Migration and the household: Gender dynamics and family planning in the context of widespread labor migration in Nepal

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Z. Hendrickson dissertation research (Sept 2016)
Presentation outline

- **Part 1:** Whether, how, and what reproductive decisions are made
  - Discussion

- **Part 2:** Migration and intention to use
  - Discussion

- **Part 3:** Husbands’ migration and women’s lives
  - Discussion

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Presentation outline

- Background
- Research question
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion

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Whether, how, and what reproductive decisions are made:

A qualitative look at reproductive communication, decision-making, and family planning practices in households where husbands are migrating

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Background: Migration and family planning

- Migration has a complex relationship with fertility
  - To understand the effects of temporary migration, the **disruption and interrelation hypotheses** are useful
  1-4

- In Nepal, temporary labor migration among men is common
  5
  - Men travel internally and internationally (India, Malaysia, and Persian Gulf most frequently) for work

- National-level surveys have shown that women whose husbands were currently migrating had low current contraceptive use and high unmet need
  6-8

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Background: Migration and family planning

- Women whose husbands were currently migrating had low current contraceptive use and high unmet need (as currently defined) 6-8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Currently using any contraceptive method (%)</th>
<th>Currently using any contraceptive method (%)</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td>Non-cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
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<td>15–19</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<td>43.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>29.6</td>
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<td>25–29</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>46.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>30–34</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>31.4</td>
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<td>35–39</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>41.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>40–44</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>40.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>45–49</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>53.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total MWRA</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Background: Migration and family planning

- Women whose husbands were currently migrating had low current contraceptive use and high unmet need (as currently defined) \(^6-8\)

Husband away provided as reason for non-use among MWRAs whose husbands were away *

- Yes 91%
- No 9%

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Background: Migration and family planning in Nepal

- Few researchers have focused on: **family planning decision-making** among migrant couples or the **dynamics of contraceptive use** surrounding the husband’s return event in Nepal.\(^8,17\)

- Data from the Nepal HC3 baseline survey suggests that 38.6% of 546 migration returns in the past year were followed by uptake of a modern contraceptive method (47.8% for any contraceptive method) within one month.

- Qualitative research enables a more in-depth look at such complex patterns of adoption, discontinuation, and re-adoption.

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Overarching research question

- How does labor migration affect women’s lives and intimate relationships between partners, and what are the implications of these household changes on family planning practices?
Methods

- **Quantitative:**
  - Secondary analysis of NHC3 survey

- **Qualitative:**
  - Independently funded qualitative study (n=20 women) from Dhading district who had husbands with migration experience
  - Women were interviewed at two time points (n=38 total interviews) in Spring 2016
  - Coding (Atlas.ti) and analysis guided by the framework method

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Results: Overview

- **Qualitative:**
  - Women’s husbands were either absent or had returned in the past six months
  - Variation in age and caste/ethnic group as well as household and marriage type
Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

- Partner communication about family planning
- Decisions about family planning
- Contraceptive use dynamics

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Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

Partner communication about family planning

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Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

I: “When would you have one, if you are planning for [another] baby?”
P: “My son is 5 years old. So, I think it is an appropriate time, however, I have to discuss with my husband about having the next child after he comes here.” (Mid-twenties Dalit woman, joint family)

“It will be fixed only after he returns. It depends on whether we will be willing to give birth to the next child. As for now, we have no such plan.” (Early twenties Brahmin woman, lives separately from in-laws)

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Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

I: “Have you and your husband discussed about having another child?”
P: “We have not discussed over the phone but maybe we will go for a child.”
I: “Whose idea was it?”
P: “Both of us. I think we need one more. Villagers, my parents and others also [advise] me to have a son. There is a daughter already, so I also want a son. We will discuss it once he returns.” (Early twenties Brahmin woman, lives separately from in-laws)

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Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

Decisions about family planning

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Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

I: “Whose decision was it for you to take the injection?”
P: “I asked my husband. He said it was not necessary. So, I decided it on my own. Otherwise, it would be difficult for me only.” (Early thirties Chhetri woman, joint family)

“Yeah, otherwise there is a fear of getting pregnant. He will go away and I will face the problem.” (Mid-twenties Dalit woman, joint family)
Decisions about family planning

I: “Whose decision was it for you to take the injection?”
P: “I asked my husband. He said it was not necessary. So, I decided it on my own. Otherwise, it would be difficult for me only.” (Early thirties Chhetri woman, joint family)

“I: “Yeah, otherwise there is a fear of getting pregnant. He will go away and I will face the problem.” (Mid-twenties Dalit woman, joint family)

P: “…When my husband comes back, I am going to use Depo as it works for three months. While using pills, you may forget. When my husband decides to stay at home and not to go back for work then, I will ask him to [get an] operation (vasectomy).”
I: “Are you and your husband talking on this matter?”
P: “We are discussing [about getting a] vasectomy when he permanently stays at home.” (Mid-twenties Dalit woman, lives separately from in-laws)

Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

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Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

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Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

I: “Have you continue[d] using pills while your husband is away?”
P: “No. Why should I use it if my husband is not here? I can’t think of having any relationship with other men. It’s a bad thing to think about that. We have to take care of our status in the society.” (Mid-thirties Dalit woman, lives separately from in-laws)
"We didn’t have sexual relationship for 1/1.5 years after the birth of my first child (daughter). After that he migrated. He came back and again I gave birth to another child. This was [a] repeated process. Due to this, I didn’t have to use any contraceptive devices." (Mid-thirties Brahmin woman, joint family)
Qualitative findings: Effects of migration on reproductive decision-making

**Use trajectories:**
- After husband returns
- 2-3 days before
- A week or more before
- After confirmation of arrival date
- No adoption
- Amidst husband’s opposition
Discussion

- A husband’s absence affects whether and when couples talk about having a child or using contraception.

- Labor migration intersects with gender dynamics and social norms to affect women’s family planning decisions and practices.

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Discussion

- Migration is an important, recurring experience that affects family planning uptake, discontinuation, and re-adoption.

- Complex use dynamics demand better measures of contraceptive use. Could intention to use be an appropriate metric, particularly for women whose husbands are currently migrating?
Discussion questions

- Should labor migration be seen as a key determinant of fertility?

- How can such complex use dynamics be incorporated into national dialogue on family planning?

- Social norms about contraceptive use in the absence of a spouse were commonly shared and described by women. Should, and how should, family planning programs incorporate the sensitivity of such topics and such social restrictions into their messaging?
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