown, 2006). “The word methodology comprises two nouns: method and ology, which means a branch of knowledge; hence, methodology is a branch of knowledge that deals with the general principles or axioms of the generation of new knowledge. It refers to the rationale and the philosophical assumptions that underlie any natural, social or human science study, whether articulated or not. Simply put, methodology refers to how each of logic, reality, values and what counts as knowledge inform research.” (McGregor and Murname 2010).

3.1 Rapport establishment

By definition, rapport is “a relationship marked by mutual understanding and trust”. Rapport is one of the most important features of unconscious human interaction. This helps in collection of accurate information about the people’s behaviors and attitudes. The researcher used this technique for building rapport in the field before conducting the field work. Five visits were made before starting field work for better rapport building in the field. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) explained that researchers have access to different information according to their gender in the field as accessing different people, locality and gathering purely depends upon the gender, ethnicity, class and many other factors. As the researcher was female therefore interaction and access for participation was easy.

3.2 Key informants

Key informants’ method is used in customary anthropological field research. Key informants are foundation of particular information such as pecuniary systems, family and kinship associations, and cultural as well as religious philosophies and practices. Agar (1980) explains the role of key informants that they are the first point of contact before entering into the field work as key informants are “deviants” or “professional stranger handlers.” He further explains that the deviants are the people who live in the same culture, and have relations with the people in the field. Agar suggests that key informants must be those persons who have strong linkages in the field and must belong

to noble families in the field. This will allow the researcher conducts the field research in a better way and meet the respondents. Keeping in view the importance of key informants, three key informants were selected.

The first key informant was a school teacher in the field. She was selected on the basis of her connection to the community. She was educated and well versed with the society norms. Most of the school children are from the locale and their parents had strong connections with the informant due to their children. With the help of her, the researcher was able to identify the respondents while asking school children about their parents. She also helped the researcher to reach the informants at their houses.

Second key informant was a well-connected house wife in Rehara Village. She belonged to renowned family in the village. She was known by most of the people as she was involved in different social works. The key informants helped to identify the respondents and conduct the field work.

The third key informant was a nurse in local dispensary. She was also similar traits as of above. She was well connected with the people and had very humble attitude. With the support of key informant, the researcher conducted the case studies in the field.

3.3 Participant observation

Observation is defined by Marshall and Rossman (1989) as "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study". Research involves "active looking, improving memory, informal interviewing, writing detailed field notes, and perhaps most importantly, patience" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). DeMunck and Sobo (1998) describe "participant observation as the primary method used by anthropologists doing fieldwork." Participant observation enables researchers to study the actions of the participants which are to be studied without disturbing their original situation by perceiving and participating in those events. (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Participant observation is "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999). Direct and indirect interaction was used to complete the field work. The process of participant observation started from rapport building and field visits and continued till the completion of the field work. To

get the insights, special occasions like marriages, informal gathering, and deaths events were attended by the researcher.

3.3.1 Participation in local events

The researcher participated in the local events to capture the natural events and get insight of the local culture. Birth of new child at the locale was celebrated by the Sudhan family. All the family members and invited guests were present in the event. The event started with the haircut of the child followed by the lunch. Special dishes were cooked for the guests. Such events are generally organized by the local people on 7th day of birth of new baby. Happiness, enjoyment and addition of new family member is celebrated.

The researcher participated in the death of an elderly person who was head of the family. He had four sons and two daughters living in joint family. All sons and daughters were married. The person was holding the senior position in the family. People from the village and other families also participated in the event. Sorrows and condolences were shared by the people.

The researcher was lucky to have eid days during field work. People share happiness on the special Muslim's occasion. New dresses were worn by the local people. Male members of society who are living away from their home get together on this occasion. The day starts with the Namaz-e-Eid in which male members go to the mosques to offer prayers. Then people go to others houses to meet others and share the blessings of the day. The event remained for two days in the locale.

Marriages are equally celebrated in the locale. The researcher participated in the marriage of a person who worked in nearby city. The event shows happiness and joy where bride and groom get married. The girl will have to face husband absenteeism from the first month of her marriage as her husband was working in Government department in Kahuta, District Rawalpindi. She will live in joint family system where other family members are there to support her.

There are several other events like Milad and Quran khoani were organized in the locale. These events helped people not only to know about each other's problems but also support the women who are facing husband absenteeism. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews during Milad organized by local family.

3.4 Sampling

Target women for this research are not homogeneous groups in the locale. The sample for this research study was determined using amalgamation of two methods: purposive sampling strategies and stratified sampling. As the target women were those females whose head of the family (male) is absent from home due to any reason. This is the only characteristic that developed base of finding target respondents in rural as well as urban areas of the locale. This method is used due to the reason that there is no such data or registration authority available in the locale who maintains the data of male migrants from the region. Therefore, the sample was developed by identifying the respondents one by one. Different stratified groups were used according to parameters defined to collect diversified information. As Emmel (2013) explains that selecting qualitative sample size keeps on changing throughout the research process and it cannot be a solitary planning decision taken at the start of the research. However, following parameters were kept in view to select the target respondents:

Table 1: Parameters for Sampling

S.No	Parameters	Segregation							
1	Age (years)	Below 30	31-40	41-50	51 and above				
2	Education	Primary	Middle	Matric	HSSC	Higher			
3	Location	Rural		Far Flung					
4	Family System	Joint		Nuclear					
5	Nature of Absenteeism	Relocation within country	Foreign Relocation	Separation/any other					
6	Sample Size: 33								
7	Case Studies 3								
8	Total Population : 1200 ¹								

3.5 Socio economic censuses

Socio-economic survey was conducted in the locale to collect basic information about the locale. Rehara, District Poonch is a small village near Rawalakot has population of over 1200 people. The survey was conducted to collect information on following traits:

Name, Address, number of members living in one house, number of children, family structure, level of education, caste, housing pattern, income level, animal holding, land holding, electricity, water supply etc. Out of total population of 1200 individuals and almost 150 households, socio economic census form was filled from 50 households.

3.6 In-depth interviews

Interview guide was prepared according to the statement of problem, objectives and significance of study. While preparing interview guide each and every aspect of study was covered and well addressed. In depth Interviews (unstructured and semi structured) from respondents were conducted in the locale for collection of information according to the guide. The researcher along key informants had very good rapport in the field therefore it was not difficult to conduct the interviews. Respondents were called in the morning to schedule the interview on available time of respondents. Most of the

¹ Union Council Rehara, District Poonch, AJK

interviews were conducted during 11.00 am to 3.00 pm as this was the time when respondents were free from their housekeeping and other activities. Interview started with an informal introduction from key informants. The respondents were very cooperatives and they openly discussed their issues and problems. The researcher probed the questions according to the guide. Some of the respondents were so much responsive that it took almost whole day to conduct an interview. 33 in-depth interviews were conducted during the field work. As according to sampling, it was planned to conduct 50 interviews, however data repetition started and data collection was stopped after completing 33 interviews.

3.7 Case studies

"The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena" according to Yin (2003a) because "the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events," In such a setting, a case study would be an explanatory one (ibid.). Yin's (2003a) the information is collected through case studies of the target women as personal stories reflect social changes, values and cultural practices. Objectives of eliciting case studies is to understand in depth community life as it is lived by the women in locale and to understand prevailing cultural values related to the topic. Three case studies were prepared during the field work.

During field work few points were addressed to collect the exact information. Verbatim were used during the course of study. Activities were described in the order in which they occur. Descriptions of questions and probing were provided without inferring meaning to record the original responses. Relevant background information were included to situate the events in which researcher participated. Personal thoughts and assumptions will be kept aside from what actually be observed. Exact date, time, place, and names will be recorded on each set of notes

The hypothesis for the study is level of husband relocation and absenteeism in the locale has increased many folds. Due to this husband absenteeism, women behind has been facing lot of social and cultural issues and challenges. There is strong cultural impact on family structure due to husband absenteeism. Previously role of women in family and society was different but due to this rising issue role of women in family and society has been changing in the absence of husband who was generally head of the family.

3.8 Audio recordings

Heath (2011) explains the importance of audio recordings that provide astonishing openings for field research. It provides properties that ethnographical research actually needs while capturing events in their natural flow.

Knoblauch et al (2006) explains that audio and video recording are natural and accurate data. They can be used multiple times to review the findings and can be used as source of information for others as well. They also bring trustworthiness and reliability in qualitative research. The researcher used audio recordings to record the original responses from the respondents. All the data and responses were recorded and archived. They helped the researcher to compile the results and write the report in better way.

During the field work audio recordings were made and respondents were informed about audio recordings. Respondents did not have any objections on recording the conversations as the purpose of the audio recording was explained to the respondents prior to the interview.

3.9 Secondary sources

Different secondary sources were used to collect the data for the research including desktop research, Government departments of AJK, local people and several published reports. Literature review and research methodology were completed using desktop research. Statistics were collected from Tourism Department of AJK, health department, education department, union councils and district government of Rawalakot. References has been used were required to keep the originality of data.

4. AREA PROFILE

This chapter explains the detailed information about the locale. The locale of the study was District Poonch, AJK. It is one of the eight districts of AJK. Its capital is Rawalakot. District Poonch have 3 sub-divisions i.e. Abbaspur, Rawalakot and Hajira. There is one tehsil namely Thorar. The District has 26 union councils and two town-committees namely Abbaspur and Hajira. Rawalakot city has one municipal committee. District is divided into 4 legislative assembly constituencies. Deputy Commissioner heads the district administration taking care of administrative functions of the nation building.

District Poonch spreads over 855 square Kilometer with an inhabitant of more than 573,000 people in 53694 housing units widely spread 87.5% in rural areas which is 87.5% of total. Rawalakot is famous with the name of pearl valley situated in the district, 1615 meters high from the sea level. Its grassy hills and attractive flowers including many varieties of Roses attract the tourists in summer. Tourism industry is growing in the District Kot Muttay Khan, Banjosa, Koian, Ghori Maar & Toli Pir are some of the famous places.

4.1 Population

District Poonch has a population of over 573,000 individuals having 2.24% average annual growth rate. Almost 87% populations live in rural areas of District. Average Household size 6-7 person in Rural and 8.00 persons in urban areas. According to report "The Impact of Conflict on Young People in Azad Jammu and Kashmir by Waqas Ali" almost 25000 persons went abroad for employment. It can be estimated that more than 80% household has one or two person away from the district for the purpose of employment. The village where research was conducted, out of 150 households almost every household is away from the village for the sake of financial and economic reasons. Table below shows some of the statistics:

Table 2: Population of District

S.No	Description	Number
1.	Total Population	573000
2.	Housing Units	54000
3.	Average House Hold Size	7-8 Persons
4.	Total Foreign Immigrants	40000 (Estimated) ²
5.	Population of Village Rehara	1200
6.	Housing Unit of Village Rehara	150
7.	Husband Absenteeism in Village Rehara	120

4.2 Infrastructure facilities

District Poonch is hilly train similar to other areas of AJK. It had infrastructure and other facilities managed and governed by Government of AJK. Earthquake of 7.6 Richter scale on October 08, 2005 jolted the whole country, specifically AJK, northern areas of KPK, and Federal Capital including district Poonch. This problem increased many fold due to heavy rainfall, snow fall and landslide, access to remote villages were clogged. Most the infrastructure, houses, lifelines of the District were destroyed. Although ERRA and other Govt organizations improved the infrastructure in the district however effects still remained halted the local development. Heavy landslides and weather conditions are one of the causes of low economic development in District and particularly in Village Rehara contributing towards husband absenteeism.

4.2.1 Roads and other facilities

Rawalakot which is the capital of District Poonch is about 120 km (75 mi) from the Country Capital, Islamabad. The city is connected with Islamabad and Rawalpindi through Tain roads via Kotli Satiyan and Kahuta and directly connected through Goyain Nala Road. A road from Sudhnuti also connects the city to Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The city is connected to Bagh and Muzaffarabad through Jalooth-Paniola raod. Ghazi-i-Millat road though Azad Pattan connects Rawalakot to Islamabad/Rawalpindi. Rawalakot city has Airport which is nonoperational in these days.

² These statistics are only applicable to those who travelled on a working visa through the emigration department. Those travelling on student or visit visas are not included

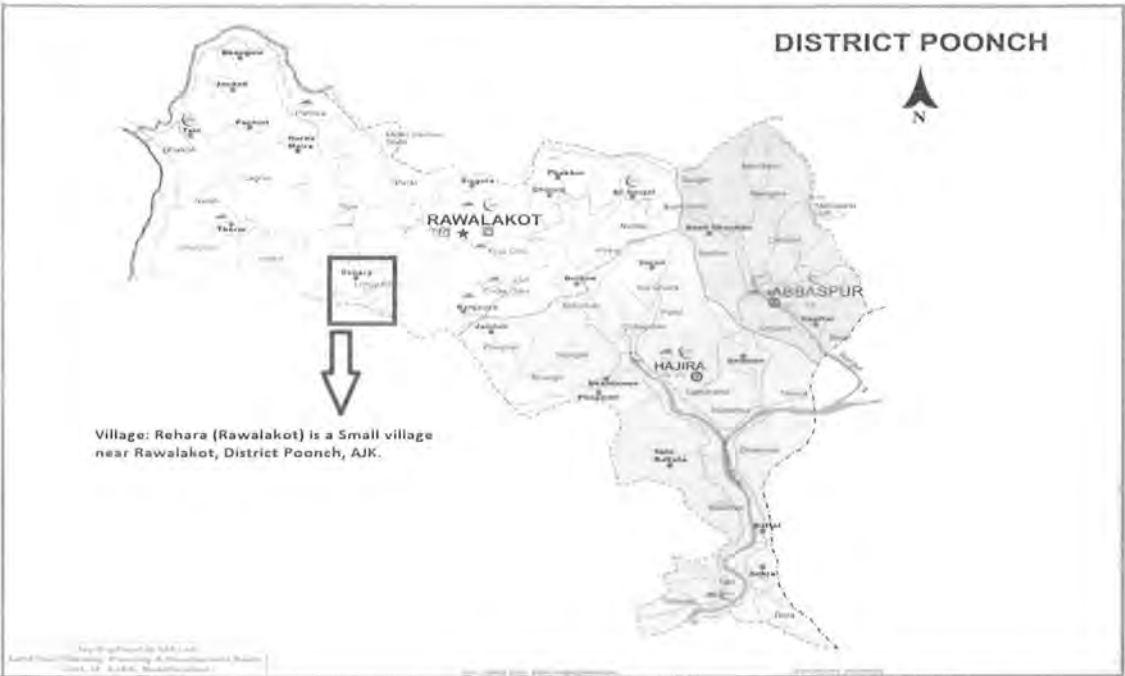
³There were a total of 2264 km of roads in district Poonch/Rawalakot city with a following break up according to statistics in 2005:

- 1- 1066 km of metal Roads
- 2- 1198 km of fair weather roads.

4.2.2 Access to the village – Rehara

Rehara is small village located south of the district capital Rawalakot. It is almost 15 KM away from Rawalakot. Local transport is available during day time for movement of people however quality and frequency of transport availability is low. Movement of people is restricted due to non-availability of transport during snow, rain and night times.

Figure 1: Map of Rehara, District Poonch



⁴ (Source: AJK Official Web site)

⁵ Azad Jammu & Kashmir, at a Glance 2013
⁶ Image Sources: AJK Official Website

Figure 2: Rehara Bazar, District Poonch, AJK



(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 27 August 2015)

4.2.3 Communication and power

Special communication organization (SCO) is providing up-to-date IT and Telecom facilities throughout the district. As per statistics provided by SCO there were 9700 telephone connections, and 17 telephone exchanges providing facility in almost all major towns. Cellular phone and internet facility is also available throughout the district.⁵ The District also has postal services facility with one head post office along with 24 sub post offices and branches.

Water supply scheme is also provided to 70% of the population in major cities and 50 % to rural population through piped water supply.⁶ Electricity Department of AJK provides electricity in the district through a distribution network linked with Pakistan's national grid system. Almost 100% of the district area has electricity as the source of lighting. According to report "AJK at a Glance 2013" there were total 72173 electric

⁵ SCO Muzaffarabad, AJK

⁶ Source: Office of the Dy. General Post Sector Head quarter AJ&K, MZD

connections in the district having 66000 domestic, 6200 connections for commercial and industrial purposes.⁷

4.2.4 Health and medical facilities

District has a number of health facilities available and easily accessible for the people; however, these facilities are not up to standards. Village Rehara has a small dispensary providing basic health facilities and it is managed by Health Department AJK. As this dispensary is located in the village therefore it is easily assessable for the women. Following are number of Public health facilities at District Poonch, AJK: ⁸

Table 3: Medical Facilities at District Poonch

S.No	Type	No of Facilities	No of Beds
1	THQ	1	60
2	CMH	1	50
3	RHCs	6	60
4	BHUs	24	48
5	Govt Dispensaries	1	-
6	MCH Center	32	-
7	Sub Heath Centers	42	-

⁷ Source: Power Development Organization, Muzaffarabad

⁸ Source: HMIS Cell, DHO Office AJK

Figure 3: A view of Dispensary, Rehara, Poonch, AJK



(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 27 August 2015)

4.3 Demographics

Demography of the District Poonch explains household information, language of the local people, health and education facilities, climatic conditions, casts and ethnic groups, religious affiliations, economic and livelihood conditions, social life, dress patterns etc.

4.3.1 Language

District Poonch is tranquil of diverse communities. People of District speak different languages. Mostly people living in District Poonch speak Pahari and Urdu. Bakerwals are nomadic tribes. Gujjars and Bakerwals speak Gojri whereas rest of the population (excluding Kashmiris) speaks Pahari. Pahari is considered to be the mother tongue in the District.

4.3.2 Education

The literacy rate in the district is 67.22% comprising 72% for urban and 66% for rural areas. Female has low literacy rate which is 54% compared to the literacy rate among

men which is 80%. Alif Ailaan provides the ranking for education in all districts of Pakistan. According to District Education Rankings 2015, District Poonch ranks at 38 out of 148 districts in terms of education with 693 schools in the district along with the 22 collages at graduate and post graduate level. There is one university in District named as University of Poonch in Rawalakot providing education to almost 3000 students in seven different fields. Following table shows the education facility in the district (Alif Ailaan, District Ranking 2015).

Table 4: Education Facilities in District Poonch

S.No	Level	Number
1.	Mosque/Madrassas	131
2.	Primary	426
3.	Middle	148
4.	Higher Secondary	119
5.	Intermediate Colleges	14
6.	Degree Colleges	6
7.	Post Graduate Colleges	2
8.	University	1 ⁹

There is low foreign direct investment in AJK however local people have made lot of investment in schooling systems in AJK as well as District Poonch. This investment not only provides job opportunities to the local people but also provide standard education systems for their children. Sources from AJK Education department explained that there are 1157 private school systems in three districts namely Poonch, Muzaffarabad and Mirpur. Village Rehara has one Government higher secondary school for boys and one Government higher secondary school for girls. There is also one private school providing education facility unto middle level.

⁹ PND Department AJK

Figure 4: A view of Boys Higher Secondary School Rehara, Poonch, AJK



(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 28 August 2015)

4.3.3 Climatic condition

District Poonch has mild to warm temperatures during the seasons of spring and autumn however humid temperatures during summer. It has cold to snowy weather during the winter season. The temperature may rise up to 38 °C during the mid-summer and may drops below -3 °C during the winter season. Generally, snow fall occurs in the mid of winter while heavy rains during the month of July and August in monsoon season. Topographies are subtropical highland climate due to high altitude (Pakistan Metrological Department, 2015).

4.3.4 Family structures and marriage patterns

People in District Poonch mainly live in joint family systems. However, in urban and semi urban areas people are having nuclear family systems. Patriarchy prevails in the district. People are having strong affiliations with the caste systems. Trends have been changing from old customs to modernized systems. Elderly people used to follow the customs of marrying their children with in their own caste. Now-a-days people are having bit flexible attitude toward this custom. However, there are families who still follow these practices strictly. Monogamy is practiced and preferred in the district.

4.3.5 Casts and other ethnic groups

Total population of 573,000 individuals in the district includes many cast systems. Sadozai, Sudhans, Awans, Rajpoot, Khawajgan (Mir, Butt), Abbasis, Kianis, Sheikh's, Syeds and many others are major casts in the District. Significant numbers of people who serve in Govt Sector from other regions live in Rawalakot city. (City Population, AJK). Residents of village Rehara mainly belong to Sudhan family. There are other casts like Mughals and Qureshi as well in the village.

4.3.6 Religious affiliations

In District Poonch, among total population of 573,000 almost 100% population is Muslims. Masques and Graveyards are present in almost every town and villages. The registered number of mosques is 131. People are considered to be strong in their religious affiliations. There is just little number of people who belong to Christianity. In village Rehara 100% population is Muslims.

4.3.7 Land ownership, crops and irrigation

District Poonch has hilly terrain and area under cultivation is around 51214 acres. About 85% households have very small land holdings between 1-2 acres. Mostly crops like Maize, Wheat & Rice are major crops. Minor crops include Pulses (red kidney beans), Grams, Oil-seeds and Vegetables. Pears, Apple, Walnuts and Apricot are major fruits produced in area. Women have equal part in managing the land and crops irrigation compared to the men. However, women who face husband absenteeism generally manage the land and crops related matters.

4.3.8 Economic conditions and medium of livelihood

On an average in District Poonch, animal holdings of each house holds consist of 3 heads and 2 heads for cattle/buffalos. Land and animal holdings are small in the district. Small pieces of cultivated land and livestock generate income ranges between 30-40% of the total household earnings. Other sources of income are tourism, businesses, services, and remittances received by the families living in other cities or abroad. Tourism industry is growing in the District whoever reduction in agriculture productivity has harmfully affected the traditional lifestyle and per capita income of the rural households living in the district. Women in the locale take care of their animals.

It is a medium of livelihood for rural community. Following picture explains the rural household activity of a woman.

Figure 5: Rural Household Activity in District Poonch, AJK



(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 29 October 2015)

Figure 6: Household Activity of Women in Village Rehara, District Poonch, AJK



(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 12 October 2015)

4.3.9 Social life, events, dress and food patterns

People living hilly areas are physically strong as adapted to tough climatic and geographical areas. People of District Poonch share the similar traits as hard-working and physically strong. In surrounding areas and villages people cultivate their own vegetables and food. Famous or favorite foods are saag with makai, gushtabey, mutton etc. They generally speak Pahari and Hindku. In village's people live on basis of joint family system but in city people are maintaining standard of living by acquiring all basic necessities of life. Clothing in District Poonch depends upon seasonal and climate changes. During winter season heavy woolens, shawls and woolen caps are used due to heavy snow falls and chilling cold. People in rural areas usually burn woods to in houses (angheeti) to keep their houses warm in winter. It is pertinent to mention here that events like marriages and birthdays are celebrated when breadwinners of the family returns to their home. Dress and food patters are not disturbed by husband absenteeism.

4.3.10 Household information

Similar to other Districts of AJ&K, generally male members of the family are owners of the houses. According to 1998 census there are 53694 housing units in the district. These housing units are further divided into rural (46976, 87.49%) and urban (6718, 12.51%). The ownership ratio among male and female is relatively high in rural areas: i.e. 98.26% as against 93.38% in urban areas. Modern house designs are being constructed in towns like Rawalakot. Generally, houses are constructed in double stories with the top floor build by tin to get protection from severe weather conditions; i.e. Rain and snow fall. In rural areas both Kacha and Pakka houses are constructed. Mud houses are constructed for animals and storage of their graze.

Figure 7: Housing Pattern in District Poonch, AJ&K

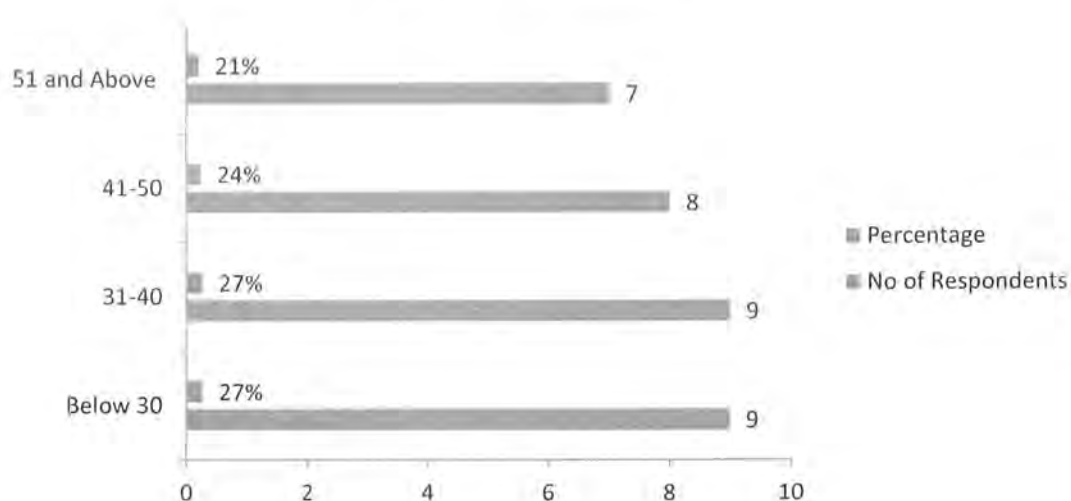


(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 12 October 2015)

5. HUSBAND ABSENTEEISM

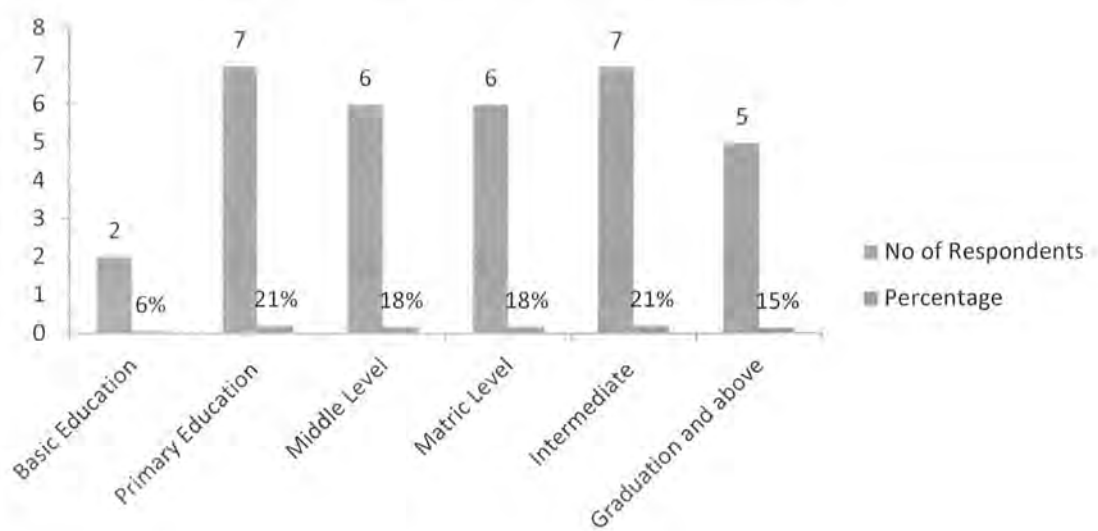
This chapter explains the results and responses extracted from different interviews related to husband absenteeism during the field work. The quantitative data analysis has been done through MS Excel by using tables and graphs. Qualitative results were explained in the similar way as they were reported by the respondents. This chapter explains the perception of respondents about absenteeism in general and husband absenteeism in particular. It also explains insights of gender roles distribution in village Rehara, District Poonch. While focusing on the physical movement of husband, changing roles and fulfilling the new responsibilities by rural women of village Rehara is presented. Similar to other villages, Rehara is purely rural area with low population density and wide spread houses. 100 % respondents were from rural area. One of the parameter in analytical framework was age of the respondents. It was found during the research that different age cohort has different understanding of husband absenteeism. Following table shows respondent's age. There were 33 respondents in this research. 27% respondents were falling in 20-30 years of age similar to age group of 31-40 years. 24% respondents were between 40-50 years.

Figure 8: Respondent's Age



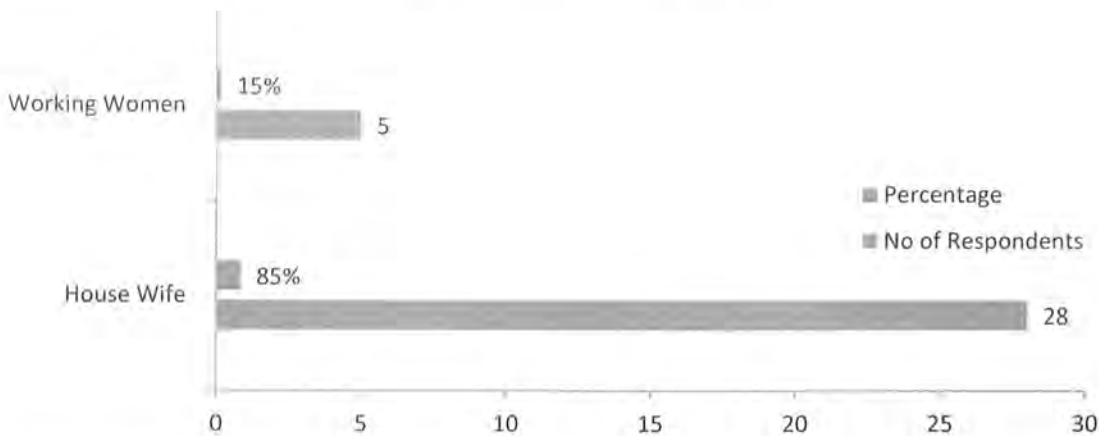
The next factor for special consideration was education as it plays a key role in the family and society. It was observed that educated women have more chances to handle the complex social issues as compared to the un-educated women. Following table explains the level of education of the respondents from Village Rehara, District Poonch.

Figure 9: Respondents' Level of Education



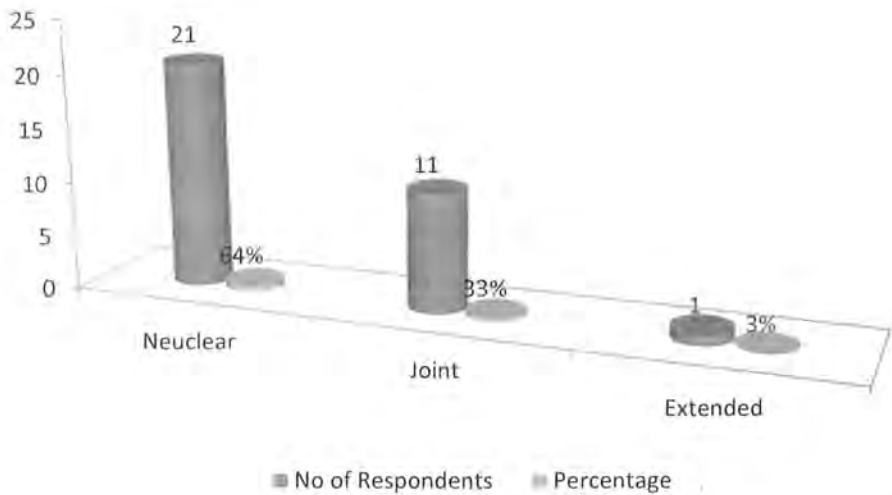
Next factor discussed was occupation of the respondents. Village Rehara is situated almost 15 kilometers from district capital, Rawalakot. Village has very limited employment opportunities particularly for women. From the sample, 4 out of 5 educated working women are associated with teaching profession. Following figure explain the segregation among working women and house wives. 15% women are working ladies out of 33 respondents.

Figure 10: Respondents' Occupation



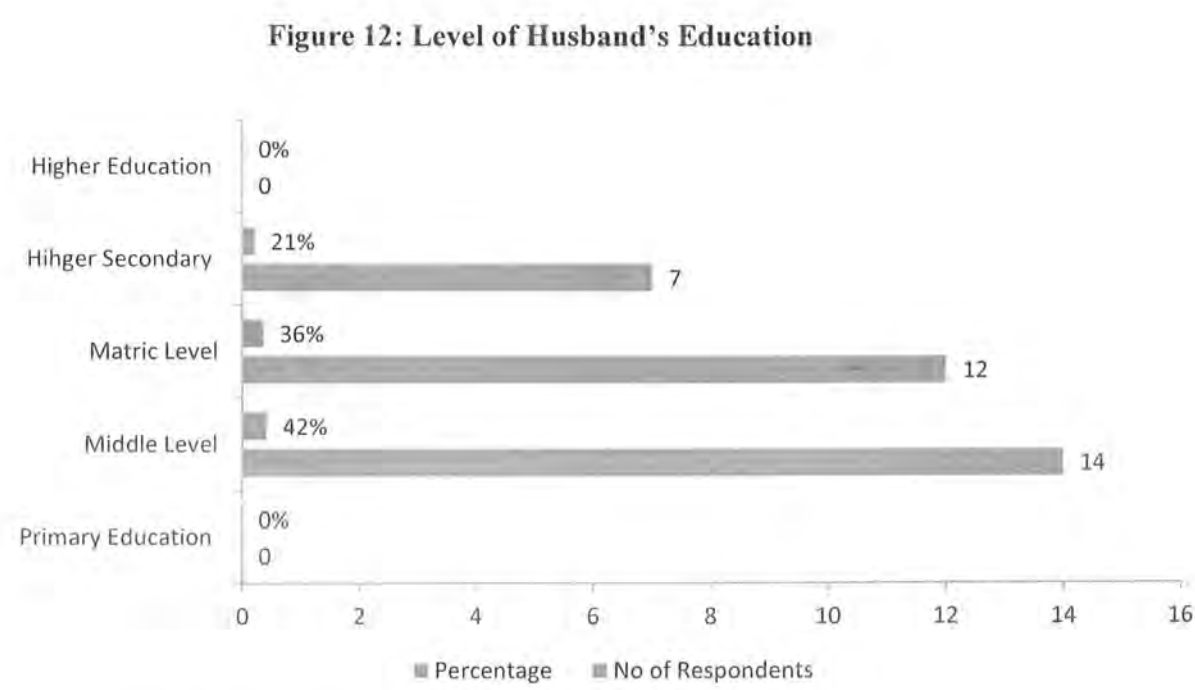
As the family structure has a direct influence on behavioral patterns, therefore the family structure was also studied. The research identifies the nature of issues that women face is directly linked with the family structure. Family structures have its positive impacts of women while living in joint or extended family systems, issues and impact on women are different in case of nuclear family structure. Following figure explains the nature of family structure among respondents.

Figure 11: Respondents' Family Structure



During the course of study there were few factors which came under consideration and stood one of the important factors playing key role in empowering the women status. Respondents from village Rehara face higher level of absenteeism as male education

ratio is low. Due to non-availability of better education systems, mostly males are not well educated therefore they get low level jobs at destination place. They are unable to keep their families with them and bound to leave them behind. Monetary responsibilities to male family members may possibly limit their further education and career progress. They prefer to earn their living after completing their higher secondary education for hand holding and to generate income for their families. Following figure explains the level of education of absentees.



5.1 Perception about absenteeism

The researcher queried about the understanding of absenteeism from the respondents and the term was explained in their local language. 30 out of 33 respondents were unaware of this term. However mostly women responded on the question about husband absenteeism. Mostly women did not answer the question. Some of the women had some vague ideas, and some respondents have clear understanding about absenteeism and husband absenteeism. Following table explains the concept as a known phenomenon for women in District Poonch.

Table 5: Understanding about Husband Absenteeism

S.No	Terms	%age
1	No Understanding about Absenteeism	90
2	Clear/Partial Understanding about Absenteeism	10

Results from this research conferred that relationships play pivotal role in life of both male and females. In other words, this lays the foundations of society norms and ideologies throughout the mankind history. Both male and females are the integral part of the relationships. The researcher queried from respondent that when her husband is away from home then who else fulfill the partial responsibilities of husband. The women who lived in joint family system responded that brother in law generally takes care of the maximum matters related to family and children. However, few respondents replied that they rely on the father-in-law or mother-in-law. Some respondents had their own family member i.e.; brother/father who generally support them when their husband is away from home. Table below explains the responses about family support during husband absenteeism.

Table 6: Support from Family during Husband Absenteeism

S.No	Terms	%age
1	Support from In-Laws	50
2	Support from her own family	20
3	Independents	30

Responding to the question that “how do you feel during husband absenteeism”? when explored, then the different gurgles of emotional feelings and attachments were the erupted. 27 out of 33 respondents had emotional attachment with their responses. Women responded that they had faced a lot of problems and they feel sad and lonely however her husband is away because he wants his wife and family to have comfortable life. He is the breadwinner of the family and having major responsibility. Most of the women who responded this question became emotional while answering. Affection and closeness were shown by the women with their husband. One of the respondents replied in different way:

"Majboori ma jaty han Kon sa shok se jaty han"

Her husband is away as he is responsible to earn living for himself and the whole family and for family betterment. He is not away because of his own needs. One respondent was highly emotional about her relationship. Her cooperation to her husband was tremendous; she was morally supporting her husband. Her response was highly emotional;

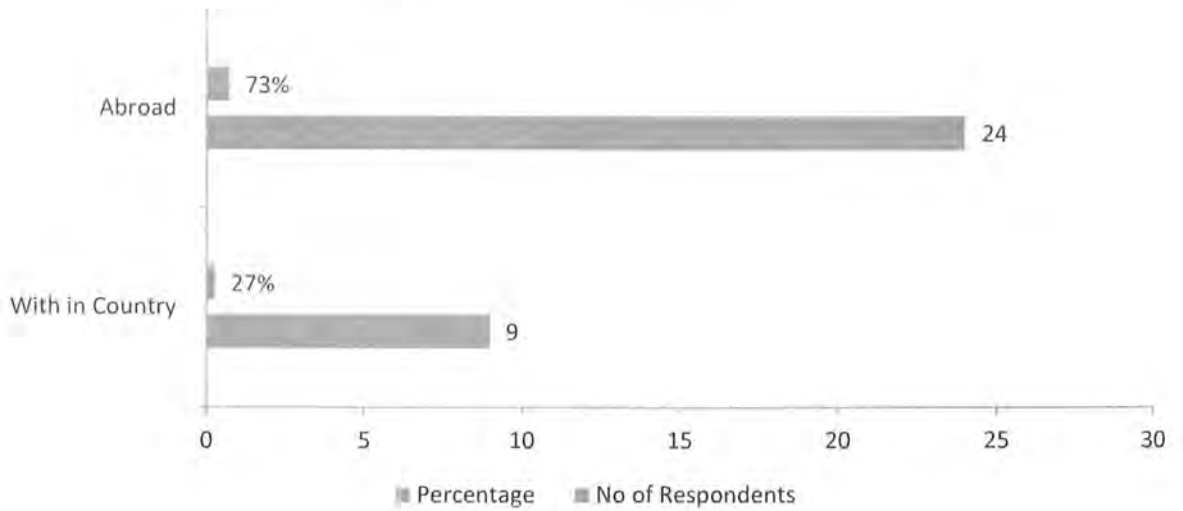
*"Kon Keha ha mery husband wo absent han wo her time
mery pas han, ma unko apny ass pass hi dekhti hon"*

She responded that my husband is physically away from me but he is always with me spiritually and I feel him with me every time. As the respondents not only feel the emotional attachment in their relationships but also they show their affection and support in expression.

5.2 Husband absenteeism

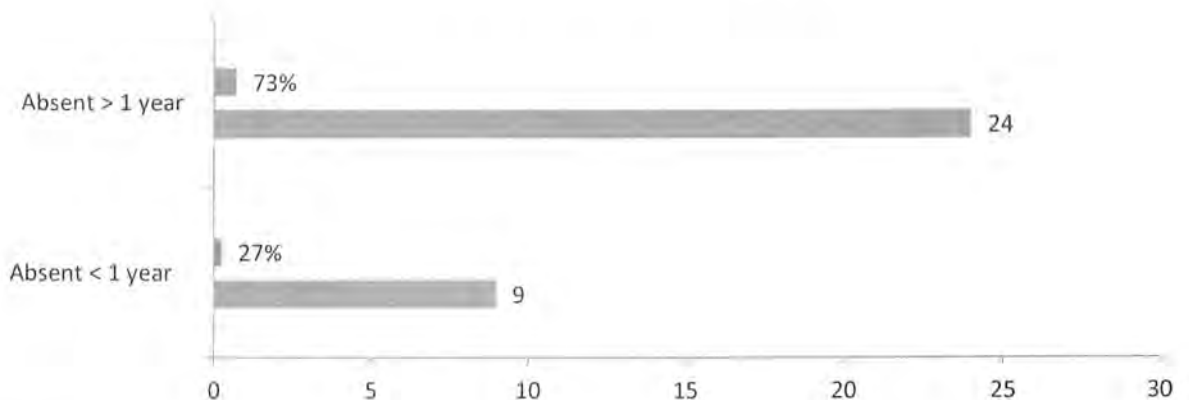
The locale of the research was District Poonch, AJK. District terrain is hilly and with low economic activities in the district. Similar to traditional role, men are responsible to struggle to find livelihood for their family, whilst women generally took on dual assignments they look after the children, prepare the food and taking care of family matters and look after the animals when their husband is away from home. People fetch their livings from urban areas, metropolitan cities and other countries. Following table shows that out of 33 respondents 24 husbands out of 33 were living abroad (UK, Dubai, Saudi Arabia etc.) and others were in major cities like Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi to earn their livelihood;

Figure 13: Husband Location



Magnitude of husband absenteeism is on higher side, 24 out of 33 respondents told that their husband remains out of home on yearly basis. Husbands of 9 respondents were absent on monthly basis. Some were absent for more than 2-3 years. Most of them have migrated to KSA, UAE, UK. Following figure explains some of the statistics about magnitude and duration:

Figure 14: Magnitude of Husband Absenteeism



Results related to husband's absenteeism and their economic gain after migration show devastating situation. It represents brain drain and loss of capable human and social capital which has affected socio-economic development in the locale. The diaspora has resulted into financial gains but economic activity has not geared up resulting into movement of people from the area as a continuous process.

Jakimovski & Matilov (2002) explained in their survey conducted in 2001 that when women in rural areas were asked to prioritize their major problems, the results were alarming as non-availability of requisite infrastructure facilities, lack of employment opportunities for their husband were top of the problems in the lists. Similar issues were faced by the rural women in the locale. They have limited employment opportunities therefore their husbands seek their employment in major cities. 80% of respondents expressed that their husbands have gone to seek job, 20% told that their husband have their own business there. Table below explains the facts about purpose of movement and their financial gains:

Table 7: Purpose and Nature of Movement

S.No	Purpose of Movement	%age
1	Job	80%
2	Business	20%
	Economic and Financial Gain	100 %

However sentimental and emotional issues along with the attachment with the financial gains from interviews and discussion were shown by the respondents. 40% of respondents told that their husband may visit home only on special occasions, in any emergency like death of their near ones, they can easily join us. 60% were of the view that their husbands hardly get a leave on special occasions. Husbands who can visit their home frequently, they have their own business. One of the respondents expressed the views that her husband remained away for long time even on Eid and special occasions throughout the course of his job. He used to visit his home for just two or three days. 19 years of absenteeism with some visits of two to three days affected the life of respondent as well as her husband and other family members. She had been handling all the issues and responsibilities by her own.

*“Shadi k bad hum sirf kuch mahiny sath rahy lakin unko
kam k liay jana tha wo chaly gae kam k liay aur isi tarah
zindgi guzar di, kabhi kabhi aty thy. Bachy thay wohi*

sari sochon ka mehwar thay. Usi aulad k liay koshish

ker rahy thy mery husband bhi aur ma bhi"

"We remained together for few months after marriage, we had children and then my husband had his work in other city. He went away and I kept on living with my in-laws. He was away to earn living for me and my sun. Days and night went on and after years he came back permanently. He used to visit home for two or three days in between."

5.3 Changing gender roles and their implication

Gender roles play key roles in the formulation of family norms in societies. Generally, in rural society women have limited decision making power. Males do have the responsibility to act as breadwinner and fulfill the financial and economic needs of the family. Women are characterized to take care of children and housekeeping work. The fundamental concern about poverty is generally fulfilled by males' members of society in the locale. "What were the husband responsibilities when he was at home"? When respondents replied on the probe they were of the view that when he was at home, he used to handle all matters related to financial and family related issues. He was taking care of dealing all the matters related to constructions and maintenance of house, buying and selling of cattle and animals, grocery and other household items. He used to show our family presence in social and societal events like deaths and marriages in the family and those of neighborhood, matters related to land and cultivation. The most important responsibility of children education was fulfilled by the husband. Mobility and security was not the issue for me during his presence. 25 out of 33 respondents have similar responses about the question.

When researcher asked that when he left which are the different duties/responsibilities of husband women, 28 out of 33 women replied that as of rural area where population densities are low, personal and belonging's security and mobility are major concern to most of the women. Other issues related to children education, family and society related matters. Out of 33 respondents almost all of the respondents replied that after their husband become absent from the locale, they have to take care of dealing all the matters related to housekeeping, children education, constructions and maintenance of house, buying and selling of cattle and animals, grocery and other household items. Now 32 out of 33 women had to fulfill the social and society obligations by their own.

Mobility and security was one of the major issues. All responsibilities including her obligations were transferred to the women or other family members. 20 out of 33 respondents expressed that in the absence of their husbands their brother in laws are fulfilling some of those responsibilities. 13 respondents believed that they are solely responsible for all those tasks that were initially fulfilled by their husbands.

While asking about how many times your husband perform the different tasks while at home (during presence), 30% of women communicated that their husband do not perform the tasks with responsibility as they stay here for a short time and they behave like guest, they take less interest in household matters, if we ask about something they use to say do as you think right. 70% of the respondents told that when their husband visit their homes, they try to perform all the tasks, they have their targets for the period they stay at home, they plan and work according to the planning. They perform the tasks while keeping in mind that they may not be present for the rest of the year.

5.4 Kinship chart of changing responsibilities

Following charts explain about kinship and responsibilities of deferent members of family before husband absenteeism and after husband absenteeism.

Figure 15: Responsibilities before and after Husband Absenteeism in Joint Families

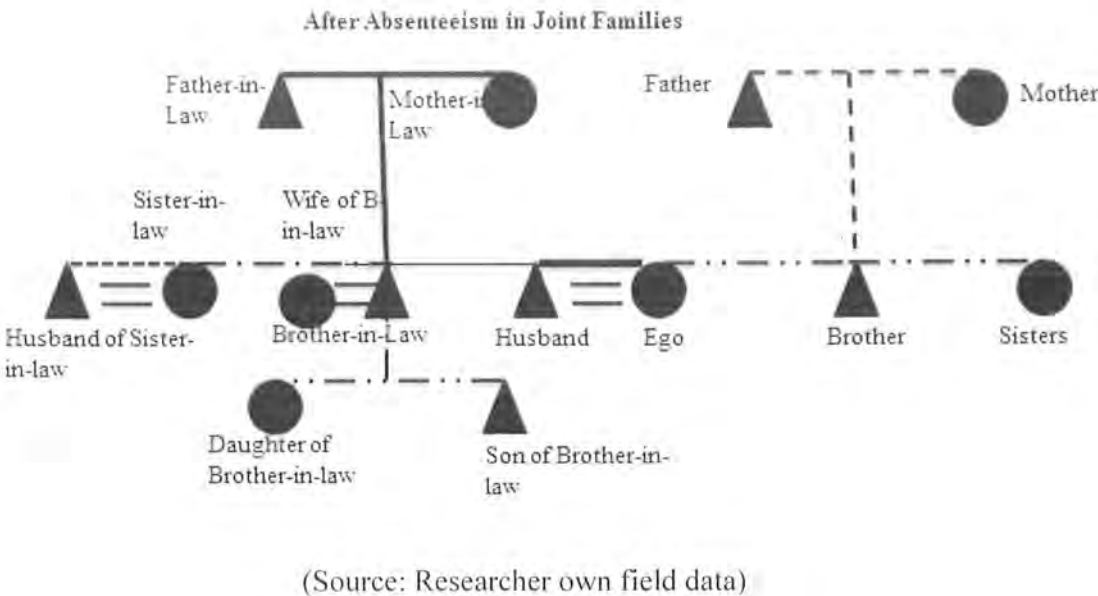
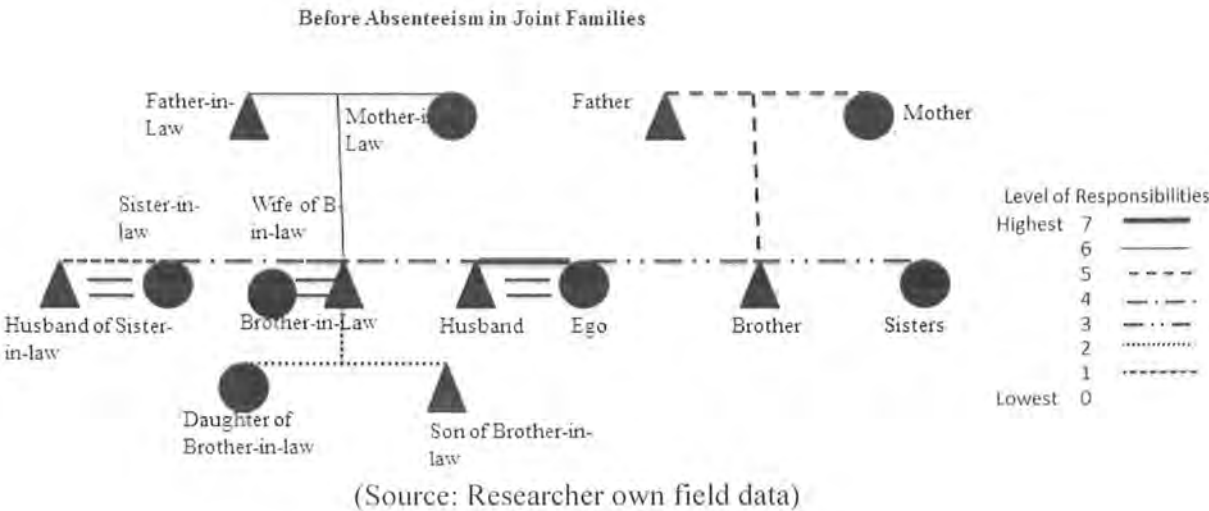
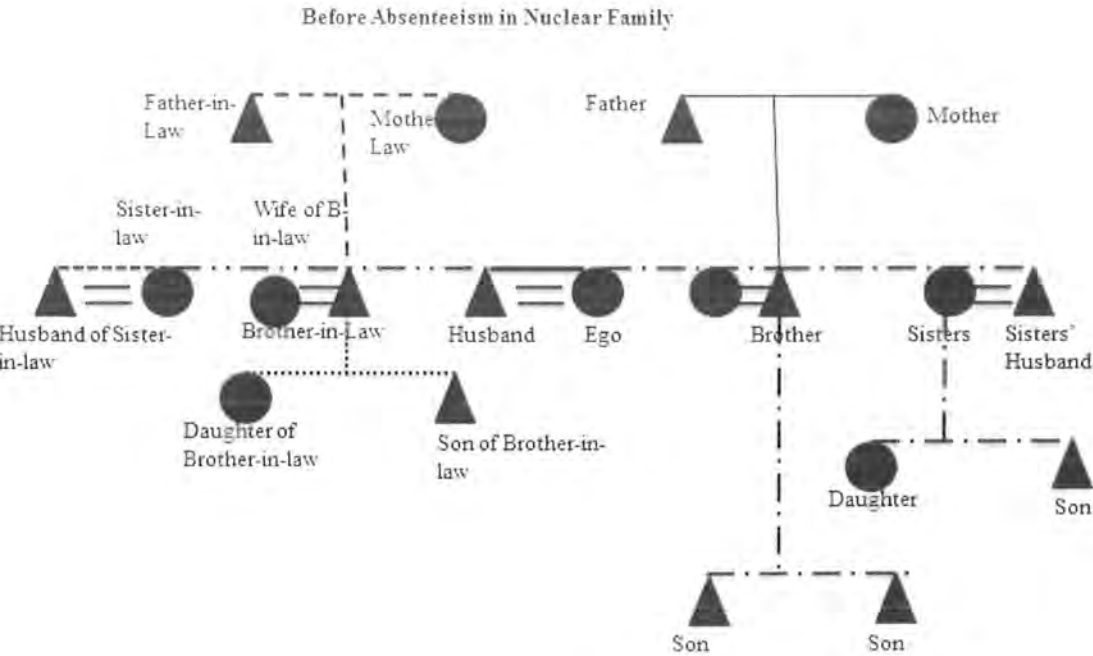
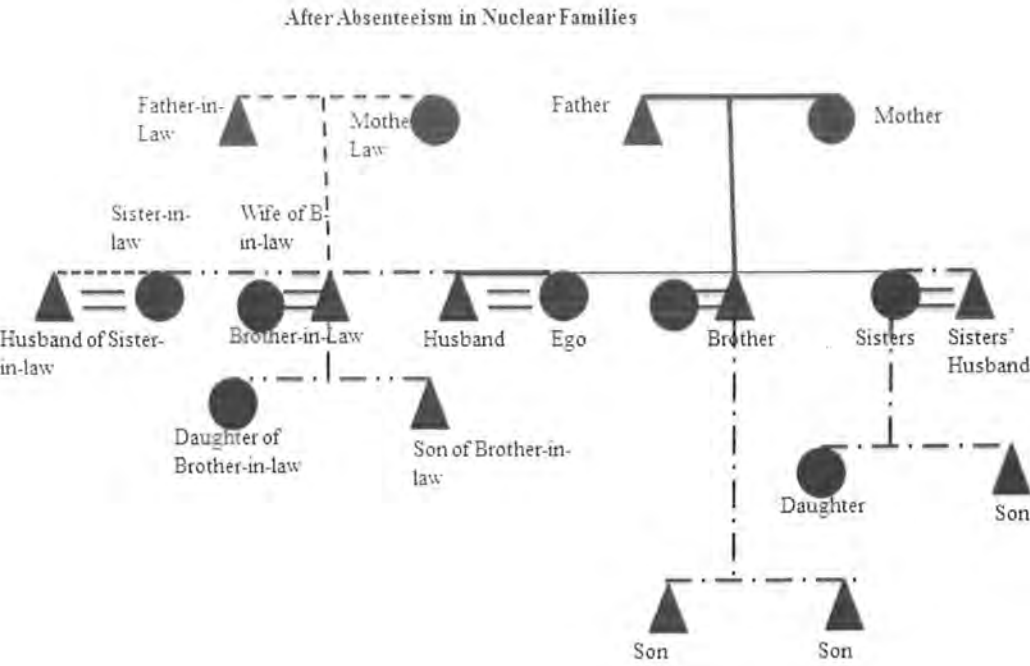


Figure 16: Responsibilities before and after Husband Absenteeism in Nuclear Family



(Source: Researcher own data)



(Source: Researcher own data)

6. CHANGING ROLE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

In this chapter concepts and responses received during field work related to issues and challenges faced by the women, changing role and women empowerment in locale has been explained. Research results into diverse dogmas, ethics, ways of life and tenets characterized by life experiences of women in the locale. Women in the village Rehara, District Poonch who face husband absenteeism have developed their own ways to address the issues. Women social networks have supported them to achieve the strength to cope with the challenges associated with the new role. Availability of basic facilities like water supply scheme, schools for children, availability of food items, proximity of neighborhood, electricity, public transport and health facilities are of key importance along with strength of social capital help them to fulfill the women's responsibilities. Women, who faced husband absenteeism, welcome their new roles and responsibilities with the economic strength and power of decision making leading toward women empowerment. On the other hand, increased responsibility has restricted the women to household activities leading toward less personal development. Women success and women empowerment has taken to the gender based violence due to loss of self-esteem of male head of the family in rural society.

6.1 Traditional to contemporary role

Husband absenteeism proved to be blessing in disguise, when man left home in search of livelihood of himself and for the family left behind, all of his responsibilities now shifted to the wives who have to do her own tasks as well as tasks of her husband. It has certain negative impact on women but it also gives some power to make decisions about family matters, related to children affairs, family and society related matters which signs the movement of traditional role to contemporary role resulting into women empowerment. Remittances received by the women made her financially independent and independent in making decisions. The case is same for women in village Rehara. 31 out of 33 women responded that their pattern of household spending changed after their husband moved to the other places. Despite of increased responsibilities, 80% women argued that they felt they can have time for their personal well-being. This movement helped them to grow strong financially and economically. They felt feelings of belongingness, self-worth and constructive self-identification. Above all 100% respondents felt when the responsibility was given to them along with the financial

independence, they were more confident to handle the situations and responsibilities in a better way.

Respondents have diverse views and responses about how many times their husband perform the different tasks while visiting home? 30% of women expressed that their husband does not perform the tasks with responsibility as they stay here for a short time and they behave like guests, generally they take less interest in household matters, if Women ask about something to do or acquire some guidance then they use to say do as you think right. Responses from different women showed very different experiences of such situations which results in diverse ways of family and society lives. 70% of the respondents voiced that when their husband come home they try to perform all the tasks, they have their targets for the period they stay at home, they plan and work accordingly to perform the tasks while keeping in mind that they may not be present for the rest of the year. Tasks and responsibilities of men and women are different significantly similar to the way they are completed.

There were differences in status and prestige within the different social structures between male and female decision making. Women while taking the major responsibilities perform decision making in their houses however decisions are supported by their other family members like brother-in-law and father-in-law and may be her brother or father, Children education or household decisions, husband support their women while staying away from home. 28 out of 33 respondents in village Rehara get support from their family members. Family structures play important role in decision making. Women living in joint or extended family systems have different dynamics of decision making compared to the women living in nuclear family systems. It was found from research that women living in joint or extended family systems have less decision making power.

The respondents take most of the errands of the economic and societal organization of the family and household weather related to productive or social tasks. Due to lack of knowledge and limitation on capabilities and learning environment in matrilineal and patrilineal households, women felt difficulty in handling the entire responsibilities single handed. Some of the respondents in village Rehara women's have less control, and authority over the economic decisions e.g. household matters, matters related to property ownership or those of children. Generally, in rural society like village Rehara

most of the time husband makes decision of all important aspects of life. When husband absenteeism occurs, the decision making power is shifted to his brother or father. Women still face difficulty to have decision making power. One of the respondent explained that she is less involved in decision making whether it is related to animal buying, selling or related to house construction/extension, even I cannot decide matters related to children education:

"Ma faisla nahi ker sakti, sari batain mery husband apny bhai k sath kerty han aur wo hi faisla karta ha meri khoahish thi k mery bachy achy school ma parhain laikin wo thora door tha is liay mery dewar ne kaha k nahi dakhil karana wahan. Muji ye faisla manana parha. Agar faisala kerny ki taqat mery pas hoti tu ma bachon ko usi school ma parhati"

In nuclear family systems, a woman facing husband absenteeism makes the decisions inspite of limited access to skills of family decision making. However social transformation of women role living in nuclear family system is accepted by society in village Rehara. 70% of the total respondents replied that their husband appreciated their decisions while 30% replied that they never get any appreciation no matter how hard they put their efforts to make any kind of decisions. Some of the respondents were of the view that type of activity in which decision is required is important. The matters related to other people are generally dealt by male members of society who help them to make the decisions.

6.1.1 Decision making

It is evident from the research that decision making power of women was influenced by various factors. These factors included family structure in which women are living, status of women, working or housewife, age of women, education of women and also the nature of decisions. This study shows that the majority of the women living in nuclear family system are dependent on their husbands for making decision about all household matters. 10 out of 33 women willingly accept the dominance of their husbands in making decisions of household, they are happy with their status as housewives for each matter either it is related to children or about herself she has to strive for permission of her husband. But this statement is not applicable to the women

who are well educated and financially independent. Educated women living in nuclear family are more independent in making decisions. The decision making was again confined to household chores, land issues are still handled by male person of the family either he is father in law or brother in law.

Society and family norms prevail in rural society. The woman living in joint family or in some cases in extended family, if working, she is more autonomous than non-working women. In most of the joint families if father in law is holding the key position, he makes all the decisions, if woman does something of her own desire even then she has to seek permission of father in law. Another scenario is observed in the locale, that in the absence of husband, if father in law is deceased, then the absentee husband would prefer his brothers to make the decisions about his family and would not allow her wife to make decisions.

In a household headed by a female whose husband was deceased, women had sought permission of mother-in-law for all matters. In such cases it is found that both daughter in law and mother in law have a very strong bonding. Grandmother not only support her daughter-in-law but also happily look after her grandchildren if their mother is a working lady. Time period spent with in laws also effects the decision making process. In case, a woman is newly married and facing husband absenteeism, she would be less autonomous in her decisions as compared to a women living in that house since ten years or more.

It was observed that in the locale of study, decisions about marriages of children are made by mutual consent of husband and wife, if they are living separate. In case father in law is alive though not living with them, his consent for those decisions is complementary.

6.1.2 Financial and economic autonomy

Majority of the women facing husband absenteeism had increased access to finance after the husband departure; they had the role in household financial management. Women living in nuclear families expressed that they get the opportunity to save money as every expense of the household were in their hand so they used that saved money to purchase new assets including furniture, making jewelry or other household items. Some women used this saved money when they were in a position to purchase a

property in nearby city. Thus, living in nuclear family results these women to gain more freedom in making decisions about their finance but women prefer to consult their husbands to take a decision about purchasing something which is expensive.

10 out of 33 respondents articulated that their husband's migration helped them in access to finance and have given them exposure of outside life. Now they are better able to make decisions regarding household and also can discuss the positive and negative impact of any major financial decision with their husband before the decision is made. This level of consultation is comparatively low in joint families. The nature of expenses on which the women uses remittances includes construction/maintenance of house, education of children, health, agricultural practices and loan payment, medical facilities, family and societal events like marriages and supporting the low income neighbors or family members.

6.1.3 Length of migration and decision-making

It was observed that the time frame of migration affects the decision making in household activities, if the husband had gone long before; women get more autonomy because of the disconnection of husband from family matters. She knows every good and bad about her family and community so, she is better able to make the decision as compared to her husband, and this creates no conflict among them because these decisions are consultative in nature. Time frame of absenteeism is directly proportionate to the women empowerment in household decisions.

The research showed that the women of migrant husbands gained more freedom of opinion at household, family and community, 20 out of 33 respondents agreed that their husband used poking in every matter of household and it raises conflicts among them. Now they got enough liberty to fulfill their household responsibilities. Women stated that her mobility is still controlled by her husband however she was allowed to go for shopping, children school, taking children to hospital, attending marriage ceremonies in the family, but again all that is allowed if she is accompanied by sister-in-law or mother-in-law. Decisions about the migration of men vary from family to family. 12 out of 33 were pressurized by their parent to go abroad and earn for family, 13 out of 33 were forced by their wives and sometimes that decision is purely their own and nobody even knows before their departure.

6.2 Challenges faced by women due to husband absenteeism.

Women in the locale face many issues while facing husband absenteeism. The researcher asked about problems due to husband absenteeism. Most of the women expressed that they are the sole care taker of their home, children and all family matters; her responsibility has increased to a very large extent, when my husband was at home she was less worried about these matters.

Majority of women do not face security issues due to family and society support. 22 out of 33 women stated that they did not face any security related issue, their husbands or they themselves never allowed any person other than family members to get into their household matters. So issues related security did not arise. While some women living in nuclear families were of the view that they have faced trouble because the in-laws lived far away from them and during the absence of their husbands, sometimes they were being harassed by some neighbors. It was observed that the women living in joint families, or having a male family member with them faced a very few security problems as compared to those living in nuclear family.

Children affairs related issues faced by the women living in locale were one of the major challenges. Majority of the women face very serious issues related to their children. 80% of women were of the view that they do not have control over their children especially the boys. Women on asking about the reasons they answered that boys have no fear of their mothers, they trick mothers. Women take it as an irrecoverable loss in the context of their children. Some of the respondents reported that fathers stay at home for a short time period, a month or two after 2-3 years. This leads the attitude of softness towards the children, and if they are watched by their fathers during their presence they knew it that the father would leave the home very soon and they will start their activities again. Absence of fathers had a very negative impact on the education of children. Children specially males had less inclination to the education as they were not well controlled by their mother. Women living in joint families especially in the presence of their father-in-law did not face serious issues, but in the absence of father-in-law, they faced issues related distribution of land and other financial assets.

Researcher asked that with whom they discuss these issues and get guidance for handling these problems. 40% of the respondents said that they discuss their problems

with their own parent family (mothers and sisters). 30% discuss with their husbands on telephone. 10% told that they did not discuss their problems with any one, they just try to solve them personally. 20% of respondents, and especially working women communicated that they discuss their problems with their female colleagues.

To the question, “how your husband/other family members helped you to cope with these issues?” The respondent replied in different ways. One of the respondent told that her husband used to ask her to be brave, responsible and mature because now she is all in all of her family. The respondent added that such kind of statements from her husband encouraged her to do those things which were likely to be difficult for her before; she added that her own brothers helped her a lot in the absence of her husband in constructing her home.

6.3 Social capital and women socialization

Social Capital is a process that empowers people to create synergy and deliberate upon the issues faced by them either in families or in societies. In particular perspective of women roles in family and society social capital plays a vital role. Women who face husband absenteeism are generally supported by the family and society. The researcher asked from the respondents that does society helps you on any issue keeping in view about your husband's absenteeism? Majority of the response was strongly positive when society support was questioned. A woman who was divorced and living with 5 children articulated that society was very helpful to her and her children. She expressed that her state of being alone is not taken as negative by the people of that Village Rehara. Mobility, security and other aspects related to social activities are supported by the family members and society elders. Acknowledgement and importance of knowledge of family elders is given due reputation. Family elders support women on several issues as it is supposed that they have wisdom on the basis of their life experiences. Moreover, she stated that people give her respect and she is freely performing her responsibility with confidence. She could not do that effectively without support from society. A very low rate of obstruction by the society in regard of women facing absenteeism has appeared.

28 out of 33 respondents felt empowered when they were asked that are you gaining your confidence while handling all responsibilities. There was a slight difference in opinion about confidence. Majority of women living in joint family system were of the

view that they feel as normal when we talk about confidence, there is no such difference, in fact they feel more confident in the presence of their husbands, now their works has been done by their brothers in law. 10 out of 33 women who all live in nuclear family articulated that they are more confident in the absence of their husband. As they have more responsibilities now, they feel that they may do everything by themselves. Now they attend every event in society and family. This new role as they feel has made them more confident from fragile nature.

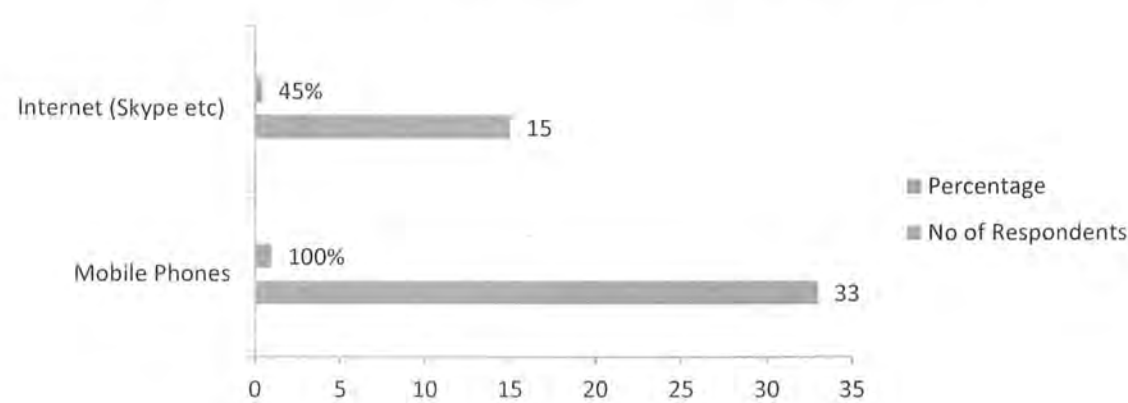
Some of the respondent stated about do they want their husband to come back and take his responsibilities or you are happy with all new roles. 5 out of 33 respondents were in favor of the opinion that their husband should come back and live with them. Different responses come across, those women whose husbands are out of country and having good financial gains were satisfied with their absence, keeping in view of their financial position for the family and children. While women whose husband are in army or within the country, they want their husbands to get retired soon and start some work at home place so that they can keep an eye on children affairs which they feel is of utmost importance. A very major concern of women facing husband absenteeism was the education of their children. Almost every woman wants their children to get higher education and they are struggling for that. Majority of the women stated that they are facing absenteeism just for the sake of children education and betterment. Women want their boys to get high standard jobs and become contributing element for the family and country.

6.4 Technology and dynamics of social relationships

Communication technology has positive impact on social relationships of people. It's wide spread effects has changed the course of life in context of long distance relationship. Mobile communication, internet and better infrastructure facilities in rural areas have acted like catalyst to the relationship polarized due to migration. Women in Village Rehara have harvesting the technology reap by utilizing the communication facilities to shrink the distances with their husband. 33 out of 33 respondents in locale have been using the mobile phones and internet facility to communicate with their husbands. On the other hand, women who were facing husband absenteeism were facing this challenge to communicate with her husband. They used letter writing through Post office as she was not educated and was unable of read or write the letter.

She was purely dependent on her father in law who used to write letter. Most of women now use communication to get guidance from their husbands. Following figure shows the respondents using the facilities to communicate with their husband during husband absenteeism;

Figure 17: Technology Support for Women in Village Rehara



6.5 Time utilization and average mobility of women

Women have several responsibilities with the changing role. Their activities depend upon various factors like nature of family system, family size, working or house wife and location of house. Activities include household work, children related activities, working time, working in field, family/society responsibilities, animal handling, personal time etc.

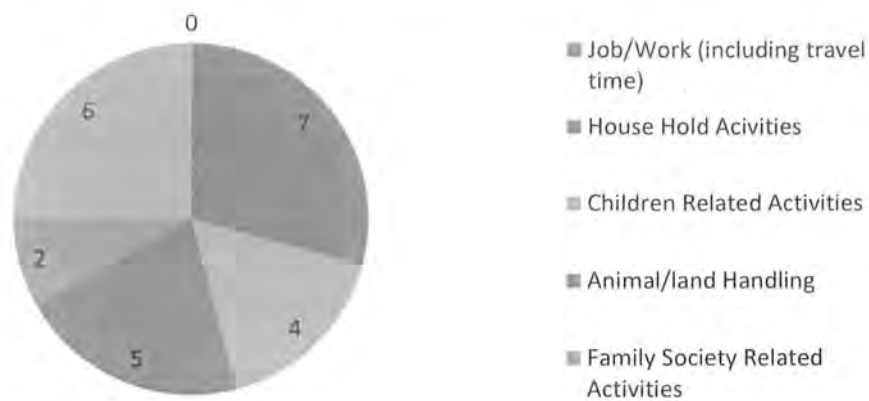
Following tables explain time utilization of working women in on average day:

Figure 18: Daily Time Utilization of Working Women on an Average Day



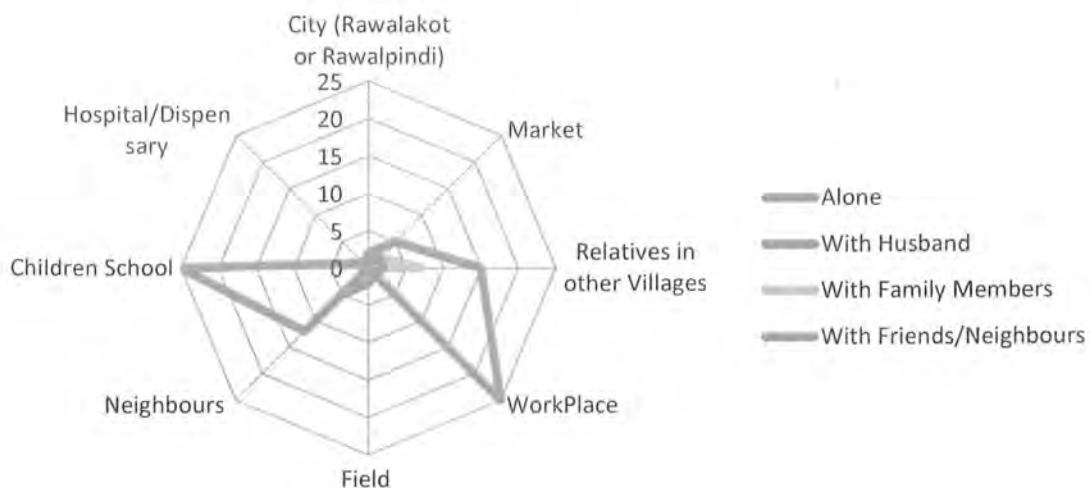
Following tables explain time utilization of housewife in on average day.

Figure 19: Time Utilization of House Wife on Average Day



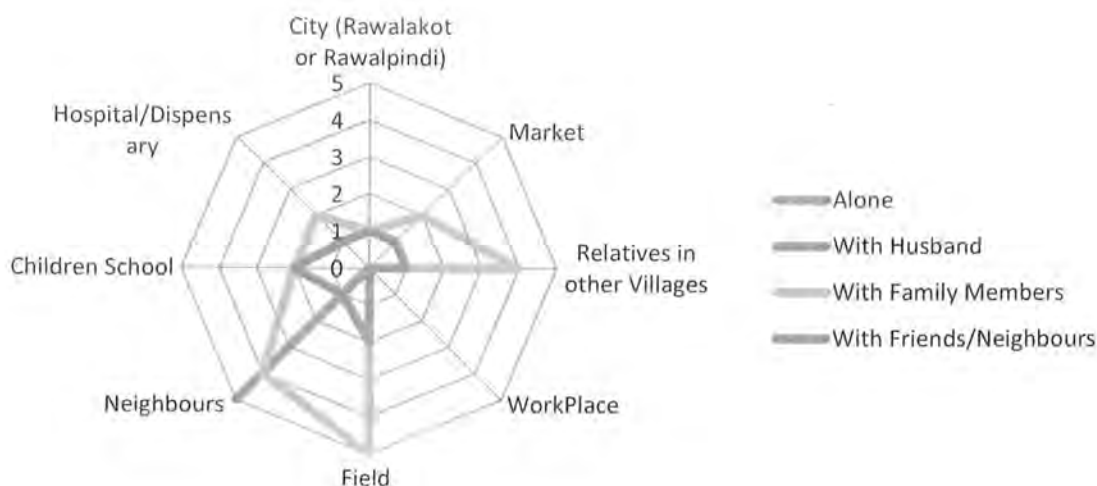
Following figure explain the working women mobility while living in nuclear family.

Figure 20: Average Monthly Mobility Chart (Working Women) in Nuclear Family



Following chart explain the mobility chart of house wife living with joint family system.

Figure 21: Average Monthly Mobility Chart (House Wife) in Joint Family System



6.6 Case studies

Case studies referred to special cases reported by respondents. These case studies were extracted while conducting the field work. They are stated as they were presented by the respondents while analyzing the aspects of study critically. It was generally found during the course of study that women gave importance to their personal educations and traditional skills as and when they faced difficulty to handle some complex situation. If they would have the education and skills, they would have been able to handle the situations and lifelong decisions in superior way. It seems that these women are successful to determine the legitimate vision of world to some extent. Although dilemma of merging traditional knowledge and skill set to formal education based knowledge remained unresolved. Uneducated women reported the several situations where they could perform their tasks comparatively better than those who had formal education. Similar life cases are explained in the case studies.

6.6.1 Case study of a rural business woman

Ms. Shahnaz Akhtar was born in uneducated family of village Thorar, District Poonch. Her family had limited family income based on inadequate agriculture resources and livestock. Living in joint family system, she had chances to go to nearby school to

acquire basic formal education along with religious education. On her return from school she had to complete several tasks related to housekeeping at the age of 10 years. While having less emphasis on education by the parents never gave her chance to build the thrust for further education. She left the school at primary level as there were limited opportunities to acquire further education in the village. Now staying at oppressing family structure, handholding of her mother in daily housekeeping tasks, supporting her father and brothers in animal care taking, she was passing her days and nights without realizing the future ahead. Without realizing her childhood rights, she was involved in supporting the household responsibilities. Knowledge, skills, dealing with the outer world, and handling some issues were all unknown things for her mind however she learned the housekeeping techniques from her mother based on traditional knowledge. Animal and agriculture familiarity were indigenous knowledge base which came inherited from her father. Cultural learning was also in progress as she lived in joint family system. Her house at the edge of the village cliff, she visited to nearby city once in a blue moon to know about the diverse cultural aspects.

The day came and she was married to her cousin in nearby village named Rehara. Her husband used to live in joint family systems and she had to face the phenomenon of husband absenteeism from first month of her marriage. Her husband and her father in law were holding the key of decision making while giving the less importance to women voice. Less employment opportunities and extended expenditures compel her husband to move abroad for better economic and financial gains. She was left with her father in law with the only communication possible through letter writing. Again her father in law use to write letter to her husband and she could not communicate. Her husband asked her to take care of household matters related to food and clothing and other daily necessities. Nothing was in her hand, no finances with no decision making power, she used to live with her in-laws. Days and months kept on passing and after one year her husband came back home for few days on special occasion when their first child born. Cultural gathering started with the ceremony of celebrations for new arrival at home. Days and months went on and her husband used to come to home once in a year. With five kids she was handling her day to day matters on her own. At initial stage her father in law used to support her in family matters but after her divorced, she was handling all the children rearing tasks by her own. She was less familiar with the handling of people in the market or in hospital. Decisions were difficult to take related

to children education. Mobility was major issue for herself and for her children. She used to get support from her brother in nearby village but at this stage she had to complete all the tasks. She was confident in rearing the children and her house keeping knowledge helped her but things were difficult. She had to earn the living by her own. She started to buy animals and chicken with the support of her brothers. All of her tasks starting from rearing the children, their education, their food and clothing and above all the social status in the family and society were completed by her own. She was supported by the other family members and the one of the elderly person who lived in the neighborhood.

Major concern for Shahnaz was education of her children. She was not educated herself but she wanted best education for her children. She faced challenges of mobility for her children as well. But with her confidence and support of her children she was able to manage her living in rural area. After years of efforts now her elder child has completed higher secondary education and started earning from a job in nearby city. Her younger children are completing education very soon. Long journey with lot of efforts brought the lady into a place where she is confident to handle all kind of complex matters related to life.

Ms Shahnaz put an emphasis on her own capacity development in handling the animals and managing it as a rural business. She further stated that there was no guidance for her to manage small animal form house she develops at her own. If she would have some opportunity to build her capacity she could have managed her financial and economic matters in a better way. She further added that Government may provide soft loans for small farmers in rural area. She was of the view that formal education is utmost important for women in rural areas. Formal education not only provides the opportunity to learn the education but also provide a platform to know culture and socialization with learning environment. Vocational education in rural areas especially for women is so far unnoticed.

Social aspect of her life states that she was never involved in household decision from the day first which lead her to face some bitter experiences from life. During period of husband absenteeism, after having trouble full days, she learned the techniques of decision making. She stated that girls must be involved in the decision making

combining formal education and knowledge of experiences from start of their life to build their confidence in real life scenario.

Society role along with the importance of social relationships are of key importance in life of Ms Shahnaz. She faced husband absenteeism throughout her life. She illustrated that the women empowerment is a process which starts from the day first, generally it is not considered important in traditional rural society like village Rehara based on cultural notions and norms. These norms must be changed to empower women of rural society. It is not need of the hour but a continuous necessity of life and women's role in family and society.

6.6.2 Case study of a house wife

Ms Rukhsana Sajid is 47 year's old lady living in village Rehara in a rural family with joint family system. She is facing husband absenteeism from three generations. Her father in law who used to work in UAE, her husband found her job also in UAE and now her son who is also working aboard in UAE. Her son is married therefore her daughter in law also facing husband absenteeism. Three generations in one family facing the same problem of husband absenteeism.

Ms Rukhsana was 20 years old when she got married. Her husband was working in UAE and always lived away from home from past 27 years. He used to visit his home once in a year. She had issues with her mother in law as she was never valued as a family member in her home. Strong family bindings compelled her to face the issue of negligence in family with no support from her husband as he was away for years. Her mother in law used to take the decisions of family matters with her own involvement. Time passed and day come when she shifted to her new house contracted by her husband. She faced the similar issues of children education and society related matters as she was not groomed in the family with the basic skill set.

Financing was not issue as her husband was solely responsible for earning the livelihood for his wife and children. She started building her capacity while acquiring support from her neighborhood friends. She used to discuss the challenges with elderly people and her senior female fellows in the village.

Ms Rkhsana stated that she wanted to impart education for her children. Her husband was managing the finances therefore greater autonomy came to her way empowering

her financially and economically. An overwhelming support she received from her own *baradari* (Cast) and neighborhood friend. She started participating in family gathering and events enduring benefits of social participation.

Women Social Network helped her to grow strong, discuss the matters and get the guidance from elderly ladies. She was having no worries related to financial support. She was financially strong making her own decision after she shifted to nuclear family system. Her son and daughter was getting education in higher secondary level from nearby school. With the passage of time and husband absenteeism she was growing strong. She was confidently taking the decisions of her family and society matters. Growing financially and economically strong counted as a major contributor for her autonomy. The only thing she did not had formal education. Keeping in view the importance of education she selected the daughter in law who was well educated. Her son moved to the other country.

She stated that mobility was major issue for her at initial years but with the passage of time she developed her confidence level to cope with this issue. While living in village Rehara, she imparted best education to her children and with her visionary approach she started the process of women empowerment while involving her daughter in law to every decision she make in household matters.

She is acting as a change agent while putting emphasis on women empowerment. She faced issues with her uneducated and customary mind set mother in law, she expressed that women must be provided learning opportunities using the community participation. She also believes that participatory approach with the community can build the strength of women to handle the roles and responsibilities in systematic way. She believed that this is only way for those women who have limited opportunities to learn the formal skills for personal development. From hilly areas of village Rehara, the message to the entire world is that the women must build their own capacity by participating in the social activities in their communities in addition to the formal education. Moral support from family and community may provide the platform for women to learn the abilities to handle the matters related to life but also acts as a catalyst for family happiness and healthy relationships.

6.6.3 Case Study of a self-empowered working women

Ms Nasreen Akhtar brought up in an educated and noble family of District Poonch. Her father put emphasis on children education from the day she was able to read and write. Being school teacher, her father developed learning environment while guiding his children at his home. She completed her higher secondary education in the Rawalakot city, later studied in the Women Degree in Rawalakot while completing her higher education. After completion of her education she got selected in the similar profession as of her father to further distribute the pearls of knowledge in the rural areas of AJK.

The day *Ms Nasreen Akhtar* was married to Mr. Iqbal who was working in Pakistan Army. As part of his job he lived his life while serving in different station in Pakistan. Husband Absenteeism was faced by *Nasreen* from the first day of her marriage as she had a job as a school teacher in AJK. He visited his home once in a month thought-out his job. Later he moved to Saudi Arabia for his new job after retirement from Pakistan Army. Absenteeism increased many folds as now he visited home once in year.

As a working woman, having tremendous support from her family and society she was able to continue her job along with rearing up the children and also taking care of household matters. Situation was not same with her in-laws as her husband was eldest son of her parents who had to take care of his younger brothers and sisters. Her father-in-law always urged her husband juts to take care of them as his wife is working lady and would better take care of herself. He was spending all of his earning to his parents and younger brothers and sisters. Although she was holding the key to decision making in the family as an educated woman however she was overburdened by the other family members.

Facing husband absenteeism was a challenge for her as she was working lady with no support after converting herself into nuclear family. Associated with the noble profession school teaching in village Rehara, she was well supported by the society members. She had the requisite abilities and strength to handle the day to day matters weather related to society or family. Her brought up in educated family supported her tremendously but she was overburdened by the husband's family. She was handling her household responsibilities skillfully and providing education environment for her children. She felt herself as self-empowered lady having decision making, parenting,

and financial strengths. Despite of having all abilities, Ms Nasreen believed in women empowerment as a stepping stone for human development.

Mobility is one of the major problems in rural society like Village Rehara but having no opportunities for women to grow strong is the bigger problem, she expressed. An educated woman may handle such issues like mobility or public dealing however she must be providing some learning platform in rural areas. No facility for personal development is the major hindrance for women development.

Women Empowerment has some boundaries for its positive use, she stated. Husband Absenteeism gives strength and independence to the women left behind. It contributes in scope of decision making of women, provides access to financial resources and gives opportunity to grow her cultural framework in society. It supports to create her identity, capability, and position in family and society. She further stated her view point that women empowerment may act like double edge sword in prevailing social norms and practices. A woman who is empowered may get more responsibilities which she is not supposed to be held responsible. A woman has tremendous power to handle the resources once she is empowered however on the other hand she may be treated like a machine to complete all the tasks in the patriarchal society. Ms Nasreen further expressed her views that women who can handle the responsibilities in absence of her husband must have time for her own personal development.

7. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This thesis has presented the research related to **husband absenteeism** and its pedigrees prevailing in the rural areas of AJK. It was hypothesized for the research that husband absenteeism has negatively affected family life and has a varied effect on change of women role. Women whose husband is away from home either for job, business or any other kind of non-presences is treated as husband absenteeism. This research also analyzed effects of absenteeism on women's social role along with the effects on family relationship, children and society affairs. The research was conducted in village Rehara, District Poonch. Village Rehara is situated almost 15 kilometers away from the District Capital, Rawalakot city. The village was adversely affected by the problem of husband absenteeism due male migration from the village particularly after the massive earthquake of October 2005. Village is situated in the hilly terrain of AJK with the population over 1200 people.

This research is substantial to the argument made by Ahmed (2008) about the **causes of transnational movement in Pakistan**. Income discriminations and insufficiency were the main causes of international migration. It was found that migration and Absenteeism is prevailing in the locale due to low economic development and less employment opportunities. The rural area of Pakistan and particularly those of AJK have **less business activities** and agriculture production, due to hilly terrain and less infrastructure facilities, severe weather conditions resulted into the flow of economic activities to the major cities. Research findings stated that the movement of people from one place to another results into financial and economic changes not only to the person who moves out but also the people left behind. As Jolly and Reeves (2005) explained that both genders received the impact of migration. It was evident from this research that men and women have received the benefit of movement from rural to urban areas. Economic and financial gains received by the men as their major responsibility is considered to be the breadwinner for the family and children. On the other hand, women received the economic and financial independency and freedom for making their house hold decisions.

Ahmad (2008) also relates migration with **inflation and unemployment** in the country. During this study, unemployment was identified as the most prominent basis of migration. Unemployment raises frustration among AJK's youth. Majority of the

people living there strongly consider that economic deprivation has urged males to migrate. Lacking industry, poor economic conditions, fewer opportunities for job and business pulled young people to migrate towards Middle East and European Countries. Moreover, due to the geographical boundaries of AJK, economic movement is extremely reliant on KPK and Punjab. This research discovered that there are few cases of movement of people who have faced the financial crises due to some reason and they were unable to find their livelihood to pay back the debt have left their home to other areas for better employment and returns as explained by The Swaziland PPA notes (Swaziland 1997).

Genders roles are those behaviors or values of a society which are considered to be followed by men and women. Every society has some predefined roles and both men and women have to perform their roles according to the society norms. In this research it was found that men and women of Rehara have set of rules for the performance of tasks. Women are supposed to stay at home, take care of children and all household matters. Men know that they are the primary and may be the sole breadwinner for their family so they have to step out of their comfort zone and search for some job or business. As (Prentice and Carranza 2002, Unterhalter 2005, Bernard 1981:3, Kvande 1998, Lupton 2000) have the same views about gender roles that this is the society which decided gender roles. A task assigned to a person defines his or her gender. It is a stereotypic belief that women are delicate, caring and warm so they should be there for caring of children and husband and man is considered as strong and he has to be strong anyway. Another finding of this research about the gender role is that in some cases these roles may change, if a women had no male partner and she was to perform the tasks of her husband as well, her role had been totally changed from the stereotype role, so this situation supports the argument of (Ortner, 1996, Kondo, 1990, Lynn Stephen 1991, Guttman 1996) given in literature that gender is fluid and depends on different societal situations. Meaning of maleness and femaleness keeps on changing according to the circumstances.

It was evident from this research that people **migration** occurred from rural to urban areas in Pakistan. The research foresees the similar future movements. The results from similar surveys conducted (PIHS 1998, Memon, 2005, Arif, 2005 and PSES) previously shows the findings of the movement from rural to urban areas and other countries for economic and financial reasons. This research is supplementary to the arguments

made by the (see Shankman 1976; Duany 2001) showing that migration has some of the negative effects on the rural economy. Shifting from rural agriculture economy to the industrial/white color jobs adversely effected the rural agriculture production resulting into dependency of people on the major cities. Most of the agriculture production reduced down in the hilly rural areas like those of AJK due to migratory flow is interdependent phenomena resulting into people dependency on the **remittances** received from migrants. Results related to husband's absenteeism and their economic gain after migration show brain drain and loss of capable human and social capital which has affected socio-economic development of the people. The diaspora has resulted into financial gains but economic activity. In addition to agriculture down trend research explains that movement of people results into brain-drain. The same has been pointed out in the Laws of Migration Journal. Similar results have been experienced by Agesa and Kim (2001) for Kenyan families.

It was found during the course of study that the women living in rural areas have major problems like non availability of infrastructure facilities, lack of employment opportunities compelled their husbands to move to the major cities nearby supporting the arguments made by Jakimovski & Matilov (2002). The movement of husband results into the social issues and increased level of responsibility to the women left behind both socially and economically. Sekher (1997) has expressed the similar arguments in his research (See Sekher, 1997). This research negates the argument made by (Shaheed, 1981) that women's decision making power is not changed by the husband absenteeism. It was found during the research that the women who face husband absenteeism have increased their decision making ability with the passage of time. Moreover, it was found that decision making power of women increased with the timeframe of husband absenteeism. Women feel more powerful while making the decisions during the period of husband absenteeism. The research also adds up to the similar argument made by (Gulati, 1987; Findley and Williams, 1991).

Results from this research conferred that **relationships play pivotal role** in life of both male and females. In other words, this lays the foundations of society norms and ideologies throughout the mankind history. Both male and females are the integral part of the relationships. The researcher queried from respondents that when their husband is away from home then who else fulfill the partial responsibilities of husband. This research supports the argument. As Bolak (1995) states; kinship relations play a

predominantly critical role in Turkey. Kinship relationships play dynamic role in the family and society of village Rehara. Women accept male dominancy and supremacy as they consider them the head of the family.

Results from this research explained that **sentimental and emotional issues** were shown by the women as a problem related to self-esteem needs, supporting the findings of Gordon (1981; Sadiqi and Ennaji 2004). This research explained that the wives of the migrants face loneliness, added responsibilities, adverse effect on education of the children, debt incurred to finance emigration, increased anxiety for communication, psychological strains effecting the inter relationships between husband and wife. (Beneria and Roldan 1987; Dwyer and Bruce 1988) presented the same situation while completing their work. (Katz, 2003; Chee, 2003) presented the literature of similar findings.

(Reiss 1986; Wilson 1987; Farooq and Javed 2009; Farooq 2009; Gulati 1993; Sattar, 2009; Sadaf et al. 2010) revealed matching research findings which were found in my research that in Pakistan, movement of people was directly related to the poverty and unemployment, so migration resulted in positive effect on the economic life of migrant's family but can negatively affect the behavior of their children, their wives felt insecure, unsafe and isolation in the absence of their husbands.

It is evident from the research that **decision making power of women** is influenced by various factors like **family structure** of women, status of women (working or housewife), age of women, education of women and also the nature of decisions. This study shows that the majority of the women living in nuclear family system are dependent on their husbands for making decision about all household matters. Some of the women willingly accept the dominance of their husbands in making decisions of household, they are happy with their status as housewives for each matter either it is related to children or about herself she has to strive for permission of her husband. But this statement is not applicable to the women who are well educated and financially independent. Educated women living in nuclear family are more independent in making the decisions. This decision making is again confined to household chores, land issues are still handled by male person of the family either he is father in law or brother in law.

Society and family norms prevail in rural society. Family elders have key role in the decision making process. The woman living in joint family or in some cases in extended family, if working, she is more autonomous than non-working. In a household headed by a female whose husband is deceased, women have to seek permission of mother in law for all matters. Time period spent with in laws also effects the decision making process. If a woman is newly married and facing husband absenteeism, she would be less autonomous in her decisions as compared to a women living in that house since ten years or more. It is observed that decisions about marriages of children are made by mutual consent of husband and wife, if they are living separate. These findings exactly relate to the work of Anderson (1990). A number of scholars of South Asia are found that women's physical movement is strictly constrained in many parts due to norms and customs supporting the results found during the research. (see Bloom et al. 2001).

In rural areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir men and women have defined responsibilities but it was seemed that women have some additional responsibilities as well. This research had also come up with the results that women of Rehara were not only fulfilling their household responsibilities but also involved in the activities regarding income generation. A woman had to perform additional role of her husband in family and community. She had to attend important event like marriage, death or birth ceremonies which were attended by her husband before. This **new role of women** kept women in a more demanding position and they were not able to spare ample time for children development. When man left home in search of livelihood of himself and for the family left behind, all of his responsibilities now shifted to the wives who have to do her own tasks as well as tasks of her husband. It has some negative impact on women but it also gives some power to make decisions about family matters, related to children affairs, family and society related matters which signs the movement of traditional role to contemporary role resulting into women empowerment. Research reveals that women's economic pattern of household spending changed after their husband moved to the other places.

Majority of the women who are facing husband absenteeism had increased **access to finance** after the husband departure; they have the role in household financial management. Women living in nuclear families expressed that they get the opportunity to save money as every expense of the household were in their hand so they used that saved money to purchase new assets including furniture, making jewelry or other

household items. Some women used this saved money when they were in a position to purchase a property in nearby city. Thus, living in nuclear family results these women to gain more **freedom in making decisions** about their finance but women prefer to consult their husbands if there was to take a decision about purchasing something which was expensive. This research relates positively to the findings of (Bookman and Morgen 1988; Zurayk and Saadeh 1995).

It was observed that the **time frame of migration** also affects the decision making in household dynamics, if the husband had gone long before, women gets more **autonomy** because of the disconnection of husband from family matters. She knew every good and bad about her family and community so, she is better able to make the decision as compared to her husband, and this creates no conflict among them because these decisions are consultative in nature. Time frame of absenteeism is directly proportionate to the **women empowerment** in household decisions. The research shows that the women of migrant husbands gained more freedom of opinion at household, family and society level. Some of the respondents agreed that their husband used poking in every matter of household and it raises conflicts among them. Now they got enough liberty to fulfill their household responsibilities. Women stated that her **mobility** is still controlled by her husband however she is allowed to go for shopping, to go to children school, taking children to hospital, attending marriage ceremonies in the family, but again all that is allowed if she is accompanied by sister in law or mother in law. These findings were related to the work of (Abdullah and Zeidenstein 1979; Cain, 1994).

Up to some extent, arguments made by Khalaf (2009), about Lebanese women feel that their increased responsibilities have changed their **customary role** in the absence of male therefore migration changed the structure of the family. On the other side **family and society norms** play key role while supporting their family members while in crises situation unlike to the Lebanese women. Research results showed that **strong family binding and community participation** helped women to handle the worst case scenarios.

One of the bigger problems as identified during the research was **less opportunities for women** to grow strong and build their **capacity**. An educated woman handled such issues like mobility or public dealing however she must be provided some learning

platform for **personal development**. Women Empowerment had some boundaries for its positive use. Husband Absenteeism gave **strength and independence** to the women left behind contributing in scope of decision making, access to financial resources and opportunity to grow her **cultural framework** in society. It supported to create her **identity, capability, and position in family** and society. Women empowerment may act like **double edge sword** in prevailing social norms and practices. A woman has tremendous power to handle the resources once she is empowered however on the other hand she may be over burdened in the patriarchal society.

The research leaves some of the **future implications** for other researchers to find out the possibilities to design and create **capacity building opportunities for women** living in rural areas in context of their changing role. This research also ends up by putting a query to the researcher that how **strength of women** be developed from the childhood? How these opportunities may be established by utilizing the social capital and local resources? The research also ends up with the open questions to the researcher to find **positive and negative aspects of women empowerment**. How to create opportunities for personal wellbeing of women may be a challenge for the policy makers and change agents by utilizing the strength of social norms and customs. How the roles of **family ties** and **society elders** may be enhanced to overcome the arising rural dilemmas?

8. CONCLUSION

This thesis presented the research work on husband absenteeism and changing role of women in the rural society. The research found that women face higher level of husband absenteeism particularly in rural areas due to movement of their husbands. Movement of people from one place to another in search of better livelihood is as old phenomenon as the human history affecting those individuals who left and those who stayed behind. There were economic & financial push and pull factors behind this movement. In the present research it was found that people from the locale mainly moved due to lack of employment opportunities, financial gains and improvement in their standard of living. In this study, main focus was on wives who were facing husband absenteeism due to migration of their husbands. According to the findings of the study, husband absenteeism put these women in a more demanding situation, traditional gender roles had changed and these women had to step out of their traditional role. It was revealed during the research that women were enthusiastic to change their conformist role to contemporary role by fighting the challenges. However, these women faced psychological and emotional issues with increased level of responsibilities. Research found that the movement of their husbands did not make them deprived but enriched their capability and identity in family and society with financial autonomy, decision making power and freedom of mobility. Society and family ties had key importance in strengthening women's new role. While living in joint family, support from in-laws was remarkable. According to the findings technology had played a positive role in removing the conflicts among the couples. It was concluded from the research that women face loneliness and stress in the absence of husband but they were willing to accept this at cost of their financial and economic benefits. After completion of research, hypothesis was accepted. It was found that husband absenteeism has negatively affected the family life and had varied effect on women role.

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ANNEXURES

Annex 1: Snapshots of the Field

Annex 2: Maps (Locale, District Poonch, AJk, Pakistan)

Annex 3: Interview Guide

Annex 4: Snapshots of the Field

Figure 22: Women Working in Rural AJK



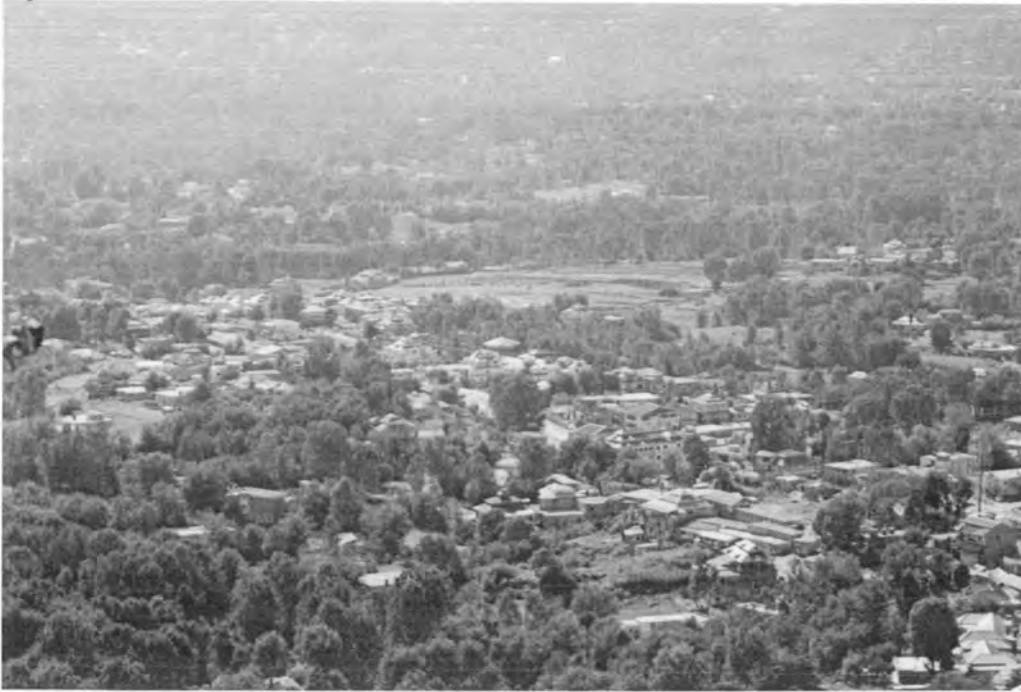
(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 12 October 2015)

Figure 23: Village Life of Women at Reahara, Poonch, AJK



(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 12 October 2015)

Figure 24: District Capital, Rawalakot, AJK



(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 27 August 2015)

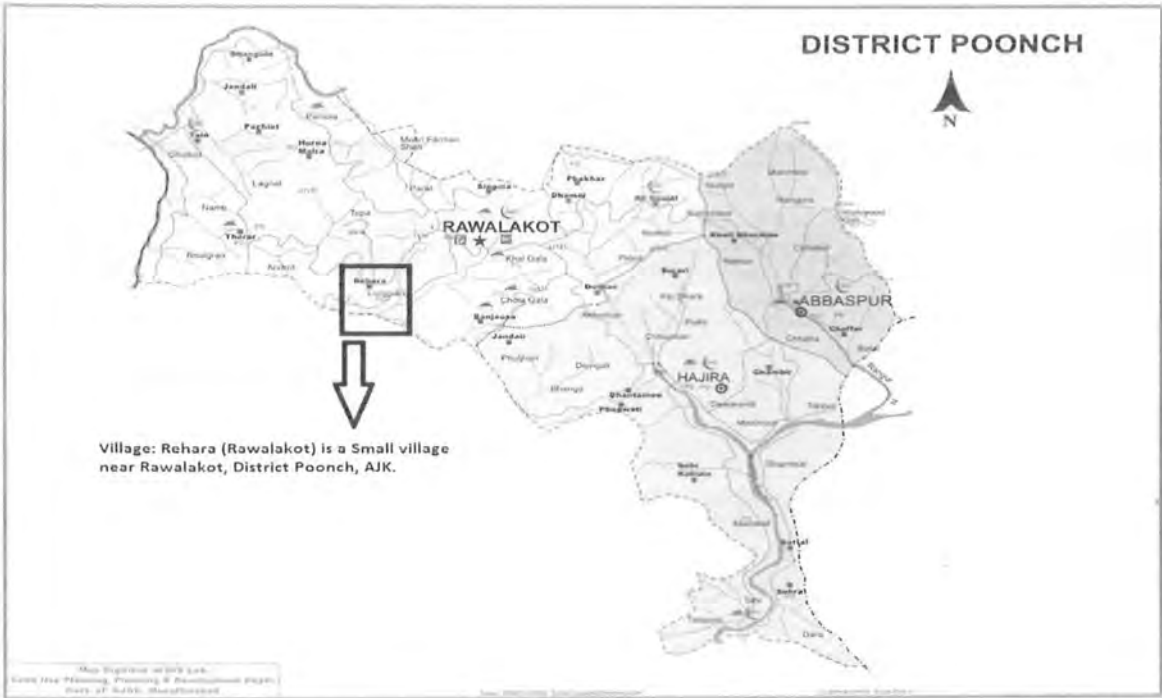
Figure 25: A View of Rehara Bazar, Poonch, AJK



(Source: Researcher own field data, picture taken on 27 August 2015)

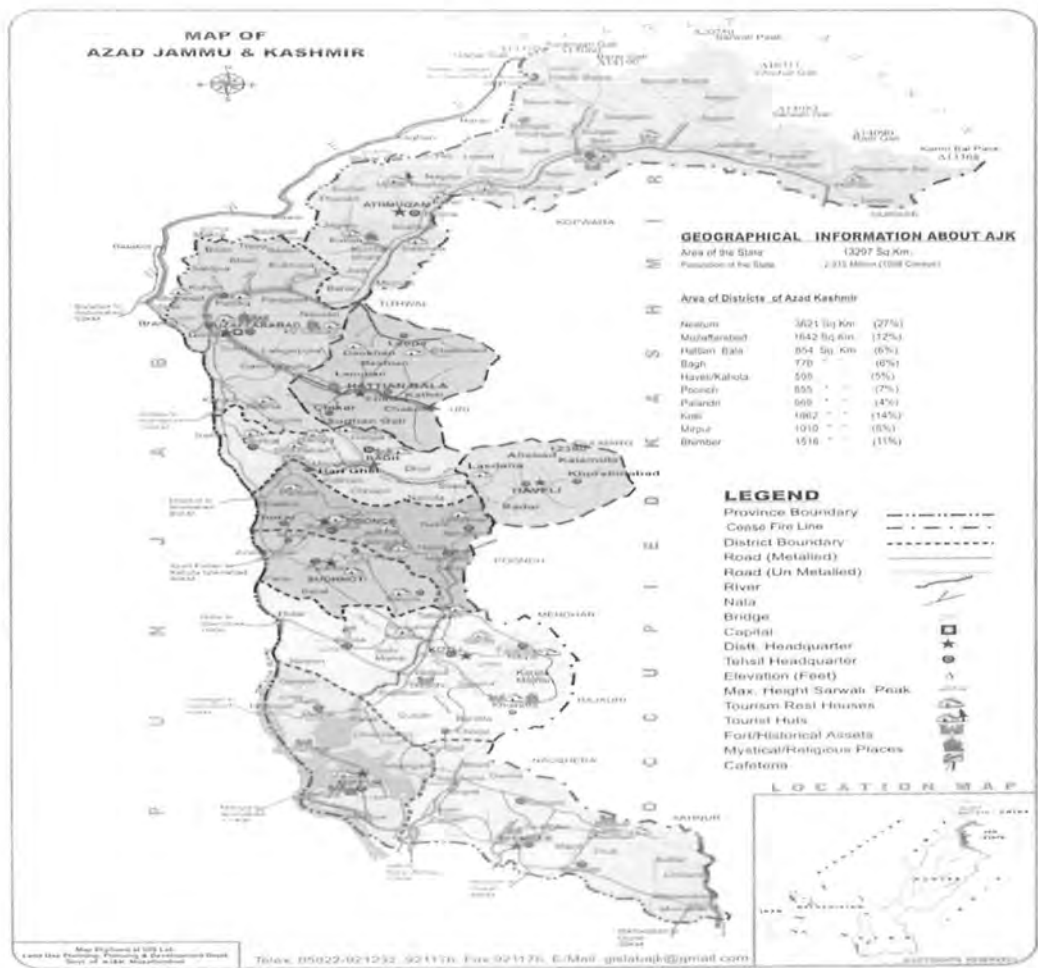
Annex 5: Maps (Locale, District Poonch, AJK, Pakistan)

Figure 26: Map of Village Rehara, District Poonch, AJK



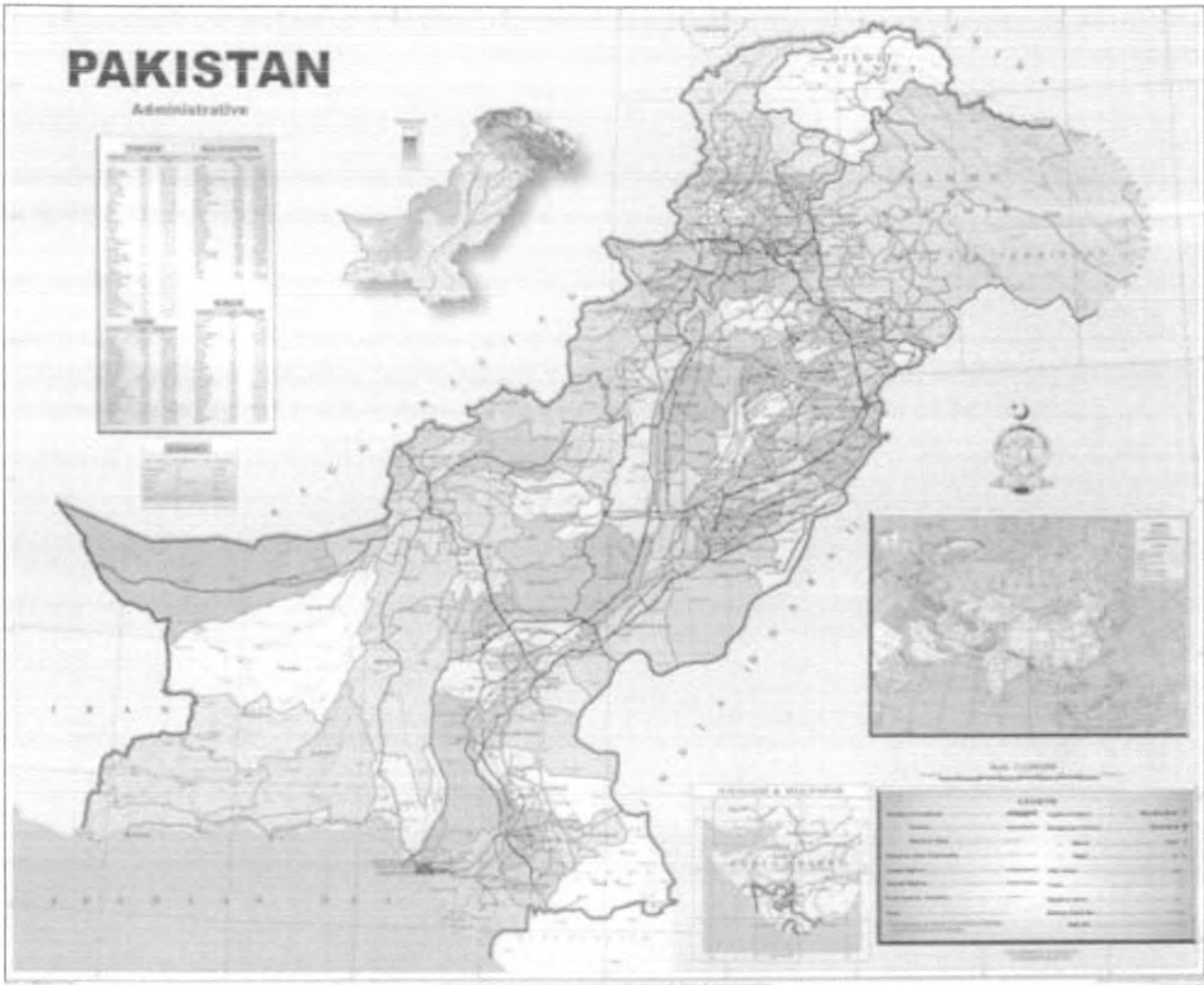
(Source: AJK official web site)

Figure 27: Map of AJK



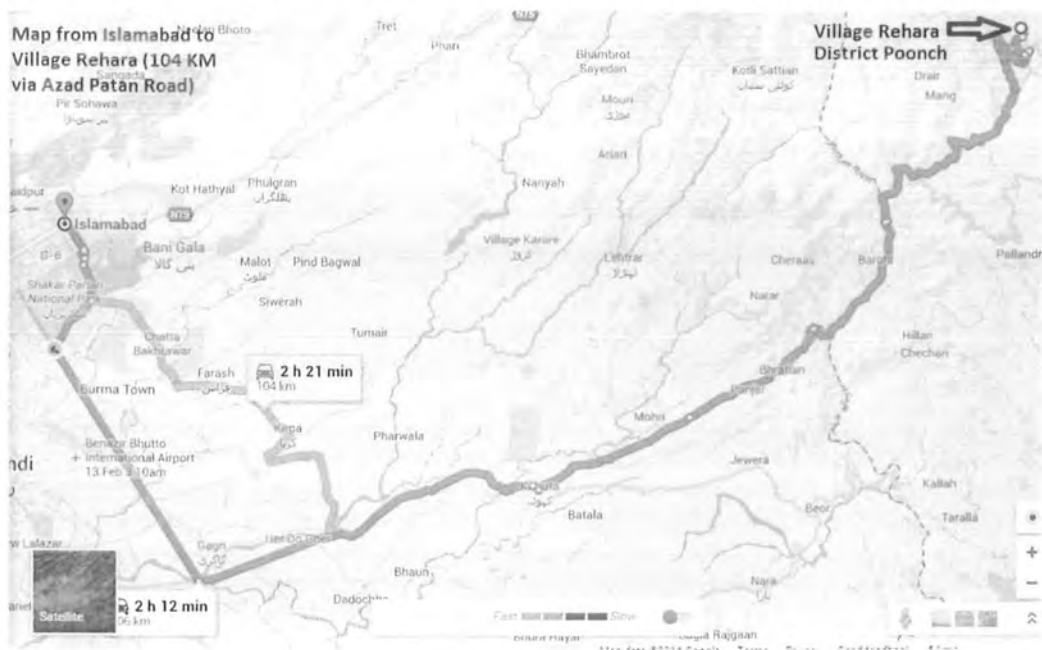
(Source: AJK official web site)

Figure 28: Map of Pakistan



(Source: GoP official web site)

Figure 29: Map from Islamabad to Village Rehara, District Poonch



(Source: www.google.com/maps)

Figure 30: Map from Village Rehara to Rawalakot, District Poonch



(Source: www.google.com/maps)

Interview Guide

Name of the Respondent:

Family Name:

Age:

Husband Location:

1. How do you define absenteeism?

2. How do you define husband's absenteeism?

3. Does anyone else fill the absentee's place?

4. How do you feel about during Husband absenteeism?

5. How do your husband feel about his absenteeism?

6. How often your husband is not at home (Week/Month/year)?

7. What is your husband present location?

8. Why your husband is away from home (Job/Business/other)?

9. How many times your husband is absent from home on special occasions (Eid, Family gathering, marriages, deaths, other etc) ?

10. What were the husband responsibilities when he was at home?

11. When he left which are the different duties/responsibilities of your husband you are fulfilling?

12. How many times your husband perform the different tasks while at home (during presence)?

13. What are different responsibilities your husband is still fulfilling while away from home?

14. Different aspects of responsibilities solely fulfilled by you?

15. Does anyone else help you in fulfilling your responsibilities?

16. Different aspects of responsibilities solely fulfilled by you and other family members?

17. Who makes the different family matter decisions?

18. How often you have to move within the city or outside the city (in presence of your husband and in absence)?

19. Which kind of decisions making you are doing in absence of your husband?

20. Do your husband appreciate your decisions?

21. Did your husband movement helped you to grow strong economically and financially?

22. Did your husband movement helped you for personal and family wellbeing ?

23. Explain the problems you are facing while her husband is not at home?

24. Security issues faced

25. Children affairs related issues faced

26. Family related issues faced

27. Society related issues faced

28. To whom you discuss these issues and get guidance ?

29. How your husband/other family members help you to cope with these issues?

30. How do you face these issues alone ?

31. What are different issues you resolve without any support?

32. What are different issues you resolve with support of other family members ?

33. Does society help you on any issue keeping in view about your husband's absenteeism?

34. How do you feel while handling all these issues in the society?

35. Are you gaining your confidence while handling all this?

36. Any special issue that you handled and face difficulties?

37. Do you want your husband to come back and take his responsibilities or you are happy with that ?

38. What are your major concerns in family and society?

39. How society should help you to perform your new role?

40. How your family should support while in absence of your husband?

41. How should your husband support you while away from home?

42. Do you feel that any training can help you to improve your capability to handle with the new role?

43. Any Other Comment (s)
