

The Effect of Remittances by Migratory Workers on Child Education

Nunung Nurwati
Department of Social Welfare University Padjadjaran

Nurliana Cipta Apsari*
Department of Social Welfare University Padjadjaran

Meilanny Budiarti Santoso
Department of Social Welfare University Padjadjaran

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ABSTRACT

The Indonesian workforce migration phenomenon has been going on since the 1990s. Underlying the phenomenon are push factors such as difficulties in obtaining livelihoods within the country and pull factors such as higher wages. The high numbers of migratory worker provide positive and negative influence such as remittances brought and sent back by the workers, yet the children left by their parents are vulnerable to the neglect of their education. Usage of remittances is divided into consumptive and productive aspects. Consumptive aspects are expenses for daily bread; productive are expenses for the child education and investment. Previous studies showed that most remittances are used for consumptive necessities. This research is aimed at studying the effect of remittances on child education. The method used is quantitative with cross tabulation and descriptive statistics. The data sources are primary and secondary and analyzed using descriptive cross-sectional analysis. The location of research in coastal and farming areas (Sukabumi and Cianjur Municipalities). The research found only 12% of total remittance is used for child education. Family characteristics have a strong influence on allocations for education. Farming communities put greater expenses for child education compared to coastal communities.

Keywords: migration, remittance, child education, Indonesian workforce (TKI)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian workforce migration phenomenon has been going on for a long time. Sending the workforce abroad or to different regions of Indonesia is one of the efforts made to decrease the unemployment rate. West Java is one province sending workers abroad. Some regions which contribute the highest number of Indonesian workers (TKI) are Sukabumi and Cianjur Municipalities. Mostly the workers are female with destination countries usually in the Middle East. TKI activity from West Java to foreign countries is increasing in volume since the 1990s. A significant increase happened in 1997 when the economic crisis hit the country.

Various reasons are behind the workforce departure abroad. The most dominant reasons are economic conditions such as the limited opportunity of the workplace in the village, low wages in the village and its surrounding area, and willingness to increase the family income. There are also non-economic reasons, such as workforce recruitment and the willingness to copy the success stories of other workforces.

The TKI's remittance of income sent to their family at their area of origin provides a positive impact on the welfare of not only the workforces but also for their families and surrounding

communities. Research by Dorantes et al. (2002) in Mexico shows that remittances can increase the children's presence at the school, lowering the infant mortality rate, and reducing the illiteracy among children. One of the negative impacts is known as brain drain. Children who are left by their parents when they become TKI have the potential to be neglected, especially in education. This is supported by a study on migration in terms of child welfare in Thailand conducted by Michel Cameron and Steven Lim (2005). The study pointed out that the migration is damaging toward children's health and achievement at school.

Some studies in various countries show that remittances are expended primarily for consumption. Studies using household data in Bangladesh by Afsar (2003; in de Bruyn and Kuddus, 2005) recorded that around 80–90% of the remittance is used for consumption. Glytos (2005) also found that based on the composition, the largest portion of remittance in Greece is used for household consumption (63%), housing investment, trade, and engine (30%) and investment in the form of land (7%). The same situation has also happened in Indonesia. There is some research in Indonesia that shows that remittances are used mostly for consumption aspect and/or paying the debt (Sukamdi et al., 2004). Research conducted by Effendi (2004) and Strauss et al. (2004) shows that migrant workers who are coming from Lombok Tengah and Nusa Tenggara Barat use almost all of their remittance to pay the debt, fulfilling their daily needs and also to pay for their children's education. Based on the previous studies above, there arises a question of how big is the effect of remittance on children's education. Children are important human capital for the future of a country, thus the quality of their life should be in the interest of the country (Ridho & Anggraini, 2016). Education also plays an important role in increasing the quality of life. Therefore, the remittance usage for education is important not only for the future of the children but also the future of the country.

This research used quantitative methods with descriptive statistics techniques. The data used were primary and secondary data. This research was conducted at Sukabumi (a farming area) and Cianjur Municipalities (a coastal area).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to the classical theory of Todaro (2006), a person will migrate if there is a different economic value between the origin area and destination area. Someone will migrate because of push and pull factors. The push factors are factors in the origin area that cause someone to migrate, such as minimal fields of work, disaster, marriage, and lack of education, health, and cultural facilities, meanwhile the pull factors are factors that exist in the destination area such as uncomplicated and the complete of education and health facilities, easy to get occupation. With the influence of those factors, then someone will migrate with the hope that their wish would come true. The migrants hope is to get their economical live increasing.

Remittance can be defined as money or goods sent by the migrant workers to their origin area. Remittances have an important role in increasing the socio-economical condition of the family, the community, and the origin area. As Cohen and Sirkeci (2012) state, remittances are efforts by the workers to sustain social and economic bonds in their origin area, even though they are miles apart. In short, the migrant workers send their remittances due to their responsibilities to their family left behind.

The existence of remittances from migrant worker can increase income and household welfare, which then can decrease the poverty number. Based on a household survey conducted by World Bank in 2004, found that the households of TKI working abroad who receive remittances have a positive impact toward their children's education.

3. DISCUSSION

During their time working abroad, almost all TKI especially the one with permanent contracts still build communication with their families. With the existing communication, it is hoped that the family members who remain at their area of origin are informed about the condition of their parents and vice versa. The communication frequency by the TKI in a year has been recorded up to 44 times; the least is only once in a year.

The TKIs who work abroad face the potential of inhuman attitudes from their masters, and possibilities of misconduct done by their spouses during the time. In general, the husbands of female migrant workers said that they are never misconducted and for fulfilling the biological needs, they conducted fasting for a while. This result is different with a study conducted by PSKK-UGM at 2001 which found that at Yogyakarta Special Region (DIY) as many as 7,5% of 133 respondents realize that their husbands are misbehaving when they are being left for working abroad.

The percent of TKI in both areas of study with 1 child is 53.33% and with 2 children is 35.33% and only a small number of TKIs have more than 4 children. The percentage of TKIs who have 1 child is higher at Cianjur than Sukabumi.

The absence of wives and mothers in the household had an effect of losing the role of caregiver of the children. The same issue also happened with fathers who go abroad, where the family would lose the figure of family protector. It seems that the female migrant worker phenomenon shows the shift of role and relation between female and male from the traditional Indonesian patriarchal culture.

The departures of females who work abroad show the increasing status of females, and have changed the values that the main task of the female is to take care the household and the children. Thus, some of the female migrant workers felt guilty due to their absence in the family. Compared with male migrant workers, it turned out that female migrant workers sacrifice more for their family.

Reasons mentioned by the migrant worker at the study area are various, which the dominant ones (80.65%) are to fulfill the household needs, difficult to get a job within Indonesia (10,48%), for saving (8,06%), and having an issue with a parent in law (0,81%). Looking at the numbers, it means that the migrant workers are only to fulfill the household needs, and not to increase the family resources such as sending the children to school, or long-term investment such as saving for retirement.

The main information resource for the Indonesian migrant workers to know the way to work abroad is through informal sources. The majority of TKI gained information from their relatives and their own family members who are already becoming the TKI and economically successful. Besides that, the information is also received from a sponsor. Actually, the sponsor is a collaboration between workforce finder, brokers and investor who can provide loans to the future TKIs, because before their departure the future TKI have to have documents such as passport, health announcement letter, and visa, which all of these need capital which is part of the expenses the TKIs have to spend beforehand. Thus, the future TKIs will look for a loan, and after working around 2 months abroad, the TKIs will pay the loan.

The remittance path conducted by migrant workers is via banks and the Post Office. They usually send remittances starting at the second or third month of their working time, however, some also send the remittance at the sixth month. The average remittance sent, usually twice in a year, is around Rp. 3 million.

The household receiver of the remittance shows the amount per capita is higher compared to the income from other sources with the ratio of 3:1 (3 times bigger). This result shows that there is a great dependency on remittance to fulfill the economic needs of the household. This is mirrored by the number of assets owned, house, ricefield/land, motorbike and other electronic goods.

The value of assets for housing is relatively high, with an average of Rp. 38 million, meanwhile the other building asset is valued at Rp. 42 million. This result describes that the assets owned by households with above the average remittance compared to a household with no remittance. This means the living standard for families who work abroad are clearly able to provide a better living compare those who are not. Thus, there is a positive connection between migration and remittance for Indonesian cases.

With the strong push in order to fix and increase the livelihood of the household, women from the village make this strategy as their way to search for livelihood and also with the goal of increasing the dignity of the family to a higher level.

Based on the analysis, the consumption pattern of the household can be described, in which most of the expenses are at consumption for daily bread and other expenses such as transportation and fuel.

The connection of remittance with expenses allocation used for investment for their children's education is an important issue for villagers because the remittance is still dominantly allocated for consumption expenses. A household was seldom found that allocated expenses for the education of their children. This has happened because there are no rules in the arrangement of the household budget and is also caused by neighborhood cultural factors, which do not support spending as much on children for their education. The unplanned use of the remittance appears to happen because the receiving family is not used planning their family finances.

Besides that, there are difficulties for children who live in the village to access higher education, such as high schools, due to the long distance travel. Such conditions influence the household decisions on the quality of their children's education.

The household expenses for education from the survey were Rp. 172.850 per month on average, with a maximum expense seen of Rp. 693.000 per month. The relatively low household expenses for education is because of the children's young ages on the study families, which is around the elementary school on average. With the expenses allocation from the remittance for education is able to reduce the condition of the difficult situation of schooling and reducing the possibility of drop-out children from school.

The survey shows that child education is also positively and significantly influenced by the parent educational background. From the study analysis, it is found that a lower parental education will negatively influence and prevent the children to go to school, and in contrary for children whose parents education is higher (senior high school) can provide a positive effect, which means children whose parents' education is higher tend to encourage their children to go to school.

The same condition is also found by Ranathunga and Seetha (2011), which show a significant positive influence from migration toward the level of educational achievement at village area in Pakistan. The result of the study also shows that children from migrant worker households not only acquire a higher level of school participation but they also have a longer stay at school averagely compare to children from a non-migrant worker household at the same village.

Education background is one of measurement devices to weigh the Human Development Index, by counting the average length of time at school, thus can learn the population quality in an area in a certain timeframe. It is hoped that the effect of remittance can improve the lives of the female migrant workers children. Although the allocation of the remittance for education is smaller compared to the household needs, however, this does not make the children of the female migrant workers drop out from schools.

The TKIs understood the importance of education for their children, this can be seen from the attention and motivation given to the children in order for their children stay at school and pursue the education to a higher degree. The TKIs do not want their children to have a lower education level and

work like their mothers as a female migrant worker or TKI who work in domestic sector abroad. This means that although the workers are low in education, they have a big hope for their children's education; this is also the reason for the children to be motivated to keep schooling.

There is a concern, if the TKIs are no longer working abroad due to end of the time of their contract or another factor, then the continuity of their children's education will be disturbed because there is no longer allocation for education from their parent. This condition does not seem to prevent the drop out condition, and if this is happening, then the children's education will stay low, and with lower education levels, they will not be competitive in the working market; they will be labor force with lower wage or even worse, become unemployed, which in the end will result in poverty. There is a big possibility that they will follow their mother's path to become migrant workers.

It seems that the values in the female's lives have been lost. The women dare to make decisions to go abroad for work, they are willing to leave their children and husband and other family members to make a living. With their departure abroad, there is an empty role within the family, which is the role as caregiver. Usually, grandmother or other relatives will replace that emptiness. The children who are left by their mothers to work abroad for quite long time are taking care by their grandmother or another relative will be bereaved, yet they do not have the power to communicate their reluctance and disagreement toward their mother's decision of becoming migrant worker abroad.

4. CONCLUSION

The income that comes from remittances is allocated to household daily bread such as food and other main necessities. The allocation for education is smaller compared to the allocation for household consumption. Thus, there is an allocation from this remittance for children's education even though the amount is small.

The remittance usage for children's education expenses cannot be separated from the influence of the parental education background. Parents with better education levels can enforce the remittance allocation for higher education, thus the children will have the opportunity to stay in school and pursue a higher and better level of education.

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