

**CHANGING GENDER ROLES AMONG THE WIFE OF MIGRANTS
(PRAVASI): A STUDY OF ROLE EXPANSION WITHOUT
AUTHORITY**

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DECLARATION

I, **ASWATHY S S** do hereby declare that the Dissertation Titled **CHANGING GENDER ROLES AMONG THE WIFE OF MIGRANTS (PRAVASI): A STUDY OF ROLE EXPANSION WITHOUT AUTHORITY** is based on the original work carried out by me and submitted to the Department of Sociology, Loyola College of Social Sciences(Autonomous), University of Kerala during the year 2024-2026 towards partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree Examination in Sociology. It has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title of recognition before any University or anywhere else.

Thiruvananthapuram

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled **CHANGING GENDER ROLES AMONG THE WIFE OF MIGRANTS (PRAVASI): A STUDY OF ROLE EXPANSION WITHOUT AUTHORITY** is a record of genuine work done by **ASWATHY S S** fourth semester Master of Sociology student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that it is hereby approved for submission.

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ABSTRACT

As migration has become a defining element of the economy of Kerala, particularly in the context of employment in the Gulf, there has been a remarkable evolution of the patterns of family organization and gender relations of the family of migrants. Overseas employment leads to a drastic impact on intra-household power relations, with families becoming breadwinners. While employment in other countries provides the family primary income, the primary breadwinner becomes the actual head of the family.

This research attempts to analyze the gap between responsibility and authority for Gulf migrants' wives in Thiruvananthapuram in the context of how the boundaries of gender roles are redefined in the context of international nuclear families. In order to analyze the content of the policy of migration, the research uses the classical method of case studies based on gender and nuclear family theory, and utilizes the strategies of patriarchy and migration on a daily basis.

Using the qualitative research analysis, the research will focus on whether employment in the Gulf has truly led to a shift in power relations and authority in the context of the family or whether the employment wives of the family, from the integration point of view, have undergone a shift in authority. The research will address analysis, substance and content of power relations, resources provided by the migrants and the family in order to establish, sustain and institutionalize changes in the family of the migrants. It will also address the content and forms of relations of patriarchy, resources provided by the state and the family, in support of extensive control.

This research adds to the discussions on gender roles, migration and policies for international families, particularly the unfinished wife of the Pravasi type. It sheds light on the way that migration transforms gender relations, focusing on the differences that remain, whilst highlighting the necessity for considering empowerment as a relational and contextual process.

Keywords: *Gulf migration, Gulf migrants' wives, Gender roles, Patriarchy, Family power relations*

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CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

International migration permeates modern life and no longer occupies a small social issue concern. Instead, it shapes families, and transforms economies, and societies on a global scale. Economic globalization, developed communication technology, and economic disparity among countries have intensified international labor migration. Beyond economic motivation, migration transforms social relationships, family dynamics, and daily life. Migrating, especially internationally, transforms family roles, emotional connections and family social order. Migrating families learn to harness technology and make scarce relatives' presence socially and emotionally instead of maintaining actual family presence. Focused communication and family social order make these families spatially & socially distributed.

International & Gulf migration has impacted the Indian social dynamics. The Gulf international migration remains the primary concern. Centuries of material & labour exchanges have transformed economically backward Indian regions, especially the oil-producing Gulf countries, into destinations of choice for various economically backward Indian regions. Once transformed, the Gulf cooperation remains the primary concern for various region & cooperating Gulf countries migration relationships. Alongside the various region & cooperating Gulf countries migration relationships, interregional relationships transformed. The remittance flow from the various economically backward Indian regions & economically transformed Gulf countries not only transformed the economic & social living standards of these regions, especially the Gulf countries, but also transformed the various economically backward Indian regions & especially the backward regions of interregional cooperation.

Kerala is a particularly interesting case regarding migration. For a number of years, a majority of state's families have relied on overseas migration to the Gulf countries as one of their main economic activities. Migration often becomes a familial practice, undertaken by different generations of families, and is no longer practiced by a singular individual (Osella & Osella, 2000). Social remittances have caused a number of changes in the local society, because of the money that is sent home to the families by the overseas members of families. Some of these changes include quality of housing, social consumption, and educational and social investments (Zachariah & Rajan, 2012). Under the strong social and economic links, the migration of members of a family (especially one person) is easily coordinated and is a social and economic practice that is widely embraced.

Migration has been extensively discussed in terms of the monetary benefits it provides, but little is widely argued about the social impacts of migration, especially concerning families. A rearrangement of domestic duties occurs with the movement of people as a result of migration. Kerala men tend to venture out to seek employment and women remain at home. The formation of transnational family is referred to as this when it is composed of families in different countries but keeps in touch through communication and financial support (Parreñas, 2005).

Maritally related to migrants, or Pravasi spouses, have a particularly significant place in such families. They get to the plate and deal with a host of activities which have traditionally been men. Among some of these roles are working with financial institutions, schools and government agencies, attending to the healthcare needs of their family members, and managing the finances of the household (Gulati, 1993). With the role of the women shifting to the roles played by men, women are increasingly participating in civic and social activities.

Although women have acquired additional responsibilities, they might still not hold the same influence as their male counterparts in making significant decisions. Desai and Banerji (2008) claim that the husbands of migrant families usually maintain control over major decisions such as making purchases, investments or money planning, yet the wives do the day-to-day work. Despite their distance, men might still be able to influence family affairs due to the modern communication channels. Moreover, traditional structures of patriarchal power also continue to suppress women within the joint or extended family further limiting the independence of women.

The above scenario gives rise to a paradox for Pravasi families. On the one hand, women are the cornerstones of society who take care of children and the house. But the absence of the male breadwinner will transfer the roles and choices of the home onto his hands in most cases. The implications of this on sociology are that we simply know not whether migration empowers women, but merely increases their load without a change in power relations (Kabeer, 1999).

Kerala, with its great health indices, high literacy levels and fairly developed gender development brings yet another complication to this issue. With education and social opportunities available in Keralan households and decision making, norms of patriarchy are still intact (Jeffrey, 2001). This proves that such gender equality is not always a consequence of development in society.

The present research is put into this frame. The issue of gender roles in Pravasi spouses in the district of Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala is under study to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. The enhancing of the responsibilities of women and the degree to which this expanding leads to actual empowerment and power are both areas of focus.

This research is qualitative and it dwells upon the experienced life of Pravasi women. It seeks to understand the day-to-day living, challenges and coping strategies of women in families that have members living in various countries as well.

Hence, this chapter pre-empts the study, outlines the key issues, and provides the background and context. It preconditions the study of the impact of migration on gender roles and finding out whether or not migration brings about or sustains the collapse or structure of social institutions.

1.2 GENDER, MIGRATION AND FAMILY STRUCTURES IN KERALA

In the context of the history of expansion of India, Kerala has always been in a peculiar position. Some of the indicators that have been used to feed these arguments include public health, literacy rates and lifespan (Rajan & Zachariah, 2019). The female literacy situation is particularly intriguing: not only has the access to both elementary and secondary school increased significantly over the past few decades, but new generations of women have been inherited with knowledge. The figures appear to indicate that our society is not taking the issue of gender parity lightly.

Regardless of the impressiveness of the sociological data, they still do not give a complete picture of the event. It does not mean that having a more education should lead to the absence of family hierarchy. The historical role of the man as head of the home, is also attributed to the power, property and symbolic leadership. Most of the college-educated women in the rural, semi-urban areas do not have jobs in the official sector or participate in illicit economic activities (Agarwal, 2018). Their lives remain to be organized around the unpaid housework. The cultural legitimacy of the "male head of the household" persona continues to have a growing disconnect with experience.

The sociological geography of Kerala is characterized by simultaneous existence of the social development and the traditional patriarchy. Although women are slightly better equipped in the areas of education, mobility, and knowledge, they might not be given an equal voice in the issues where the home is concerned. The exchange of power in the family does not necessarily come with literacy rate equality or health achievement (Bhagat & Keshri, 2020).

International migration has taken on revolutionary dimensions in this complicated atmosphere. Since the 1970s, many Keralans have left the state to the Gulf area, transforming the economic situation of the state and its family dynamics in the process. Many Keralites worked in the construction industry, service industry, and technical industry because of the high demand of labour as a result of oil boom in West Asia. It began as a business opportunity though over the years, it has become a way of life (Djurfeldt, 2021). New patterns of consumer demands have been materialized, school in a more private form has become more popular, there has been an increase in the amount of money spent on healthcare aspects, tiled roof has been substituted with concrete dwellings, and the visual landscape has been altered as a result of the money sent back. Rather than remaining a one-episode event, migration has taken over to become a social concept.

However, the effect is not limited to the physical or material plane. With husbands living in foreign countries for longer periods of time, sometimes coming back home only once in a few years, the family gets accustomed to the fact of absence. The wife and children remain back in Kerala, keeping the world around them moving, and at the same time, keeping their transnational connections alive (Srivastava, 2020). In these Pravasi families, absence becomes the norm, but it also necessitates constant adjustment. The family does not disintegrate; instead, it readjusts its own internal distribution of duties and responsibilities. In these families, women assume roles that are both functional and symbolic. They handle finances, monitor savings, make decisions on spending, and ensure that routine payments, such as school fees, electricity bills, and loan payments, are made on time. They attend parent teacher meetings, schedule medical appointments, manage religious or social commitments, and engage with banks or government offices (Idemudia & Boehnke, 2020). In many rural and semi urban parts of Thiruvananthapuram district, it is not at all unusual to find women handling government offices or banks alone, interacting with officials, or making day-to-day financial decisions. This is a far cry from the past in terms of gendered seclusion. On the face of it, these developments seem to indicate empowerment. Increased visibility, financial control, and engagement with institutions can be empowering. Many women express a sense of empowerment that has actually arisen as a result of migration, which forced them into new roles. What was previously deemed marginal has become crucial to the survival of the family. Migration, in this respect, creates spaces for agency.

However, there is much complexity involved to a more nuanced way of understanding the problem. Responsibility does not necessarily mean that one takes charge. Migrant wives

typically take a very long time before taking big financial decisions, such as buying property, building a home, organizing weddings, or investing in businesses. There is still a possibility that migrant men can be actively involved in decision making about their families with the use of modern technologies such as mobile phones, video conferencing and internet banking. Disengagement and absence are not similar (Zachariah and Rajan, 2020). Senior male family members may also be included in the strategic decision-making of mixed family arrangements. Though power is dispersed, not necessarily democratic; it is to stay merely top-down as it swarms and moves across space.

Rather than having flipped upside down interactions, the resultant would be a stratified social structure. The major decisions remain to be made at the expense of a male, but about minor, more routine things (such as spending, schooling of their children, small purchases, etc.) they are allowed to make their own judgement. Symbolic headship may continue to rest with the migrant father, even when he is physically absent for most of the year. The cultural imagination of power is remarkably durable, adjusting to transnational realities rather than being effaced by them.

This contradictory process-simultaneously expanded functional roles and persisting structural inequalities-raises fundamental questions about the nature of empowerment as a social and political project (Amrith & Sahraoui, 2018). Does enhanced administrative authority signal a radical shift in the balance of power, or does it indicate a shrewd tactical adjustment within an otherwise unaltered patriarchal structure? The Kerala model of development heightens this problem. If advanced literacy and social consciousness do not automatically translate into non-hierarchical family relations, then the migration experience must also be evaluated with comparable subtlety.

In the Thiruvananthapuram district, especially in the rural and semi-urban areas where Gulf employment is prevalent, these factors are a normal part of life. Families rely on remittances; the absence of males is expected rather than unexpected. Watching how gender roles are played out in these contexts can reveal much about the processes of social change that are underway—and that are rarely linear from tradition to transformation

The interplay between gender, migration, and family structure in Kerala is thus one of negotiation, adaptation, and selective continuity. Migration reallocates labor and increases women's visibility. However, the architecture of power tends to remain the same, sustained through cultural values, kinship relations, and technological connections. In placing this

research within this context, the analysis aims to move past easy assumptions of empowerment or stagnation. Rather, it seeks to explore how Pravasi wives make sense of their new roles and whether these changes represent real power or are circumscribed within existing power structures.



Figure 1.1: Migration-Induced Changes in Family Roles and Authority in Kerala

This figure 1.1 explains the process by which international male migration alters the family structure in Kerala. The figure above shows how the absence of the husband leads to an expansion of the wife's role and responsibilities, but with authority still mediated through patriarchal norms and structures. This model emphasizes the continuity of gendered power relations despite the apparent change in function.

1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

International migration is more than an economic activity-it is a significant social process that shapes family structures, gender roles, and power relations within households (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2014). In regions like Kerala, where migration to Gulf countries has been a long-standing phenomenon, its effects extend beyond income generation to influence everyday life, social relations, and cultural practices. For migrant families, particularly those where men migrate and women remain behind, the experience of migration is deeply connected to issues of responsibility, authority, and gender dynamics (Rajan & Zachariah, 2019).

This system of transnational family structure has arisen in Indian context, especially in the state of Kerala, due to the male dominated migration. In such families the husband makes it to

another country and the woman remains and takes care of the house. Gulati (1993) says that this system compels women to assume even greater roles at home, and to undertake more interaction with government institutions, such as in schools, banks, and local governments. This shift can suggest that more women are playing a part in both public and private life but it does not mean that they are necessarily getting a more say in the making of important decisions (Kabeer, 1999).

It has been demonstrated that migration can assist women as they can feel more empowered when they get more choices to move around, learn new things and also have a better self-esteem. Some of the variables that can define the degree of empowerment include access to resources, the power to control income, and make decisions independently (Desai and Banerji, 2008). The migrant spouse or other male members of the family are usually able to control key decisions made due to patriarchal norms, which dictate home relations. In transnational contexts, male power might be maintained even over distance due to modern communication technology, which enable male power to be preserved even beyond distances (Aleshkovski, 2017).

Several studies that have been done in Kerala to study migration have focused on the big picture at things like remittances, economic development and increase in the living standard (Zachariah and Rajan, 2012). Even while these studies show that migration is good for the economy, they don't always take into account the details at the household level, such the dynamics of power, bargaining, and decision-making. As empowerment involves not only the involvement but also the control and authority over resources and choices, the assumption that increased responsibilities will inevitably result in empowerment has been vehemently challenged in the context of gender studies (Kabeer, 1999).

In this context, the Pravasi homes in Kerala are an important site to carry out a sociological study. Women at such homes are often the heads at the home running day to day activities but the head is usually symbolic and decisions are often made by the absent male. In the same social context, women experience both the growing responsibility and the constant subordination constituting a complex and often contradictory role.

The present study narrows down to Pravasi women in the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala where there is an abundance of migrant families. The global objective of the study is to learn by investigating the real-life experiences of the participants how women can manage their

decisions and chores at home when their husbands are inaccessible. Some of the areas that are analyzed include family dynamics, forms of communication, as well as societal standards.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to present the lived experiences of women in transnational families as opposed to being explored through statistical representations. The article explores how women navigate their status, cope with their responsibilities and engage in decision making processes as long as the societal norms and expectations still exist. All in all, the study leaves us wondering whether migration does alter the gender relations or it merely complicates them.

Hence, the research is based on migration, gender and family dynamics. The comprehension of the manner with which social transformation occurs within the context of long-standing patriarchal systems as well as the critical study of the interrelationship between duty and authority in Pravasi families is both highlighted.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Out of an early economic response to a longer term and more structured social set up, male migration in Kerala to other countries, particularly the gulf countries, has taken a gradual yet consistent detour. Zachariah and Rajan (2012) believe that migration has become a part of family life in most rural and semi-urban communities. It influences the decisions regarding housing, education, consumption and social mobility. It is commonplace that male in areas such as Thiruvananthapuram spend considerable amounts of time overseas and only seldom up to the time of him coming back to his home, and not go with him. Consequently, such a lengthy separation is now common in families.

Domestic life is restructured in a big way by these transnational relationships. In the absence of their husbands, pravasi wives do a great deal of additional work outside the house. They are in charge of home expenditure coordination, remittance coordination, the coordination of obtaining healthcare, child education, and family and community interactions. Also, they are involved in administrative and financial roles that require involvement by the people through their interactions with formal institutions such as schools, local self-government organisations and banks (Gulati, 1993; Osella and Osella, 2000). When this occurs, women have a major role to play in ensuring that the home operates well.

But the fact that you have increased obligations does not imply that you have increased power. Migrant spouses often remain to exert influence or authority over large decision making, such as purchasing property, building a house, making large investments as well as long term

financial planning, even when women may be in charge of making smaller decisions and daily financial operations. Men are able to maintain power even when they aren't physically present since these choices are often made via transnational communication (Rajan & Sumeetha, 2010). When members of the family system are joined or extended and a major part is played by members of the family system who are older and are of the male gender in the family.

This results in the inequity of power in pravasi houses, where women are largely charged with household management but may not be able to make such large decisions. To make sense of these women's stories, it's necessary to differentiate between responsibility and authority. Any knowledge about the empowerment of women in the migrant house is inadequate and perhaps misleading till this gap is closed (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Even more hyperbolically, the influence of patriarchal norms in these interactions is a long-term effect. Conservative attitudes towards sustaining the male in a position of superiority within the household environment still persist in the state of Kerala, even though the state boasts of great literacy levels and highly developed socioeconomic measurements. Rather than creating a deconstruction of these norms, it is migration that often recode these norms. It was determined by Parrengas (2005) and Osella & Osella (2000) that existing power relations can be reproduced within transnational environment through exercise of digital communication, financial surveillance and family networks that facilitate the exercise of power at a distance.

The primary concern of the study lies in the fact that the pravasi spouses in the Thiruvananthapuram region have more obligations than powers to make decisions. Although the responsibility of running their own homes rests in the hands of women, it can still be the case that due to the established gender norms, women may not be able to have complete freedom because their bodies are controlled by their male partners. Whether migration assists people to gain power or merely relocate roles without altering the power structure is an important question that this situation brings to their minds.

This study seeks to appreciate the structure, negotiation, and experience of authority in the transnational families by focusing on lived experiences of pravasi women. The text emphasizes that there is a need to explore deeper in the dynamics of power, control, and autonomy rather than its presence as superficial signs of involvement. In such a manner, the study contributes to what we already know about the effects of gender relations and international migration on, and, in some cases, contribute to inequality in contemporary Kerala.

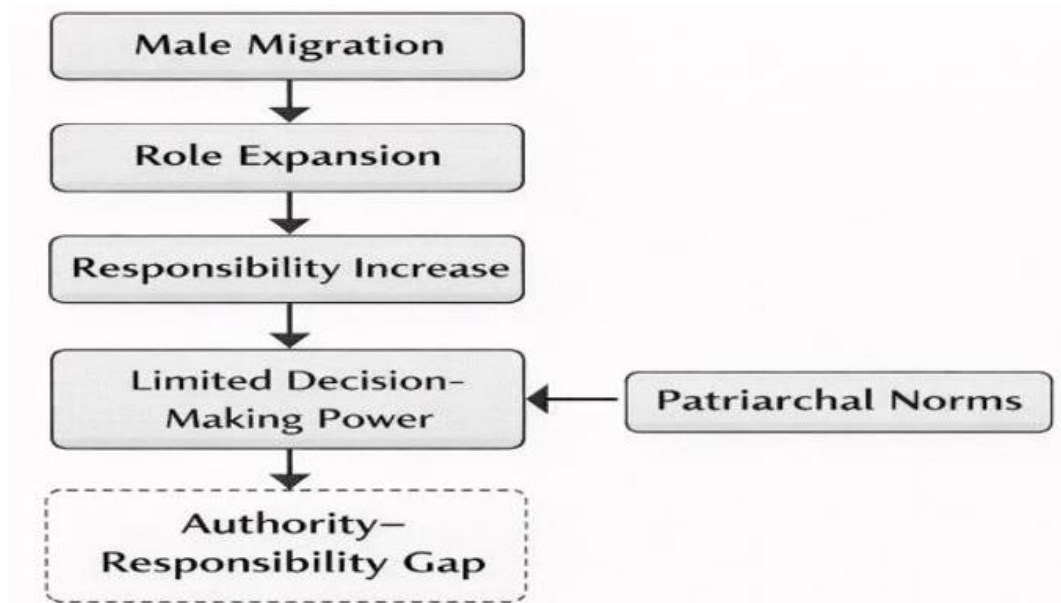


Figure 1.2: Conceptual Model of Role Expansion without Corresponding Authority

Figure 1.2 shows the conceptual framework of the study in which the role and duty of Pravasi women is increased as a result of male migration. Although the number of functional jobs has increased, it remains that the distribution of power to make critical decisions is obstructed by patriarchal principles as shown by the figure. The model emphasises that the study's conceptual focus is the authority-responsibility divide.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The applicability of this study in understanding the dynamic changes in power relations and gender roles in migrant families in Kerala cannot be overestimated. The social and economic impact of male migration to Gulf countries especially, is becoming a significant factor in Kerala. It investigates the impact of migration on the routine life of a family, in this particular context, the family as a unit is the Pravasi spouses in the Thiruvananthapuram region.

This study contributes to the mass of literature on gender and development by challenging the belief that in taking up more work outside the home, women are truly self-empowered or merely just artistically loaded with more work. Some of the key themes brought to the fore by the exploration of women lived experiences which the study has done include financial management, involvement in the public space, ability to gain access to the institution as well as power negotiation within the context of nuclear and extended family. The role played by communication technology in ensuring that the international controls and decision making are enabled are further enlightened.

In this way, this study helps bridge a gap that exists in the academic literature in terms of providing empirical evidence for a subject matter that has remained unexamined in the field of migration studies - the distinction between responsibility and authority. In contrast to studies that focus on macro-level dynamics such as remittances and economic growth, the findings from this study can be applied to understand the social dynamics that occur at the micro-level. The continuity and change in gender relations that this study identifies make sociological discourse on patriarchy, social transformation, and family dynamics easier to adapt.

The outcomes of this study can also be useful to policymakers, social workers as well as development practitioners who are involved in the welfare of migrants and gender empowerment. It stresses the need of considering migration from a social and gendered perspective in addition to an economic one when formulating policy. In totality, the research gives useful insights in future research as well as practical in-the-field programs, that would target such migratory women and their respective families.

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the impact of male migration on women in Kerala, one should take the role of authority in the home. Care for children, run the household, manage the money, and keep in touch with friends and family are all responsibilities of Pravasi ladies whose husbands work overseas. Patriarchal norms are observed since in spite of these norms, males are always the ones to make decisions and the ones to have access to resources.

The chapter examines the available literature on the impact of male migration on women's lives. It is organised around five themes: (1) Lived experiences of Pravasi wives, (2) Gender roles and authority within migrant households, (3) Conceptualising Changing Gender Roles and Their Movements, (4) persistence of patriarchy despite expanded responsibilities, and (5) Role strain from multiple responsibilities. These themes provide insight to the way in which migrant families share both domestic and childcare responsibilities, who does what, and how much power family members have.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.2.1 Lived Experiences of Pravasi Wives

A ground breaking study titled *In the Absence of their males* (2003) by Leela Gulati, gives a detailed study of those women of Kerala who were left behind when their males migrated abroad. Unlike other works that show the way women cope with institutions such as schools, banks, and government agencies when their husbands are absent in addition to taking care of children and the aged, handling finances, and more. Due to the performance of these roles' women tend to acquire experience, self-confidence and be seen in the community.

Having more responsibility does not necessarily imply more power as Gulati demonstrates so explicitly. Although the day-to-day is handled by women, migrating spouses or older male relatives usually make the big decisions in the case of the investments, property, moving plans and long-term money strategy. The continued cultural validation of patriarchal control and the perpetuation of male supremacy are shown by this disentanglement of duties and responsibilities.

Thomas (2007) supports these results in his article, *Male Migration in Kerala: A Study of the Impact on the Families of Migrants*, which makes the crucial contribution of Pravasi women to family maintenance. It is their role to take care of the budget, healthcare of the kids and

schooling. Thomas also mentions the fact that women still cannot have much power in terms of making decisions, particularly with the financial aspects and long-term plans. This is what feminists refer to as multiple roles without power as their research indicated.

Gardner (1995) argues that due to the growing responsibilities of women, women in migrant homes often experience a greater level of isolation, both emotionally and practically. The scope of their independent decision making is restricted, although their control of the family might be independent tertiary to the family system and social norms.

Parreñas (2001) puts out the idea of the international division of reproductive labour whilst arguing that women in transnational families are at the receiving end of increased responsibilities in the caregiving process yet they are not recognised or given any power. Within migratory settings, emotional and homework lack recognition.

According to Nair (2011), in studying the migration experience among families from Kerala to the Gulf region, the author notes the constant loneliness, anxiety, and emotional distress faced by many Pravasi wives because of the distance between wives and husbands.

These findings have also been supported by a number of field findings in the Kerala Migration Survey conducted by Zachariah et al. (2018). As can be seen from the study findings, remittances have indeed improved the standard of life in many households; however, they have also created additional stress and scrutiny among other things for the wives who have to do more household chores now than ever before. According to Rajan (2020), India Migration Report, while migration leads to greater economic security, it does not alter the dynamics of power in the family.

2.2.2 Gender Roles and Authority within Migrant Households

It is a common anti-migration literature theme to make a distinction between the role of women and their relative power. Increased number of roles of women does not alter patriarchal ownership of resources and decision making, as maintained by Gulati (2003) and Thomas (2007). The said phenomena can be elaborated in the light of this theory of gender and power by Connell (1987) which illustrates how the culture and institutional behaviours play a part in the creation and inherent maintenance of gendered roles.

Despite women being involved in handling home bills and remittances, migratory males tend to make strategic financial decisions remotely as noted by Rajan (2020). It is which is the expression of absentee patriarchy, where the power is in a symbolic but not actual sense. It is backed up by the statistics of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019) which

indicate that in Kerala, women lack much control over property and important family decisions despite having high education and health indicators.

Shah and Menon (1999) further assert that Remittances undermine home economic conditions though they reinforce male authority, as the key family provider. Nevertheless, women are making inroads in financial management although the male gender still has the upper hand when it comes to making long term decisions regarding investments.

Desai and Banerji (2008) suggest that the power of decision-making in women might soar in the short-run when the male is not around but the power is short-lived and it does not lead to any real empowerment or system change.

George (2005) asserts that concept of absentee patriarchy is solidified by the fact that migrant males are able to use the communication technology to maintain control of home decisions despite them being away.

One way of analysing the above scenario could be from the perspective of genre of resources, agency and achievements proposed by Kabeer (1999). Even if the Pravasi women receive remittance and other types of resources, their scope for empowering themselves remains restricted due to the gender roles that limit their agency. As Agarwal argues (1994), the bargaining ability of women within the domestic sphere would depend on whether women within the domestic sphere have access to their resources and not incomes.

As money alone cannot transform gender relations, empowerment (as discussed by Malhotra & Schuler, 2005) would require mobility and control over personal resources.

This case brings to mind the concept of feminisation of duty without the authority, as postulated by Chant (1997). Though, in this regard, women have more economic and administrative opportunity, males still possess most sources of power. Premchand explored household restructuring and reorganisation of household responsibilities with the aim of better understanding the role of the family in structurally adjusting to migration without the man necessarily implementing changes to his men. When together these studies reveal that we are not redistributing the power which is coinciding with the escalation of the gendered division of work.

2.2.3 Conceptualizing Changing Gender Roles and Their Movements

Change in gender roles is now becoming visible due to migration especially in those regions where traditionally, male occupations have been performed. The result of the Kerala Migration

Survey (2018) and Gulati (2003) enables to evince the financial management of women, their skills in institutional negotiation and their participation in local government. The report shows that such experiences enable women to boost their confidence and improve their abilities (Thomas, 2007).

Education is a major contributor to enabling these shifts to occur. Studies indicate that women at higher education levels are more active in political and home decision making. Vocational reinstatement of affected roles, however, do not necessarily herald the breakages of gendered power relations, as Connell (1987) cautions. The systems of symbols and cultural norms shape authority.

As Osella and Osella (2000) note, although migration out of the gulf does elevate household status and social mobility in Kerala, it does absolutely nothing to change gender relations in within the family. That is yet another testament that alteration in family power relations is not necessarily caused by the change in economic status or social prestige.

Hugo (2000) introduces the concept of the so-called stretched households, where migrant fathers maintain the centralised control over their families though the distance distribution of responsibilities. Decisions are continued to be made at a distance, and this keeps the hierarchies that exist old-fashioned even in the dissimilar circumstances.

Although women do become more competent and self-assured since they have started taking on more responsibility, Kaur (2004) notes that such progress is more utilitarian than transformational. Gender imbalance remains even though women are becoming more active to balance between their social and household roles.

The researches by Desai, which she has named as *Negotiated Identities: Male Migration and Left-Behind Wives in India* give us an insight into how women cope with societal limits as they strive to define themselves. As much as women might have assumed de facto positions of power, symbolic power remains with the males. Although women have increasingly become very visible through their engagement with the local organisations, cooperative groups and banks, still the males tend to remain in control of the resources and decisions to be made in future.

Thus, moving gender roles, instead of radical change, points to a bargaining era. The very nature of inequality and complexity of social change is demonstrated by the combination of increased responsibilities of women and their ongoing domination by men.

2.2.4 Persistence of Patriarchy Despite Shifts in Responsibilities

Although the roles may have shifted, it is most apparent that even now, patriarchy remains ever deeply embedded in our social and family thinking. Walby (1990) argues that patriarchy is used to continue to entrench male dominance in a number of contexts such as the home, the workplace, cultural norms and the legal system. Migration has the advantages, by redistributing care labour without necessarily offending patriarchal norms, as the concept of global care chains as new form of demonstration further illustrates.

Kapadia (1995) asserts that gender relations in South India drive caste and familial relationships that lower the chances of women attaining complete independence despite the increasing roles and duties they assume. This shows that gender inequity is supported by structural factors, which go beyond the home.

These ideological frameworks and cultural norms that promote male dominance sustain patriarchal control as highlighted by Chakravarti (2003). These norms shape everyday activities and social pressures, and help maintain male supremacy despite any socioeconomic limitations.

According to Jeffrey (2001), even though the state has a high level of literacy and development, gender inequality still exists in some subtle forms embedded in cultural and family practices within the state of Kerala. This implies that gender equality at the home is not an off product of the societal progress alone.

Although migration does present women with opportunities to participate, empirical studies in Kerala revealed that migration does not do anything to eliminate the systemic inequality. Male power is legitimised by culture, hindering the independence of women (Gulati, 2003; Thomas, 2007; Rajan, 2018). Male dominance still continues in issues like property titles, investment in financial enterprises and decisions to migrate.

Education, exposure, and economic engagement are all activities geared towards destroying patriarchal norms but these are slow and uneven. Women can rule the home but males can still gain the symbolic power as the patriarchy evolves rather than disintegrates. It is the daily experience of Pravasi spouses which is characterized by this collision between change and constancy.

2.2.5 Role Strain from Multiple Responsibilities

People might develop role strain when they are obliged to balance excessive workloads without adequate information or support. Connell (1987) says that a woman will tend to become mentally and physically exhausted because of working long hours, yet having no equal authority. Walby (1990) supports this by showing how the system of patriarchy limits the agency of the women and raises their responsibilities.

Thomas (2007) believes that Pravasi spouses are under a lot of pressure to look after their children schooling, finances and their social responsibilities all by themselves. Among the challenges raised by Gulati (2003) are mental anguish, loneliness, relentless scrutiny by the society, etc. The women who are left behind have even a heavier load should care giving responsibilities be distributed to them more as in the model of global care chains noted by Hochschild (2000).

Emotional work bears through even greater emotional labor by women in migrant households in the absence of both institutional and family support as Parreñas (2001) further elaborates. Care giving has an invisible nature and this is unrecognized by society and hence it has an adverse impact on physical and mental health.

Nair (2011) takes this a step further by stating that Pravasi females find themselves psychologically uneasy, isolated in their communities, subjected to endless pressure to keep the home afloat. Due to this reason, psychological effects of the migration factor become a factor that is part and parcel of their day to day lives.

The research indicated that the act of economic participation by women did not necessarily result in a greater number of decisions. As Kabeer (1999) notes, more than money is needed to change the power relations between genders. Agarwal (1994) further asserts that even when women have the day-to-day costs, they still do not make most of the strategic decisions. It is the enhanced accountability without authority, as characterised by Chant (1997). It is in the context of migration in Kerala that Zachariah and Rajan confirm that women of such a society increase their financial burdens but even then, their financial status is still determined by the patriarchal norms.

The systemic theories of role tension between the spouses of the Pravasi are not only due to personal factors, but also to tradition, symbolic power, and the culture of the Pravasi spouses.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The impact of the male migration on the Pravasi women in Kerala is explored with the multi-theoretical framework. The study is directed towards gender roles, power relations, decision making powers, propagation of patriarchy at the migrant homes. The huge influx of men into Gulf countries has significantly influenced family life in Kerala as well as its dynamics. In this meaning, pravasi wives are women whose husbands have joined jobs in foreign countries, leaving them to take care of the home and children back to where they had originally come to.

The social reality of the Pravasi wives is not possible to be explained using a single theoretical framework, due to the interactions between gendered labour, power relations, cultural standards and structural inequality. As such, five interrelation theoretical frameworks were applied in this study: (1) Connell's theory of gender and power, (2) patriarchal theory and the persistence of male dominance, (3) Hochschild's concept of invisible labour and global care chains, (4) theories of family change and gender role expansion under migration, and (5) Social Role Theory. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens to analyse how increased responsibilities coexist with limited authority in the lives of migrant wives.

2.3.1 Connell's Theory of Gender and Power: Responsibility without Authority

The disproportional distribution of power by migrant families can be advised in terms of the theory of power and gender offered by R.W. Connell (1987). The three interrelated components which Connell defines as the three aspects of how gender relations are constructed are as follows: The sexual division of work, the sexual division of power, and the structure of cathexis (emotional and social ties). The exercise of power does not necessarily alter when men migrate, but the work division alter as a result of women being left with extra responsibility.

Despite women being in charge of the financial aspect, childcare, elderly care, and social responsibility as Pravasi wives, males mostly keep the control over the strategy decision-making authority, including remittances, property, and future migration plans. Contrary to the equipotency of functional responsibility and making decisions, women demonstrate an analytical difference between the two aspects of decision-making and functional responsibility. Since structural power is yet to be established as founded upon gender equality, the idea presented by Connell helps to explain why circumcision as a broader role does not necessarily lead to gender equality.

2.3.2 Patriarchy and the Persistence of Male Dominance

In cases when males are not physically present, the theory of patriarchy helps explain why male supremacy perpetuates. According to Walby (1990), the patriarchal system is seen to play into a variety of spheres, including the economic, cultural, ideological, and familial spheres. The scholar term the process of sustained dominance by men, even when they do not live in a particular country, as absentee patriarchy, an adaptation of patriarchy other than its weakening.

By obtaining remittances sent to them by their friends and family back home, this allows the males to have more control over their roles as breadwinners and to have more bargaining power to make important decisions. Still, mostly, male dominance permeates long-term investments and ownership of assets so that male dominance keeps women in control over family expenses. Although the attention of women has still been growing, through this structure, male domination will still persist. This, therefore, exaggerates gendered hierarchies in families by influencing who does work and who claims authority.

2.3.3 Hochschild's Concept of Invisible Labour and Care Work

The emotional and psychological burdens imposed on the Pravasi women may be understood better within the context of the two invisibility linkages of the work and transnational care concept. According to Hochschild most of the job that women perform is unrecognised and undermined in society. This is more so in nurturing and managing emotions. Being denied institutional support, social recognition upon women choosing more of the care-giving roles is worsened by the male migration, which further isolates them.

Emotional needs of kids, looking after of the elderly, preservation of kinship ties and keeping of family honour are all duties that inherently fall upon Pravasi spouses in migrant household. Despite all these efforts, the decision-making capacity is at a dire minimum. Patriarchy operates not only through presence but also through domination and acknowledgement as is the case with the paradigm set out by Hochschild. The problem of inequality in the male-female dynamics in the household continues to exist as the female does the household chores, but still, the man retains his majority of the reins.

2.3.4 Family Change, Migration, and Expansion of Gender Roles

Theories explaining transformation of families show that migration is one of the factors behind the change in the traditional division of labour in the family. Migration of males makes the traditional family system collapse, thus making women undertake activities done by men,

which include dealing with cash and people. In sociological studies about migration, this results in the broadening of duties of individuals, but no essential shift in the social setting.

Despite Pravasi spouses in Kerala possessing no power in their homes (although they appear to be more powerful outside in areas such as banks, schools, and other social organizations). This contradiction implies that migration results in families undergoing modernization in terms of practice, although not in terms of ideology in its primitive form. The shifting of gender roles occurs, but the existing social system remains the same, and this model is applied to understand the situation better.

2.3.5 Social Role Theory: Changing Roles without Power

Why the attempts to further the roles of women could lead to neither the equal authority nor the power, might be better explained with the help of social role theory? The theory holds that social roles are not a matter of individual capabilities but rather as dictated by cultural norms and expectations. Women are even supposed to focus on housework and care giving, in cases when they can efficiently multitask. This is attributed to the fact that male gender is still associated with authority.

Since there are no males in migrant households, women get more responsibilities. They also have the responsibility of taking care of the home, the money of the family, the children and the community. They, however, remain still considered as the secondary decision-makers in the eyes of the society. It is not unusual that their authority may be viewed as being temporary, subject to the absence of the husband. Therefore, women not only have to contend with greater responsibilities and at the same time be subordinate to the authority of men.

Due to this fact, the problem of symbolic male domination continues to exist and women cannot attain long-term independence. As such, role expansion per se does not put at risk continuation of pre-existing gender roles within the home with reference to the Social Role Theory.

2.3.6 Integrated Theoretical Lens in the Present Study

This theoretical framework helps the research to methodically understand and assess the everyday life of Pravasi spouses in Kerala. To examine this difference between having more responsibilities and less of the authority to make decisions, the gap between the two is explored using the theory of gender and power by Connell. Both the patriarchal theory and the theory by Hochschild of the invisible labour yet again tend to focus on the unsung emotional and caring labour involved that women attend to, but which very often goes unrecognised.

Social role theory and family transition theory give more in-depth evidence about how migration can lead to people having their roles enlarged without an increase in their power. Combining these perspectives, in that these positions enable the shaping of discussion and analysis. This holistic perspective enables the research to go beyond simple narratives and get at a more nuanced comprehension of the interplay between gender, power, and migration in the context of family dynamics.

2.4 RESEARCH GAP

There is plenty of research regarding Kerala migrations; however, most of these studies focus on remittance and economic development, as well as improvements to the quality of life in households. Scientists such as Gulati, Thomas, and Rajan have analyzed the impact of migration by men on social relations within the family and the increased responsibilities that women must carry. There are also empirical findings related to the analysis of migration trends, their consequences, and the socio-economic impacts. However, one may see the absence of micro-level research regarding the distribution of power within families.

However, many researches have also indicated that the responsibilities of wives increase when their husbands are out of town. But the measurement of empowerment usually remains limited to gaining new capabilities or managing finances, rather than questioning an important issue of power imbalance between responsibility and authority, especially decision-making authority over major aspects such as property, investment, and birth control, for example. The frequently repeated assertion that “roles increased while authority did not” needs further theoretical examination.

Moreover, some studies have shown that even economic interests for women do not always translate into higher levels of influence in decision-making processes. As feminists’ scholars argue, not only financial means but also other factors are required to alter the gender power relations in the private sphere (Kabeer, 1999). Though women can easily take care of the household expenses, yet, they still lack the power to make major decisions regarding large-scale financial affairs, as evident from the studies about the financial obligations of women (Agarwal, 1994). As pointed out by Chant (1997), this occurs due to the reason that women are taking on more responsibilities but without any increase in authority. Though the women of Kerala, whose families are affected by migration, bear unequal responsibility for the family finance, yet the patriarchal tradition continues to play its role regarding strategic control over these assets (Zachariah and Rajan).

There has been lack of research on how patriarchal norms, symbolic power, and male domination persist among the migrant families in Kerala despite the state having an excellent reputation in regard to female literacy and progressive social indices. The Migration studies do not really focus much on some of these factors such as emotional labour by Pravasi spouses, role pressure, social isolation, limited mobility, and limited participation in social networks. Facing daily struggles, it is often decided to be thrown into the shadow in relation to financial performance.

Besides that, little research interested in the experiences of women involved in migrating families takes into consideration issues of patriarchy, emotional labour, financial management, and gender roles. These are all related in the environment of extended absence of men, and this demands a comprehensive sociological outlook.

In the context of migration studies in Kerala, the term Pravasi wives refers to women whose husbands have migrated to other regions or countries-particularly to Gulf nations-for employment, while the women themselves continue to reside in the place of origin. These women experience prolonged spousal absence and occupy a critical position at the intersection of family, migration, and gender relations. However, their everyday social experiences remain insufficiently documented at the micro level.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by:

- Focusing on the lived experiences of Pravasi wives through a micro-level sociological study;
- Examining the mismatch between expanded responsibilities and limited decision-making authority within migrant households;
- Understanding the ongoing impact of symbolic power and patriarchal structures on power relations, even in the absence of men physically present;
- Considering all these phenomena in a single theoretical framework which includes gender, power, patriarchy and migration.

By filling these gaps, the study aims to provide a greater understanding of the changes male migration brings to the dynamics of power, emotions and gender in the household, going beyond just the financial aspects to capture the real social experiences of the Pravasi wives of Kerala.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have had a glimpse of some of the main studies which have been done to examine the effects of male migration out of Kerala on the women who remain behind, particularly the Spouses of Pravasi. The research was reviewed in this chapter and some key issues such as patriarchy, emotional labour, migration, role strain, shifting gender roles, domestic authority and gender roles in the workplace were discussed. Inasmuch as migration assists most of the families financially, the analysis shows that it also leads women to experience deep emotional and social changes.

Pravasi women in the absence of their husbands increase their responsibility around the household, including manage the money, children and elderly, and look after the house. Even though patriarchal norms are still underway, and the power and autonomy of decisions made by women is still heavily limited, their role in life and in decision making can have greatly increased. Everyday social experiences, emotional stress, and social isolation of Pravasi women get relatively less attention compared to research that concentrate on economic repercussions of migration.

By drawing on theoretical perspectives such as global care chains, gender and power, patriarchy, and family change, this study moves beyond surface-level discussions of migration and empowerment. The identified research gap highlights the need for micro-level, context specific studies that focus on women's lived experiences, their authority in the household, and emotional challenges rather than only structural or economic indicators.

This chapter thus provides a strong foundation for the present study and justifies the need to explore the social life, household authority, and emotional experiences of Pravasi wives in Kerala. The following chapters will detail the research methodology adopted for the study and present findings based on the lived realities of the respondents.

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the research methodology employed to examine the authority responsibility gap among Pravasi wives in Thiruvananthapuram district, with particular focus on the changing nature of gender roles within migrant households. Given the complexity and context-specific nature of family dynamics shaped by male out-migration, the study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore how Pravasi wives experience, interpret, and negotiate their expanded roles in the absence of their spouses.

The methodology is guided by the broader aim of understanding not only the visible expansion of responsibilities but also the subjective meanings attached to this change particularly in relation to authority, autonomy, decision-making, and social expectations.

By focusing on the lived experiences of selected Pravasi wives, the study seeks to foreground everyday negotiations and power relations within the household, thereby providing depth and nuance to the analysis of gendered transformations in migrant family settings.

3.2 TITLE OF THE STUDY

Changing Gender Roles Among Pravasi Wives: A Study of Role Expansion Without Authority in Thiruvananthapuram District

3.3 CONCEPTUALIZATION

The various concepts used in the study have evolved from the detailed literature review on the topic.

3.4 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

3.4.1 Gender Roles

Theoretical Definition

According to Talcott Parsons, gender roles are socially structured expectations and responsibilities assigned to men and women within the family and society. He emphasized that men and women perform complementary roles, which contribute to maintaining social order and stability within the social system.

Operational Definition

In this study, gender roles refer to the domestic, financial, caregiving, and social responsibilities performed by Pravasi wives in the absence of their migrant husbands.

3.4.2 Authority

Theoretical Definition

Based on Max Weber's concept of authority and legitimate power. Authority refers to the socially accepted power exercised by an individual in decision-making and controlling family or social affairs within a particular social structure.

Operational Definition

Authority in this study refers to the ability of Pravasi wives to make decisions regarding household matters, finances, childcare, mobility, and family affairs during the absence of their husbands.

3.4.3 Responsibility

Theoretical Definition

Responsibility refers to the duties and obligations individuals undertake within the family and society, often shaped by social expectations, cultural norms, and gender roles. In the sociological context, responsibilities reflect both individual commitment and the influence of broader social structures such as family, marriage, and community relationships.

Operational Definition

In this study, responsibility refers to the domestic, financial, emotional, and caregiving duties managed by Pravasi wives during the prolonged absence of their husbands working abroad.

3.4.4 Pravasi Wives

Theoretical Definition

Pravasi wives are women whose husbands migrate abroad for employment while they remain in their home country managing household and family responsibilities. In the sociological context, their experiences are shaped by migration, gender norms, family structures, and social expectations within transnational families.

Operational Definition

In this study, Pravasi wives refer to married women residing in Thiruvananthapuram district whose husbands are employed in Gulf countries and who are actively involved in managing household, caregiving, and social responsibilities during their husbands' absence.

3.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.5.1 General Research Question

- What are the roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority and autonomy of wives of the migrants? And how do they manage these roles in the absence of their husband?

3.5.2 Specific Research Question

- How do the household, financial roles and social responsibilities of migrant wives change after their husbands migrated? And what are the new roles do they feel they have taken on, and how do they make sense of these changes?
- To what extent the wives of migrant's exercise decision making authority within the household in the absence their husbands? Whether do they still rely on their husbands or other family members for approval or guidance?
- What are the strategies do they use to manage their everyday responsibilities? And what sources of support (family, community, religion, personal strength) help them cope with emotional or practical challenges?
- How do they negotiate authority with husbands, in laws, or other family members when conflicts or disagreements arise?

3.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

General Objective

- To understand the changing gender roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority of Pravasi wives in the absence of their husbands.

Specific Objectives

- To examine the changes in household, financial, and social responsibilities experienced by Pravasi wives after their husbands migrate abroad.
- To understand the extent of decision-making authority and autonomy exercised by Pravasi wives within the household during their husbands' absence.

- To explore the coping strategies and support systems adopted by Pravasi wives in managing emotional and practical challenges.
- To analyze how Pravasi wives negotiate authority and responsibilities with husbands, in-laws, and other family members within migrant households.

3.7 TYPE OF RESEARCH

A qualitative approach is adopted for the study, and a multiple case study design was used to collect data for the purpose of the study. Qualitative research refers to a research approach that focuses on exploring, understanding, and interpreting phenomena through non-numerical data. It involves collecting and analysing rich, descriptive data such as interviews, observations, documents, and field notes to gain in-depth insight into the underlying meanings, perspectives, and experiences of participants. Here, to explore and understand the changing gender roles among Pravasi wives and their experiences of role expansion without authority within migrant households, a qualitative approach is adopted.

3.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design refers to the overall plan or structure that guides the collection and analysis of data to address a specific research question or objective. A research design provides a roadmap for conducting the study and ensures that the research is systematic, rigorous, and capable of generating meaningful and trustworthy findings.

In order to investigate and comprehend the changing gender roles among Pravasi wives in Thiruvananthapuram district, this study uses a qualitative case study design. Because it allows for a comprehensive, in-depth examination of a particular group of people in their real-life social and family settings, the case study approach is especially well-suited for this type of research. Giving a thorough understanding of the lived experiences of Pravasi wives and the authority-responsibility gap within migrant households is the aim of this design. Since each participant's experiences, responsibilities, coping mechanisms, and perceptions are influenced by social, cultural, emotional, and economic factors, the focus is on recording their subjective realities. This is particularly relevant in situations where there is limited previous research and where gaining deeper insights is more important than measuring preset variables. When the goal of a study is to thoroughly examine and understand the lives of Pravasi wives rather than verify theories or measure variables, this design becomes highly appropriate. By using this method, the study aims to understand the dynamics experienced by Pravasi wives during their husbands' prolonged absence, such as increased household responsibilities, decision-making

authority, emotional labour, and coping strategies. A greater understanding of how these women negotiate changing gender roles within migrant families is made possible by the case study design's emphasis on real-life experiences.

3.9 RATIONALE OF QUALITATIVE STUDY

Rather than adopting a quantitative approach and identifying this gap using numbers, this study could be done using a qualitative approach that seeks to understand how and why this gap exists. Issues of gendered expectations, decision-making, and autonomy are explored in the research via an interpretative and context-sensitive perspective. The qualitative nature of the methodology applied in the study enables it to capture on the nuances and universals that are likely to be ignored by quantitative methodologies.

3.10 SAMPLING

The target population for this study consists of married women residing in Thiruvananthapuram district whose husbands are employed in Gulf countries. This includes women who are actively managing household, financial, caregiving, and social responsibilities during the prolonged absence of their husbands.

Women aged between 31 and 49 years whose husbands have been working abroad for a significant period make up the sampling frame. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method frequently used in qualitative research, was used in the study to select participants. Participants were selected according to several eligibility criteria, including age, duration of migration, family responsibilities, and district residency. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the varied experiences of Pravasi wives, efforts were made to ensure variation across socio-economic background, family structure, and duration of migration. Eight participants in total were selected, and the sample size was determined based on the qualitative objective of reaching data saturation.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants included in this study were married women between the ages of 31 and 49 years residing in Thiruvananthapuram district, whose husbands were employed in Gulf countries for a significant period. Women who were actively involved in managing household and family responsibilities during their husbands' absence were considered eligible for the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants were excluded if they were below 31 or above 49 years of age, unmarried, residing outside Thiruvananthapuram district, or if their husbands were not employed abroad. Women who were unwilling to participate in the study were also excluded.

3.11 SAMPLE SIZE

For this study, a total sample of 8 Pravasi wives satisfying the inclusion and exclusion criteria was selected.

3.12 SOURCES OF DATA

Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from Pravasi wives residing in Thiruvananthapuram district whose husbands were employed in Gulf countries.

Secondary Data

Secondary data comprise information from books, journals, research articles, reports, and literature related to migration, gender roles, transnational families, and the lived experiences of Pravasi wives in Kerala.

3.13 TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

The interview schedule was prepared to collect the socio-demographic profile of Pravasi wives participating in the study. This schedule consisted of closed questions dealing with socio-demographic details such as age, educational status, occupation, family structure, duration of husband's migration, and place of residence. A semi-structured interview guide including more than 42 questions was prepared based on the research questions. Certain modifications were made to the questions according to the responses of the participants during the data collection process. An in-depth interview was conducted as the primary technique of data collection to gather detailed information from the respondents regarding their responsibilities, decision-making authority, emotional experiences, and coping strategies. Non-participatory observation was also used by the researcher to observe the family environment, interaction patterns, and everyday responsibilities of Pravasi wives within the study setting. This contributed to making the study more detailed and meaningful.

3.14 DATA COLLECTION

The researcher collected the data from eight Pravasi wives residing in selected areas of Thiruvananthapuram district whose husbands were employed in Gulf countries. The researcher

visited each participant personally and conducted interviews accordingly. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour. The interview guide was originally prepared in English and later translated into Malayalam for the purpose of the interview.

3.15 DATA ANALYSIS

The data gathered through in-depth interviews were subjected to thematic analysis with the main goal of understanding the lived experiences of Pravasi wives and the changing gender roles within migrant households. Coding was performed manually, allowing the researcher to identify and label significant statements, phrases, and patterns related to participants' responsibilities, authority, decision-making experiences, emotional challenges, and coping strategies.

3.16 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The time constraints and household responsibilities faced by Pravasi wives during the data collection process were one of the major limitations of the study. Many participants had limited availability and often appeared busy during interviews because of their domestic, caregiving, and family responsibilities. As a result, the length and depth of certain conversations were occasionally constrained by the circumstances.

CHAPTER 4 - DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 NARRATION OF THE CASES

This chapter presents the experiences of eight women whose husbands are working in Gulf countries. For confidentiality, the participants are identified as A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H. All participants are living in Kerala while their husbands are abroad. Their experiences are presented in both verbatim (their own words) and narrative (descriptive) forms. This chapter focuses on how migration has affected their lives, especially the increase in responsibilities at home. While migration improves financial conditions, it also creates challenges like stress, loneliness, and limited decision-making power. The following sections explain each case in detail.

Case ‘A’

Case ‘A’ This first participant, Case ‘A’ is a thirty-one-year-old working woman employed as a Confidential Assistant in the Kerala Legislative Assembly. She belongs to a middle-class family and has been married for the past seven years. Her husband has been working abroad in Qatar as a CCTV operator since 2013, and because of this long-term migration, she has been living most of her married life without her husband’s physical presence. Their family consists of five members, including one child and her parents. Due to her husband’s absence, she has taken up multiple responsibilities both inside and outside the home. A said, “My husband is away most of the time, so I have to manage everything by myself.” Her husband visits only once a year, and they maintain their relationship mainly through phone calls and WhatsApp. She explained, “We talk whenever we get time. Sometimes daily, sometimes less, but communication is very important for me.” Her daily life is a mix of work, childcare, and household duties. Over time, she has adjusted to this routine, even though it was very difficult in the beginning. A said, “At first it was very hard to manage everything alone, but slowly I got used to it.”

Her life changed a lot after her husband migrated. Earlier, responsibilities were shared, and she had emotional support at home. But now, she has to think and act independently in almost all situations. She said, “Earlier I didn’t have to worry about everything, now I have to take care of all matters.” This change increased her responsibilities and also created mental pressure. At the same time, it helped her become more confident and practical. A said, “Now I feel I can handle situations better than before.” Her daily routine is very busy and tightly scheduled. She wakes up early, completes cooking and household work, takes care of her child, and then goes

to work. After returning from work, she again manages household tasks and helps her child with studies. A said, "From morning till night I am busy, there is always something to do." Even though she feels tired, she continues her responsibilities because she knows they cannot be avoided. She added, "Sometimes I feel very tired, but I just continue because there is no other option."

Financial responsibility is one of the major areas where her role has increased. After her husband moved abroad, she became the main person responsible for managing all financial matters in the household. She handles the money sent by her husband and uses it carefully for all needs such as household expenses, her child's education, medical needs, and savings. A said, "I have to manage money properly because everything depends on it." In the beginning, she found it difficult because she was not used to handling finances alone. She explained, "Earlier I didn't think much about money, but now I have to calculate everything." Slowly, she learned budgeting and planning. Now she manages expenses carefully and avoids unnecessary spending. She also deals with regular payments like electricity bills, water bills, loans, and other household expenses. Sometimes many expenses come together, which creates pressure. A said, "When many expenses come at the same time, I feel tension, but I plan step by step." This shows her practical way of handling financial stress.

Her social role has also changed after her husband's migration. Earlier, she used to attend functions and events with her husband, but now she has to go alone in most situations. She attends family functions and religious programs whenever possible. A said, "Now I have to represent the family alone in most situations." Initially, this felt uncomfortable, but gradually she became used to it. She explained, "At first I felt shy, now I am okay." Her participation in such events depends on her schedule and responsibilities. People around her generally see her as a responsible and independent woman. A said, "People respect me because I manage both work and family." At the same time, she feels that society sometimes misunderstands her situation. She said, "People think life is easy because my husband is abroad, but they don't understand the real situation."

Due to her busy routine, she does not actively participate in community activities or women's groups. Her schedule is already filled with work and household responsibilities. She said, "I don't get time for such activities because my routine is very busy." Even though she understands the importance of social participation, practical difficulties prevent her from being involved. Along with this, she also manages all institutional responsibilities independently. She visits banks, schools, hospitals, and government offices whenever required. A said, "All official

work I have to handle alone now.” In the beginning, she found it difficult to deal with such formal systems. She explained, “At first I didn’t know how to handle these things, but now I am confident.” Her job experience has also helped her gain confidence in dealing with such situations.

She sees the changes in her life as both positive and negative. On one side, her responsibilities have increased significantly, making her life more stressful. She said, “Sometimes I feel everything is too much to handle.” Managing multiple roles like employee, mother, and homemaker is not easy. On the other side, she feels that these changes have made her more independent and stronger. A said, “Now I feel more confident because I can manage things on my own.” She takes many decisions on her own, especially related to daily household management and financial planning. However, she still consults her husband for major decisions. A said, “For big decisions, I always discuss with him and then decide.”

Even though she has become independent, she still depends on emotional support from her husband and family. She sometimes seeks advice from her parents or in-laws when needed. A said, “Support from family is very important for me.” There are situations where she feels that her decisions are influenced by others, especially due to family expectations. She explained, “Sometimes others question my decisions, but I try to handle it calmly.” She also pointed out that traditional ideas about gender roles still exist in society. A said, “In many places, people think men should take major decisions.” But in her own life, she has taken those responsibilities because of necessity.

Her daily routine requires careful planning. She balances work, childcare, and household duties through proper time management. A said, “If I don’t plan my day, everything becomes difficult.” Even with planning, she sometimes feels physically and mentally tired. She explained, “By the end of the day, I feel very exhausted.” Still, she continues her routine because of her responsibilities. Emotionally, she feels lonely at times because her husband is not with her. A said, “When I have problems or when I am sick, I miss him a lot.”

Communication through phone and WhatsApp helps her manage this feeling. She said, “Talking to him gives me relief.”

To cope with emotional stress, she depends on her inner strength and practical thinking. She focuses on her responsibilities and tries to stay positive. Her child is a major source of motivation. A said, “My child gives me strength to continue everything.” When she faces problems, she depends on her husband or family members for support. She believes that having

a support system is very important. A said, “Even if I manage things alone, knowing someone is there to support gives confidence.”

She has also experienced conflicts with relatives or in-laws at times. She handles such situations patiently and avoids unnecessary arguments. A said, “I don’t like arguments, I try to solve things calmly.” When her decisions are questioned, she explains her reasons clearly and stands by them. A said, “If I am sure about something, I will stand with my decision.” This shows her confidence and independence.

She believes that if her husband returns permanently, some responsibilities may reduce, but the skills she has developed will remain. A said, “Now I know how to manage things, that will not change.” She believes that taking responsibility has made her stronger and more confident in handling different situations in life. A want to continue working and managing her family responsibilities in a balanced way so that she can provide a secure and stable life for her child and family. She said, “I want to manage my work and family well and give a good future for my child.” She also values staying close to her family and maintaining strong relationships despite the challenges she faces. Whatever the situation is, as a working woman managing multiple responsibilities, she has the confidence to handle everything by herself rather than depending completely on others.

Case ‘B’

Case ‘B’ is a thirty-one-year-old working woman employed as a Computer Assistant (Senior Grade) at the University of Kerala. She belongs to a middle-class family and has completed her Bachelor of Commerce degree. She has been married for the past 11 years and is living with her two children. Her husband has been working in Oman as a manager in a private company for the last 15 years. He migrated in 2010 in search of a better job and stable income. He comes home once in about nine months, and they maintain their relationship mainly through WhatsApp and phone calls. Case ‘B’ said, “Even though he is far away, we talk regularly. Communication is what keeps us connected.” Because of this long-term migration, she manages both household and work responsibilities on her own most of the time.

The daily life of Case ‘B’ is fully occupied with multiple responsibilities. She wakes up early in the morning and starts her day by preparing food for her children. She cooks breakfast and lunch, gets her children ready for school, and ensures they leave on time. She said, “Morning time is always busy. I have to finish everything before my children go to school.” After that, she goes to her workplace at the University of Kerala. Even after returning from work, her

responsibilities continue at home. She cleans the house, helps her children with studies, and manages all household duties. Case 'B' explained, "There is no free time in my daily life. Work and family together fill the whole day." At times, she feels physically tired, but she continues because all responsibilities depend on her.

After her husband's migration, financial responsibility has completely shifted to her hands. Her husband sends money regularly from Oman, and she carefully manages all expenses. She handles costs related to children's education, household needs, bills, and savings. Case 'B' said, "I have to plan everything carefully because all expenses depend on the money we receive." In the beginning, managing money alone was difficult for her, but slowly she learned how to plan and control spending. She also uses her own salary along with her husband's income for family needs. She pays electricity bills, water bills, school fees, and other monthly expenses. She added, "Now I know how to manage money properly and avoid unnecessary spending." This shows her development in financial management over time.

Social responsibilities of Case 'B' have also changed after her husband went abroad. Earlier, she used to attend social functions and family gatherings along with her husband. Now she attends them alone and represents her family. She said, "Now I go alone for all family functions and social events." At first, she felt uncomfortable going alone, but gradually she adjusted to the situation. People in her community see her as a responsible and hardworking woman who manages both job and family effectively. Case 'B' said, "People respect me because I manage everything alone." However, she also feels that people sometimes misunderstand her situation and think life is easy because her husband is abroad, while in reality, she handles many difficulties alone.

Due to her busy schedule, she is not actively involved in community or group activities. She said, "I don't get time for social activities because my responsibilities are too many." Her job and household duties take most of her time and energy. Even though she understands the importance of community participation, she is unable to take part in it regularly. Along with this, she also manages institutional responsibilities such as visiting banks, schools, hospitals, and government offices. She said, "Earlier my husband used to handle these things, now I do everything alone." At first, these tasks were difficult, but later she learned and became confident in handling official work.

Case 'B' sees the changes in her life as both challenging and empowering. On one side, her responsibilities have increased a lot, which makes her life stressful and tiring. She said,

“Sometimes I feel everything is too much, but I have to manage.” On the other side, she feels that these experiences have made her stronger and more independent. She added, “Now I can take decisions and manage situations on my own.” This shows that migration has created both pressure and personal growth in her life. She now handles many decisions independently, especially in daily life and financial matters, but still discusses important decisions with her husband through phone calls.

Even though she is independent in many ways, emotional and family support still plays an important role in her life. She sometimes asks advice from her parents or in-laws when needed. Case ‘B’ said, “Family support is very important when I face difficulties.” There are also moments when she feels emotionally stressed due to the absence of her husband, especially during illness or difficult situations. ‘B’ says, “When I face problems, I miss my husband’s presence.” Regular communication with him helps reduce this emotional gap. At the same time, she depends on her inner strength and responsibilities to move forward in life.

Case ‘B’ also experiences challenges related to workload and emotional pressure. She has to manage job responsibilities, childcare, and household work without proper physical support from her husband. This sometimes creates stress and exhaustion. However, she manages everything through planning and discipline. ‘B’ says, “If I don’t plan properly, I cannot manage my day.” She also faces situations where relatives or society expect her to behave in a certain way because her husband is abroad. But she tries to handle such situations calmly and avoids unnecessary conflicts.

In terms of decision-making, Case ‘B’ has gained more independence over time. She takes many decisions related to her children’s education, household management, and daily expenses. However, for major decisions, she still consults her husband. She said, “For important matters, I always discuss with him before deciding.” This shows that even though she has gained independence, there is still shared decision-making in the family.

Case ‘B’ also believes in equality in responsibilities. She said, “Both men and women should work and support the family. There is no difference in responsibility.” She feels that migration has made her stronger, but at the same time, it has increased her workload. She manages everything with patience and responsibility, even during difficult situations. She also believes that women become more capable when they face responsibilities alone.

Case ‘B’ receives emotional support mainly from her family and close relationships. ‘B’ said, “Knowing that my family is there for me gives me confidence.” Even though she manages

most things independently, she still values support from her husband, parents, and relatives. This support system helps her handle stress and continue her responsibilities smoothly.

She also experiences occasional conflicts with relatives or in-laws, but she handles them peacefully. 'B'says, "I prefer to solve problems calmly instead of arguing." She tries to maintain good relationships and avoid unnecessary tension. When her decisions are questioned, she explains her reasons clearly and stands by her choices.

Overall, migration has brought both positive and negative changes in her life. Financial stability has improved, and she has become more independent and confident. At the same time, she faces increased workload, stress, and emotional challenges due to her husband's absence. However, she continues to manage all responsibilities with strength and patience.

Case 'B' wants to continue her life in a balanced way by managing both family and work effectively. 'B'says, "I want to give a good future for my children and manage everything properly." She also hopes to maintain strong family relationships despite distance and challenges.

She believes that family support is the most important factor in managing life after migration. She wants to continue working and taking care of her children while maintaining stability in life. Whatever the situation is, as a working woman managing multiple responsibilities alone most of the time, she has the confidence to handle her life independently rather than depending fully on others.

Case 'C'

Case 'C' is a thirty-four-year-old woman who has completed her Master's degree in English Language and Literature. She is currently not working and is a full-time homemaker living in Thiruvananthapuram with her three children. Her husband is working in Dubai as a realtor in the real estate field. He migrated in 2013 for better job opportunities and financial stability. Since then, he has been living abroad and comes home occasionally, usually once in several months. Even though they live apart, they maintain a strong emotional connection through regular phone calls and messages. Case 'C' says, "We talk regularly, and communication helps us stay connected even though he is far away."

Case 'C' explains that her daily life is fully focused on household responsibilities and childcare. She wakes up early in the morning and starts her day by preparing food for her children. She cooks meals, takes care of cleaning, and manages all household activities alone. C said,

“Morning time is very busy because I have to manage everything before my children’s needs start.” She also takes care of children’s education, including school work, tuition arrangements, and study support. She ensures that their daily needs are properly fulfilled.

After her husband’s migration, her responsibilities increased significantly. Case ‘C’ says, “Earlier we shared work, but now I have to do everything alone.” She manages both indoor and outdoor tasks such as buying groceries, handling children’s school matters, and taking them to hospitals when needed. When many tasks come together, she feels tired, but she continues because there is no other option. She said, “Sometimes I feel very exhausted, but I manage everything step by step.”

Case ‘C’ also explains that she follows a planned routine to manage her workload. She prepares things in advance, such as cutting vegetables and arranging materials at night to make the next day easier. She manages time carefully and completes work mostly when children are asleep.

C said, “If I do not plan properly, I cannot finish my daily work.”

Financial management is also handled by her. Her husband sends money from Dubai, and she manages all household expenses. Case ‘C’ says, “He sends money regularly, and I manage everything carefully.” She takes care of daily expenses like groceries, children’s needs, and household purchases. Major payments like rent and school fees are sometimes handled online by her husband, but she monitors overall spending. She said, “I always check expenses and make sure everything is under control.”

Case ‘C’ experiences both emotional strength and emotional burden due to migration. She said, “I have become strong because I manage everything alone, but sometimes I feel lonely.” She feels her husband’s absence strongly during difficult situations, especially when children are sick or when she is under pressure. However, regular communication with him gives her emotional support. She said, “Talking to him makes me feel better and gives me strength.”

Family support also plays an important role in her life. Case ‘C’ says, “My parents and in-laws help me whenever I face difficulties, especially in childcare and emotional support.” However, most of the responsibilities are still handled by her alone. She also prefers to share her stress with close family members rather than always depending on her husband. C said, “I don’t tell everything to him because I don’t want to make him worried.”

Case ‘C’ has also gained independence in decision-making. She takes decisions related to her children’s education, health, and daily life independently. C said, “If any emergency comes, I

take decisions immediately.” For major decisions, she still consults her husband through phone calls, but most daily decisions are handled by her.

Case ‘C’ also faces challenges related to workload and emotional pressure. She manages job like responsibilities at home without breaks, which sometimes leads to stress and tiredness. She said, “Sometimes everything feels heavy, but I have to continue.” However, she handles these challenges with patience and planning.

She also believes in maintaining balance between independence and family connection. Case ‘C’ says, “Even though I am independent, family support is still very important.” She values emotional connection with her husband, children, and relatives.

Case ‘C’ also experiences limited social participation due to childcare responsibilities. She does not have much time for social gatherings or community activities. She said, “My main focus is my children and home, so I cannot go out much.” However, she attends important family functions when necessary.

Case ‘C’ handles institutional responsibilities such as visiting hospitals, schools, and banks by herself. Earlier, her husband used to manage these tasks, but now she does everything alone. She said, “Now I am fully responsible for outside work also.” This has increased her confidence and independence over time.

Case ‘C’ maintains strong communication with her husband, mainly through phone calls and messages. She said, “We adjust and communicate according to our daily situations.” Their relationship is based on trust and understanding, which helps her manage emotional stress.

Case ‘C’ believes that migration has brought both positive and negative changes in her life. She said, “It has made me strong, but also increased my responsibilities.” On the positive side, she has become more independent and confident. On the negative side, she faces loneliness, workload pressure, and emotional stress.

Case ‘C’ believes that family support, emotional strength, and independence are essential to manage life after migration. She wants to continue managing her responsibilities effectively and maintain stability for her children’s future. Whatever the situation is, Case ‘C’ manages her life with confidence, patience, and strong responsibility rather than depending fully on others.

Case ‘D’

Case D is a twenty-four-year-old woman who has completed her postgraduate education and is currently focusing on preparing for competitive examinations. She has decided not to take up employment at present because she wants to fully concentrate on building a stable career through competitive exams. Case D says, “This is the most important stage of my life, so I want to focus completely on my preparation.” Her daily routine mainly includes studying, managing household responsibilities, and maintaining her personal well-being.

She got married two months ago, and this has marked a new phase in her life. However, Case D says, “Marriage has not changed my life completely; I am still continuing my preparation with small adjustments.” Instead of feeling pressured, she sees this period as a transition where she is learning to balance personal life and career goals together. She lives in her husband’s family home, where there are five members, after moving from her parental home where there were four members.

Her husband works abroad in Abu Dhabi as an accountant in Lulu, a well-known organization. He has been working there since 2024. Case D says, “We were already in a long-distance relationship before marriage, so we were somewhat prepared for this situation.” After marriage, he returned home for a short period on emergency leave and then went back abroad for work. Now they are continuing their married life as a long-distance couple, maintaining regular communication through WhatsApp messages and voice calls.

Case D says that communication is the strongest connection between them. She said, “Even though he is far away, we talk daily and share everything. That gives me emotional strength.”

However, she also feels the absence of physical presence in daily life. She added, “Sometimes I feel his absence strongly, especially during emotional moments, but I manage myself.”

In her daily life, she is engaged in simple household responsibilities. She helps her mother-in-law in cooking, cleaning, and other small household activities. Case D says, “Household work is not new for me; I was already doing similar things at my home.” Because of this prior experience, she does not find household responsibilities stressful or overwhelming.

Even though she has recently entered married life, she has already started managing some financial responsibilities. Her husband sends money from abroad, and she handles the usage of that money carefully. Case D says, “We both have the same mindset; we prefer saving money rather than spending unnecessarily.” She ensures that expenses are controlled and only essential needs are met. She also handles small financial tasks like LIC payments and personal expenses. This has helped her develop financial awareness and responsibility.

At present, there is no major financial burden on her because her parents still support her in many ways. However, she contributes when needed. Case D says, “I am learning how to manage money step by step; it is giving me confidence.” This shows her gradual development in handling financial independence.

Socially, Case D is an active and friendly person. She maintains good relationships with neighbours, relatives, and family members. She participates in family gatherings and social events whenever possible. Case D says, “I like to stay connected with people, but I also prioritize my studies when needed.” Her social involvement helps her maintain emotional balance in her life.

However, she does not feel excessive pressure from social responsibilities. She attends functions selectively and avoids unnecessary social distractions during her preparation time. Case D says, “My focus is my studies, so I attend only important events.”

Emotionally, the absence of her husband sometimes affects her. Case D says, “Even though we talk daily, I still feel lonely at times.” She experiences emotional moments of missing his physical presence, especially during stressful situations. At such times, she tries to manage her emotions by focusing on studies and daily routines.

Case D says that emotional support from her husband is very important. She said, “His words give me strength to continue my preparation.” Even though he is physically away, his encouragement helps her stay motivated. At the same time, she also depends on her own inner strength to handle emotional pressure.

She also receives support from her parents, especially her father. Case D says, “Whenever I feel confused or stressed, I talk to my parents.” However, she does not depend fully on them and tries to make her own decisions independently. She believes that emotional strength is necessary to handle both marriage and career preparation together.

In terms of decision-making, Case D has full freedom in her personal life. She takes decisions regarding her studies and daily activities independently, while discussing important matters with her husband. Case D says, “We respect each other’s decisions and do not interfere unnecessarily.” This mutual understanding helps maintain balance in their relationship.

Her relationship with her in-laws is also peaceful. She has adjusted well in the new family environment. Case D says, “I feel comfortable in my husband’s family; there is no major difficulty.” She maintains respectful relationships with all family members and avoids conflicts.

However, Case D also experiences challenges related to workload and emotional pressure. She has to manage household responsibilities, exam preparation, and personal life simultaneously. Case D says, “Sometimes I feel tired, but I continue because I have responsibilities.” At times, balancing everything together becomes stressful, but she manages through planning and discipline.

She also reduces stress by maintaining a study routine and limiting distractions. Case D says, “I avoid unnecessary social media use because it affects my concentration.” She focuses mainly on her studies and avoids unnecessary mental pressure.

Case D believes that marriage and migration of a partner have both positive and negative effects. On one side, it creates emotional distance and loneliness. On the other side, it helps her become more independent and responsible. Case D says, “I have learned to manage my life on my own, and that has made me stronger.”

She also believes in equality in relationships. Case D says, “Both husband and wife should support each other equally, even if they are in different places.” She feels that mutual understanding is the key to a successful relationship, especially in long-distance marriages.

Looking at the future, she expects more responsibilities after her husband returns permanently. Case D says, “When we start living together, it will become easier to share responsibilities.” She hopes to balance both family life and career in the coming years.

Case D’s life shows a combination of adjustment, independence, and emotional balance. Marriage and long-distance living have brought both emotional challenges and personal growth. While she experiences loneliness at times, she continues to stay focused on her career goals. Case D says, “I want to build a stable future through my own efforts.”

This case highlights how young women manage marriage, migration-related separation, and career preparation simultaneously. It shows that with emotional strength, family support, and self-discipline, it is possible to balance personal life and professional aspirations effectively.

Case ‘E’

Case E is a thirty-six-year-old woman who has completed her degree education and also has work experience from her earlier life. At present, she is not working outside and is fully engaged in managing household responsibilities and taking care of her children. Case E says, “Right now my main duty is my family, especially my children, so I am not working outside.” She has been married for 17 years and lives with her two daughters. The elder daughter is

studying in the sixth standard and is around 11 years old, while the younger child is 2 years old. Her husband is working in Dubai in the real estate sector for nearly 20 years. He had been working abroad even before their marriage.

Case E says that migration has been a long-term part of her married life. She said, “He was already in Dubai when we got married, so this life was not new for me.” After marriage, he stayed with the family for about two years and then returned abroad for work. Since then, he has been living in Dubai and coming home only occasionally, depending on his leave. Case E says, “We try to meet whenever possible, but most of the time we are living apart.”

Before COVID-19, their family life was slightly more balanced because they could meet more regularly. Sometimes the husband would come home once in six months or once a year, and sometimes she and the children would visit him in Dubai. But during COVID-19, everything changed. Case E says, “During COVID we could not meet for nearly four years, that was the most difficult time for us.” During that period, there was emotional stress and more responsibility on her side. After COVID, communication improved again, and video calls became the main way of staying connected. Case E says, “Now we talk mostly through video calls; it helps us feel connected even when we are far.”

Her daily life is fully cantered on household work and childcare. She takes care of cooking, cleaning, and especially the younger child, who needs constant attention. Case E says, “My day is fully planned around my children; I cannot do things freely like before.” She often has to do many tasks at the same time, so she plans her work step by step and gives priority to urgent needs.

Case E says that managing everything alone is physically and mentally tiring. She said, “Sometimes I feel exhausted, but I have to continue because there is no one else to share the work.” Because her husband is abroad, she has to handle both parental roles at home. This increases her workload and reduces her rest time.

Financially, she depends on her husband’s income from abroad. He sends money regularly, and she manages all household expenses from it. Case E says, “He sends money, and I take care of everything at home like school fees, groceries, and bills.” Even though she handles daily expenses, major financial decisions are discussed with her husband. Case E says, “We always discuss before making financial decisions; I don’t decide everything alone.”

In decision-making also, she is not fully independent. Case E says, “For important matters, I always ask his opinion first.” In some situations, she also asks advice from her father or brother,

especially when she feels unsure. This shows that she manages daily life independently, but still depends on family guidance for important decisions.

Her social life is also limited. Case E says, “I don’t go out much unless it is very necessary.” She attends functions or events only when she can manage the children. When her husband is at home, she participates more, but when he is abroad, she mostly stays at home because managing children alone is difficult.

Emotionally, she depends a lot on communication with her husband. Case E says, “Even though he is far away, talking to him gives me strength.” Still, she sometimes feels lonely, especially during stressful moments or when handling all responsibilities alone. At such times, she also depends on support from her parents or close family members.

Case E says that she is capable of managing things, but she still feels she needs support at times. She said, “I manage things, but sometimes I feel I need support or guidance.” This shows that she is responsible and strong, but also emotionally dependent in some situations.

There are no major conflicts in her family because she prefers discussion and calm communication. Case E says, “We talk and solve issues; we don’t keep problems inside.” However, she does not express her opinions strongly in all matters and often chooses peace over arguments.

In her daily routine, she has very little personal time because most of her day is spent on household work and childcare. Case E says, “My whole day is planned around my children and housework.” This limits her personal freedom and rest time.

Even with difficulties, she continues her responsibilities with patience. Case E says, “I have learned to manage everything step by step over time.” Over the years, she has become more disciplined and responsible because of her situation.

She also receives support from her family when needed. Case E says, “When I feel stressed, my family helps me a lot.” But still, most of the responsibility remains with her, as she is the main caregiver at home.

Case E says, “I manage everything, but sometimes it becomes too much,” showing both her strength and the pressure she experiences in daily life. She manages household work, childcare, and financial tasks mostly on her own, while staying emotionally connected with her husband through video calls. She tries to complete all tasks in a planned way, but the presence of a small child makes her routine physically and mentally tiring.

Case E says that after her husband went abroad, her life became more structured and responsible because she had to manage everything independently. She adjusts her daily schedule according to her children's needs and depends on family support only during difficult situations.

Case E says that migration has made her more responsible and independent, but at the same time it has reduced her personal time and increased her workload. She continues to manage her life by balancing household duties, childcare, and emotional responsibilities according to her family situation.

Case 'F'

Case F is a 46-year-old woman who has studied up to B. Com, but she could not complete her degree because she was unable to attend her final year examinations due to her marriage. She has been married for 26 years and is currently not working. At present, she lives with her mother and her three children. Her eldest child is studying architecture, the second child is studying engineering at TKM College, and the youngest child has just completed the tenth standard.

Her husband is working in Abu Dhabi as a civil engineer and has been working abroad for almost 30 to 35 years. He has been abroad even before their marriage and continued his work after marriage. She had also gone abroad in 1995 and lived there for some time before returning. Her husband usually comes home once in six months, but sometimes it may extend up to one year depending on work and leave availability. Case F says, "Even though he is far, we always stay connected through calls and WhatsApp." They communicate regularly, and he calls her two or three times in the morning and also speaks in the morning and night. In between, they stay connected through WhatsApp messages.

Case F says that her daily life is fully centered on household responsibilities. She takes care of cooking, cleaning, and all home-related duties. She also manages outdoor tasks like watering plants and maintaining them. In addition to this, she takes care of her husband's elderly mother, who needs special attention. Case F says, "Everything in the house depends on me, so I have to manage all the work." After her husband went abroad, all responsibilities came to her, and she handles everything alone.

Managing all these duties is not easy for her. Case F says, "Many times I feel tired because I have to do many things at the same time." She often has to manage multiple responsibilities together, which makes her physically tired and mentally stressed. Even though she feels

frustrated sometimes, she continues her duties because she has no other option. She tries to complete all tasks step by step and manages her time according to the situation.

Her social life has changed a lot after her husband went abroad. Earlier, she had more interaction with people, but now she mostly stays at home. Case F says, “Now I go out only when it is necessary.” She visits hospitals or goes for essential work, and sometimes her son helps her with outside activities. She is not a member of any women’s group or social organization, so her social interaction is limited. Because of this, she feels her confidence has reduced slightly and she does not interact freely like before.

Case F says that decision-making in her family is mainly influenced by her husband and other family members. Even though her husband asks her opinion, the final decision is usually taken by him. She follows his decisions and manages accordingly. In her daily routine, she plans her work in advance. She writes down what needs to be done and follows the schedule. This helps her manage household tasks more effectively.

Earlier, she used to manage these situations more actively, but now her daughter often helps in solving such issues. Her children also support her in small household tasks, even though sometimes they are not very interested. She manages to balance household work, children’s needs, and care of elderly family members, but it makes her physically very tired by the end of the day. Case F says, “By the end of the day, I feel completely exhausted.”

Case F also experiences emotional stress because her husband is away most of the time. She sometimes feels lonely and wishes he were present at home. However, she also says that he is very supportive and gives her emotional strength through regular communication. Whenever she feels stressed, she talks to him first. If needed, she also depends on her mother and children for emotional support.

Case F says that when problems arise, discussions with her husband take time to resolve. Sometimes she expresses her opinions, but the final decision is still mostly taken by him. Earlier, she used to manage such situations more actively, but now her daughter often helps in solving such issues. She also faces small conflicts with neighbors and difficulties in managing elderly care, which sometimes create stress in her daily life.

Case F says that migration has changed her life in many ways. If her husband were at home, her responsibilities would be less, and she would get more support in daily life. She also feels that children might behave differently if their father was present regularly. His absence has

increased her responsibilities and affected her emotional well-being. Still, she continues her duties with patience and adjustment.

Case F says, “I manage everything, but sometimes it becomes too much,” which reflects both her strength and emotional pressure. She handles all household responsibilities, childcare, and elderly care mostly on her own, while depending on regular communication with her husband for emotional support. She tries to manage everything step by step, but the continuous workload often makes her tired.

Case F says that after her husband went abroad, her life became more disciplined and responsibility-oriented. She adjusts her daily schedule according to her children and household needs. She depends on family support during difficult situations, but most responsibilities remain with her.

Case F says that migration has increased her workload and reduced her personal time, but at the same time, it has made her more responsible and stronger in handling daily life. She continues to manage her household, children, and family duties with patience and effort, balancing both emotional and practical responsibilities in her life.

Case ‘G’

Case G is a 49-year-old woman who has completed her degree education. Even though she is educated, she is currently not employed and spends most of her time managing her household responsibilities and taking care of her family. She has been married for 24 years and lives with her children. Her family is small, but her responsibilities are large because her husband has been working abroad for a long period of time. Case G says, “My life is fully centered on my home and children, I am not doing any job now, so all the responsibilities are on me.” She manages her daily life by balancing household work, family needs, and external responsibilities with patience and discipline.

Her husband is working in Dubai as a lab technician. He has been working abroad for nearly 27 years and migrated in 1999. Since then, he has remained in foreign employment, coming home only once a year or sometimes depending on leave availability. Case G says, “He is abroad most of the time, so I have learned to manage everything alone here.” Even though they live separately for long periods, they maintain regular communication through phone calls and WhatsApp. They speak around three to four times a week, and this helps them stay emotionally connected. Case G says, “We talk regularly, and that helps us feel close even though we are far away.”

Case G's daily routine is fully focused on household responsibilities. She takes care of cooking, cleaning, and maintaining the home. She also looks after her pet dog and manages all the daily needs of the family. Case G says, "My day starts with household work and ends with household work; there is always something to do." After her husband went abroad, she took full responsibility for managing the home and children. Earlier, responsibilities were shared, but now she handles everything alone, including children's needs, home management, and outside work.

Managing multiple responsibilities every day is not easy for her. There are days when the workload becomes heavy and tiring, but she continues without stopping. Case G says, "Some days I feel very tired, but I cannot stop because everything depends on me." She does not follow a strict timetable but manages work based on situations and priorities. She believes that household responsibilities are part of her duty, so she completes them without complaint. This shows her commitment and strong sense of responsibility towards her family.

Financial management is also an important part of her life. Her husband sends money from abroad regularly, and she manages all expenses at home. Case G says, "He sends money, and I handle everything like bills, school fees, and daily expenses." She takes care of loan payments, children's education, groceries, and other household needs. Even though she sometimes faces small difficulties in planning expenses, she manages everything carefully. Over time, she has become more confident in handling money and making financial decisions for the family.

In terms of decision-making, Case G does not take major decisions alone. Most important decisions are discussed with her husband before finalizing. Case G says, "I always ask him before taking important decisions." If needed, she also seeks advice from her parents or siblings. This shows that her decision-making is shared and supported by family members. Even though she manages daily life independently, major family matters still involve her husband's opinion.

Case G's social life has also changed after her husband's migration. She feels that she has become more independent in attending functions and managing outside responsibilities. Case G says, "Now I go for functions and activities on my own when needed." She maintains good relationships with neighbours and relatives, who respect and support her. She also feels that her social confidence has increased because she handles situations independently when her husband is not present.

Case G also participates in social and community activities when possible. She attends family functions, religious programs, and social gatherings. These activities help her stay connected with others and reduce feelings of isolation. She believes that social interaction is important for emotional balance and mental well-being. Even though she is busy with household responsibilities, she tries to maintain a social connection whenever time allows.

Case G also handles important institutional responsibilities such as going to banks, hospitals, schools, and government offices. She manages these tasks independently without much difficulty. Case G says, “I do all outside work myself, I cannot depend on others for everything.” Earlier, her husband may have helped with such tasks, but now she manages them alone. This shows her ability to handle both household and external responsibilities with confidence.

Emotionally, Case G experiences both strength and challenges. She has become more independent due to managing everything alone, but at the same time, she sometimes feels lonely. Case G says, “I am strong because I manage everything, but sometimes I feel the absence of my husband.” She receives emotional support through regular communication with her husband, which helps her cope with stress and loneliness. She also depends on her children and close family members for emotional strength.

Case G says that she manages her responsibilities step by step, even when situations become stressful. She often prioritizes urgent tasks and adjusts her routine based on the needs of the family. Even though she feels tired at times, she continues her responsibilities without stopping. Her daily life reflects discipline, patience, and adjustment to changing family needs due to migration.

Case G also mentions that family support is very important in her life. She receives help from her children, parents, and relatives during difficult situations. Case G says, “When I need help, my family supports me, and that gives me strength.” However, most of the responsibility still remains with her, as she is the main person managing the household. This shows a balance between support and independent responsibility.

Case G also faces occasional conflicts or difficulties within the family, but she manages them through communication and understanding. She believes in solving problems calmly instead of creating arguments. This helps maintain peace in the family even during stressful situations. She prefers cooperation and understanding in family relationships rather than confrontation.

Migration has brought both challenges and positive changes in Case G's life. On one side, her husband's absence has increased her workload and responsibility. On the other side, it has helped her become more independent and confident in managing daily life. Case G says, "I have learned to handle everything on my own over time." She has developed skills in financial management, household planning, and decision-making through experience.

Case G's life clearly shows how long-term spousal migration shapes women's daily responsibilities, emotional well-being, and social roles. She manages household duties, financial responsibilities, and childcare mostly on her own while maintaining regular communication with her husband for emotional support. Although she experiences stress and loneliness at times, she continues her life with patience and strength.

Case G says, "I manage everything, but sometimes it becomes too much," showing both her strength and emotional pressure in daily life. She handles household responsibilities and family duties with dedication, even when the workload is heavy. Her experience reflects how women adapt to migration situations by becoming more responsible and self-reliant while also facing emotional and physical challenges.

Case G continues her life by balancing household responsibilities, financial management, social participation, and emotional needs. She adjusts herself according to family situations and maintains stability through discipline and support from family members. Her experience reflects the lived reality of many women in long-term migration contexts, where responsibility increases along with personal growth and resilience.

Case 'H'

Case H is a 38-year-old woman who lives with her two children and her mother-in-law. She has studied up to higher secondary level and got married at a young age. She has been married for 16 years. Her husband is working in Qatar as a driver and has been working abroad for around 15 years. Case H says, "My husband is abroad most of the time, so I have learned to manage everything at home by myself." He usually comes home once in a year, but sometimes it may take longer depending on his job and leave. Because of this long-term migration, she manages most of the family responsibilities alone.

She said that even though her husband is far away, they stay in regular contact through phone calls and WhatsApp. They mostly talk at night and sometimes during the day when he gets time. H says, "Daily communication is very important for me; it makes me feel less lonely." These conversations help her to stay emotionally connected with her husband and share her

daily life experiences. Even though they are physically apart, regular communication helps them maintain their relationship.

Her daily routine is completely focused on household work and family care. She wakes up early in the morning and starts her day with cooking and cleaning. She prepares food for the family, sends her children to school, and continues with household chores. She also takes care of her mother-in-law, who is elderly and needs support. Case H says, “My whole day is filled with work; there is always something to do.” After morning work, she again prepares lunch and continues with other duties in the evening. Her whole day is busy with responsibilities from morning to night.

She said managing everything alone is not easy. She often feels tired because there is no one to share her work. Earlier, her husband used to help when he was at home, but now she has to manage everything by herself. H says, “Sometimes I feel very tired because I have to do everything alone.” Even small tasks become difficult when many responsibilities come together. Still, she continues her work because she feels responsible for her family.

She said that she manages her work by prioritizing important tasks first. She completes urgent work and postpones less important tasks when needed. She does not follow a strict timetable but adjusts her routine based on daily situations. She believes that household work is her responsibility, so she completes it without complaint. Over time, she has become more capable of handling multiple tasks, but the pressure is still there.

She said that financial management is another important responsibility in her life. Her husband sends money from Qatar, and she manages all household expenses. She takes care of children’s education, groceries, electricity bills, and other needs. Case H says, “He sends money, and I have to manage everything carefully.” Sometimes unexpected expenses like medical needs also come up, which makes planning difficult. She tries to save money whenever possible and avoids unnecessary spending. Now she is more confident in handling money, but for big decisions, she still prefers to discuss with her husband.

She said earlier she was not confident in managing finances, but she learned it over time. In the beginning, she depended on her husband or family members for advice. Now she manages daily expenses on her own, but still discusses major financial matters with her husband. This shows that she has developed practical skills through experience.

Case H says that her social life is limited. She mostly stays at home and goes out only when necessary. She attends family functions and social events occasionally, but she prefers to go

with someone else rather than alone. Case H says, “I don’t feel comfortable going out alone.” She is not part of any women’s groups or community activities, so her social interaction is less. Because of this, she feels less confident in social situations compared to earlier times.

She said that she sometimes feels lonely and emotionally stressed because her husband is away for long periods. Case H says, “Sometimes I feel very lonely, especially when there are problems at home.” Even though they talk regularly, she feels that phone calls cannot replace physical presence. During difficult situations, she misses her husband’s support. Apart from her husband, she also depends on her mother and brother for emotional support, and talking to them helps her feel better.

She says that her confidence in handling outside matters is not very strong. She feels nervous when she has to go to banks, hospitals, or government offices. Case H says, “I can manage small things, but for big matters I feel I need help.” Since she spends most of her time at home, her exposure to the outside world is limited, which affects her confidence.

She says that in decision-making, she is not fully independent. She prefers to discuss important matters with her husband before taking decisions. She believes he has more experience and can guide her better. In some situations, she also asks her mother or brother for advice. Case H says, “I don’t take major decisions alone; I always ask first.” This shows that decision-making is shared, but still influenced by family members.

She says that when problems arise, she tries to solve them calmly. She avoids arguments and prefers discussion instead of conflict. If she cannot solve a problem, she seeks help from her family members. She believes maintaining peace in the family is more important than fighting.

She says that migration has changed her life in many ways. It has increased her responsibilities, especially in household work and childcare. At the same time, it has made her stronger and more responsible. Case H says, “I have learned to manage everything over time.” However, emotional challenges like loneliness and stress are still present in her life.

She continues her life by balancing household duties, childcare, financial management, and emotional responsibilities. She adjusts her routine according to her family needs and manages everything step by step. Migration has made her more independent in daily life, but it has also increased her workload and emotional burden.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.2.1 Expansion of Household and Caregiving Responsibility

Here, the researcher attempts to draw from the data the changes in household, caregiving, and domestic responsibilities experienced by migrant wives after their husbands migrated to Gulf countries. This section presents a thematically organized analysis of the narratives of selected participants (Cases A, C, D, E, F, and H) living in transnational family settings in Kerala. The analysis identifies recurring patterns across their experiences, highlighting how women increasingly assume full responsibility for household management, caregiving, and family maintenance in the absence of their husbands.

4.2.1.1 Changing Household Responsibilities

The migration of husbands to Gulf countries has led to a significant restructuring of family roles, where women increasingly assume expanded domestic, caregiving, and managerial responsibilities within the household. This shift is not limited to routine household chores but extends to a broader range of duties, including child-rearing, financial management, healthcare coordination, and day-to-day decision-making. As husbands remain physically absent for long periods, wives become the central figures responsible for maintaining household stability and ensuring the smooth functioning of family life. Over time, responsibilities that were earlier shared or primarily managed by husbands are gradually transferred to women, leading to a clear reorganization of traditional family roles.

The narratives consistently reflect this increasing responsibility. Case C states, *“I manage everything related to home and children because my husband is not here.”* Similarly, Case H mentions, *“I take care of everything at home and make decisions when needed.”* These statements highlight how women emerge as the primary authority in household affairs, independently managing children’s education, household expenses, and essential family decisions. Their role expands beyond supportive participation to full responsibility for maintaining daily family functioning.

Case A further reflects this transition by stating, *“Earlier I depended on my husband, but now I manage everything myself.”* This indicates a gradual shift from dependency to independence, where women adapt to managing financial planning, budgeting, and problem-solving without external support. Through continuous engagement with household responsibilities, they develop practical skills and confidence in handling complex family situations independently.

Case E also highlights the expansion of caregiving responsibilities, where she manages children's schooling, hospital visits, and other external obligations alone. This demonstrates how women's roles extend beyond domestic boundaries into institutional interactions, requiring them to engage with schools, hospitals, and community systems on behalf of the family. In doing so, they become the primary link between the household and external social structures.

Similarly, Case D notes that even small day-to-day decisions are entirely managed by her, stating that *"everything, even small matters, I have to handle myself now."* This reflects the continuous nature of responsibility, where women are required to manage both minor and major issues without support. Over time, this constant engagement strengthens their ability to multitask and handle complex situations efficiently.

This expansion of responsibility is closely linked to the prolonged absence of husbands, which makes women the central figures in maintaining family life. Their increasing involvement in caregiving, financial management, and daily decision-making reflects not only necessity but also adaptation. As one participant notes, *"There is no other option; I have to manage everything here."* Through this process, women gradually redefine their roles, positioning themselves as the primary authority in everyday household functioning while ensuring continuity and stability within the family.

4.2.1.2 Decision-Making Authority

Alongside the expansion of responsibilities, the migration of husbands also leads to a significant shift in decision-making authority within the household. In the absence of husbands, women increasingly take up the role of primary decision-makers in matters related to finances, children's education, healthcare, and daily household functioning. However, this authority is often exercised within a complex space where emotional dependence, communication with husbands, and family expectations continue to influence decisions. Over time, women develop strategies to balance autonomy with relational obligations, shaping how they manage and negotiate household responsibilities.

Case H states, *"I take care of everything at home and make decisions when needed."* Similarly, Case C mentions, *"I manage everything related to home and children because my husband is not here."* These narratives highlight how women become the central authority in daily family life, independently handling both routine and important decisions. Their role extends beyond

domestic management to full control over household functioning in the absence of their husbands.

Case A further reflects this change by stating, *“Earlier I depended on my husband, but now I manage everything myself.”* This indicates a gradual transition from dependency to independent decision-making, where women develop confidence in handling financial planning, budgeting, and problem-solving on their own. Through continuous exposure to responsibility, they strengthen their ability to make decisions without external guidance.

Case E also highlights how women manage both domestic and external responsibilities, including school-related decisions, medical care, and household arrangements. This shows that decision-making is not limited to the home but extends to interactions with institutions and community systems, making women the key link between family and external environments.

However, Case F mentions that although her husband provides emotional support and occasional guidance through communication, all practical decisions regarding children and household management are taken by her alone. This reflects a situation where emotional presence does not necessarily translate into shared authority in everyday decision-making.

In terms of coping strategies, women rely on personal resilience, emotional strength, and support from children, relatives, and social networks to manage their responsibilities. Over time, they develop adaptive approaches to handle stress, multitask, and maintain balance between various roles. Negotiation of responsibility also occurs subtly, where women retain primary control over household functioning while maintaining emotional connection with their husbands through communication.

“I take care of everything at home and make decisions when needed, including children’s education, household expenses, healthcare needs, and all daily family matters in the absence of my husband.” - Case H says

“I manage everything related to home and children because my husband is not here, so I handle all responsibilities independently, from daily needs to important family decisions.” - Case C says

“Earlier I depended on my husband, but now I manage everything myself, including financial planning, household management, and all day-to-day decisions related to the family.” - Case A says

4.2.2 Relational Autonomy and Shared Decision-Making in Migrant Households

4.2.2.1 Relational Autonomy

The narratives indicate that the absence of husbands due to migration leads to the emergence of functional autonomy among wives, particularly in managing the everyday functioning of the household. Women take on responsibilities that were earlier shared or dominated by their husbands, including financial planning, children's education, healthcare decisions, and maintaining social relationships. This shift reflects a practical adaptation to circumstances rather than a deliberate challenge to traditional gender roles. Over time, repeated engagement with these responsibilities builds confidence, decision-making ability, and a sense of ownership over household management. As one participant notes, *"Now I have to take decisions on my own because there is no one else to manage things here."*

In Case H, the participant explains that her husband has been abroad for many years, and she has gradually become the primary decision-maker in day-to-day matters. She manages expenses, supervises children's education, and handles emergencies independently. This indicates a clear shift from dependency to self-reliance in routine decision-making. She explains, *"Now I manage almost everything at home; for daily matters I don't wait for anyone's opinion."* Similarly, Case F highlights that she cannot wait for her husband's input for everyday matters due to distance and time constraints, which compels her to act independently. She mentions, *"For small things I decide myself because I cannot call him for everything."* This form of autonomy is practical and necessity-driven, where women learn through experience and responsibility.

Case E further illustrates this transformation, where the participant not only manages domestic responsibilities but also assumes a leadership role within the household by ensuring emotional balance and discipline. She takes decisions regarding children, household priorities, and social obligations, reflecting an expanded role that combines both managerial and caregiving functions. She states, *"I have to take care of everything here, including children and family matters, so I decide what is needed."* These cases demonstrate that women's authority becomes more visible and central in the absence of husbands, particularly in the domain of everyday life. However, this autonomy is often limited to routine matters, while larger decisions still remain partially shared or negotiated.

"My husband is away, so I handle all the daily responsibilities at home, including children's needs and expenses. I have learned to manage everything on my own over time." - Case H

“I take decisions for small and daily matters because I cannot depend on him for everything from a distance.”- Case F

“Since he is not here, I manage the household and children by myself. It made me more confident in handling responsibilities.”- Case E

4.2.2.2 Decision-Making in Migrant Households

Despite the expansion of autonomy in everyday matters, the narratives clearly show that decision-making authority remains relational and negotiated rather than fully independent. Women continue to rely on their husbands and other family members for guidance, approval, and emotional reassurance, especially in significant or long-term decisions. This reflects a pattern where autonomy and dependence coexist, shaped by emotional bonds, marital expectations, and cultural norms. As one participant expresses, *“Even if I take decisions here, I feel better when I discuss it with my husband.”*

In Case H, although she independently manages the household, she still consults her husband for important decisions, particularly those involving financial investments or long-term planning. This indicates that while practical authority has shifted, symbolic authority remains shared. She notes, *“For big matters I always call and ask him before finalizing anything.”* Similarly, Case F emphasizes that she feels more confident when her husband supports her decisions, showing that emotional validation plays a key role in the decision-making process. She explains, *“I manage things, but I feel more confident when he agrees with me.”* This suggests that reliance on husbands is not merely structural but also emotional, helping maintain trust and stability in the relationship.

Case E highlights the role of extended family in shaping decision-making. She explains that for culturally sensitive or socially significant matters, she seeks the opinion of elders, especially her in-laws. This reflects the continued influence of family hierarchy and collective decision-making within the household. She states, *“For important family matters, I will ask elders because their opinion is important.”* Even in the absence of the husband, authority is not entirely individualized but distributed across family networks, where approval and guidance are still valued.

These narratives show that women’s decision-making authority is best understood as negotiated autonomy rather than complete independence. Women actively balance their ability to make decisions with the need to maintain relationships and social harmony. As one participant reflects, *“I can manage things alone, but still, I don’t want to take decisions without*

informing others.” Their authority is shaped by both practical necessity and emotional interdependence, making it a dynamic and context-dependent process.

“Even though I take most of the decisions at home now, I still prefer to discuss important matters with my husband because it gives me confidence and a sense of reassurance when he agrees with me.” - Case H

“I manage almost all responsibilities by myself, including household and children’s matters, but when it comes to major decisions, I depend on his advice and support, as it helps me feel more secure and clear about my choices.” - Case F

“For most daily decisions I act independently, but for major or family-related matters, I still consult elders in the family because their opinion holds value and ensures that my decisions are accepted by everyone.” - Case E

4.2.3 Financial Management and Emerging Autonomy

The narratives reveal that in the absence of husbands due to migration, women gradually take on the responsibility of managing household finances, which in turn contributes to the emergence of a new form of autonomy. This financial role is not merely about handling money but involves budgeting, prioritizing expenses, managing remittances, and making decisions regarding children’s education, healthcare, and daily household needs. Migrant wives learn to selectively depend on different sources such as husbands, in-laws, or informal networks while maintaining control over every day financial matters. This reflects an active process where women are not passively dependent but strategically managing available resources and relationships to sustain household stability. As one participant expresses, *“Now I have to think about all expenses carefully because everything depends on how I manage the money.”*

In Case H, the participant explains that she independently manages the money sent by her husband, carefully planning expenses and ensuring that the needs of her children and household are met. She highlights that while she has full control over day-to-day financial decisions, she still informs her husband about major expenditures, indicating a shared but unequal structure of financial authority. She states, *“I handle all the daily expenses, but for big amounts I will inform him before spending.”* This shows how autonomy develops within limits, where women gain practical control but continue to maintain communicative accountability. Similarly, in Case F, the participant notes that she has become more confident in handling financial matters over time, learning through experience how to allocate resources effectively. She mentions, *“Earlier I was not confident, but now I can manage the expenses properly.”* However, she also

points out that for larger investments or savings decisions, she prefers consulting her husband, reflecting a pattern of selective dependence. As she adds, *“For savings or important financial decisions, I will always ask his opinion.”*

Case E presents a slightly different dimension, where financial management is closely linked with emotional responsibility. She explains that managing money is not just about calculation but also about ensuring family well-being and avoiding unnecessary stress. She carefully balances expenses while also considering the emotional needs of her children and other family members. She notes, *“I have to manage money in such a way that everyone’s needs are met without creating tension.”* In this context, financial autonomy becomes intertwined with caregiving, making her role more complex and multidimensional. At the same time, she occasionally seeks advice from elder family members for socially significant financial decisions, indicating that autonomy is negotiated within a broader family framework. She states, *“For important matters, I will also ask elders because their experience is helpful.”*

These narratives collectively show that financial management becomes a key site where autonomy is both developed and regulated. Women actively learn, adapt, and make decisions, but they also maintain relational ties by seeking guidance when necessary. As one participant reflects, *“I can manage the money, but still, I don’t want to decide everything alone.”* This selective engagement with financial authority highlights a shift from complete dependence to conditional independence, where women exercise control while still acknowledging existing family hierarchies and emotional bonds.

Case H says, “I am the one managing all the expenses now. I plan everything according to the money he sends, but for big expenses I always inform him before deciding.” - Case H

“Earlier I was not confident in handling money, but now I can manage it well. Still, for major decisions I discuss with my husband.” - says Case F

“Managing money is not easy because we have to think about everyone in the family. I decide most things, but sometimes I ask elders for advice.” - Case E

4.2.4 Adaptive Strategies and Support Systems in Managing Household Responsibilities

4.2.4.1 Adaptive Strategies

The narratives indicate that women develop a range of practical and adaptive strategies to manage everyday responsibilities in the absence of their husbands. These strategies are shaped by necessity and experience, reflecting a gradual shift from dependence to self-reliance.

Women take charge of multiple roles simultaneously, including financial management, childcare, household organization, and social obligations. Case H, for instance, handles all aspects of household functioning, from budgeting monthly expenses to ensuring her children's education and well-being. She notes that over time she has "learned to manage everything alone," highlighting a process of learning through experience and responsibility. Similarly, Case F demonstrates structured planning in her daily life, where she organizes household tasks alongside children's needs, ensuring that all responsibilities are met efficiently.

These strategies often involve time management, prioritization, and problem-solving skills. Women learn to allocate their time carefully, balancing urgent and non-urgent tasks while preparing for unexpected situations such as health emergencies or financial difficulties. Case E reflects this adaptability, explaining how she manages routine responsibilities independently while preparing herself to handle sudden challenges without immediate external support. Case D also points out that experience plays a key role in strengthening decision-making abilities, as repeated exposure to similar situations builds confidence and efficiency. These narratives show that women actively reconstruct their daily routines and responsibilities, transforming challenges into manageable tasks through consistent effort and learning.

From a theoretical perspective, this reflects Max Weber's concept of instrumental rationality, where individuals make calculated and goal-oriented decisions based on practical needs. The women's approach to managing household responsibilities demonstrates rational planning, conscious prioritization, and adaptive behavior within structural limitations. Their strategies are not accidental but are shaped by continuous evaluation of available resources and constraints.

4.2.4.2 Support Systems and Emotional Coping Mechanisms

While women develop independent strategies to manage responsibilities, the presence of support systems remains crucial in coping with emotional and practical challenges. The narratives highlight that support comes from multiple sources, including husbands, parents, in-laws, neighbours, and broader community networks. Case H explains that although she handles most responsibilities independently, she maintains regular communication with her husband, especially for important decisions, which provides emotional reassurance and a sense of shared responsibility. Similarly, Case F depends on her parents and close relatives during stressful situations, indicating that emotional support plays a key role in sustaining her confidence and mental stability.

In many cases, in-laws also contribute to the support system, particularly in matters related to childcare and household traditions. Case E mentions that her mother-in-law offers guidance and assistance, which helps in managing responsibilities more effectively. This reflects how family structures continue to function as important sources of support, even as women take on greater authority. At the same time, some women rely on neighbours and local networks during emergencies, showing the importance of community-level support in everyday life.

Personal strength and resilience emerge as equally important coping mechanisms. Women develop emotional control, patience, and confidence through their lived experiences. Case D highlights that being mentally strong and having confidence in one's decisions helps in handling both pressure and responsibility effectively. Similarly, Case H emphasises that over time she has become more confident and capable of dealing with problems independently, indicating an internal transformation alongside external support. These narratives show that coping is not limited to external assistance but also involves the development of inner strength and self-belief.

“Now I manage almost everything at home by myself because my husband is away, including daily expenses, children's needs, and household responsibilities. But when it comes to important decisions, I still talk to my husband before finalising anything, because his opinion gives me confidence and emotional support.” says H

“If I feel stressed, confused, or unable to take a clear decision, I usually talk to my parents or close relatives. Their support and advice help me to think better and manage the situation in a more confident way.” says F

“Earlier I used to depend on others for many things, but now I have learned to handle responsibilities on my own. Even then, emotional support from my family is still important for me to stay strong and manage everything effectively.” says D

4.2.5 Negotiation of Authority and Relational Power Dynamics

4.2.5.1 Negotiated Authority

The narratives show that women's authority within migrant households is not absolute or fixed but is continuously negotiated within existing family hierarchies, cultural expectations, and relational obligations. In the absence of husbands, women take on increased responsibility and decision-making roles; however, this does not automatically translate into complete control or independence. Instead, their authority is shaped by multiple factors such as age hierarchy, gender norms, expectations of in-laws, and the need to maintain family harmony. Women often

navigate this complex space by adopting flexible, context-based strategies that allow them to exercise control without directly challenging established structures.

“Even though I take most of the decisions at home, I still ask others before finalising because it is important to maintain understanding in the family.”

This statement reflects the relational nature of power and decision-making within families, where authority is negotiated rather than individually possessed, aligning with the concept of power as embedded in social relationships (Foucault, 1977). It shows that decision-making is not simply about control but about maintaining balance within relationships and social expectations.

Case H, for instance, manages most of the household affairs independently, including financial planning, children’s education, healthcare decisions, and routine household management. Despite this functional authority, she remains cautious when dealing with disagreements, particularly with elder family members like her mother-in-law. Rather than asserting her authority directly, she adopts a respectful and gradual approach. *“Even if I feel my decision is correct, I won’t argue immediately. I will explain slowly and make them understand without hurting them,”* she explains. This reflects how authority is exercised through negotiation, patience, and emotional awareness rather than direct confrontation. It also shows how women consciously balance independence with respect to sustain stability within the household.

Similarly, Case E highlights that although she has gained control over everyday responsibilities, major decisions such as financial investments, property matters, or long-term planning are still discussed with her husband. *“For daily matters I can decide on my own, but for big decisions I will always talk to him because it should be a joint decision,”* she says. This indicates that authority is shared rather than completely transferred, where practical control lies with the wife while symbolic authority remains distributed within the marital relationship. This shared model reflects a form of negotiated power where decision-making is influenced by both autonomy and relational expectations.

Case F also reflects this pattern of negotiated authority. While she independently manages daily responsibilities, she seeks her husband’s opinion in significant matters to avoid misunderstandings and maintain mutual understanding. *“If it is something important, I will not decide alone. I will discuss with him so that later there will not be any conflict,”* she explains. This highlights that negotiation is not only about decision-making but also about preventing future disagreements and maintaining emotional balance within the relationship. Women thus

anticipate possible conflicts and manage them proactively through communication and inclusion.

In some instances, women also adopt indirect or subtle strategies to assert their authority. Case D explains that when she is confident about a decision, especially regarding her children's well-being, she may act independently and later inform other family members. *"If I am sure about something for my children, I will do it first and then tell others. I know what is right in that situation,"* she states. This indicates a quiet assertion of control within restrictive structures, where women expand their authority without openly confronting family norms.

These narratives collectively demonstrate that negotiation of authority is a continuous, dynamic, and context-dependent process. Women actively evaluate situations, relationships, and consequences before making decisions, choosing when to assert independence and when to accommodate others. Their authority is therefore relational, strategic, and adaptive, shaped by both practical necessity and the need to maintain social and emotional harmony within the household.

4.2.5.2 Relational Power Dynamics

The process of negotiating authority is deeply interconnected with emotional mediation and conflict management strategies. The narratives reveal that women prioritise maintaining relationships, emotional stability, and family harmony while dealing with disagreements. Instead of engaging in direct confrontation, they rely on patience, communication, compromise, and emotional regulation to resolve conflicts. This indicates that authority in migrant households is not only about control over decisions but also about the ability to manage emotions and sustain interpersonal relationships effectively.

Case H mentions that during conflicts, she consciously avoids reacting emotionally, as she believes that emotional reactions may escalate problems. Instead, she prefers calm and composed communication. *"If I react emotionally, it will only make things worse. So I try to stay calm and explain things properly at the right time,"* she explains. This highlights emotional control as a key coping mechanism, where managing one's own reactions becomes essential in maintaining authority and stability within the household.

Similarly, Case E highlights that although she manages everyday responsibilities, she continues to involve her husband in major decisions. *"For daily matters I decide on my own, but for important decisions I will always ask him, because it should be mutual,"* she notes, indicating that authority remains shared within the marital relationship. This pattern reflects the idea that

power within households is relational and negotiated rather than individually held, where decision-making emerges through interaction and mutual adjustment (Kabeer, 1999).

Case F further emphasises patience and timing as important strategies in dealing with differences in opinion. Rather than opposing others immediately, she chooses to wait and express her perspective at an appropriate moment. *“I don’t respond immediately when there is a disagreement. I wait and then talk in a better way so that they will understand,”* she says. This reflects a strategic approach to conflict resolution, where women use time and communication as tools to negotiate acceptance of their decisions. Such strategies reduce the chances of open conflict while gradually asserting their viewpoint.

Case E also highlights the importance of continuous communication, particularly with her husband, in managing conflicts and misunderstandings. Despite physical distance, regular conversations help maintain clarity and mutual understanding. *“We communicate regularly, so even if there is any confusion, we can solve it without making it a big issue,”* she explains. This shows how emotional connection and communication act as stabilizing factors in decision-making and conflict resolution, ensuring that disagreements do not disrupt family relationships.

Support systems beyond the immediate household also play a significant role in managing emotional stress and conflicts. Many women rely on parents, siblings, neighbours, and close relatives for advice, reassurance, and practical assistance. These networks provide a sense of security and help women cope with the pressures of managing responsibilities alone. Emotional support from these sources often strengthens their confidence and ability to handle difficult situations.

Personal strength and self-confidence emerge as crucial internal coping mechanisms. Case D highlights that mental strength and clarity in decision-making help in dealing with both internal doubts and external pressures. *“If we are confident about our decisions, we can face any situation. We should believe in ourselves and stay strong,”* she states. This reflects how women develop resilience over time, enabling them to manage responsibilities, negotiate authority, and handle conflicts effectively.

This reflects the concept of emotion work, where individuals actively manage their emotions to maintain social relationships and stability (Hochschild, 1983). Women’s ability to regulate emotions, communicate effectively, and maintain composure becomes central to negotiating authority within the household.

Overall, these narratives demonstrate that negotiation of authority is not merely about power but about emotional intelligence, patience, and relational management. Women combine communication, support systems, and personal resilience to navigate conflicts, ensuring that household stability and relationships are maintained even in challenging situations. Their ability to balance independence with emotional sensitivity highlights the complex and dynamic nature of authority within migrant households.

The cases highlight how decision-making, emotional awareness, and social relationships work together in shaping women's ability to handle responsibilities and sustain stability within migrant family settings.

"I take decisions at home, but if there is any disagreement, I try to explain it calmly instead of arguing because maintaining peace in the family is very important for me."- Case H

"Sometimes we have different opinions, but I don't react immediately. I wait, think, and then talk in a better way so that they can understand my side without creating conflict."- Case E

"If we are confident about our decisions, we can manage situations without creating unnecessary problems, but at the same time we should respect others' opinions and maintain relationships."- Case D

CHAPTER 5 - FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to summarise the major findings related to the research topic on migrant wives and their changing roles within transnational households. All the findings presented here are derived from a systematic analysis of the data collected through in-depth interviews with the eight participants. These findings are grounded in the lived experiences of the respondents and reflect the realities of managing household, financial, and social responsibilities in the absence of their husbands. The analysis highlights how women adapt to expanded roles, negotiate authority, and develop coping strategies within existing family and social structures.

The findings also make certain recommendations to how migrant spouses may seek to enhance their health, independence and capacity to make their own decisions, given the challenges that they face. These results are more convincing since they conform to the theoretical frameworks and pertinent literature covered in the previous chapters. The results are presented in this chapter in a way that is easy to comprehend and implement since they are grouped according to important topics.

5.2 MAJOR FINDINGS

The experiences of migrating spouses are shaped by a complex interaction of migration, gender roles, family expectations and individual coping skills according to the results of the study. A few of the trends that can be observed in the stories are how the daily life of women alters when their husbands go away to other countries in the gulf. There is more change involved in this reorganisation of home roles, duties and power, than just a change of labour. As time passes women have to do more and more chores at home including taking care of the children, the finances, the care and the social duties. Such transformation can serve as an example of how migration opens new opportunities and compels women to accept new duties to redefine their roles within the family structure. Although the husband remains, symbolically speaking, as the head of the family in official bodies that still assign them the assigned positions even after the husband remains, nevertheless women gradually begin to see themselves as the primary organisers of the home and these duties become the norm.

The practical and symbolic importance of women as central figures to maintain the family stability is highlighted by the image of a migrant home with no spouses. Because of the migration of one of the male members, the female member gets forced to make immediate and

continuing decisions regarding life in normal every day. This ultimately leads to functional autonomy, where females assume the responsibility of performing everyday activities within the home, as well as making their personal decisions about things such as finances, education, healthcare and housekeeping. Having said that, it's not completely autonomous. This norm will continue to be upheld as long as women continue to seek the endorsement of their spouses or in-laws before making any dramatic life decisions. The outcome is an authority paradigm that represents both emotional and symbolic dependency and practical freedom. Consequently, the construct of decision-making relies on rather a relational than an individualistic, supported by the interdependent nature of family life in migratory circumstances. The stories suggest that autonomy is not wholly internalised in the form of individual power but is pragmatic or situational and even in constant contests.

Moreover, interviewees highlighted the challenges they face due to this changing family structure, especially in relation to emotional labour, gendered expectations. Consequently, due to the fact that women are required to balance their own internal and external responsibilities; as such, women tend to become overwhelmed with the number of things they have to accomplish. Without solid financial and emotional support on the part of their husbands, many women have filed complaints of being overwhelmed by the demands of child care, housework, social commitments, and schooling. These are likely to result in time limitations, mental pressure, and physical tiredness. Moreover, the traditional roles of caring and being able to provide emotional support are still prescribed to women, despite them now having to balance more tasks than before. This is a doubled burden to married women who are also looking after children because their roles of being decision-makers and a housewife overlap. On the other hand, the society imposes marriage and career related expectation on the single women. Although gender roles are changing within families and women are increasingly becoming decision-makers, it is these challenges that underscore the importance of the issues of gender roles and the influence of patriarchal expectations on women.

The results show that it is not the case that decision-making power is being in a stagnant position but instead it is constantly being contested through the daily behaviours and relationships within migrant families. More and more women are making the decisive choices regarding things in life, but still the women base their power on the system of relationship dependency. However, even when technically independent, they usually ask their spouses or other family members before making major life decisions, whether they will be made or not. This indicates that power is simultaneously being expanded and strengthened. In reality,

women assume the responsibility of being the head of the home however in a symbolic sense, the divide of power in the family and marriage unions is still shared. The results indicate that authority negotiation is characterised by a more subtle approach and mandatory discussion, compromise, and emotional sensitivity to the subject. Women demonstrate that relationships and not responsibilities in themselves define power in delicate balance of their independence and maintenance of peace in the home. In this case, dominance is not usable to exercise authority but through collaboration with decisions being interwoven in continuous interpersonal bargaining.

The study sheds light on how structural forces, cultural norms, and emotional processes interplay to influence the experience of migration by women living in migrant homes. Gender roles and relative standings of people in families play a critical role in the way migrated people carry out their new duties. The adaptation process that women constantly face is the process through which they gain increasingly more and more roles; they learn how to manage resources, make decisions, and negotiate power in relation-specific contexts that are complex and many-layered. Nevertheless, they are to obey, be respectful and do some emotional work therefore their agency is not entirely free. Due to the interdependently organized family decision-making procedures, the study demonstrates that the autonomy of women is not absolute but conditional and negotiated. Empowerment is not external of boundaries but rather their experiences demonstrate how open and closed boundaries collocate to create a daily existence.

Women get to know how to cope with the emotional and practical complexities that come up, as they juggle the various demands of running a home. To find comfort and advice, communication (particularly to spouses, in a digital or phone format) is a common maneuver. When the chips are down women usually seek the support and advice of their parents, in-laws and other relatives. A lot of people also reorganise their social networks by talking to trusted neighbours or members of the community for both emotional and practical support. These support systems play a critical role in supporting women whenever they have to deal with stress and uncertainty. At the same time, a number of them emphasized the necessity to be independent and possess inner strength. They also develop confidence in their skills to incorporate complex domestic matters without frequent outside verification as they acquire skills to cope with tasks independently. Gradually, as they become more and more responsible of what they do, they become more competent decision-makers and personalities within the home management.

The results of women adaptation to the adversities of migrant life in their countries of origin revolve around individual strength and resilience. Higher emotional maturity, confidence, and problem-solving abilities seemed to be a consistent theme across the responses of the participants in terms of the beneficial consequences of repeated exposure to responsibility. There are also social factors like experience, need and the negotiation of roles that is continually going on that also contribute to the formation of this resilience. As they grow up, women learn to juggle several roles and keep their emotions in check, putting the demands of their families before their own. The capacity of a person in regulated and control of his emotions is critical in the management of stress, resolution of arguments and maintenance of peace at home. This form of power is a product of women learning to adapt to and survive under a system of structural limitations; over time they learn to overcome such limitations and to make their own choices. Their narratives show that resilience is not an inborn attribute but is a learned skill that is shaped by the experience one has as well as the continual being renegotiated to their respective positions in society.

Overall, the findings present the evidence of how the life of migrant spouses is affected by the constant state of flux, according to which, migrant spouses are subjected to metamorphoses, negotiation, and adaptation. Their duties escalate greatly after migrating and they become the decision-makers and managers of the home. Having authority is still encompassed within the relational and culturally based structure and, therefore, even with increased responsibility comes a lack of independence. Women on a constant basis juggle between independence and dependency, accountability and trust and control and compromise. They migrant families are depicted in their narratives to explain that dynamic relationships are what characterises migrant households and not fixed positions. Ultimately, the research shows that the lives of women are marked by the presence of freedom and limitation; in the absence of spouses, the ability to survive, comprehend and regulate one's feelings, negotiate the social situations favorably is critical towards keeping a family intact and a steady household.

Research question 1: How do the household, financial roles and social responsibilities of migrant wives change after their husbands migrate, and what new roles do they take on, and how do they make sense of these changes?

Case C has added more domestic responsibilities on the basis of her husband being long-term migrated. She takes up the entire responsibility in the day-to-day activity of care and cleaning of the home and the children in his absence. The husband of Case E is working abroad and she can and must take care of the schooling of her children, the medical needs of her offspring and

the visits of her children to hospitals all by herself. The husband of Case H has been long away and according to her he has worked abroad and she says that she has learnt to manage the family and make all the decisions on her own.

As seen through analysis of personal accounts, when husbands and wives migrate, women take an even bigger burden of household and caring chores, to compensate the absence of their husbands. Due to the long periods spent abroad by their husbands, the women in Cases C, E and H often find themselves totally responsible of running the family, attending to the children, taking care of any medical needs, handling the finances, and doing all of the household daily chores. They also discuss the pattern in which they deal with major family issues such as the education and health care requirements of their children without necessarily having to be assisted at all times by their husbands. This has now seen women being the main decision-maker and carer in most of the households making a significant change on the traditional gender roles. It is apparent that this tendency of growing responsibility is widespread throughout the narratives since other cases such as Case A and Case D also recount similar experiences of accommodating full responsibility of own household responsibilities.

Research question 2: To what extent do migrant wives exercise decision-making authority within the household, and do they still rely on husbands or family members for guidance?

Every theme which was present nearly in every case was the responsibility of decision-making. Following their husband's lengthy absence, migrant women tended to assume the responsibility of managing the family. As can be identified, there has been a shift to pragmatic independence in their daily lives, because the women in Cases H, C, and A state that they personally deal with the decisions pertaining to money, healthcare, an education to their children and mundane household management. When husbands and wives are away and spend long periods in foreign countries, the manner in which most countries make decisions at home is transferred to the foreign country.

That being the case, this independence is not an easy thing. Although they get the majority of day-to-day tasks done by themselves, even the migrant women, when required to make a big choice, still seek out moral support as well as advice of their husbands or other older family members. Despite the women in Cases F and E all doing all the day to day chores, they still consult their husbands or elders when it comes to making important decisions of household nature. Such is the way in which decision-making serves as an act of delicate balancing between

autonomy and continuous reliance in marriage wherein the emotional power is energetically distributed even as spouses are energetically involved in exerting beneficial control.

Research question 3: What strategies do migrant wives use to manage their everyday responsibilities, and what support systems help them cope with challenges?

Childcare, financial commitments, house chores, and society pressure is overloading many migrant women as they make attempts to make ends meet without their husbands. Being household heads and in charge of a number of household tasks, women tend to experience a number of mental and physical strains as they juggle between the household and the responsibilities of making decisions within the household. These three cases H, F and D exemplify the weight of this responsibility by putting women in situations where they have to respond to both every day and unforeseen difficulties by themselves.

To get rid of these challenges, migrating spouses employ a range of strategies and rely on a set of resources of support. The tools they use on a daily basis on how to ensure that the family runs smoothly are time management, job prioritisation and practical problem-solving. Neighbours and community networks are also very important as they form support structures, including in-laws, parents and spouses. Effective internal coping mechanisms such as personal strength and resilience make women manage to withstand constant pressure; case F and E demonstrates that family members should offer not only emotional but practical support to women.

Research question 4: How do they negotiate authority with husbands, in-laws, or other family members when conflicts or disagreements arise?

In migrant households, women engage in diverse emotional and behavioural coping, to address conflicts and power-negotiation. To avoid letting things get hot many people use selective "engagement" where they selectively choose when/with whom they are going to talk to. Not to spend time with people who can be too critical or inflexible keeps conflicts from getting worse. In this process women practice emotional control by making an effort to keep their cool, collected and patient when they disagree. That way, they can avoid any disagreements or misunderstandings regarding their opinions but still maintain peace in the family. The strategic and adaptive reactions to the issue of controlling power in a complex family include not reacting fast and conversing intelligently.

Timing, progressive persuasion, and patience are important coping mechanisms that help in managing conflict particularly in situations such as H, F and E. When women do not agree with

somebody, they mostly wait until the right time to take action so they may: say what they really think in a manner that the other people would accept. Open communications with spouses and especially communicating with spouses in an attempt to elucidate things or seek some emotional support is extremely important. As a way of averting any form of conflict that may arise due to conflicting issues in their relationships, wives tend to involve their husbands in making major decisions, despite the fact that they make most of their own decisions in day-to-day. Nevertheless, the role of in-laws and other elderly members is still essential, since their approval is needed in some cases regarding the social acceptability of households. These traditions demonstrate that power is not administered and received but created by ties of kinship through dialogue, concessions, and reciprocal concessions.

The process of negotiating power changes structurally and goal oriented, the way women interact socially and cope with life situations. As a result of regular exposure to challenges and responsibility, women build such qualities as adaptability, emotional intelligence, and resilience. Trying to maintain stability and harmony in the relationship becomes an increasingly difficult task to them, and so does trying to impose their will of decision-making. They are more strategic in their approach. The women are often being forced to reconsider their status in the society as they attempt at striking a delicate balancing act between projecting their individuality in lieu of traditional values and family structures. The nature of power in this context is not absolute but is relative in nature and is the result of continuous discussion rather than dictate. These findings demonstrate that gender norms, emotional attachment, and fostered expectation, among other factors, influence the conflict management of migrant women; to keep the family life afloat, migrant women have to maintain a fine balancing act between being independent and being dependent.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS

In this section, the researcher as per the findings of the research provides some recommendations. Outlined in such a way that they are organized per the major topics analyzed, these recommendations are aimed at improving the lives of migrant spouses and reducing the burdens that they have to face.

Role Expansion

Migrant women are left with a huge responsibility of household chores and taking care of their children without the financial and emotional support of their husbands. They should also provide institutional and community level support in recognition of their critical role as primary

carers and home managers. Reasonable sharing of responsibility by the family might be promoted through awareness campaigns and communal projects. The process of reducing the burden on women and enhancing their overall quality of life is possible through the access to medical assistance and community-based support services, and childcare.

Decision-Making

Traditional beliefs and dependence on relationships limit women, despite their greater involvement in positions of decision-making. Self-esteem and independence of women can be improved through some initiatives that will inform them about personal finance, the law, and making good decisions. To lead the effective and friendly home life, it is significant to contribute to open communication and collaborative decision-making of the family members. Allowing women greater autonomy in decision making regarding their own long term financial resources and property is a very special area of concern.

Coping Strategies

Women manage their responsibilities through a host of coping mechanisms the coping mechanisms are usually shaped by the needs other than by the organised support systems. Community networks to give emotional support and practical support as well as counselling services and women self-help groups should be established. As a source of guidance, breaking down tasks, and the creation of the sense of solidarity within the community, local organisations and neighbourhood groups can be invaluable. Worries and the sense of isolation can be enhanced through the creation of the surroundings where women will be able to communicate and support each other.

Conflict Management

Family conflict management and negotiating the authority require emotional strength and consideration of words. Families can be taught about mutual respect and sharing of responsibilities through awareness programs which focus on learning positive communication, conflict resolution and being gender sensitive. Women can seek help through community mediation programs and family therapy programs and help them manage issues in a better manner. When a woman needs to cope with the power and relations at home, one of the tasks to perform is to stimulate supportive relations among in-laws and spouses.

Partly such studies are rather significant in the current socioeconomic context, especially in places such as Kerala where migration to the Gulf countries continues to be a common means of earning a living. The house hold management, caring and decision making have now shifted

to the female gender due to restructuring of family dynamics brought about by prolonged absence of the husbands. This research contributes to our sociological understanding of how societal norms, family life, immigratory process, and economic situations affect the everyday life of people. It puts a lot of focus on how migrating spouses' experiences are served amidst wider social and cultural settings, and are not individualized personal transformations.

When their husbands are away, migrant women must take on numerous responsibilities; and they must be properly nurtured. Women can gain by having a greater availability of counselling services and local based support networks, and by the introduction of self-help groups of women, which offer emotional as well as practical support. Women may take on more responsibility with self-assurance if local and national organisations launch initiatives to increase their financial literacy, skill sets, and general knowledge. Individuals might also feel improved and experience less stress when they can obtain medical care with ease, child care subsidies, and support systems within their communities.

Communities and families have a significant impact on migrant wives' lives. In the case of women, who already have a lot of responsibilities, it is especially essential to create an environment where empathy will be encouraged, and the burden of unreasonable expectations will be lifted. It is as easy as promoting the development of common duties in extended families and providing emotional support due to the elimination of stress and isolation. There is a need to consider the lived experiences of these women since, although they play a very crucial role in ensuring that there is stability in the family, much of what they go through remains unnoticed.

According to C. Wright Mills, personal troubles are often understood as individual problems, but in reality, they are closely connected to larger social structures and institutional forces. In the context of migrant wives, the challenges they face in managing household responsibilities, decision-making, and emotional stress are not merely personal struggles but are shaped by broader factors such as gender norms, migration patterns, and family systems. Therefore, it is the responsibility of not only individuals but also families, communities, and institutions to recognise these structural influences and provide adequate support to women in managing their roles and responsibilities effectively.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Some of the areas where the research established that migrant women incur the greatest and most multi-faceted change are household administration, caregiving, financial and decision-

making. Although women are left with the increased burden of home duties that her husband formerly controlled, wives are often left to fend alone without their husbands who are now away long without return. This shift has increased their responsibilities significantly by including the management of the education, healthcare, financial planning and social obligations of their children in addition to the normal housework they usually carry out. Based on the results, women gain self-assurance, competence, and practical independence via this transition as they gain experience dealing with challenging circumstances independently. Due to the need to balance a number of jobs with no stable support, women have to endure both physical and mental stresses that are the result of having to face a number of jobs without any consistent support. The accounts of their lives reflect a hierogaleid of process of adaptation, whereby people are motivated to be increasingly competent and self-sufficient by necessity and all the while are guided by existing cultural norms and family expectations.

The narratives show that migratory patterns, gender stereotypes, cultural expectations and family structures are a great influence in shaping the realities of the migrant wives. Women deal with these complex situations with the aid of various coping mechanisms which include emotional control, time management, dependence on support systems when one needs them, and effective communication in the family. Their authority of making decisions is, however, shared and contested at times being influenced by emotional attachments they may have with their spouses and the demands of the extended family members even as women gain operational powers in managing their everyday home tasks. This is an example of a midway between dependency and independence where women are mostly doing the household chores and also creating unity in their households. Studies indicate further that women can more easily cope with their responsibilities and challenges when they are well supported, by family, friends and community. Overall, the findings begin to distinguish that migrant spouses are important community members who make everything in their power to support their families, and that the support they are providing could be enhanced by more institutional support and how the public is made aware of their situation.

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ANNEXURE

Interview Guide

The following interview guide aims to gather in-depth information and lived experiences regarding the changing gender roles among Pravasi wives. The study focuses on their role expansion within the household and society, particularly in the context of absence of formal authority. It also explores their decision-making responsibilities, everyday management of household affairs, sources of support, coping strategies, and the challenges they face while navigating these expanded roles in Thiruvananthapuram District.

General Profile

1. Personal and Family details

- Name of the respondent
- Age
- Occupation
- Duration of marriage
- Family type (nuclear/joint/extended)
- Number of family members in the household
- Number of children/dependents

2. Migration Details

- Name of the husband
- Location of migration (Country of employment)
- Husband's occupation abroad
- Duration of migration
- Year when husband migrated
- How long has your husband been working abroad?
- How often does he visit home?
- Mode of communication and its frequency

B. Changes in Household, Financial, and Social Responsibilities (Addresses RQ 1)

B1. Household Responsibilities

1. Can you explain what your daily routine at home looks like now when your husband is working abroad?

- Household work you do every day
 - Caring for children or elders
 - Outside tasks you handle
1. After your husband migrated, what new household responsibilities did you start handling that you were not responsible for earlier?
 - Cooking and cleaning
 - Supervising children
 - Dealing with workers or services
 2. How do you manage the home and family responsibilities on your own when there are many tasks to complete in a day?
 - Planning daily work
 - Balancing different responsibilities
 - Asking for help if needed
 3. Are there situations where managing household work becomes difficult for you?
 - Illness
 - Children's needs
 - Lack of help at home
 4. Do you feel that your role in the household has become bigger or more demanding after your husband migrated?
 - Increase in duties
 - Feeling of pressure
 - Adjustments you made

B2. Financial Responsibilities

5. Who usually manages the money that your husband sends from abroad?
 - Your role in handling the money
 - Whether others are involved
6. What types of financial responsibilities do you handle in your family now?
 - Paying bills
 - Buying household items
 - Managing children's education expenses
7. Do you make decisions about spending and saving money in the household?
 - Daily expenses

- Major purchases
 - Savings or investments
8. Have you ever faced any difficulties while managing financial matters alone?
- Unexpected expenses
 - Lack of financial knowledge
 - Pressure from relatives
9. How confident do you feel now about managing financial responsibilities on your own?
- Learning through experience
 - Support from others

B3. Social Responsibilities

10. After your husband migrated, did your role in family or community events change in any way?
- Attending functions
 - Representing the family
11. Do you attend social or religious programmes alone when your husband is away?
- Comfort level
 - Support from relatives
12. How do neighbours and relatives usually view or treat you as the wife of a migrant worker?
- Respect or appreciation
 - Criticism or gossip
13. Do you feel that your social position or status changed because your husband works abroad?
- Positive experiences
 - Negative experiences
14. Are you involved in any local groups or community activities in your area?
- Women's groups
 - Neighbourhood activities

B4. Institutional Responsibilities

15. Do you handle outside responsibilities such as going to banks, schools, hospitals, or government offices?
- Types of work you manage
 - Difficulties faced

16. Were these outside responsibilities earlier handled mainly by your husband?

- Changes after migration
- Learning to handle them

17. How comfortable do you feel now when dealing with officials or institutions on your own?

- Confidence level
- Support from others

B5. Interpretation of Changes

18. When you look at your life now, how do you understand the changes that happened after your husband migrated?

- New responsibilities
- Personal growth

19. Do you feel these changes have made you more independent or more burdened?

- Positive feelings
- Challenges

C. Decision-Making Authority in the Husband's Absence (Addresses RQ 2)

C1. Independent Decision-Making

20. In your daily life, what types of decisions do you make independently without asking your husband?

- Household matters
- Children's needs

21. Can you describe a situation where you had to take an important decision by yourself because your husband was not present?

- Reason for decision
- Outcome

C2. Dependence on Husband or Others

22. Are there certain decisions where you still feel it is necessary to ask your husband's opinion first?

- Financial matters
- Children's education

23. Do you sometimes seek advice or approval from other family members before making decisions?

- Parents
- In-laws
- Relatives

C3. Responsibility Without Authority

24. Do you ever feel that you carry many responsibilities but do not always have the full authority to make decisions?

- Examples from family life
- Reactions from others

25. Can you share situations where others questioned or changed the decisions you made?

- Family reactions
- How you responded

C4. Patriarchy and Gendered Power Relations

26. In your family, do people still believe that important decisions should mainly be taken by men?

- Cultural expectations
- Family traditions

27. If your family believes men should take important decisions, what do you do when you make decisions at home?

- Limitations
- Adjustments you make

D. Everyday Management and Coping Strategies (Addresses RQ 3)

D1. Practical Management

28. How do you organise and manage your daily responsibilities when you have many tasks to complete?

- Planning work
- Managing time

29. What strategies do you use to balance household work, childcare, and outside responsibilities?

- Prioritising tasks
- Asking for help

D2. Emotional Coping

31. Living apart from your husband for a long period can be difficult. How do you deal with feelings such as loneliness or stress?

- Talking with others
- Personal activities

32. When you feel emotionally stressed, what helps you feel stronger or more relaxed?

- Hobbies
- Prayer or religious activities

D3. Support Systems

33. Who are the people you depend on most when you face difficulties in daily life?

- Parents
- In-laws
- Neighbours or friends

34. How important is family or community support in helping you manage your responsibilities?

- Examples of support
- Situations without support

E. Negotiating Authority During Conflicts or Disagreements (RQ 4)

E1. Negotiation with Husband

35. When you and your husband have different opinions about a decision, how do you usually discuss and resolve it?

- Phone conversations
- Mutual understanding

36. Do you feel comfortable expressing your own opinions and preferences to your husband?

- Openness in communication
- Situations where you hesitate

E2. Negotiation with in-laws and Family Members

37. Have you ever experienced disagreements with in-laws or relatives about family decisions?

- Reasons for disagreements

- How it was handled

38. How do you manage such disagreements while maintaining family relationships?

- Compromise
- Seeking support

E3. Real-life Example

39. Can you describe a real situation where you had to negotiate or defend your decision in front of family members?

- What happened
- How it was resolved

F. Closing Questions & Reflection

40. Overall, how has your husband's migration changed your role and life in the family?

- Positive changes
- Challenges
- Hopes for the future

41. Do you think your role in the family will change again when your husband returns?

- Expectation
- Fears or hopes
- Anticipated adjustments

42. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a migrant wife managing the household?

- Any other problems you faced
- Any good experiences
- Sacrifices you made
- Changes in your confidence
- Difficult moments in life
- Support that helped you
- Advice for other migrant wives
- Things you wish others understood about your life