

INNOVATIONS

Life as a Migrant: The lived Experience of Returnee Migrant Children: The Case of Farta Woreda Returnees ; South Gondar Zone, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Throughout their entire process of migration returnee children undergo with various conditions of migration. It was the objective of this phenomenological study to explore the lived experience of migrant returnee children in Farta Woreda. A total of 30 returnee migrant children were purposively selected for the study. An in-depth interview was employed to collect relevant data from subjects. The findings of this study revealed that migrant children encountered psychological, social, economic, physical and educational problems during their live as a migrant. Although, migration exposed children to the aforementioned difficulties, the study also confirmed that migration helped migrants to escape from early marriage and assist their family occasionally. The study also affirmed that migrant children were engaged in activities like working in cheap and difficult jobs, spirituality, forming friendship, and re-integration to their family as a strategy to cope up with the difficulties they experienced.

Keywords: 1. Migration 2. Child Migration 3. Returnee migrant children 4. Farta Woreda

1. Introduction

People migrate from their place of origin to another destination hoping to find a better basis for existence. Migration is a global phenomenon caused by economic, social, political, cultural, environmental, health, education and transportation factors (Kyain, 2015).

Internationally, an estimated 214 million people, which is 3.1 percent of the world's population, are migrants (UN, 2010). According to the UN estimation, approximately one third of the migrants from all developing countries are between 12 and 24 years old. Among this age group, youths under the age of 18 years are at great risk when migrating due to the fact that this specific age group has a tendency to become involved in child labor, particularly when migrating without their parents.

Apart from migration at global level, Africa has a long tradition in migration (Shaw, 2007). To show the migration pattern in Africa, Shaw, took 10 African countries as an instance. These countries were Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda, as a contribution to a larger study on migration in Africa. The study found out that these countries show a wide variety of international migration patterns. Some migrants pursue seasonal agricultural activities that involve crossing borders, while others migrate for short periods of time as a reaction to changes in economic conditions. Thus, the reasons for emigrants in the aforementioned African countries were complex in nature.

Migration has also becoming a growing public agenda in Ethiopia. The country experienced both international and internal migration (Shaw, 2007). Most of the international migrants from Ethiopia were refugees, escaping political conflict, famine, and persecution, often by their own government. Motives to flee have changed over time, however. Migrants initially fled for political reasons and to

escape conflict. In later years the motives of Ethiopian migrants to flee their country shifted to more economic motives (Blerk, 2008)

Internal migration flows within Ethiopia are currently larger than international migration flows from Ethiopia. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre ([IDMC], 2009) estimates that there are currently 300,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Ethiopia compared to around 60,000 refugees that currently reside in other countries (UNCHR, 2009). Among the migrants, children who are below the age of 18, accounts large number (Kelil, 2015). This shows that, internal migration has become a growing public concern in Ethiopia and children comprise a large number.

From the phenomena of migration in Ethiopia, rural urban migration of children becomes the most increasing concern. Children leave their rural villages and move to the cities to find opportunities. However, after migration most of them are not employed. The opportunities for rural migrants in urban areas are limited, and life in cities frequently does not meet expectations (Sentayhu, 2016). Children of the rural community migrate from their origin to different cities and towns of the country have been a routine phenomenon in Ethiopia. As a result, observing of street children in different towns and cities of the country becomes the common phenomena (Girmachew, 2009). For instance, according to MoLSA (2002), about 150,000 children live on the streets in Ethiopia, about 60,000 of them in Addis Ababa. UNICEF (2000) has also estimated the problem may be far more serious, with nearly 600,000 street children countrywide and over 100,000 in Addis Ababa. Rao (2009), also stated children who migrate to urban centers are more likely to face problems like coercion, deception, and violence etc. Regardless of the contribution that migration has on urban development, unaccompanied child migration will bring a negative effect. In relation to this idea, Sarah (2011) noted that children who are unaccompanied or separated from their parents are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations and abuses at all stages of the migration process.

Children constitute a vulnerable group and a child could become more vulnerable when he or she apart from their family and experience a new environment on their early age for searching of better live. The effects of migration could have a profound impact on the child's development and future opportunities, that its impact on households and communities of origin (Bakker, Pels& Reis, 2009).

Although children constitute a large share in migration and face multifaceted problems, most migration discourse traditionally focused on the adult male migrant, by considering children as secondary and dependent. Children did not feature as individual subjects of immigration concern, but as appendages of and dependents on their parents, families or others (Mannion, 2016). From the above arguments one can deduce that, children are particularly facing various problems in the entire process of migration as compared to other section of the society but still scant attention has been given to migrant children in the national and international debates of migration. Thus, it is the necessity of conducting this phenomenological qualitative research to address the current gap in searching phenomenon experienced by returnee child migrants. Specifically, this study aims to (1) Explore challenges experienced by returnee migrant children in their migration life; (2) investigate positive effects of migration on migrants live; and (3) Identify coping mechanisms employed by migrant children.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Migration Experience of Children

Children who migrate from their home places to other areas in searching of better live and environment faced multifaceted problems in the entire process of migration. The situation gets worse when the migrants are independent child migrant. Migrant children are perceived to be at risk because of the difficult circumstances they go through in the cities. Some migrant children under go very difficult circumstances during their childhood because of the early untimely termination of their educational progress, engagement in hard labor under harsh tropical conditions, sleep in unacceptable places and crime. The daily economic struggles and hustles of such children and young people in their activities in the city signify how difficult life is treating such categories of children in the urban centers. Migrant children, according to Boyden, (2000) often face considerable problems in getting education, special facilities and programs and other social services, albeit these services are accessible in the urban centers. Depending on national sometimes local, legislation, undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are entitled to different levels of services and often fall under

different fee schedules. Moreover, unless they are issued with proper documents and the front-line health care workers recognize the documents, they may not be able to utilize effectively those services to which they are entitled (Hashim, 2005).

Migrant children both in the urban and rural areas are generally, the most vulnerable portion of the society that faces problem of access to food and medical care which in turn results delay on the physical and intellectual development of children. Particularly in urban settings migrant children experience crowded living, unsanitary living condition and lead a stressful life situation and inconsistent life style. Most of them are also exposed to child labor who works in hazardous areas. Hence, they are exposed to pesticides, fertilizers and toxic substances. On the contrary, they have little or no access to bathing facilities to keep their hygiene (Tatek, 2009). Migrant children in urban settings also face perennial harassment by police since they are considered as delinquents. While police in informal business and try to prevent street trading, migrant children especially those without proper documentation are particularly likely to have their goods seized or be asked to pay bribe or other forms of protection money. There are situations by which the money earned by migrant children controlled by gangs (Vungsirphis, 1997). Migration may have psycho-social impacts on children due to the experience moving from the country of origin to the country of destination, and also due to exclusion and marginalization in countries of destination. Leaving their communities, migrant children lose contact with their family and friends, as well as lose customs and traditions. At the same time, coming into a new community, they may be required to become accustomed to new language, culture and lifestyle. Even if children may adapt to new contexts more quickly than adults, this may generate conflict with parent or other members of same migrant group (Kelil, 2015).

2.2. The Impact of Migration on Migrants, Migrant Sending Family Livelihood, and Migrant Receiving Community

There are two major contradictory arguments regarding with the impact of migration bring in the lives of those who migrate, their households, their locality and areas of destination. The first group argued that migration had positive impacts in changing the lives of the migrants themselves, their families and for the economy of the sending countries. On the other hand, the other argument is the impact of migration is negative in the sense that migrants face different challenges in their place of destination.

Recently, international and internal migration has increasingly been recognized as a driving force for development, as migrants transfer knowledge and skills to receiving and origin locations, channel investments and remittances, and foster economic linkages and business opportunities between countries and regions (UNCSD, 2012). Byers, (2003) asserted that Immigration stimulates the economic growth of the receiving countries'. In return for contributions to the receiving nation's economy, the migrant is offered an opportunity to earn more money and to enjoy a range of chances which may not be available in the sending nation. Ellis (2003) also identified the multiple and complex roles of different types of migration in reducing the vulnerability of households and in potentially enabling virtuous spirals of asset accumulation that can provide families with exit routes from poverty.

Migration has also considered as a component of demography and population change and the changes on its scale and pattern of migration have a great consequence in social, economic, cultural, and political configuration of a society both in the places of origin and destinations (Gartaula, 2009). In recent times, various literatures show a remarkable optimistic relationship between migration and development. Larger global and national development contexts determine local development contexts, which in turn affect peoples' aspirations and opportunities to migrate (JMIDI, 2011). Carolina (2008), also indicated the existence of positive relationship between migration and development in which he believes migration promote development in the country of origin mainly in less developed countries (LDCs). Migration is seen as a livelihood strategy and integral part of development in countries of origin particularly in LDCs. Stephen (2008), take the potential of migration beyond the country of origin asserting that properly managed migration can stimulate new economic opportunities in destinations and shape the economic, social and cultural conditions in developing countries.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) estimated the total inflow of remittances for Ethiopia in 2007 reaches at US \$359 million. The average value of remittances received per person was US \$4. This is low when compared to an average of US \$26 dollars per person for Sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP, 2009) while the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) estimated the inflow of remittances at US \$636.2 million in 2007, but this number reflects only the formally-recorded flow of remittances. Since the informal flow of remittances is estimated at 45 to 60 percent of formal remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa (Freund & Spatafora, 2005), the real financial inflow of remittances is expected to be much higher. In 2008 the NBE reported much high remittance amounts, with one billion dollars' worth of remittances received from Ethiopian and foreign nationals in the year 2007-2008. In relation to this, NBE (2006) noted that one of the positive effects of the out-migration flows from Ethiopia is the inflow of remittances from Ethiopian citizens who migrated abroad. Remittances, as to the bank, are important in Ethiopia in the sense that they constitute a large share of foreign capital inflows.

In contrary, different studies showed migration gets increased and bring about different impacts. It is explained that not only migrants suffer from problems caused by migration but also sending and receiving communities of migrants are vulnerable to the troubles. Byers (2003), stated that emigration has a negative consequence for the sending countries. The study argued that while people leave the agricultural labor force to emigrate, total agricultural production falls and the amount of unproductive marginal land increase. The study further stated that when migrant people have special skills or educational qualification, the sending country lost the labor, knowledge and leadership skills of the migrant. Gautam, (2008) also states that migration has some effects on the construction and manual activities in urban towns. The emigration of skilled and knowledgeable people has resulted in a loss of potential leadership and left families and village without strong well informed people to take over from the existing leaders. Migration has also encouraged individualism and undermined the traditional collectivism. When migrants return from long periods overseas, and sometimes even short periods, they bring with them new ways of thinking and organizing things. They challenge traditions, traditional leaders, and traditional forms of social organization (Macpherson, 2000).

Not only on the sending community, public and the policymakers at the destination country usually believe that immigration can become an economic burden, as immigration is feared to lead to loss of jobs, heavy burden on public services, social tension and increased criminality (UNDP, 2009). The concern here is that immigrants increased job competition, down size the wage of the local labor and increase the fiscal burden for caring for a growing number of immigrants in the destination countries. Migrants at their place of destination also faced problems like unemployment. As most of migrations are taking place from rural areas to overpopulated urban centers the migrants simply involve on the saturated market and remain vacant. When the number of unemployed migrants increased they become the threats of urban security (Abdulahi, 2012). In addition to this, seasonal migrants result problems like disease contamination, environmental pollution and pressure transportation and health services on the destination countries. Migrant's interaction with the original dwellers also resulted acculturation or assimilation of culture which might be seen as undesirable by the local community, who are concerned for their original culture (Worku, 1995).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Population and Sampling of Respondents

Returnee migrant children were the focus of this study. A phenomenological qualitative research design was employed for this study to explore and describe how returnee migrant children make sense of their lived-experiences as a migrant child as individuals and their shared meanings with other migrant children on the study area. A total of 30 migrant returnee children were selected purposively as respondents for this study. Data was collected through an in-depth interview. The collected data analyzed through thematic analysis technique.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Challenges Experienced by Child Migrant Returnee`s

4.1.1. Psychological Problems

Findings of the study revealed that migrant children faced various multifaceted problems starting from their journey to flee up to their live as migrant and returnee to their community. It is evident from the data; migration exposed migrant children to different problems which worsen their situation. Migrant returnee children experienced situations that exposed them to psychological problems such as depression, loss of self-esteem and uncertainties.

Participants of the study explained; as a result of sadness and utterance of different ideas in their minds and feeling of alienation they experienced depression. Migrants identified that withdrawal from their families and communities` made them develop feeling of depression, guilt and shame. One interviewee explained, "My detachment from my families, unable to assist my poor family and inability to pursue my education always disturbs me. Albeit my families are poor, I never forget the love and affection they had for me and their inspiration for my education". Migrants` expectation of live and the reality in the urban destinations made participants depressed. Another interviewee stated that reminiscence of friendship and collective live in his original place make him unhappy and depressed. Migration changes the life situation of migrants. According to the interviews with a girl returned after five years of migration experience, inconsistency between the work she performed and the salary remunerated, neglect and insult from her employers and the host community results her to develop feeling of depression.

An interviews with another returnee revealed that economic uncertainty makes migrant live desperate and depressed. One interviewee shared about his economic insecurity and its psychological impacts as follows:

I was working as a daily laborer for a year. I trundled a wheel barrow and manhandled different packages. But these activities are seasonal and situational. As a daily laborer there were days I get busy and obtained much money, and there are days I spend without accomplishing any task and get nothing. I feel happy when I obtained better money for my daily expenditures, while off work days are boring and tiresome. On some of these off work days I run as a broke and worry for my basics.

According to the study live as migrant ensued children to face labor exploitation, neglect and insult from their employers and customers which eroded children`s self-assertiveness and competence over time. An interviewee with a girl served for four years as maid at Gondar confirmed that being voiceless and insult by her employers` and their children influenced her to develop low self-esteem. She stated, "I find difficulty to talk openly especially when subjected to criticism. They attack my personality than my idea. Nobody heard me. Every problem in the house was attached on me. Even the children insulted me as stupid and irrelevant. I feel hopeless in everything". The negative messages they routinely receive affected their sense of worth, and lead to self-blame. Moreover, migration exposed children with economic insecurity which in return forced them to not contact and help their families in time of emergency. As a result children develop feeling of worthlessness.

Starting from their first day of existence in cities and urban centers migrant children experienced uncertainty of life. Different living style in the new destinations, problem to adapt to the new environment, home sickness, bullying and robbery are the major experiences that make migrant children feel uncertain and insecure. The returnees raised in rural area characterized by shared living, trust and cooperation. Contrarily, migration destinations like towns and cities has different live styles which exposed migrant children to deception, hunger, street life, and a cumulative of insecurity. An interviewee with a migrant returnee boy who lived in Addis Abeba three years as a street child stated, "I frequently experienced bullying and robbery by gangsters. When I get back from work during the night gangsters waited me and took the money I earned by performing different difficult activities. I give the money and keep silent because they scared me not to disclose it for anyone". Besides, interviews confirmed that being strange and alone in towns also exposed migrants to life uncertainty. An interview with a girl returned from Bahir Dar after 2 years of migration experience explained, "I know no one in the city. Nobody understands my problem. When I ask for help they consider me as idle and burglary. Life with strange people makes me anxious".

4.1.2. Social Problems

Being strange for receiving community and environment, migrant's expectation of migrant live and their financial insecurity resulted migrant children for multifaceted social problems. Migrant children experienced exclusion and seclusion from various interactions and social relationships. Receiver community attitude towards migrant children and migrant children's attitude for recipient community results migrants to social detachment. The recipient communities develop a negative attitude towards migrant children which in return forced migrants to develop negative attitude for the community and make their relationship rough and limited. One interviewee enunciated, "because people considered me as a thief and their threat, I do not have good attitude for them and do not want to have a close interaction". Similarly, migrants experienced neglect and segregation in their environment. Migrant children are unequally treated, frequently sacked from work and considered as destructive and aimless. These all affected migrants to lose their bond with the recipient community and employers. Surprisingly, the results of this study confirmed that after return migrant children also experienced social exclusion at their home of origin. An interviewee with a returned girl explained, "After those years of migrant life tragedy in Addis Abeba I come back to my family but things were not the same as before. Some villagers considered me as aimless and a wrong model. As a result they warned their children not to contact me".

The socio-cultural and environmental differences between migrant's place of origin (rural) and destination (urban) exposed migrants to accustomed with new language, culture, and lifestyle. This created misunderstanding with other people and led them to other mental and physical strain. A boy returned from Addis Abeba after three years of migration experience explained the strange things he experienced. He noticed, "Everything in Addis Abeba was strange for me. Mass squirming of the people and tumultuous environment made me restless. Over congestion of roads exposed me to difficulty of road crossing for a while. Different colored people, diverse language speakers and tall buildings were also inexperienced before". Differences of culture in the destination also lead migrants to understand things differently and create misunderstanding with others. Migrants stole by a cutpurse during their attempt to settle false fights between pickpockets. Likewise, the apparent and truthful behavior of migrants endangered them to physical abuse during their attempt to disclose pickpocket's action for victims.

Due to their engagement in a dead end jobs for survival child migrants are also vulnerable to labor exploitation. Migrants who enter into the labor market in their early age suffer tremendously. They are forced to perform heavy duties with difficult circumstances without technical skills and equipments. Sometimes disproportion results child migrants failed to accomplish tasks as expected by employers. As a result, this creates dissatisfaction on employers and in return ends with denial and/or inadequate payment, sack from work, and verbal and physical abuse of child migrants. Likewise, this struggle for survival makes child migrants no time for education, lose an interest, and consider education as secondary. Thus, migration influenced child migrants to dropout from school and spends their time in search of jobs for daily basics. The study also revealed that even those migrants who attempted to pursue their education were faced problems related with school expenses, poor performance and sleeping in classes.

4.1.3. Economic Problems

Although children flee their family and community in search of better life and assist family things are not as expected in the destination. Child migrants experienced economic difficulties such as financial insecurity, lack of working capital and unemployment which worse their migrant live. According to the findings of this study migrants were unable to secure their basic needs like food, shelter, cloth and health services due to limited economic capacity. On this regard, a boy returnee from Bahir Dar stated, "There was days I run out of money and spend cold nights at Veranda and ate leftovers". Such economic difficulties also exposed child migrants to different diseases and inability to afford medication costs. As a result child migrants were forced to stay for a long period of time with their illness without any medical treatments. A girl returned after four years of migrant life from Gondar expressed, "I was frequently attacked by malaria and got sick. My employers asked me to take my salary and go to hospital. But I never go to hospital, because I need to accumulate and send the

money for my family". Economic deficiency also made participants unable to permanently assist their family permanently and start up their own business. According to participants their work and income was seasonal and situational. Therefore, they only support and visit their families in line with the conditions of income.

Searching of job in a new environment and get employed is not also an easy task for child migrants. Due to the new environment and children's lack of skills for the urban work environment made them to stay vacant at least for some period of time. Child migrants do not know the ins and outs of their destination and has no one they know as a directive to access jobs. Besides, migrants frequently sacked from work which exposed them at least transitional period of unemployment. On this conditions child migrants stay vacant and experienced financial insecurity for their daily basics.

4.2. Positive Effects of Migration

Although migration negatively affects the economic, social, and psychological status of migrant children it brought some positive contributions for them and their family. According to the findings of this study live as a migrant helps study children to escape from early marriage and paved a way for migrants to assist their family occasionally. Interviews with respondents especially girls indicated that repeated family influences of children to dropout school and early marriage are the major reasons to flee. Though children are passionate for education and unwilling to engage in marriage the family considered marriage as a base for economy and social bond that every child has to involve early. On this instance, a girl returned home after 3 years of migration experience stated;

"My father arranged marriage for me with the man who is rich and old. At a time I was grade six. When he told me the situation my mother and me begged him to continue my education and refused the proposal. But, things were continued as he planned. To make things cultural, the man [arranged fiancé] sends elders to ask my parents willingness about the marriage proposal. They said ok. I left them the day after and went to Woreta and then to Humera. When things get worse I come back home and found my father regretful for his position. Now I am pursuing my education".

Moreover, migration allows migrants to assist their parents and siblings rarely. The study confirmed that migrants send remittance, clothes and educational materials for their families. Interviews with a returnee boy from Giligel Belese enunciated "I do anything to get money and I send some for my family though it is not enough. Every year I bought educational materials and cloths for my two sisters. I also occasionally send money for holidays. Even with such difficulties I was happy seeing my sisters pursue their education". Likewise, migrants rented a plot of land for their family and helped their siblings to continue their education by fulfilling educational materials, school uniform and dormitory payment.

4.3. Coping Mechanisms of Returnee Migrant Children

To cope up and overcome the problems that migrant children experienced over the entire journey of migration participants designed their own strategies such as engaging in heavy and low paid jobs, being religious, substance use, forming friendship with parallels, seclusion and finally returnee to home.

4.3.1. Engage in dead-end Jobs

Doing any job available was identified as coping mechanisms of migrant children to deal with their difficulties. According to returnee migrants, to cover their immediate daily expenses like food, cloth, shelter and to assist their families they engaged in different dead end jobs. To satisfy these needs migrants were involved in low paid jobs like house maid, porter, technical assistance, daily laborer, janitor, car washing and shoeshine. The findings of this study reveal that to sustain life migrant children were involved in different heavy and low paid jobs. Interviews with a boy returned after two years of migration experience at Gondar confirmed as he was engaged as a daily laborer, porter and

car washer. He stated, "Due to absence of permanent work I was ready to do every work available there. I worked as a daily laborer like digging of canals, cleaving of wood and mud kneading. I carried parcels and tried car wash". Likewise, another respondent asserted as he was a shoeshine and carrying goods for income. The same was true for a girl returned from Addis Zemen. She engaged as a domestic servant in different houses. When she kicked out of work she was started to work as a daily laborer. Because of the difficulties she encountered as a daily laborer she changed her job and employed in a small private tavern house as a seller of local beers like 'Tella' and 'Areqie'. These shows that to struggle with challenges of migration migrants was ready to do any jobs available.

4.3.2. Spirituality

The study confirmed that religious practice is another strategy for migrants to cope up their migration difficulties. Migrants pray and fast, drink holy water (Orthodox followers), baptise (orthodox followers) and read religious books. Migrants go to church and mosque early in the morning before work and during the night after work. They attended religious preaching's to get relief from their uncertainties. Migrants pray day and night to refrain from their problems. They pray to get daily needs, health, kindness from others, to love and be loved by others, safety and better life, and peace and health for their family. Migrants engaged in spirituality to cope up with psycho-social problems like loneliness, homesickness, neglect and uncertainty. Interviews with 16 years old returnee from Gondar stated, "When I face any trouble in my life, miss my family and feel lost I pray to God to make things right. I ask God to give me courage and strength". To get relief and tranquility of mind migrants also consult religious fathers. An interview with a returnee girl from Addis Abeba explained, "Religious fathers were my immediate counselors. When I face any difficulties, fired from work or get sick I go to the church, pray and meet my God father. I told everything for him. I feel relaxed, and get strength from his consultations".

4.3.3. Forming Friendship

Migrants form friendship with their parallels to overcome the difficult migration experiences. They rent dormitory in a group, eat and drink together, work and walk jointly and share feelings together. Such collective actions facilitate migrants to get help, protection, advice, companionship and relief. Migrants rent a single room collectively and enjoy the ups and downs of life together. They share experiences, feelings, jokes and feel home. A returnee from Bahir Dar reflected, "I would not stay the last four years in Bahir Dar, if my friends were not there. It was memorable. The nights we slept together were full of happiness. We share our past, daily reports and stories and jokes. We had a lot of fun and laughing. This gives me relief from my depression and worries".

Forming friendship also helped migrants to get protection from bullying and robbery. Interviews with respondents asserted that migrant children were repeatedly bullied and robbed by gangsters. Especially, lonely and new migrants are vulnerable for such difficulties. As a result, migrants form friendship with others, live, work and walk together. An interviewee returned after three years of migration experience stated, "Every night I get back home with my friends and feel secured because my friends protect me from gangsters. They introduce me with bullies. And advice me about how to adapt the urban environment".

Financial and food assistance and companionship is another good bit of friendship. Migrants help each other in time of difficulties like illness, fired from work and feel lonely. A girl returned after two years of migration experience confirmed this case as follows, "When I was sick, my friends took me church, consulted a religious father and I get baptized. They took me to their house and nurse me until I get relief. They also provide money until I find a new job. I always remember their kindness".

4.3.4. Back to Home

This study confirmed that returning to the home of origin is the final exit strategy for migrants to end up the ups and downs of migration. The psycho-social and economic difficulties of migration forced migrants to say good bye migration. Currently, all the respondents are returnees from different destinations with different experience.

An interview with the returnees asserts that returning to home helped migrants to get love and affection from family, childhood friends and community members. This study also declared that, though returnees are considered as wrong models by some villagers they prefer life at home. Re-integration helps child returnees to care family nearby, pursue their education and feel sense of belongingness to the community. A boy returned home after three years of migrant life and expressed his satisfaction by a proverb “who as a mother who as a country”. Further he stated, “I come to visit my family for the New Year and settle here. I do not need to encounter more troubles as a migrant. My families are happy on my return and I am happy. I advise others that nothing in life is satisfied as being with family. Don’t leave your family and community. Life outside home is full of difficulties”.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that child migrants experienced psycho-social and economic problems. Psychologically, migrants experienced depression, abuse, low self-esteem, uncertainty and insecurity. Socially, migration exposed migrant children to neglect, exploitation, school dropout, homelessness, cultural shock and seclusion. Economically, migrants experienced unemployment, starvation and stuck in a dead end jobs. In fact, this study also confirmed that migration masked child migrants from early marriage and helps to assist their family occasionally. Nevertheless, the challenges of life as migrant surpassed the opportunities. As a result migrant children devised strategies like engaging in a dead end jobs, forming friendship, spirituality and finally return to home to cope up and exit migration difficulties.

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