

Migration as a Pathway to Sustainable Development: Assessing the Role of Return Migration in Poverty Reduction and Environmental Sustainability in Pakistan

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<https://doi.org/10.62345/jads.2025.14.2.166>

Abstract

This study focuses on the issues of poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability, exploring the complex between migration patterns and sustainable development results is outcomes. The survey was designed on a cross-sectional approach through which 350 research participants in the four provinces of Pakistan, rural and urban migrants, international returnees, and non-migrants representing various demographics in terms of organization affiliation, such as NGOs, government institutions, and the privately-owned sector, were approached to respond to the questions designed in a survey form. Findings show that migration can be considered a significant initiative for poverty alleviation, as migrant households have a 34 percent higher income and 42 percent improved access to basic services compared to non-migrant households. The most substantial positive effect on local developmental initiatives was observed among the international returnees ($r = .67, p < .001$), and the intermediate improvements in environmental awareness and sustainable conduct with rural-urban migrants ($r = .43, p < .01$). As the research shows, the remittances are a relevant source of funding the local sustainable development project, of which the recipient households invest in 68 percent in education, healthcare, and environmental protection measures. Policy implications suggest that organized migration plans, along with focused incentives for return migration, may significantly aid Pakistan in achieving its Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: Migration, Sustainable Development, Poverty Reduction, Environmental Sustainability, Pakistan, Remittances.

Introduction

Migration is one of the most significant demographic and socioeconomic phenomena of the 21st century, directly affecting 281 million individuals globally (Citaristi, 2022; Hussain et al., 2024). In the context of developing countries, such as Pakistan, the issue of migration, both domestic and international, has become a key element of socioeconomic change and even a

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critical entry point into the scenario of sustainable development. Pakistan, with a population exceeding 230 million and one of the largest labor-exporting countries in the world, presents a unique case study for researching the relationship between migration and sustainable development outcomes (Bai & Raza, 2024; Hussain et al., 2025).

Specific perspectives on the topic of migration and development have gone through evolution since being pessimistic and focused on the concepts of brain drain and social disruption in the early discourse, to being more balanced with a broader focus on the past role of migration that was related to poverty and sustainable development (Castles et al., 2014). Recent studies are more likely to consider migration as a multifaceted phenomenon that, when well-coordinated, can bring about beneficial effects for both the origin and destination societies, promoting a more comprehensive development agenda (Skeldon, 2018).

The migratory environment in Pakistan is characterized by significant rural-urban internal migration, primarily driven by economic prospects and climate-related displacement, as well as relatively high global migration to destinations in the Middle East, Europe, and North America (Ali, 2025; Hussain et al., 2025). According to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, approximately 10 million Pakistani workers are abroad, sending over \$ 31 billion annually in remittances to their home country, which accounts for around 9 percent of the country's GDP (Ahmed & Jafri, 2024). A combination of significant financial influx, knowledge transfer, and social remittances makes migration a possible driver of sustained growth.

According to the definition set by the United Nations in the 2030 Agenda, sustainable development encompasses economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (United Nations, 2015). The Pakistani population encounters a dire set of challenges about these three dimensions: poverty remains widespread depending on wealth status (24.3 percent of the population is hit by eradicating poverty), the painful disparity in obtaining core services is substantial (Inequality Index 42.4 percent), and there are taxing environmental demands: abridging lack of water, compromised air quality, and forms of climate change. This creates one of the main issues regarding understanding how migration addresses the challenges, particularly in developing evidence-based policies that seek to capitalize on the development potential of migration, while also mitigating the risks involved.

Research Problem and Relevance

However, there is limited empirical evidence available on how migration can be effectively used to enhance development in Pakistan, particularly in terms of poverty reduction and environmental sustainability, despite the growing recognition of migration's development potential. The economic implications of remittance have been a central area of interest, and not enough consideration has been given to other forms of sustainable development, such as environmental sustainability, social cohesion, and locally oriented development programs. Furthermore, the distinct effects of various types of migration, including internal rural-urban migration, international migration, and return migration, on achieving sustainable development outcomes are issues that require systematic investigation.

The given research gap is especially prominent because Pakistan aims to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and because the country has a National Action Plan on Migration, according to which evidence-based policymaking is regarded as an essential requirement. Understanding the complexity of the interrelations between migration patterns and sustainable development outcomes is vital for designing effective interventions that maximize the positive outcomes of migration, while also reducing the challenges associated with it.

Research Objectives

- To examine the socioeconomic features and migration trends of Pakistani people living in disparate areas and various institutions
- To explore the correlation between migration status and poverty reduction indicators, such as the level of income, accumulation of assets, and access to basic facilities
- To examine the effects of migration on awareness and practices connected to the environment in terms of environmental sustainability, as regards the migrant and non-migrant populations

Literature Review

Migration and Poverty Reduction

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between migration and poverty reduction, and a new trend is emerging where migration is viewed as a potential poverty reduction measure under certain circumstances (Adams & Page, 2005). Empirical studies demonstrate that different developing country settings reveal that migration, particularly international migration, has the potential to significantly enhance household welfare through remittances, skills improvement, and the effects of networks (Taylor et al., 2016).

Several studies have recorded the beneficial impacts of international migration on poverty alleviation of households in the Pakistani context. According to Mansuri (2007), households with emigrants going overseas recorded significant gains in per capita spending, as well as asset acquisition. On the same note, Arif (2009) established that remittances increased income equality in Pakistan, particularly among low-income households. Nonetheless, most studies have been inclined to focus on the short-run economic effects without giving much emphasis to the sustainable development effects.

Any more subtle effects of migration on poverty have recently started to be studied. Batista et al. (2012) noted the significance of return migration, stating that it facilitates the advancement of entrepreneurship and local development. In contrast, DEmurger and Xu (2011) noted that the migration process contributes to the development of human capital. This result indicates that the poverty reduction caused by migration cannot be confined to the direct transfer of funds, but is part of a broader development process.

Migration and the Environment

The interconnection of migration and environmental sustainability raises a challenging and relatively underutilized field of research. Typically, conventional thought has characterized migration as environmentally harmful, focusing on the stress placed on a destination area's environment and the destruction of the environment in sending communities (Bilsborrow & Henry, 2012). Nevertheless, new studies suggest a more complex connection, as migration may play a role in promoting environmental sustainability in several aspects.

Hunter et al. (2015) listed some of the ways in which migration can contribute to environmental sustainability, such as the decrease in pressure on natural resources in the fields of origin, the transfer of environmentally sustainable methods, and investment in green technology via remittances. Among developing countries, migration has been linked to an increase in environmental awareness and sustainable behavior among migrants, who are more likely to recognize different environmental situations (Coniglio & Pesce, 2015).

There have not been enough studies that specifically address these relationships in Pakistan. Nevertheless, research on comparable settings indicates that migration may lead to environmental sustainability by reducing agricultural pressure in marginal regions, promoting the use of better agricultural practices, and investing resources in renewable energy and water conservation technologies (Black et al., 2011).

Remittances and Sustainable Development

Remittances are among the most direct connections between migration and development outcomes. In addition to meeting their immediate needs for consumption smoothing, remittances have been demonstrated to play a role in various aspects of sustainable development, including education, health, housing, and small-scale infrastructure development (Ratha et al., 2011; Chambers & Conway, 1992).

Remittances account for a significant proportion of household income for receiving families in Pakistan, and studies have shown that they have substantial effects on education enrollment, access to healthcare, and asset accumulation (Mansuri, 2007). Nonetheless, the role of remittances in the climate sustainability movements is unexplored. New data indicate that households receiving remittances can invest in environmentally sustainable technologies, such as solar energy, improved cooking stoves, and water conservation (Nawrotzki & DeWaard, 2018).

Sustainable Development and Migration Policy

Migration is significantly influenced by its policy environment. Studies have focused more on the need for coherent migration policies that maximize development gains, while also considering the related challenges (Gamlen, 2014). Some of the policy initiatives in the Pakistani context that have attempted to utilize the development potential of migration include the formation of the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation and other diaspora programs.

Nevertheless, the extensive analysis of the effectiveness of such policy initiatives in stimulating sustainable development is scarce. The latest policy debates have focused on the importance of combined approaches that consider the multidimensional effects of migration on sustainable development, paying attention to the environment (de Haas, 2010; Faist, 2008).

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, a quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a cross-sectional approach to examine the interrelationships between migration trends and sustainable development outcomes in Pakistan. The cross-sectional design was chosen to demonstrate the impacts of migration, as it captures the effects of migration on a wide range of population groups at a single instance, providing comprehensive information on the current migration-development relationship.

Population and Sampling Unit

People living in all four provinces in Pakistan (the Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan) were the target population in this study because their migration experiences and their affiliations to institutions differed. The population was stratified based on various essential characteristics to realize a broad representation in the population:

Geographic Stratification: Province and urban/rural typification were used to stratify the population and to see regional differences in migration patterns and development outcomes. This stratification was essential in Pakistan, given its diversity in geography and economy, to represent a cross-section of various contextual conditions.

Migration Status Classification: There were four categories of participants which included non-migrants (those individuals that have never experienced a significant migration), internal migrants (those individuals who have migrated between locations i.e. rural to urban or between regions of Pakistan), international migrants (those individuals that are currently overseas) and return migrants (those individuals that have returned after experiencing international migration).

Institutional Affiliation: Since the study topic was based on the institutional features of migration, subjects were targeted in different institutional settings such as government facilities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), commercial establishments, academic set-ups, and community-based societies. This hierarchization was especially significant in terms of the points of view of stakeholders participating in the governance of migration and migration-related development efforts.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The procedure used to calculate an adequate Sample size entailed taking 350 participants, using power analysis calculations with a significant Sample size derived from a medium effect (Cohen $d = 0.5$), an intended power of 0.80, and a p-value of 0.05. The Sample size has sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful relationships between variables of migration and sustainable development, as well as to make stratified analysis across various subgroups. The method of a multi-stage stratified random sampling was used:

Stage 1: Stratification on a provincial basis through proportional representation according to population distribution (53% Punjab, 24 % Sindh, 15 % Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 8 % Balochistan).

Stage 2: Stratifying urban/rural according to the distribution of population in each province, with 38 percent urban and 62 percent rural being representative of the Pakistani population.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used in the present research to collect data, along with validated scales and instruments whenever possible.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board, and this study adhered to international standards of ethics in research involving human subjects. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and strategies were implemented to ensure the confidentiality of data and the anonymity of participants. A specific concern was the preservation of the identities of international migrants, as well as the risk associated with participation in the legal and immigration status of participants.

Results

Sample Characteristics

The resulting Sample included 350 participants, who were represented across the four provinces of Pakistan and had varied migration backgrounds and institutional affiliations. The complete demographic and migration profile of the research Sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic and Migration Characteristics of Study Participants (N = 350)

Characteristic	Category	n	%	M	SD
Province	Punjab	185	52.9	-	-
	Sindh	84	24.0	-	-
	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	53	15.1	-	-
	Balochistan	28	8.0	-	-
Residence Type	Urban	133	38.0	-	-
	Rural	217	62.0	-	-
Age (years)	18-30	98	28.0	38.2	12.4
	31-45	142	40.6	-	-
	46-60	85	24.3	-	-
	>60	25	7.1	-	-
Gender	Male	198	56.6	-	-
	Female	152	43.4	-	-
Education Level	Primary or less	67	19.1	-	-
	Secondary	98	28.0	-	-
	Higher secondary	112	32.0	-	-
	University/Graduate	73	20.9	-	-
Migration Status	Non-migrant	87	24.9	-	-
	Internal migrant	134	38.3	-	-
	International migrant	76	21.7	-	-
	Return migrant	53	15.1	-	-
Migration Duration	No migration	87	24.9	8.7	6.3
	<5 years	89	25.4	-	-
	5-10 years	102	29.1	-	-
	>10 years	72	20.6	-	-
Institutional Affiliation	Government	78	22.3	-	-
	NGO/Civil Society	92	26.3	-	-
	Private Sector	68	19.4	-	-
	Academic/Research	45	12.9	-	-
	Community Organization	42	12.0	-	-
	IOM/International	25	7.1	-	-

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

This sample shows a fair representation of such variables as demographic and migration. The province is equally comparable with the population distribution in Pakistan, where Punjab possesses the highest percentage (52.9%) and Sindh, which contains 24.0 percent. The association observed in the data (62.0%) can be attributed to Pakistan's demographic character, where the respondents are primarily rural, since the topic of investigation was the migration patterns that were based in the rural counties.

The distribution of the migration status shows high migration experience in the Sample since seventy-five percent of the participants had some migration experience. Internal migrants with 38.3 percent are the most numerous group of migrants, indicating the rural-urban migration trends that strongly marked the development process in Pakistan. The fact that large

proportions of international migrants (21.7%) and return migrants (15.1%) are present makes it sufficient to study the difference in migration effects.

Socioeconomic Outcomes and Poverty Reduction

Table 2 presents the analysis of socioeconomic outcomes across different migration categories, revealing significant variations in poverty reduction indicators.

Table 2: Socioeconomic Outcomes by Migration Status (N = 350)

Indicator	Non-migrant	Internal Migrant	International Migrant	Return Migrant	F	p	η^2
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)			
Monthly Income (PKR)	28,450 (8,240)	35,680 (11,320)	42,150 (15,680)	38,920 (13,450)	15.73	<.001	.121
Asset Ownership Index	3.2 (1.8)	4.7 (2.1)	6.8 (2.4)	5.9 (2.3)	32.84	<.001	.222
Housing Quality Score	5.8 (2.1)	7.2 (2.3)	8.9 (1.9)	8.4 (2.0)	28.91	<.001	.201
Access to Education	6.4 (2.4)	7.8 (2.1)	9.2 (1.7)	8.7 (1.9)	25.64	<.001	.183
Healthcare Access	5.9 (2.3)	7.1 (2.2)	8.8 (1.8)	8.3 (2.1)	22.47	<.001	.163
Food Security Index	7.1 (1.9)	8.3 (1.7)	9.4 (1.2)	9.1 (1.4)	27.83	<.001	.195
Financial Inclusion	2.8 (1.6)	4.2 (1.9)	6.7 (2.1)	5.8 (2.2)	41.29	<.001	.265

Note: All scores are standardized on a 10-point scale. F-statistics from one-way ANOVA.
 η^2 = eta squared (effect size).

Analysis of monthly income shows that international migrants have higher income than non-migrants, as their monthly income increases by 48.2 percent. In contrast, return migrants and internal migrants have a monthly income that is higher than non-migrants by 36.8 and 25.4 percent, respectively. Such income gaps lead to the elimination of poverty in other poverty indicators, as international migrants perform significantly better in asset ownership ($\eta^2 = .222$) and financial inclusion ($\eta^2 = .265$).

Outcomes in Environmental Sustainability

Table 3 analyses the performances of environmental sustainability based on migration categories; this demonstrates crucial trends in environmental enlightenment and adaptation of sustainable activities.

Table 3: Environmental Sustainability Measures by Migration Status (N = 350)

Indicator	Non-migrant	Internal Migrant	International Migrant	Return Migrant	F	p	η^2
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)			
Environmental Awareness	5.7 (2.1)	6.8 (1.9)	8.4 (1.6)	7.9 (1.8)	29.45	<.001	.204
Sustainable Practices Index	4.2 (1.8)	5.6 (2.0)	7.8 (1.7)	7.2 (1.9)	35.67	<.001	.237
Green Technology Adoption	2.1 (1.3)	3.4 (1.7)	5.9 (2.2)	5.1 (2.0)	48.32	<.001	.296
Water Conservation	6.8 (2.2)	7.4 (1.9)	8.9 (1.4)	8.5 (1.6)	18.73	<.001	.141
Waste Management	5.9 (2.0)	6.7 (1.8)	8.3 (1.5)	7.8 (1.7)	23.84	<.001	.171
Energy Efficiency	4.5 (1.9)	5.8 (2.1)	7.6 (1.8)	7.0 (2.0)	26.91	<.001	.190
Environmental Investment (PKR)	1,240 (890)	2,450 (1,340)	5,680 (2,450)	4,320 (2,120)	42.15	<.001	.268

Note: Environmental indicators scored on 10-point scales investment amounts. F-statistics-one-way ANOVA.

Socioeconomic indicators resemble environmental sustainability results; the environmental awareness/practice of adoption is strongest among international migrants. Migration experience, specifically international migration, is found to have a significant effect on green technology adoption (largest effect size .296), and the study shows that not only migrants with international migration experience adopt our green technologies, but also the presence of this mobility to adopt our green technologies.

Remittance versus Development Impact

Table 4 examines the direction of remittances and patterns of their usage, where the analysis is done on participants (n = 198) who will be receiving the remittances.

Table 4: Remittance Patterns and Development Investment (n = 198)

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Amount (PKR/year)	SD
Remittance Sources				
International migrants	129	65.2	156,780	89,450
Internal migrants	69	34.8	47,320	28,560
Utilization Patterns				
Basic consumption	198	100.0	62,340	31,240
Education investment	134	67.7	28,450	18,320
Healthcare expenditure	156	78.8	19,680	12,450
Housing improvement	89	45.0	45,670	32,180
Business investment	67	33.8	38,920	28,760
Environmental projects	78	39.4	15,230	11,890
Community development	45	22.7	22,340	16,780
Dev. Impact Score				
High impact (>7.5)	82	41.4	-	-
Medium impact (5.0-7.5)	87	43.9	-	-
Low impact (<5.0)	29	14.7	-	-

Note: The score is composite measure of investments in education, healthcare, housing, and community projects.

An analysis of remittances shows that there is a tremendous amount of financial flows that have a significant impact on development results. The annual average of international remittances is PKR 156,780, compared to internal remittances of PKR 47,320, which is much higher. There is a high level of development orientation reflected by the heavy investments in education (67.7 percent of recipients) and healthcare (78.8 percent of recipients).

Momentum Analysis and Labor Migration

Table 5 explores stocks or outcomes related to migration concerning the various institutional affiliations, where it can be said to show the role played by establishments in migration governance and development influence.

Table 5: Migration Outcomes by Institutional Affiliation (N = 350)

Institution Type	n	Migration Policy Awareness	Development Program Participation	Sustainability Initiative Leadership	Overall Impact Score
		M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Government	78	8.4 (1.2)	7.8 (1.5)	6.9 (1.8)	7.7 (1.1)
NGO/Civil Society	92	7.9 (1.4)	8.9 (1.1)	8.7 (1.3)	8.5 (0.9)
Private Sector	68	6.8 (1.8)	6.2 (2.0)	5.8 (2.1)	6.3 (1.4)
Academic/Research	45	8.7 (1.0)	7.4 (1.6)	7.8 (1.4)	8.0 (1.0)
Community Org.	42	7.2 (1.6)	8.4 (1.3)	8.1 (1.5)	7.9 (1.2)
IOM/International	25	9.1 (0.8)	8.8 (1.0)	9.2 (0.9)	9.0 (0.7)
F-statistic	-	23.84	28.91	32.45	35.67
p-value	-	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
η^2	-	.257	.296	.320	.341

Note: All measures on 10-point scales. Higher scores indicate better performance.

In high policy awareness and moderate sustainability initiatives performance, government institutions are found to have the capacity for development and enhancement in implementing policy. The high effect sizes (with 2Square between .257 and .341) allow pointing out the significant role of institutional context in the assessment of the development impact of migration.

Regional Variations and Provincial Analysis

Table 6 presents provincial variations in migration patterns and development outcomes, revealing important regional differences in migration's impact on sustainable development.

Table 6: Provincial Variations in Migration and Development Outcomes (N = 350)

Province	Punjab (n=185)	Sindh (n=84)	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (n=53)	Balochistan (n=28)	F	p	η^2
Migration Intensity							
Internal migration rate (%)	41.6	38.1	30.2	25.0	3.67	.012	.031
International migration rate (%)	18.9	22.6	28.3	32.1	4.23	.006	.036
Development Outcomes							
Poverty reduction index	7.2 (1.8)	6.9 (2.1)	6.4 (2.3)	5.8 (2.5)	7.84	<.001	.064
Environmental sustainability	6.8 (2.0)	6.5 (2.2)	7.4 (1.9)	7.1 (2.1)	2.91	.034	.025
Remittance impact	89,450 (45,320)	76,340 (38,920)	112,680 (52,340)	98,230 (48,670)	8.92	<.001	.072
Policy Implementation							
Migration policy effectiveness	7.8 (1.4)	7.2 (1.6)	6.9 (1.8)	6.4 (2.0)	9.34	<.001	.075
Institutional coordination	6.9 (1.7)	6.5 (1.9)	7.8 (1.5)	7.2 (1.8)	6.78	<.001	.056
Community engagement	8.1 (1.3)	7.7 (1.5)	8.6 (1.2)	8.3 (1.4)	5.92	.001	.049

Note: Values are means with standard deviations in parentheses. Remittance impact in PKR annually.

Provincial analysis reveals distinct regional patterns in migration and development outcomes. Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa exhibit higher international migration rates (32.1% and 28.3%, respectively), likely reflecting economic challenges and their proximity to international borders. However, these provinces also show relatively strong environmental sustainability outcomes, suggesting that migration may facilitate the adoption of sustainable practices. Punjab shows the strongest overall poverty reduction outcomes, benefiting from both internal and international migration flows, while maintaining effective policy implementation mechanisms. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa demonstrates the highest remittance impact, indicating effective Utilization of migration-related financial flows for development purposes.

Discussion

Migration as a Catalyst for Poverty Reduction

The results are strong indicators suggesting that migration is a viable Mechanism in reducing poverty in Pakistan, not only limited to improving earning ability but also through overall better living and human development parameters. The 48.2 percent income gap between international migrants and non-migrants, as well as the significant increases in both ownership and quality of assets, housing quality, and access to basic amenities, demonstrates the potential of migration to profoundly impact household wellbeing.

The findings are consistent with the existing migration literature on the negative impacts of migration on poverty reduction (Adams & Page, 2005; Taylor et al., 2016). The work presents insights into the Pakistani context but in quantitative form. This conclusion that the benefits of migration extend beyond the migration experience per se implies that return migrants continue to enjoy superior socioeconomic outcomes (income 36.8 percent above that of non-migrants), which has also been established regarding the human capital and social capital theories of migration effects (Batista et al., 2012).

Migration and Sustainability Nexus Environment

This research has filled a gap in the existing literature by presenting new evidence that supports the notion that migration has a beneficial impact on environmental sustainability in Pakistan. The study's results indicate that international migrants are more environmentally conscious and embrace sustainable practices (by 47.4 percent and 85.7 percent, respectively) compared to non-migrants, which contradicts conventional discourse that often describes migration as environmentally damaging.

The high correlation between the two variables, i.e., environmental consciousness and sustainable behavior ($r = .834$), reflects consistent patterns of behavior that would transform environmental awareness into real behavior. This discovery indicates that migration-related environmental benefits not only result in a shallow increase in awareness, but also lead to actual behavioral changes that contribute to environmental sustainability.

Development Finance as Remittances

The given analysis demonstrates the importance of remittances as a source of development finances since 85.3 percent of households that receive them are at a medium to high development stage. The results, at 67.7% and 78.8% investment in education and health, respectively, portray strategic usage behavior that has led to human capital growth and sustainable development.

International migration is especially significant to development financing due to the substantial difference between international and internal remittances in terms of value (PKR 156,780 vs. PKR 47,320 annually). The high usage levels regarding the two types of remittances in developmental efforts, however, reveal that the financial aspects of migration occur at various levels and types of migration.

Governance Implications and Institutional Dimensions

High differences in migration outcomes by institutional affiliation ($\eta^2 = .341$) demonstrate the importance of the institutional context in influencing the impact of migration on its development. The better performance of the IOM and international organizations in all terms implies the significance of expertise in the migration governance area, and NGOs, with their good results in development program participation, testify to the invaluable mediating work of these organizations.

The failure of government institutions to perform well in sustainability endeavors and the high awareness of policies indicate a lapse in implementation, which could hamper the ability of migration to develop. The significance of this finding is that capacity building and efforts to strengthen institutions in order to improve the governance of migration are crucial.

Conclusion

The research presents the most extensive quantitative findings, demonstrating that migration is a significant channel leading to sustainable development in Pakistan and has shown considerable positive effects on poverty reduction, as well as on environmental sustainability. As demonstrated by the findings, the benefits of migration extend far beyond the immediate economic benefits, benefiting human development outcomes, ecological awareness, and community development projects.

The study finds that international migrants have the most favourable development results, with return migrants and internal migrants having large effect sizes, signifying that the effects are practically significant. An income gain of 48.2% among international migrants, a 47.4% increase in environmental awareness, and an 85.7% increase in the adoption of sustainable practices demonstrate the multidimensional importance of migration in achieving sustainable development goals.

Remittances have become an essential form of development finance, whose strategic use, as seen in recent years, has given preference to spending on education, healthcare, and, increasingly, environmental sustainability programs. The fact that remittance recipients invest in environmental projects (39.4 percent) shows the growing sense of environmental awareness and its impact on expanding the sustainability objectives of Pakistan.

The analyses of institutions demonstrate vast differences in migration impacts, indicating a need to find specialized expertise in migration governance and coordinated strategies. The fact that international organizations and NGOs work more effectively suggests that there may be opportunities for further cooperation and capacity building at the institutional level.

The regional differences serve to portray the varying contexts present in Pakistan, as well as the similarities found in terms of migration benefits across different provincial backgrounds. The results suggest the possibility of scaling migration-related interventions in development and combining sensitivity to regional peculiarities.

Future Direction of Research

Several areas deserve future research. Longitudinal research would further the understanding of causal paths and time series in the migration-development configurations. Mixed methods can provide a more nuanced understanding of how migration contributes to achieving sustainable development outcomes.

Comparisons of national contexts make the study more generalizable and further aid in theorizing. Research on the effectiveness of policy interventions in enhancing the development impact of migration would provide practical guidelines for policy implementation.

The environmental impact of migration is an area where research is needed, especially since there is limited evidence on this topic, and the relevance of environmental sustainability in development discourse, which is becoming increasingly important.

Final Recommendations

On that basis, we suggest that Pakistan should create an overall National Migration and Development Strategy that:

- Incorporates the aspects of migration into the national sustainable development.
- Positioning coordinated, institutional mechanisms within the government of migration establishes a coordinated institutional mechanism for migration governance.
- Invent specific return migration schemes that are sustainable in outlook
- Develops remittance boosting initiatives that have an environmental part
- Introduces regional coordination devices that are representative of provincial differences
- Creates monitors and evaluations of the impact on migration development

With effective execution, these recommendations will maximize the potential of migration as part of Pakistan's sustainable development process, while also overcoming migration-related challenges. The available evidence in the study provides a sound basis for such policy interventions and suggests considerable potential for migration as a channel to achieve sustainable development.

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