Labour Migration to Middle Eastern Countries: Labour Market Scenario in Bangladesh and Migrants' Perspectives

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Abstract:

International labor migration contributes to the economy of Bangladesh in the context of reducing unemployment and earnings through remittances. According to government statistics, total population of Bangladesh is 16 crore 37 lakh and labour force is 6 crore 35 lakh with 27 lakh as unemployed. Every year 2 million labour force is being added Bangladeshi labour market and around 1 million usually for overseas employment in 165 countries around the world. Time series data shows that about 80% percent of the total expatriate workers of Bangladesh migrated to MECs like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait and others. This paper aims at finding the labour market context at homeland and the economic causes of migration. Both primary and secondary sources of data are used in this study. Primary data have been collected through a questionnaire survey from three districts with most migrants and 227 respondents were calculated based on 95% confidence level of sample selection. The study reveals that the limitations and deficiencies of internal labour market like lack of new job creation, low productivity, very low employment elasticity, low female participation rate etc. are prevailing in internal labour market of Bangladesh, which creates the situation of unemployment. While analyzing the economic drivers of migration it is found that Bangladeshi workers go abroad to enjoy better employment opportunity, reduce poverty at home and uplift life standard and so on. If the weaknesses in the domestic labour market can be taken care of, the employment of workers at home will increase and at the same time an environment may be created for overseas employment at higher wages. From this perspective, this study may help policy makers and concerned stakeholders to make appropriate policies and take actions accordingly.

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1. Introduction

Considering the existence of surplus labour as well as unemployment in Bangladesh, international labour migration has become an important issue in Bangladesh economy. According to Bangladesh Economic Review (BER) -2019, the population of Bangladesh is 16 crore 37 lakh and labour force (above 15 in age) is 6 crore 35 lakh. Among the labour force, about 27 lakh people, that is 4.25 percent of total labour force, are unemployed (Ministry of Finance, 2019). Due to limited resources comparing to the large population, it is not possible to ensure job opportunities for every member of the labour force and is not economically correct to think so. Therefore, a portion of Bangladeshi labour force temporarily goes for overseas employment and returns after a certain period. Bangladeshi migrants started their journey in the British period but after the independence in 1971, this rate became higher and significant. According to the International Migration Report -2017, 75 lakh persons of Bangladesh are living as migrants around the world and Bangladesh is ranked as the fifth migrant sending country (United Nations, 2017). Another report of ILO states that about 10.9 million people of Bangladesh is working as expatriates in 165 countries around the world (Imam and Munier, 2020). With the change of time, Bangladesh has achieved remarkable economic progress, reduced poverty and secured development in all macroeconomic indexes. Bangladesh economy added more than 1.15 million new jobs per year since 2003 with existing employment of working-age population. Those who go abroad, 82.11% go to Middle Eastern Countries (MECs) like Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Kuwait, Qatar; remaining 17.89% go all over the world mainly to East Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore (Siddiqui et al., 2018). BMET data show that about 12,899,283 people have migrated from Bangladesh during 1976-2019; and these migrants earned 210,087.52 million USD. As a single year, in 2019, 700,159 workers went abroad and earned 18,354.94 million USD (BMET, 2020). Despite positive changes and development of economy, why Bangladeshi workers are largely going abroad till now and what kind of deficits of internal labour market still exists are needed to be disclosed. This study has focused on the problems prevailing in labour market that are hindering employment. At the same time, the reasons why migrants go to Middle Eastern Countries have been explored through migrants' personal opinion. Policy makers can get proper idea from this paper for taking necessary actions.

2. Importance of this study

Bangladesh has observed its 50th year of independence and by this time, we evaluated its aspirations, achievements and future challenges. In this context, it is very important to focus on both the labour market and the best use of labour force. Due to lack of opportunity, our labourers are obliged to go the foreign lands. It is very important to find out the reasons of migration and problems existing in labour market. If the shortcomings of labor market is identified and can be reformed through proper actions, members of the labour force will be able to find jobs in the country, at the same time some of them can go abroad, personal savings and life standard of workers will be enhanced. Aggregate demand will shift upward and this will ensure a steady GDP growth. Empirical study of these issues are indispensable in formulating appropriate policy so that steps can be taken to reduce labour market deficiencies.

3. Literature Review

ILO and GIZ (2015) conducted a study about labour market trends and migration from South Asia to the Gulf. According this study, the majority of South Asian migrant workers from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal migrate to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries of Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for jobs. Afsar (2009) conducted a study as working paper of ILO and states at least 10 million foreign labour are

working in the GCC and most of them are unskilled and semi-skilled. Majority of these migrants both male and female come from South and South Asian countries like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Philippines. Shah (2013) disclosed the changing scenario of GCC labour market and policy instruments of labour sending and receiving countries. GCC oil enriched countries are one of the largest temporary labour receiving regions of the world, where 47% population belongs to the category of non-nationals. Among the Asian countries, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka are the major labour senders to GCC. Siddiqui et al., (2018) narrated the government information that record number Bangladeshi as 1,008,525, crossed border in 2017 for overseas employment that has increased by 33.1% than 2016. Most of the Bangladeshi short-term contract workers migrated to the Gulf and other Arab countries, almost 82.11% in 2017. The remaining 17.89 % went traditionally to different South East Asian countries. Asia Foundation (2013) explored the patterns and processes of labour migration from Nepal and Bangladesh and stated that unemployment, financial insolvency, debt burden, adverse social and political condition, fabourable political condition of destination, sudden death of family earning members lead migrants to go abroad. Datta (2004) conducted a study on cross-border migration from Bangladesh to India and argued that the economic factors motivating people to leave Bangladesh were destabilization and economic depression, poverty, lack of employment, the struggle for livelihoods, land grabbing from minority communities and lack of industrialization in Bangladesh. Farole et al., (2017) conducted a study on overall macroeconomic condition, labour market and job opportunities of Bangladesh. This report explained that some basic problems were prevailing in labour market that created unemployment like shortage of new job creation, low female participation rate, lack of skill and low productivity of labour. A substantial portion of labour force choose overseas employment and earn remittances. Mostafiz Ahmed et al., (2015) explored that Bangladeshi migrants migrated to 157 countries around the world including Middle Eastern and North African countries along with Malaysia and Singapore. Poverty, unemployment, desire to get higher income and becoming self-dependent and the search for the opportunity of repaying loans are the factors that motivated Bangladeshi migrants to go abroad. Rahman et al. (2021) prepared an article on the youth unemployment of educated people, and showed a depressing situation. The general rate of unemployment is 4.2 per-cent but the rate is lower for those who have completed only primary education as 2.7 percent. In contrast, 11.2% unemployment was found for them who had graduated from universities. As the job-creation rate is low, excessive unemployment increases social crime and social disorder. In the absence of effective and proper education policy, the system provides unskilled labour force. Sultana and Fatima (2017) discussed the push and pull factors of female migration in Bangladesh. Poverty, unemployment and low wages prevailing in the domestic market push female workers to migrate to foreign countries. The study also says that most of the females are migrating to the Gulf.

4. Objectives of this study

The objectives of this study is to analyze the deficiencies of labour market in Bangladesh along with the opinion of migrants on the motivating factors of migration to the Middle Eastern Countries.

5. Methodology

This study has been conducted through quantitative approach using both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data have been collected through a questionnaire survey in summer 2020. A semi-structured succinct and simple questionnaire developed. Among the migrants, who came home to enjoy leaves or the returnee migrants, 227 were selected as respondents. Three migration-–prone districts of Chattogram Division of Bangladesh as

Cumilla, Noakhali and Lakshmipur were selected for questionnaire survey. Chattogram division as the top migration--prone division covers maximum 32.5% of total migrants and among the migrants of this division 82% migrants go to Middle Eastern Countries (BBS, 2015). Study population has been calculated based on BMET district wise data between 2005 and 2018. Total number of migrant workers of these three districts between 2005 and 2018 is 1498189. Therefore, the study population (N) who go to the Middle Eastern Countries has been determined as, N=1498189 × 0. 82= 1228515. The statistical formula recommended by C. R. Kothari for obtaining sample size has been applied to determine the sample size (n) where:

$$n = \frac{z^2 N.p.q}{e^2(N-1) + z^2.p.q}$$ (Kothari, 2014). Considering N=1228515, Z= 1.96 (for 95% confidence

level), e = 5% = 0.05 (sampling error), p = 82% = 0.82 and q =18% = 0.18 (1-p), the sample size is determined as 227. According the proportion of total migrants of the districts, sample respondents have been distributed as Cumilla 143, Noakhali 52 and Lakshmipur 32. Researcher with the help of trained assistants directly collected data from the respondents through rapport building and showing proper respect with ethical consideration. No one has been pre-determined as a respondent rather information has been taken from the persons who were found available during the period. No women expatriate workers in the survey areas were found available. Therefore, male informants have been interviewed mostly in village market places or rural tea-stalls. The respondents were separated from others with due honour for the time being. The respondents, who could not be found in the store or at bazar, were met at their homes. This study also largely depended on authentic data from secondary sources i.e. newspapers, journals, research papers, reports of national and international organizations like Ministry of Finance, ADB, World Bank, ILO and other sources as per requirement of the study. The collected data has been verified to avoid any types of inconsistency. By the help of appropriate tools like, MS Excel (2016), IBM SPSS, version 25, data have been analyzed and presented in tabular and graphical.

6. Present Position of Labour Market in Bangladesh

According to the UNFPA, Bangladesh is one of top densely populated countries that ranked seventh position in the world with 160 million people and exceeds more than 1,000 people per sq. kilometer (https://bangladesh.unfpa.org/en/node/24314). Bangladesh Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) 2020 shows that Bangladesh has the number one top population density in the world except some city countries. There are 165.55 million people in Bangladesh that means 1122 people are living per sq. km (Govt. of Bangladesh, 2020). According to another statistics of World Bank in 2019 shows that the total population Bangladesh was 163046161 where 50.58% is male and 49.42% is female. In 1990, the rate was 51.58% male and 48.42% female. The total labour force of 2019 is 7009461 and female share in labour force was at 30.89% and labour force female participation (LFP) was at 38.39% (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.IN?locations=BD). The recent birth rate is at 1.82% in 2018. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2003, 2010 and 2016 shows that the proportion of female and urban population are increasing. Share of working-age population in both male and female population as well as for rural and urban areas in the last few years have increased, which is considered as demographic dividend (ADB, 2016). The ratio of working age population is growing faster compared to the total population, which is creating a favorable condition for faster growth. As a result, some positive aspects can be observed in labour market. The rate in the increase of job opportunity is 3.7% that is higher than the growth rate of working age (2.4%). The wage employment rate driven by increased employment in urban areas, employment in manufacturing sectors and doubled participation rate of female workers. Among the active labour force, women were the main beneficiaries of job creation, 70% of all new jobs between 2013-2016. Female employment grew 4.4% annually that is twice the rate

of growth of the working-age population (Farole et al., 2017). However, some negative scenarios are prevailing in the labour market of Bangladesh; and these create unemployment and other related economic problems such as financial hardship, family poverty and low standard of living. For all these reasons, a part of the labor force of Bangladesh is forced to go abroad for overseas employment. The negative aspects of Bangladeshi labour market are described as follows.

6.1 Jobless Growth

Recently Bangladesh earned a lot of economic progress, successfully attained the MDG's, graduated from LDC and is now trying to achieve SDG's announced by UN (Daily Star, March 2021). Government data of the year 2020, says that volume of GDP has accelerated to US$ 302 billion and per-capita income (PCI) of Bangladesh has increased to US$1909 in 2018-19. The government budget allocation also expanded to US$ 53.9 billion and from which the government allocated US$20.3 billion to ADP in FY2018-19. According to the world development indicator (WDI), GDP growth of Bangladesh is increasing steadily. The average growth rate of GDP in Bangladesh from 2010-2019 is 6.75%. The statistics of GDP growth is given below in Figure 1.
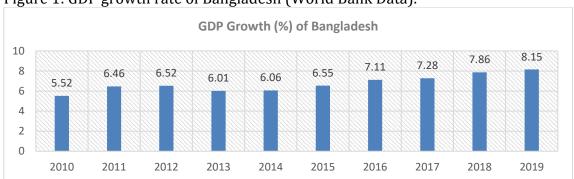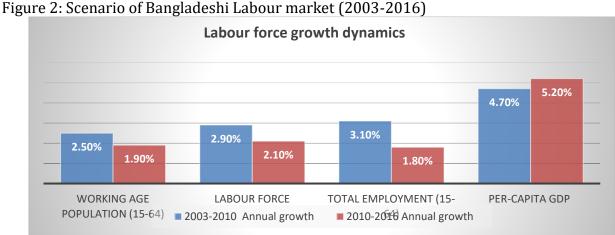
Figure 1: GDP growth rate of Bangladesh (World Bank Data).

Source: World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=BD

Although the GDP growth rate of Bangladesh is increasing but this growth do not match with the employment rate of Bangladesh. The employment statistics of recent years show the unexpected situations of Bangladesh where employment opportunity and job creation rate are decreasing. Figure 2 shows the changing scenario of labour force growth in Bangladesh.

Figure 2: Scenario of Bangladeshi Labour market (2003-2016)

Source: Based on BBS Labour Force Survey 2003, 2010, and 2016.

The above figure shows that the growth rate of working age population in 2003-2010 was 2.50% that decreased to 1.90% in 2010-2016. Labour force growth rate was 2.90% in 2003-2010 that reduced to 2.10% in 2010-2016. The total employment growth rate of 2003-16 is 3.10% but in 2010-2016, it decreased very low to 1.80. The Figure 1 shows that only per capita GDP growth rate has increased from 4.70% (2003-2010) to 5.20% (2010-2016). The rate of growth of total employment in 2010-2016 period is lower than the growth of labour force in 2003-2010 that is a very negative signal for economy. So, it is found that growth of job creation is not matching with the per-capita GDP growth; it indicates that Bangladesh is achieving a poor jobless growth.

6.2 High Real Unemployment

Although government authority of Bangladesh claims that, the rate of unemployment is moderate in Bangladesh, the real unemployment rate is very high. According to the latest Labour Force Survey 2016-17, the total labour force of Bangladesh is 6 crore 35 lakh and only 27 lakh people, that is only 4.25 percent of labour force, are unemployed (Ministry of Finance, 2019). The survey was conducted based on ILO definition that defines the unemployed as those who have been looking for work for the previous month since the survey, but have not found any. At the same time, those who worked at least one hour (paid or unpaid) in the previous week was included as employed. Many people may have done some work at that time but may not have worked all the year round. Experts reject this type of result and says that ILO's definition of unemployment is not effective for Bangladesh. ILO's definition excluded about 4 crore 56 lakh people from the labour force; whereas the real labour force stands at 10 crore 91 lakh and total unemployed population is 4 crore 82 lakh (Daily Jugantor, 2018). Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharyya argued that the unemployment rate shown by BBS is not correct rather one in three of the 18-26 year olds is unemployed and the educated unemployed may be one in two. Another report of the International Labor Organization (ILO) states that the number of unemployed in Bangladesh is 3 crore and predicts that in a few years it will double to 6 crore, which will be 39.40 percent of the total population. Scholars consider ILO's account of this instance to be the actual number of unemployed in Bangladesh (News Bangla 24.com, 2020). Economist Mustafizur Rahman argued that about one-fourth of the total working population in Bangladesh has no regular employment. According to Mr. Rahman, 21 percent of the labour force in Bangladesh is underemployed or not full-time employed. Combining under-employed and unemployed, 25 per cent of population do not work, or work for a short period, do odd jobs, or do seasonal work (BBC Bangla, 2017). World Bank also estimates that the real rate of unemployment in Bangladesh is 14.2%. Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in London says that Bangladesh has the highest rate of educated unemployment. According to them, out of every 100 graduates, 47 are unemployed. In other words, the name of one out of every two is included in the register of the unemployed (Bangla Tribune, 2016). The actual situation of unemployment found from the above discussion is quite disturbing.

6.3 Low Wage Structure

The wage structure in labour market in Bangladesh is not satisfactory enough to maintain life standard satisfactorily. Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 and Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015 affirms workers' rights of minimum wages though uncertainties in attaining minimum reasonable wage in Bangladesh especially in non-governmental sector are often observed. On the other hand, excess supply of labour creates a situation where workers are obliged to receive lower than subsistence wage. Maximum people are engaged in private sector mainly as self-employed or engaged in family joint economic activities where some are treated as unpaid assistants. The jobs in public sector are lucrative to labour force but the scope is limited to mostly qualified educated persons. According to the Eighth National Pay Scale-2015, salary grade of employees has been doubled. However, lower grade salary allowance is not

satisfactory by which service holders can lead a better life. Bangladesh government declared eighth pay scale classifying status of employees into 20 grades compared to previous 17 steps. The lower order employees comparatively face disparity by standing at lower grade. Among the 20 grades in the new pay scale, the highest one will see a rise in basic salary by 95 percent to Tk. 78,000 (fixed) and the lowest one by 101 percent to Tk. 8,250 (Ministry of Finance, 2015). As an example of private sector where government determined lower wages is the garments sector. The Bangladeshi government announced a new minimum wage for garment workers in September 2018 fixing the minimum monthly wage at 8,000 taka equivalent to 95 US Dollar only. This 8000 consists of 4,100 taka as basic salary, 2050 taka as house rent, 600-taka medical as allowance, 350-taka ass transport allowance and 900 as food allowance. In the previous time, it was 5300 taka. An estimation from BBS data helped to conclude that in 2015-2016 average wages of skilled industrial workers was 10998 taka and 8730 taka for unskilled workers. According the BBS data of November 2018, the average monthly wage of agricultural labour without meal is 11850 taka and with single meal 9660 taka considering 30 working days (BBS, May 2020).

6.4 Female Participation
Female labour force participation rate (LFP) is very low in Bangladesh. LFS-2003 states that LFP of female was 27.5% and the rate of Male LFP is 90%. Female LFP in Bangladesh was 38.39% in 2019 that remained below both the lower-middle income country average (39%) and the middle-income country average (48%). Most of the females are engaged in readymade garments (RMG) sector and rural agriculture. At present, the employment rate in the garment sector is decreasing than before. Due to competition with the world market, small-scale garment factories have closed down in many cases. As a result, the employment of women workers is being hampered (Farole et al., 2017).

6.5 Low opportunity of New Employment in Economic Sectors
The main economic sectors of Bangladesh are agriculture, industry and service where Bangladeshi labour force are engaged. World Bank study shows that the broad share of employment in agriculture is 41.7%, industry 20.5% and service 37.8% in 2016. The employment rate is changing from the data of LFS 2003 and LFS 2010. The Figure 3 below shows the sectoral employment contribution.
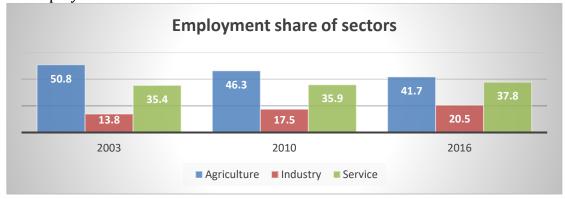
Figure 3: Employment share of sectors

Source: LFS 2003, 2010, 2016.

According to the reference of BER-2020, agricultural output grew 4.3% annually, while services grew by 5.9 % and the industrial sector grew by a remarkable 8.6 percent annually over this period, within which manufacturing grew by 9.1% and construction by 7.7%. Nevertheless, in terms of employment, the opportunity of new job creation is very low in

Bangladesh. The scope of new job creation can be presented by employment elasticity that measures the percentage change in employment associated with a 1% increase in GDP. Agriculture is the highest sector of unemployment but employment elasticity is negative (-0.09). Manufacturing, construction and service sector have the opportunity to give chance of employment at 0.65, 0.55, and 0.40 respectively. The Table 1 below shows the overall situation.
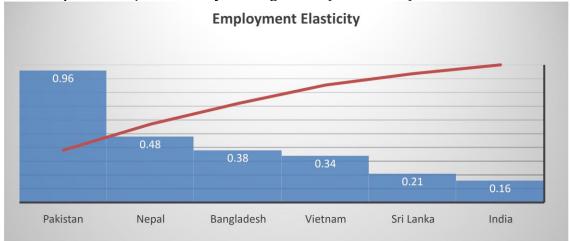
Table 1: Declining employment elasticity of sectors

Sector	1995-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2018
Agriculture	0.73	0.82	0.71	-0.09
Manufacturing	0.26	0.78	0.87	0.65
Construction	0.27	0.63	2.22	0.55
Service	0.21	0.69	0.27	0.40
Total	0.54	0.59	0.55	0.25

Source: Derived from BBS and SANEM (2018).

Table 1 shows that the total employment elasticity is 0.24 that means the opportunity of job creation of Bangladesh is declining. At the same time, the rate of elasticity of employment is low (0.38) comparing to neighboring countries like Nepal and Pakistan in 2003-2013 (Farole et al., 2017). This type of low employment opportunity creates situation for prevailing low wage and labour intensive production technology. The position of employment elasticity is presented below in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Comparison of Job elasticity of Bangladesh (2003-2013)

Source: World Development Index database recited by Farole et al., 2017.

The figure shows that in Bangladesh the employment growth cannot adjust with GDP growth and remains lower.

6.6 Lack of Formal Employment Sector

One of the disadvantages of the job market in Bangladesh is that job opportunities in the formal sector are very limited. Most of the workers do not fulfill all attributes of employment in terms of time criteria, production criteria, wages criteria and satisfaction criteria. Many people are employed but not for full time, some work where they produce inadequate products, many are forced to accept low wages and many suffer from dissatisfaction. In Bangladesh, a large number people in families are extra working people who are academically known as disguised unemployed person. Among the employed workers, most of them are engaged in self-employment. It is also difficult to measure the real economic condition of self-

employed person where a larger part is not financially well off. Self-employment rate was 35.1% in 1999-2000 that increased at 40.7% in 2013. Among the male labour force, 52.2% are self-employed and 12.3% of female are self-employed. Those who are work as employee was 10.8% in 1999-2000 and upgraded at 23.2% in 2013. As employee, male participant is lower than female by 22.2% and 25.5% respectively. The hopeless situation of labour market that about 5% male and 50% female is engaged as unpaid family helpers also misleads our GDP accounting. The figure 5 shows the employment status of Bangladeshi workers.
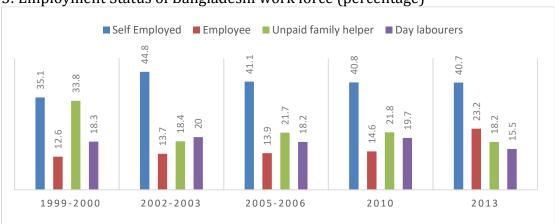
Figure 5: Employment Status of Bangladeshi work force (percentage)

 Source: Calculation from BBS Labour Force Survey recited by ADB, 2016.
The data of the figure shows an absence of strong formal sector and full time job pattern. Bangladeshi day labourers fail to collect work for full month or around the year. Seasonal unemployment occurs by the rotation of seasons.

6.7 Youth Unemployment and NEET
A substantial part of Bangladeshi labour force is young and most of them face the situation of NEET that means 'not in employment, education or training'. It is inactivity and disengagement from labour markets. High NEET rate is a threat to social security and welfare. According to the labor force survey 2016/17, it is revealed that the rate of unemployment of youth generation (age group of 15-24 years) is 10.2 percent, which is higher than South Asian average of 9.4%. Another matter of concern is that youths aged 15-29 years with tertiary education qualifications are becoming worse and face highest unemployment rate of around 12 percent. They also experience long time joblessness. More than a third about 38% of unemployed youth with tertiary education had remained unemployed for more than one year (World Bank, 2018). According to another study of SANEM, share of youth NEET was 25.4 in 2003 but it increased to 29.8% in 2016-17 (Raihan, 2020). On the other hand, skill mis‑match is also a great problem in Bangladeshi labour market. The part of the people who get educational opportunity, they cannot utilize their education in job field, as it is unrelated with production sector.

6.8 Low Productivity of Labour of Labour
It is true that average labor productivity in Bangladesh has been dissatisfactory compared to international standard. The productivity of Bangladeshi labour force has been increasing in terms of value addition since last few years but it has not been efficiency growth rather it is driven by excess amount of capital deployment. In 2003–16, productivity of labour grew by 4.25% annually and accounted for three-fourths of overall growth. Recently in 2010–16, the contribution of labour in overall growth is 89 percent accompanying 4.6% annual growth of per worker. However, the growth of per worker by total factor productivity (TFP) performance is very low, just 0.7 percent between 2003 and 2015 (Farole et al., 2017). [Total factor productivity (TFP) measures actual output in terms of production of factors through dividing

economy-wide total production by the weighted average of factors i.e. labor or capital.] To overcome the low productivity growth, strong role of technology and human capital improvement must be ensured. Table 2 shows the productivity growth of Bangladeshi workers in terms of value addition and TEP.

Table 2: Comparison of annual growth in value added per worker and TEP

Time period	% Value added per worker	Total factor productivity (TEP)
2003-2010	3.0%	0.5%
2003-2016	4.3%	0.7%
2010-2016	4.6%	0.9%

Source: World Bank long-term growth forecasting data recited by Farole et al., 2017.

The data shows that the productivity growth of Bangladeshi workers has no increase by real production of inputs rather value addition by nominal market price.

7. Context of Labour Migration from Bangladesh

However, the employment opportunities in Bangladesh in total have increased since the independence in 1971 but wages, skills and working environment are not yet satisfactory. Lack of satisfactory jobs, unequal job participation of male and female, slow job creation in readymade garments (RMG) and manufacturing sector, increase of real unemployment are creating a complicated situation. At the same time, lack of decent work, excess number of youth and educated unemployment, skill mismatch increasing gap in labour supply and demand. As a result, workers who want to join labour market have to wait for a long time or accept underemployment, even have to remain entirely unemployed. That why Bangladeshi workers have been looking for overseas employment and the trend is still going on.

8. Survey Results on Economic Causes and Factors of Migration

The survey of this study asked the expatriates to name the main causes for their migration to foreign countries and what factors influenced their decision. All those interviewed in this study are Middle Eastern expatriates. These expatriates have come from KSA, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq for enjoying vacation or some have permanently returned home. The migrants have freely provided their opinion. They all opined that they were forced to go abroad due to various problems in the domestic labor market. They were driven by push factors and bitter experiences at home as an unemployed person or low-waged worker. About 95% workers argued that they decided to go abroad for economic reasons and the remaining 5% went for social, political or geographical reasons. Among the non-economic reasons, 2.2% think that they went for social causes, 0.9% wanted to avoid chaotic political environment and 1.9% went to overcome the effects natural disasters. This study tried to specify the economic reasons and the proportion of motivation for migration. Based on the migrants' opinion, economic factors that motivated them to go abroad are presented below in Figure 6.
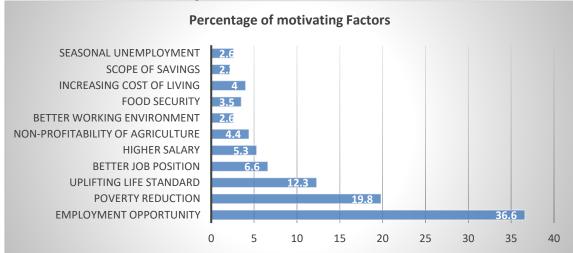
Figure 6: Economic Factors of Migration

Source: Survey on Economic Factors of Migration-2020.

Above figure shows that many influencing factors drive migrants to go abroad where employment opportunity, poverty reduction and desire of uplifting of life standard are the highest influencing factors. The other factors are better job or salary abroad, non-profitability of agriculture in Bangladesh, increasing cost of living in homeland, seasonal unemployment in locality and others.

8.1 Employment Opportunity

From every category of labour force in Bangladesh, pursuing of migration as a strategy of livelihood is thought as a great choice though choice of destination, probable benefits and process of going depends on the capacity of the migrants (Siddiqui, 2003). The survey of this study found that 36.6% migrants have gone abroad to get rid of unemployment. Another recent study also shows that employment abroad is the reason for which15.17 percent returning migrant went abroad so that they could get rid of unemployment at homeland (Ahmed et al., 2015). So, getting employed abroad is the first reason for which Bangladeshi migrants leave homeland.

8.2 Poverty Reduction

Poverty is one of the key drivers of migration. Most of the Bangladeshi migrants were economically weak before migration and their intention was to eliminate the incidence of poverty. This study revealed that 19.8% migrant working in the MECs have gone abroad for poverty reduction. Through migration, the unemployed member of the family go abroad; then he/she reduces family burden and sends remittances to his/her households. It alleviates the family poverty and ensures better-off economic environment. Another study also says that 33.67% people go abroad to eliminate poverty (ibid). Migration develops a society, reduces the poverty as well as drives further migration which results in more economic wellbeing (Van Hear at. al., 2012).

8.3 Uplifting of life standard

Members of economically backward families or even solvent family members go   abroad for better livelihood as well as for enhancing their living standard. They   cross   borders expecting higher wages and opportunities. Another studies support   that   international migration increases life-cycle welfare of both rural and urban   residents by around 10% and 1%, respectively. This study has found that   12.3% have motivated by this factor.

8.4 Food Security

In Bangladesh, the highest expenses of household go on food purchase. People go far to collect food if adequate food supply is not ensured by homegrown food grains or current earnings. This study states that 3.5% people have migrated for food security of their family. There are many landless and pauperized people in Bangladesh where 70% of rural inhabitants are either landless or near about landless. More than one million people by the river lose their dwelling or cropland due to river erosion. Facing these circumstances, migration has become a major repeating strategy for poor people to earn a livelihood (Siddiqui, 2003).

8.5 Higher Salary

It is clear that there are wage differences among developed, developing or underdeveloped countries. If low wages persist in countries of origin then they go to countries of those destinations where wages are comparatively high. A study of ILO stated that 64.75% returning migrants make migration decision for higher income (Ahmed et al., 2015). The survey of this study shows that 5.3% migrants are motivated by higher salary.

8.6 Non-profitability of Agriculture

Bangladesh is an agriculturally over populated country and maximum families are directly or indirectly engaged in agriculture. Many types of natural calamities like flood, draught and excessive rain disrupt agricultural production, raise production cost and throw people to misery. For this, as a way of livelihood, agriculture has become non-profitable to many farmers or cultivators. The crop marketing system is also against the agricultural producers. Farmers and agro-workers go abroad to get rid of financial loss (https://www.iucn.org). According to the findings of this study, 4.4% migrants go abroad for this reason.

8.7 Better Job Position

A portion of Bangladeshi migrants go abroad to uplift their job status. Although they have an opportunity to manage minimum livelihood in the homeland, they go abroad for better job status and facilities. This study found that 6.6% migrants went abroad encouraged by this point.

8.8 Better Economic Environment

Migrants try to go to better economic environment for availability of work, higher wages and decent work environment. Bangladeshis want to go to European or American countries i.e. OECD regions for this reason. Developed or rich countries can ensure better working environment i.e. developed equipment, comfortable and safe working place. This survey explored that 2.6% go abroad for better working environment.

8.9 Seasonal Unemployment

Large number of workers who are engaged as day labourers, agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, suffer from seasonal unemployment as they, do not have work all year round. In Bangladesh agriculture, construction workers are fully employed during planting and harvesting periods. At other times including the rainy season, they are seen to spend hours in unemployment. The present study shows that 2.6% people have gone to abroad to avoid seasonal unemployment in Bangladesh.

8.10 Scope of Savings

According to the survey of this study, 2.2% migrants have gone abroad aspiring for savings and capital formation by higher income. Migrants who used to earn the same amount in Bangladesh think that it is comparatively easy to save money abroad.

9. Conclusion

Labour force is the most important asset of any country including Bangladesh. The problem is that real unemployment rate in Bangladesh is very high originating from the weaknesses of the labour market. Aspirant migrants of Bangladesh are mainly going abroad due to high unemployment in the country and other economic reasons. If weaknesses of the labor market in Bangladesh are not addressed, long-term problems will persist as workers will move abroad to find temporary means of livelihood. The government and other stakeholders should increase new employment, women's participation and labor efficiency through improving required skills. Special measures should be taken to eliminate youth unemployment as population dividend is on the rise for the time being. IT based training and job facilities should be provided for the educated labour force. The system of calculating labor force and unemployment rate need to be reformed. Effective policy measures and necessary steps should be taken to make labour market stronger and ensure profitable migration.

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