MALE MIGRATION AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

THE IMPACT OF MALE MIGRATION ON THE WOMEN LEFT BEHIND IN URBAN LEBANON

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Abstract

Women's empowerment is important for gender equality and development (Sen 1999) and has been recognised by the international society as a Millennium Development Goal (UNDP 2008). This thesis investigated how male migration and remittances affect the empowerment of the women left behind in urban Lebanon. The literature review showed a gap in the research on the social impacts of migration and remittances, especially including a gender dimension. Based on empirical data collected, i.e. qualitative interviews and an online survey, the research analysed the empowerment of the women left behind through three dimensions; resources, agency and achievements, which are presented in the analytical framework by Kabeer (1999). This study discussed the use of Kabeer's three-dimensional framework for analysing women's empowerment in a context of male migration. This research showed that the impact on the women left behind is not uniform, but rather presents a complex picture. However, on an overall level this thesis concluded that there is no indication of an empowerment process being initiated as a result of male migration.

Key-words

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Content

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1. Introduction

International migration has become a social reality for many Lebanese today and is an inevitable phenomenon in the review of Lebanon's history. In 2001, around 50 per cent of the Lebanese had at least one of their family members residing abroad, and in most cases it was a man as 64 per cent of all international migrants in Lebanon were male migrants (Kasparian 2003, vol. 3: 17).

Not only in Lebanon has migration increasingly become an unavoidable reality as the number of international migrants has more than doubled since 1960 (Jolly and Reeves 2005: 6). Today, international migrants constitute 3.1 per cent of the world's population resulting in millions of households, approximately 10 per cent of the world's population, receiving financial support (Mahmud et al. 2009: 147). International migration has implications on both economic and social levels and influences both the individual and society as a whole.

The economical effects of migration on the sending countries have been widely studied and discussed, and the effects depend on the composition, magnitudes and nature of the migration flows and also on which context the migrants come from (Katseli et al. 2006: 30-44). Positive, negative and mixed views on the migration-development nexus have been established[1]. The transfer of money, remittances[2], from the migrant to the family and friends in the sending countries constitute the most visible link between migration and development. Remittances are not only an important source of external finance to the country of origin (even larger than official development aid), but also entail poverty reduction and growth, and distribution of wealth and income to the recipient households (Ratha and Mohapatra 2007). Furthermore, labour flows also contribute to the economical impacts through the transfer of skilled knowledge, brain-gain, or seen from another perspective, the loss of labour supply, brain-drain. Although the economical impacts are widely studied and often linked to the social consequences of migration, the social impacts have received much less attention. Some of the social impacts consist of changes in family patterns, gender roles, children's health, education etc. and cultural effects (Katseli et al. 2006: 44-47; Levitt 1998). I took an interest in how migration of men would affect the women left behind as male migration is

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[1] For further elaboration on the implications of migration on sending countries see section 2.1. International migration

[2] Remittances are person to person flows of money, targeted to the needs of the family or friends of the migrant (Ratha and Mohapatra 2007:1). For further elaboration see section 2.2. Remittances.

widespread in Lebanon but understudied. Furthermore, the specific research topic is dealing with a narrow angle within the migration-development nexus, i.e. the social impact of migration, and stands in contrast to the mainstream literature.

It would be appropriate here to mention that the reference to the 'women left behind' may seem value-laden and with negative connotations; however 'women left behind' should not indicate any predetermined negative connotations from the author. The term is used as the literature does not seem to have any alternative way to categorise the women (or families) who are not migrating when their husbands are, hence they are 'left behind' (DESA 2004; Wilkerson et al. 2009; Elbadawy and Roushdy 2010; Mendola and Carletto 2009; Hadi 2001; Menjivar and Agadjanian 2007; Sadiqi and Ennaji 2004).

In the following, the thesis will refer to international migration, migration, outmigration and emigration as equivalent concepts and should be understood as the move between two countries internationally. The thesis will refer to the causes and consequences in this relation (Jolly and Reeves 2005: 4). The thesis will not examine the impacts of internal migration, immigration, internally displacement of people, trafficking or illegal migration. Furthermore, the thesis will primarily focus on the impact of temporary international migration as it is expected that the husband will return to Lebanon. Lebanon is the context in which this study is placed; hence a background is presented in the following.

1.1. Lebanon

Lebanon's long history of migration began as a response to the Christian-Muslim communal conflict and the financial crisis in the second half of the 19th century. The first emigration wave was concentrated to Latin America, but has since then moved towards the US, Canada, Australia and France for permanent settlement and to Western Africa for more temporary stays. Since the 1960s, emigration to the Gulf States has increased, and the civil war from 1975 to 1989 resulted in an increased emigration rate to all the countries (Tabar 2009; Bartolomeo et al. 2010: 1). Today, the primary migrants are young males aged 15-34, and the main reason for migration is to seek better

employment opportunities abroad, which has resulted in the decrease of men in the population distribution (Chaaban 2009: 3)[3].

Lebanon is classified as a middle-high income country by the World Bank and was ranked 77 in 2006 on the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (UNDP 2009a). It is a small country with around 4 million people, estimations of 2007 (Bartolomeo et al. 2010). In Lebanon almost 8 per cent of the population lives under extreme poverty and is unable to meet their basic needs, whereas 28.5 per cent of the Lebanese live under the upper poverty line, which is set at about USD 4 per capita per day. Lebanon is characterised by regional disparities where poverty is highest in the North (with 46 per cent of the extremely poor). The extremely poor and the poor are also overrepresented in the South and in the Bekaa Valley, which to a larger degree are characterised as rural areas (Laithy et al. 2008). The unemployment rate in 2007 amounted to 9.2 per cent. However, as pointed out by Chaaban (2009: 18-19), the measurement is precarious as there is no official labour force survey. In 2004, 65 per cent of the total population constituted the working age population (age 15-64). Out of the total male population, 76.2 per cent participates in the labour force, whereas only 28.7 per cent of the female population participates. This gender gap is also shown in Graph 1, which compares the labour force participation with European figures. This gender gap is remarkable when looking into other figures, such as educational attainment where there is no significant difference between male and female enrolment ratios[4] - 83 per cent for males and 86 per cent for females (UNDP 2009b: 253).
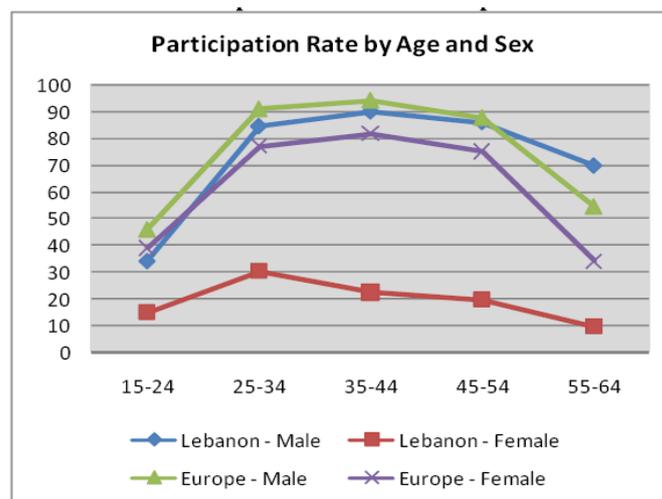
Graph 1: Labour force participation rate by age and sex – comparison with Europe (Chaaban 2009: 6)

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[3] See appendix 1- Characteristics of Legal Outward Migration Flows in Lebanon.
[4] The enrolment ratio is here the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary education for the year 2005.

1.2. The Field of Research

This study addresses an important gap in the literature as it is only within recent years that gender studies have been incorporated into the study of migration. Feminist literature of the 1970s and 1980s has questioned the near invisibility of women as migrants, their presumed passivity in the migration process and their assumed place in the home (Jolly and Reeves 2005: 3). More recently, this has resulted in an increased interest in female migration and in how intra-household power inequalities may influence the migration reality (Pedraza 1991, UNDESA 2006, Jolly and Reeves 2005, Siddiqui 2008, Mahler and Pessar 2006). Nevertheless, a gap still remains as only few studies have analysed the impact of male migration on the sending communities, in particular on the women left behind.

Thus, the subject of study is the women in urban families in Lebanon with male migration experience. Even though Lebanon is considered one of the more modern countries in the Middle East, a patriarchal structure[5] within the society and the families still prevails. This implies that a hierarchy of authority exists, which is controlled and dominated by males. As described by Joseph (1996), the traditional Arab male has the responsibility and authority to control e.g. resources and income generation. It is argued that patriarchy is highly prevalent throughout the Arab world and that kinship is the basic unit of society, which is reflected in all other arenas. In this context, it is therefore interesting to study the hierarchy of authority in a situation of male migration and how this affects female empowerment.

Theoretically, empowerment is to be understood as a process of change in which three interrelated dimensions, resources, agency and achievements, are to be analysed in order to measure the change from the state of disempowerment to the state of empowerment (Kabeer 1999). The end to this study is, therefore, to analyse how male migration affects the resources and agency of women (the preconditions and process of empowerment), and whether this can be translated into an achievement (the outcome of empowerment), in this case, female labour market participation. In this regard, the study will test the applicability of Kabeer's (ibid.) three empowerment dimensions.

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[5] Patriarchal structure or patriarchy should be understood as the "prioritising of the rights of males and elders" (Joseph 1996:14).

1.2. The Purpose and Question of the Research

The purpose of the research is therefore to explore how male migration (and the remittances) may or may not influence the empowerment of the wife left behind. Thus, to understand whether male migration has been or could be a potential source of gender equality and development in Lebanon. Furthermore, the aim of this study is to theoretically discuss the applicability of Kabeer's (1999) three empowerment dimensions where female participation in the Lebanese labour market will be regarded as an indicator of an empowerment achievement because of the profound gender gap. Accordingly, the thesis aims to explore the following questions:

> How does the migration of a husband (male migration) affect the woman left behind in urban Lebanon?
> - Does this migration influence her capability to make strategic life-choices, i.e. her empowerment?

This research is based on six qualitative interviews with women with migrant husbands, one group discussion, a social survey collected through the internet with a number of 70 respondents, a number of informal interviews with experts in Lebanon as well as a review of the existing data in the field.

1.3. Structure of the Paper

The structure of the paper is as follows. Chapter two, *Theoretical Review of Migration, Remittances, Gender and Empowerment,* presents the vast literature on international migration and the shifts in the migration and development paradigms including how remittances have been seen as the most vital connection between migration and development. In addition, this chapter will introduce the links between migration and gender, including previous empirical research on how male migration has affected the sending community, especially women. The chapter ends with a review on how the literature has conceptualised empowerment. Chapter three, *Methodology*, outlines the methodological issues and methods in the current study, including the main limitations. Ethical considerations of the study are presented at the end of the chapter. Chapter four, *Analysis of Empowerment in a Three-dimensional Framework*, combines a presentation of the analytical framework used to study the phenomenon of male migration in a Lebanese context with the analysis

of the empirical collected data. The chapter is organised according to Kabeer's (1999) three dimensions of empowerment, resources, agency and achievements. The chapter ends with critical considerations of the use of this framework and presents a revised model of empowerment. The thesis ends with conclusion in chapter five, *Conclusion*.

2. Theoretical Review of Migration, Remittances, Gender and Empowerment

This chapter will answer the question of how the literature theoretically and empirically has dealt with migration, remittances, gender and empowerment. The current thesis will therefore be placed within the existing theoretical discussions and show its relevance.

2.1. International Migration

Throughout history no single theory has been able to explain the initiation of international migration or why population flows persist over time and space, but a wide range of theories have explained international migration[6]. One theory, which has greatly influenced the notion of international migration, is Neoclassical Macroeconomics. It explains international migration as a supply and demand reaction to labour. Simply put, the geographically determined differences in wages cause workers from low-wage or labour surplus countries to move to the high-wage or labour-scarce countries (Mahmud et al. 2009:148). Similarly, the Neoclassical Microeconomics explains international migration as a cost-benefit calculation. However, here the migration decision is a result of the individual's rational choice (Lee 1966:50). In contrast to this functional approach to migration, theories like neo-Marxist dependency theory, world system theory, and modes of production theory constitute the structural approach. Migration is here seen not only as a result of the individual's rational choice, but rather as a product of objective social and spatial structures that produce the required conditions for labour migration. In other words, migration is a result of the exploitative political and economic relationship between sending and receiving countries. Finally, in more recent years, the New Economic Approach to migration, pioneered by Oded Stark (1991), has altered the neoclassical theory. The new insight of this approach is that migration decisions are

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[6] It is not within the scope of this paper to give a thorough representation of all theories in the field of migration.

not taken by individuals, but rather by the household or family and is seen as a household strategy focused on risk-minimisation (Mahmud et al. 2009: 150; Massey et al 2008: 17-22).

In regards as to how male migration affects women left behind, it is interesting not only to understand why migration is initiated and persists, but also to understand how the migration literature has explained the migration consequences for the sending countries and communities. This is closely related to the migration and development nexus which has been widely discussed. The literature on migration and development can be divided into two main strands. Simply put, into 1) the pessimistic view where migration is seen as a hindrance to development and 2) the optimistic view where migration is seen as stimulating development (Hermele 1997:133-141; Cotula and Toulmin 2004: 8-15; Haas 2010).

The first argument is that *emigration hinders development.* This approach argues that development in emigration countries is hindered by the loss of qualified man power, or the so-called brain-drain. The possible positive effect of remittances is likewise not stimulating development as these are not put to productive use, but rather spent on household consumption and unproductive purposes such as transport, insurance, and repayment of debt (Hermele 1997: 136; Haas 2010).

The second argument is that *emigration stimulates development.* In contrast to the above argument, the exit of man power should be seen as surplus labour. Simply put, emigration does not constitute a brake on development as emigrants were not employed before they emigrated, thus, constituting surplus labour. Remittances are also regarded as spurring development through investment in education or in agricultural equipment. Moreover, remittances may initiate migrants' families to employ labour in their fields meanwhile they build up activities in other settings. Finally, in this approach, remittances bring important secondary, or multiplier, effects, which create demands for local consumption (Hermele 1997: 138-139, Ratha and Mohapatra 2007:3, IOM 2008: 3).

More recently, a third strand has emerged that bridges the above two and argues that the influence of migration on development is ambiguous. This approach is based on empirical findings that show evidence of the heterogeneity of migration impacts and links the different strands to paradigm shifts in social and development theory, as argued by Haas (2010). The argument in this approach is related to time. Short-term effects are rather settled and tend to be positive; however, in the long

term, migration does not seem to be able to induce far-reaching social or economic changes (Fisher et al. 1997: 121-128). Well in line, and as pointed out by Chaaban (2009), in the case of Lebanon, the migration flows have had both positive and negative impacts on the Lebanese domestic labour market. Chaaban (2009: 31-32) summarises the positive impacts as follows; 1) The ability to send remittances, which contributes markedly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 2) the increase in the "skill stock" of the Lebanese workforce as investments in education is encouraged, 3) the decrease in local unemployment, and 4) the potential gains from return-migrants and knowledge transfer, brain-gain. The negative impacts are put forward as the following; 1) the loss of a country's human capital and workforce, brain drain, 2) the local payment for an education that renders return abroad, and 3) the loss of the talent and knowledge pool that is to fill needed skill shortages in the country. Finally, the analysis points to the fact that 80 per cent of the remittances are used for daily household consumption rather than for direct investments, which indicate a limited financial net return. Hence, the impact of migration seems to have ambiguous outcomes for the development of Lebanon.

2.2. Remittances

Remittances, money sent back home by migrants working abroad, are seen as the most visible factor linking migration and development. The World Bank estimated in 2004 that on a world basis, remittances accounted for USD 126 billion. This is almost double the official development aid, which amounted to USD 72 billion. Remittances thus constitute the second largest source of external funding for developing countries, only exceeded by foreign direct investment with USD 165 billion (Ramirez et al. 2005:13). Literature about the impact of remittances on development is closely connected to the debate about the migration and development nexus (and is often the same) (Haas 2010), as previously elaborated. Both positive and negative effects in terms of development of the sending countries and communities have thus been conceptualised. In any case, the effects are not conclusive and point to a heterogeneity of consequences.

Nevertheless, the remittances constitute the most stable and safe source of foreign aid as remittances are person to person flows that elude interventions and corrupt governments and which can be counter-cyclical in times of economic recession (Ramirez et al. 2005: 15; Ratha and Mohapatra 2007). In 2007 remittances in Lebanon amounted to USD 8.2 billion, which is 22 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) making the country a top recipient as shown in Graph 2

(World Bank 2011: 13-14). Remittances, therefore, constitute a very important source of income for Lebanon.

Top Remittance-Receiving Countries[a], 2009
percentage of GDP

Country	Value
Tajikistan[b]	35
Tonga[b]	28
Lesotho[b]	25
Moldova[b]	23
Nepal[b]	23
Lebanon[b]	22
Samoa[b]	22
Honduras[b]	19
Guyana[b]	17
El Salvador[b]	16
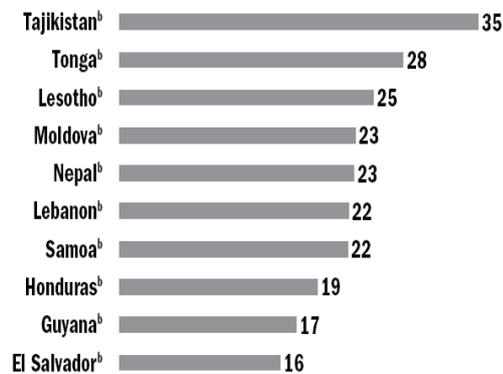
Graph 2: Top Remittance-Receiving Countries (World Bank 2011:14)

2.2.1. Social Remittances

Even though economic impacts of migration have been extensively researched, in more recent studies, remittances are not only studied in monetary terms, but also in terms of non-economic effects, or the so-called social remittances (Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010). Through empirical studies, Levitt (1998) identified that not only financial capital is transferred back to the sending communities, but also norms, practices, identities and communities are remitted. The circulation of social remittances are exchanged when migrants return to their home country, when non-migrants visit their migrant relative and through the exchange of letters, e-mails, videos, calls etc. (ibid.: 936), which can lead to social change in the sending communities. Hence, Levitt brings forward the non-economic impact of migration on sending communities.

Similarly, Ramirez et al. (2005) have coined how remittances (both social and financial) and migration are not gender neutral, but contain important gender-related differences. Remittances should here be seen not only as flow of money, but also of ideas, images and discourses that are all affected by gender as a cross-cutting issue:

> "it allows us to understand how the economic and social roles that women acquire through the sending and/or management of remittances can catalyze transformations in gender relations, and in turn, stimulate social, cultural, economic and political change" (Ramirez et al. 2005: 23).

The focal point of this thesis is exactly placed within the social impacts of migration, and in particular the impact of male migration on female empowerment and gender relations. However, in order to study this relation, an understanding of how gender has been conceptualised in the migration literature is necessary.

2.3. International Migration and Gender

The role of women in development was first acknowledged at the World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, and the rights of women were proclaimed in the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. Subsequently, the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 reinforced the need for women to be included in the decision-making of economic, social and political development. However, it was most clearly stated in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing that movements of people, i.e. migration, have profound consequences for families and have unequal consequences for men and women (DESA 2004: 3-4).

Since the 1970s and 1980s, the focus of women's movements and women's studies has shifted from women's inclusion, as a main goal in the Women-in-Development (WID) approach, to a focus on the unequal power relations between men and women in the Gender-and-Development (GAD) approach. By shifting to a gender approach, emphasis was put on the social construction of the relation between men and women, and power relations became visible, as in the feminists' battle to politicise gender and view it as a struggle (Arnfred 2001: 74-75). Likewise, the gender mainstreaming approach has grown in importance, in which equality between men and women should prevail in all development policies, strategies and interventions. Furthermore, attention on the relation between gender equality and economic development has grown, and there has been a shift in focus from looking at the symptoms of inequality towards looking at the structural factors that cause it (Sevefjord and Olsson 2001: 10). However, the relation between gender equality and economic development has been questioned by Arnfred (2001: 76-78). As pointed out, "the recurring punch-line runs like this: *Gender Inequalities are Costly to Development. Or to put it in another way: Gender Equality is Good Business!*" (ibid: 77). She concludes that there is a growing gap between the global language of the development discourse such as GAD and gender mainstreaming and the feminists' theory based on questions and concerns from the feminist activists in the South. Arnfred argues that this global language has not succeeded in being used as a

tool for changes in consciousness and self-perception of the grass-root women as they have learned to see themselves as powerless and oppressed.

Hence, it is within the gender research and debate that the "feminisation of migration" has been acknowledged and women have been recognised as migrants. Even though no significant change in the percentage of women and men moving internationally[7] has taken place, there has been a change in the migration pattern as women tend to migrate independently instead of following male migrants (Jolly and Reeves 2005: 6).

Migration influences gender relations, either entrenching inequalities and traditional roles, or challenging and changing them

Gender influences:
• who migrates and why, and how the decision is made
• how migration impacts on migrants themselves, on sending areas, and on receiving areas
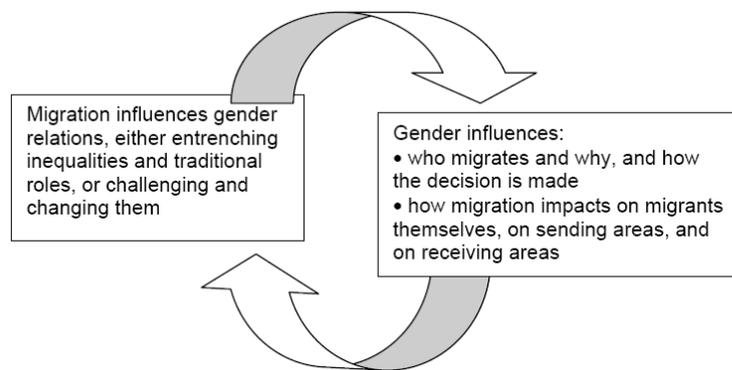
Diagram 1: Connections between gender and migration (Jolly and Reeves 2005: 9)

As illustrated in the above diagram (Diagram 1), gender and migration finds itself in a dialectic relationship, one affecting the other and influencing several levels of the migration reality. In this light, gender roles, relations and inequalities affect who migrates and why, how the decisions are made, the impacts on migrants themselves, on sending areas and on receiving areas (Jolly and Reeves 2005: 1). Migration may therefore challenge or entrench traditional gender roles as women may either gain economic independence, confidence and greater freedom or may experience greater seclusion, control, gender segregation and unequal rights (ibid.: 19-20). Nevertheless, it is argued that female migration can possibly indirectly help alleviate poverty by raising productivity, education and health of the women and their families, all key to reducing inequality and poverty in the home. Consequently, as acknowledged by several researchers, a gender approach to migration research is inevitable (Pedraza 1991, Boyd and Grieco 2003, DESA 2004, Esim and Smith 2004, Jolly and Reeves 2005, Ramirez et al. 2005, Mahler and Pessar 2006). Within the gender approach, a few studies have thus researched the impact of male migration on women left behind.

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[7] In 1960 female migrants accounted for nearly 47 per cent and in 2000 the female proportion was 49 per cent, so there has been no major change in the percentage of female migrants (Jolly and Reeves 2005: 6).

2.3.1. The Impact of Male Migration on Women Left Behind

Research on female migration is widely published today. However, it is only within recent years that studies have been focused on the impacts of migration on sending communities including a gender dimension. Even so, two strands within the literature have emerged either arguing for 1) a greater emancipation of women left behind due to the increased responsibility and decision making in the home, or 2) a greater restriction on the women's lives due to the cultural tension and anxiety as their husbands are away (Menjivar and Agadjanian 2007: 1245).

Lokshin and Glinskaya (2009) have examined the impact of international male migration on the labour market behaviour of women in Nepal. The results indicate that male migration and remittances have a negative impact on the level of labour market participation by women in the migrant-sending households, and they argue that other studies show the same results (ibid: 482). Likewise, based on their comparative study in Armenia and Guatemala, Menjivar and Agadjanian (2007) concluded that the new responsibilities do not transform women's status and male migration reinforces gender inequality. Haas and Van Rooij's (2010) study in Morocco also argues that the increase in tasks and responsibilities does not translate into changed gender roles, but rather into a new role that is perceived as a burden.

On the other hand, there are studies that argue for the greater emancipation of women with male migrants. In their research on the role of male-dominated migration in shaping the labour market in Albania, Mendola and Carletto (2009) argue that having a migrant abroad decreases paid female labour supply, but increases unpaid work. But women with male migration experience are more likely to engage in self-employment and to a lesser degree unpaid work. So over time, male migration influences women's employment status and income-earning capacity which may lead to increased bargaining power and empowerment. In Hadi's (2001) study from Bangladesh, it is revealed that male migration has a significant positive correlation with women's decision-making power and education of girls, and the study concludes that male migration can create a context for change in a traditional community.

Besides these two opposing positions, a third strand has emerged, which points out the complexity of both negative and positive consequences that male migration can have on the women left behind. Sadiqi and Ennaji's (2004) study on the impact of male migration from Morocco to Europe on the

women left behind shows ambiguous results. Women are both disempowered by their social condition, lack of facilities and increased responsibilities as a result of male migration but also empowered by their new condition as they have to fight social exclusion and negotiate gender and power relations. Similarly, based on their quantitative study in Egypt, Elbadawy and Roushdy (2010) state that male migration has a positive effect on the women's ability to make autonomous decisions about primarily household matters, i.e. they experience increased emancipation when their husbands are abroad, but once the husband returns the effect turns negative.

Finally, only one study has been conducted on the effect of male migration on women left behind in Lebanon. Khalaf (2009) has studied the "impact on decision-making and well-being within the family, essentially on the wife left behind" when the head of the household emigrates (ibid: 102). The study uses a sample of 107 women with male migrants as husbands from a national survey conducted by Saint Joseph University in Beirut in 2001. Through a questionnaire, information about the family, its income, the decision-making process, and the wife's challenges and well-being was collected. Khalaf concludes that the woman becomes more empowered following the migration of her husband, and that the wife assumes a new role. Nevertheless, Khalaf (2009: 115-117) questions if this new situation can challenge traditional gender ideology as the women are financially dependent on their husbands. The author stresses that her research should be seen as exploratory and that the analysis can only shed some light on the issues raised and more in-depth research is needed. Nevertheless, the weakest points of the research are its lack of justification for the different variables[8] used to measure empowerment and the lack of theoretical and conceptual clarity on women's empowerment as an end to the study. Similarly, many of the above-mentioned studies circle around terms like empowerment, emancipation, positive/negative impact, decision-making process or power, gender roles and ideology, and gender equality, but lack a theoretical and conceptual discussion on the understanding of the terms as well as a review of the gender and empowerment literature to frame their work. Therefore, a brief review of the empowerment literature will be presented in the following.

2.4. Empowerment

As described by Molhotra et al. (2002: 4), "empowerment has been used to represent a wide range of concepts and to describe a proliferation of outcomes". The interest in the concept started within

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[8] The husband's income level, the husband's level of education, the wife's level of education and the length of the husband's absence (Khalaf 2009)

the psychological literature in the late 1970s and found its way into other social sciences and has evolved from a paradigm challenging concept to a highly mainstream buzz-word (Perkins and Zimmerman (1995: 571). Empowerment of women has been defined in the Beijing Platform of Action as "Removing the obstacles of women's active participation in all spheres in public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making". Along the way, empowerment has been used in many different contexts and by many different actors resulting in a variety of understandings of the term. Another definition of empowerment is presented by Naila Kabeer (1999) as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability has previously been denied to them". Nevertheless, the empowerment of women stems from the feminist literature and is closely linked to the notion of gender equality.

It is in regards to women themselves that there is a fine line between gender equality and empowerment. There could be an improvement in gender equality, but it is only regarded as empowerment when it is the women themselves that are involved in the process as agents of change (Molhotra et al. 2002: 7). Molhotra et al.'s (ibid.) review of the conceptualisation of empowerment has found a consensus in the literature: "There is a nexus of a few key, overlapping terms that are most often included in defining empowerment: options, choice, control, and power" (ibid.: 5). Likewise, empowerment has been defined as a process (Oxaal and Baden 1997, Kabeer 1999, and Molhotra et al. 2002) and should be seen as the move from one state to another. Another characteristic of the common understanding of empowerment is the bottom-up approach where social inclusion and participation is emphasised and the micro-level (and individual level) in which it takes place.

"The World Bank has identified empowerment as one of the key constituent elements of poverty reduction, and as a primary development assistance goal." (Molthotra et al. 2002: 3) Not only the World Bank has recognised empowerment as inevitable in development, but the international societies have acknowledged the importance of empowerment, as exemplified in the Millennium Development Goal number three, *promote gender equality and empower women* (UNDP 2008). Empowerment as a development goal is based on a twofold argument; that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and should be a goal in itself and furthermore, it is an approach to reach other goals, such as poverty reduction. This is well in line with Amarty Sen's capability

approach as formulated in "Development as Freedom" (1999) where not only economic measures are regarded as important for development, but also human and social constituents. Sen (ibid.: 189-203) also emphasises the important role of women as agents of change, which has been further elaborated by Martha Nussbaum (2000). As a colleague to Sen, she sees human capabilities as fundamental to the lives of women.

As a result, two indices were constructed in order to measure gender equality and empowerment on a broader societal level, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). The GDI attempts to measure inequalities between men and women in achievements covered by the Human Development Index (HDI), whereas the GEM is a composite indicator which measures women's representation in parliament, women's participation in the active labour force, their share of national income and women's share of positions classified as managerial and professional (Oxaal and Baden 1997: 20). Thus, the GDI measures the expansion of capabilities, whereas the GEM focuses on the use of these capabilities to seek opportunities in life.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodological choices in relation to this research as well as to present the limitations of these choices. The chapter will also include ethical considerations to the study.

3.1. Methodological Choices

Before entering the field, the research question I intended to explore was: How does the migration of a husband (male migration) affect the woman left behind in urban Lebanon? And does this migration influence her capability to make strategic life-choices, i.e. her empowerment? Hence, my research was designed in order for me to answer this question. Based on the literature on empowerment and gender equality and on the chosen analytical framework, I saw the situation of male migration as a potential process of change and I wanted to test this hypothesis. Nevertheless, my study was not only deductive and thus connected to the positivistic school (Bryman 2008: 9-13). I also used an inductive approach, which is more often used in hermeneutics, as I wanted to

generate an understanding from the empirical material, in this case the women. In other words, I wanted to take outset in the women's experiences, perceptions and expressions. Throughout the qualitative interview, I remained open to unexpected questions that might arise, which resulted in a continuous revision of the semi-structured interviews.

Methodologically, it is also important to consider your role and position yourself within the study as you will be part of the research by interpreting the constructed meanings of the women (Bryman 2008: 17). I was thus aware of the fact that I was influenced by the literature, thus holding a normative view on women's empowerment as I believe it is important for gender equality and development. However, this positioning does not limit my research as it will not determine the results, especially as I have chosen to use an analytical framework to guide my work.

I chose the qualitative approach to my study, but as a consequence to the lack of accessibility in the field, a practical matter, I chose to supplement my research design with a more quantitative approach in terms of an online social survey. In the following, the challenge in this regard will be elaborated as well as the methods selected.

3.2. Methods and Limitations

The research methods used were the qualitative interview, a group discussion session and the quantitative online social survey. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry, triangulation[9], to a higher degree ensures validity within the research as information is gathered from multiple sources. In the following, the different methods used and their limitations will be elaborated.

3.2.1. Interviews and Group Discussion

The qualitative interview was chosen because "the subjects not only answers the questions prepared by an expert, but themselves formulate in a dialogue their own conceptions of their lived world" (Kvale 1996: 11). Through this method, meaning and understanding of male migration as understood by the women left behind would be obtained.

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[9] Understood as "the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon" (Bryman 2008:700)

Based on accessibility and the purpose of the research, I decided that the variables of the sample should be: Lebanese women, residing in urban Lebanon, aged 18-65, and with experience of male migration. Due to the difficulty of travelling alone (as a female) to rural areas of Lebanon, it was only possible to interview women from urban areas. In the aim to achieve a varied interviewee sample, women from several economic strata and with different religious and sectarian backgrounds were interviewed. The sampling was thus, as described by Silverman (2005: 129-134), both a theoretical and a purposeful sample as informants were selected purposively according to the research topic. However, the sampling process turned out to be more of a snowballing technique which implied a lesser degree of control of whom I would be able to interview as the method entails that one interviewee will lead to the next (Scheyvens and Storey 2003: 43). An unexpected challenging inaccessibility resulted in a few interviews, totalling six interviews with women whose husbands have been or are male migrants.

There is no rule to the number of interviews needed, nevertheless Cresswell (2007: 61) recommends by quoting Polkinghorne "Often data collection in phenomenological studies consist of in-depth interviews and multiple interviews with participants". It is recommended that researchers interview 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. Likewise, Kvale (1996: 103) argues "the present approach emphasizes the quality rather than the quantity of the interview" and by focusing on a fewer cases a more in-depth study will be possible.

A typology of interviews is presented in Mikkelsen (2005: 171), giving an overview of the different characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of the different types of interviews. Based on this, the type of interview chosen for this study was a semi-structured interview with an interview guide. The questions for the interview guide were formulated to create as much reliability as possible by not using leading questions. Moreover, the general guidelines for asking questions (Mikkelsen 2005: 174-175) were consolidated in order to include a careful questioning taking into consideration that the topics (marital and financial situation and gender issues) could be very sensitive to the women. Moreover, while conducting the interview, I was constantly aware of providing a friendly and safe atmosphere where the informant would feel free to say what they wanted (Bryman 2008: 445). The questions were formulated in order for me to understand how the situation had changed since the

migration of the husband and in relation to Kabeer's empowerment dimensions; resources, agency and achievements[10].

Besides the interviews, I pursued the opportunity to do a focus group discussion. The aim was here to get an understanding of how young women would understand the impact of male migration and gender issues in relation to their own experiences in their families as well as of their ideas on how a future life would be. These young women (12 girls, aged 17-20) studied at the Beirut University and generally belonged to the middle-class. Group discussions are important when the aim is to understand not only their own personal thinking of the phenomenon, but also how they choose to discuss it as part of a group (Scheyvens and Storey 2003: 58, Bryman 2008: 473). The group dynamic in a focus group might therefore reveal reasons for holding certain views, and the arguments that will occur can challenge the other participants' views. As argued by Bryman (2008: 746); "the process of coming to terms with (that is, understanding) social phenomena is not undertaken by individuals in isolation from each other. Instead, it is something that occurs in interaction and discussion with others". Thus, compared to the normal one-to-one interview, the group discussions may therefore present a variety of different views.

3.2.2. Methodological Limitations and Considerations

The primary constraint to the qualitative part of the study was the limited number of interviews conducted with the women with male migration experience. The paradox of the situation was that in the general public, everyone knows someone who is in this situation; however, the accessibility turned out to be very limited. This methodological challenge first of all owed to the fact that I had no direct contact with women in this situation, and I consequently had to rely on gatekeepers. Additionally, a number of interviews were first scheduled, but cancelled later on. This could indicate a certain resentment to talk in person about personal matters, such as marital status. This was later emphasised in an interview with a woman who said "this was not my dream, I didn't expect that my husband would travel" (Interview 6, 9th of December 2010), indicating that living alone is a delicate subject. This was further highlighted by the limited time the informants seemed to have when meeting with me. No interview exceeded one hour. It was therefore necessary to make sure that certain issues would be addressed within this timeframe. Hence, practical considerations

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[10] Please see Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

also affected the choice of using semi-structured interviews as I came to understand that I would only have limited time with the informants (Scheyvens and Storey 2003: 79-82).

3.2.3. Online Social Survey

As written above, the limited access in the field to Lebanese women with men living abroad inspired me to pursue a data collection process from Denmark[11] in order to supplement the knowledge gathered from the qualitative interview and thereby strengthen the validity of the research. As I knew (through the interviews) that a lot of the women left behind in Lebanon communicated with their migrant husband through the internet, the internet seemed a suitable means to reach Lebanese women from Denmark. In addition, the resentment to talk to me in person was an inspiration to pursue a different method of inquiry.

Survey Monkey[12] provides web-based survey solutions, and the online social survey was chosen as a supplementary method for data collection (Bryman 2008: 644). A questionnaire of 17 questions was created with an introduction explaining the purpose of the study[13]. The idea was to reach both Lebanese women with male migration experience as well as women without. This would leave way for a comparison between the two groups of women and strengthen the reliability. The first questions thus cover basic information in order to understand the social position of the woman and describe the context in which she experiences the male migration. These questions would help me discover the basic preconditions (or resources) for an empowerment process to be initiated. Likewise, questions like "where do you live?" were included to make sure that it was Lebanese women living in Lebanon that answered as opposed to Lebanese women living outside Lebanon. Finally, a question that would enable me to differentiate between women with migrant husbands and women without was included, in order to allow for a comparison of the two. Furthermore, the questions were based on Kabeer's empowerment conceptualisation and were concerned with the ability of the woman to exercise choice. Questions on the woman's employment status and understanding of the labour market were also included (Kabeer 1999). Hence, the questions seeked to answer whether male migration experience (the precondition) would translate into greater ability of the women to exercise choice (the process) and finally how it would affect their labour market participation (the achievement).

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[11] I live in Denmark, Copenhagen but study at Lund University

[12] Survey Monkey is an online provider of web-based survey solutions where the costumers can create their own online survey or buy a ready-made survey template (Survey Monkey 2011, www.surveymonkey.com)

[13] See appendix 3 – Survey Questionnaire

The survey was provided with a web link that was distributed to personal contacts in Lebanon via e-mail and through Facebook[14]. The link was thus uploaded to different Lebanese Facebook Groups and sent to friends on Facebook who were encouraged to distribute the link among other friends. A brief but concise message that included the purpose of the survey and information on who should answer the questionnaire was attached to the web link[15].

3.2.4. Methodological Limitations and Considerations

This method of inquiry has many limitations, but great potential as well. Web-based survey solutions offered by companies are a rather new phenomenon, and not much has been written about the use of this method in social science. Nevertheless, Bryman (2008: 644-654) reviews the online survey as a method and points out the strengths and weaknesses.

More specifically, this survey has some limitations. First of all, when sampling online through a web link, there is no guarantee as to who will fill out the survey. There is a risk that either the same person fills out the questionnaire several times, or instead of a Lebanese woman answering the question it is e.g. a Syrian woman. However, Survey Monkey provides the opportunity for the researcher to see from which IP-address the survey has been filled out in order to make sure that it is not the same person who answers twice. An IP-address is individually connected to a computer, and it will also allow you to see in which country the computer is connected. Nevertheless, it is not possible to be 100 per cent sure whether the person is honest about his/her identity. Hence, to minimise the risks, the introduction to the survey states that only Lebanese women should fill out the questionnaire. Furthermore, the distribution of the web link through personal contacts increases the trustworthiness.

Secondly, distributing through the internet entails that only people with access to a computer and internet can fill out the survey and thus minimises the risk for the sample to be representative of the whole country. As my focus is on urban women and women with male migration experience, one can assume that the majority of these women will have access to a computer and the internet. Furthermore, my empirical investigation led me to understand that computers and internet is widely

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[14] Facebook (www.facebook.com) is an online social utility or social networking service with more than 600 million active users (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook)
[15] See appendix 4 – Introductions to the Survey

distributed in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the use of the internet and the use of Facebook to distribute the survey does entail a certain type of respondents, which must be borne in mind when analysing the collected data.

Another limitation, as pointed out in parts of the literature (Molhotra et al. 2002, Kabeer 1999), is that empowerment should be seen as a process and is regarded as qualitative in nature, hence, it is hard to grasp through quantitative measures. Therefore, it is necessary and complimentary that the survey is conducted in combination with the qualitative interviews. The questionnaire used multiple choices, however, most questions included an option to elaborate on the answer through a comment box. In this regard, it is important to mention that Survey Monkey allows you to see each respondent's answers individually as well as collectively, which offers an opportunity for comparison in the analysis.

3.3. Ethical Considerations and the Role of the Researcher

Ethical considerations are given high importance in the literature on empirical research and should be included throughout the whole process (Kvale 1996, Scheyvens and Storey 2003, Bryman 2008, Mikkelsen 2005). Ethical considerations include many aspects, such as how to treat the participants without harm during the research and treating the obtained data with confidentiality. A common reference from researchers is that "explicit rules or clear solutions to ethical problems that may arise during an interview study can hardly be provided" (Kvale 1996: 109). However, contexts, principles and values have been discussed and can provide guidance on ethical issues during research. In the following, I will highlight some of the measures taken in order to meet ethical principles and ensure that the participants of my study were treated with no harm.

Prior to any of the qualitative interviews, a thorough explication on what the research was about was provided to the informants. This was done both orally and in writing. As most of the participants would have Arabic as their first language, the written paper was translated into Arabic, with the aim of ensuring the best understanding. Informed consent was thus achieved from all participants (Bryman 2008: 121-123). Furthermore, the participants were ensured that confidentiality and anonymity would be kept if they wished for it. Likewise, the participants were informed that if they did not wish to answer certain questions, they should be aware of their right not to answer. The research was in general guided by the principle of not inflicting any kind of

harm to the participants (Bryman 2008: 118-119). Hence, implications of what the research could have as consequences for the participants were thoroughly studied to ensure no harm was done. The research in itself, as a study of what affects women's empowerment, contributes with knowledge that could improve the lives of women and thus seeks to benefit rather than cause harm to the participants. As argued by Kvale (1996), "the central aim of social science is to contribute knowledge to ameliorate the human condition and enhance human dignity". Nevertheless, it is important not to fool one self. Scheyvens and Storey (2003: 155-156) cleverly bring forward the debate of whether the research will bring more benefit to the researcher than the actual participants.

Finally, the role of the researcher and the power relations between researcher and participants is an important ethical as well as methodological consideration in the interviews. Ethically, it is important to be aware of the power dimension of the relationship in order for the researcher to act appropriately (Scheyvens and Storey 2003: 151). I was advised by a local researcher on how to act as well as how to dress when interviewing the women. This facilitated the process so that the participants would feel as comfortable as possible. Moreover, if a translator was needed, I would ask for a woman to interpret as a man would reverse the power-relations and could restrain the woman from sharing her insights.

4. Analysis of Empowerment in a Three-dimensional Framework

The theoretical conceptualisation on measuring women's empowerment originates in Kabeer's (1999) three dimensions; resources, agency and achievements, which will be examined in the following and used as analytical framework. The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis that can lead to an answer as to how the migration of a husband has affected the woman left behind in urban Lebanon, and whether this migration has had any implications for her capability to make strategic life-choices - her empowerment. Finally, critical considerations on the use of Kabeer's analytical framework will finalise the chapter. However, before continuing, a presentation of the data and the method of analysis will be conveyed.

### 4.1. Presentation of Data and Method of Analysis

As mentioned in chapter three, the primary data source is qualitative in nature and consists of six semi-structured interviews with six different women. The group of women interviewed have different educational, religious and economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, common to them all is that they live in urban Lebanon and have experience with male migration. Two of the women are widows and are thus referring to how the situation was, the rest currently have husbands living abroad[16]. Secondly, the group discussion with 12 young women in the age bracket of 17 to 20 was used as a supplement data source. The young women were not asked about their social and economic position, but they were all university students at Beirut University, which is the only public university in Beirut, Lebanon. The students of this university generally belonged to an average social and economic strata. One of the young women was married, one engaged and the rest were unmarried.

In order to analyse the interview data, a number of steps were followed. During the interviews, notes were taken, which were all reviewed after the interview. Secondary comments and thoughts were also added to the interview summaries. All interviews were transcribed upon return. Both summary notes and transcribed interviews were reviewed and systematically coded to look for themes and categorisations. After a process of re-reading all documents, a final coding was done (Bryman 2008: 233, 250-251).

A third data source was the online social survey. The social survey has 70 respondents of which 64 women (91.4%) completed the survey. The majority live in Beirut (64.3%) or other cities in Lebanon (25.7%) and are primarily in the age bracket from 18 to 35 (81.4%). Furthermore, 90 per cent of the respondents have a university degree. Most of the women are employed (65.7%) as shown in Graph 3, whereas only three women are housewives. The majority consider themselves as having an average social and economic position (67.1%). The majority are unmarried (60.0%), and 27.1 per cent are married (as shown in Graph 4 below) out of which 6 (31.6%) have a husband that is or has been living abroad[17].

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[16] See Appendix 5 – Overview of Informants
[17] See Appendix 6 - Summary of Survey Results

What is your occupational status?
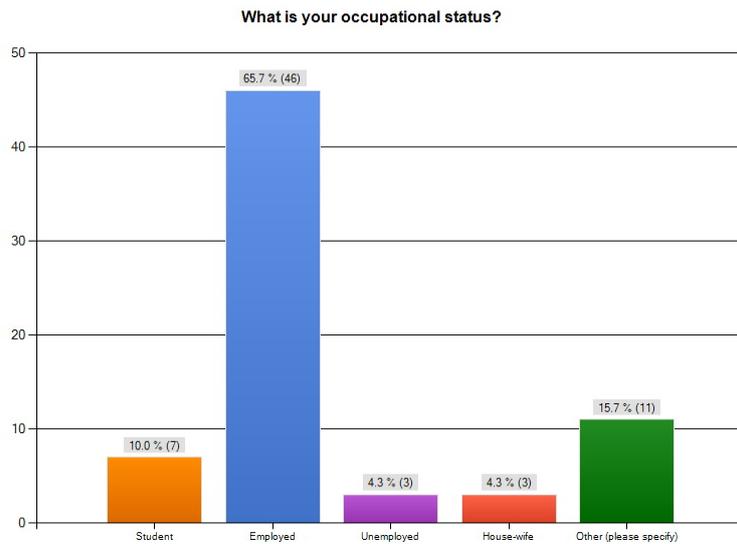
Graph 3: Occupational status for the women in the social survey (source: Author's retrieved from Survey Monkey)

What is your marital status?
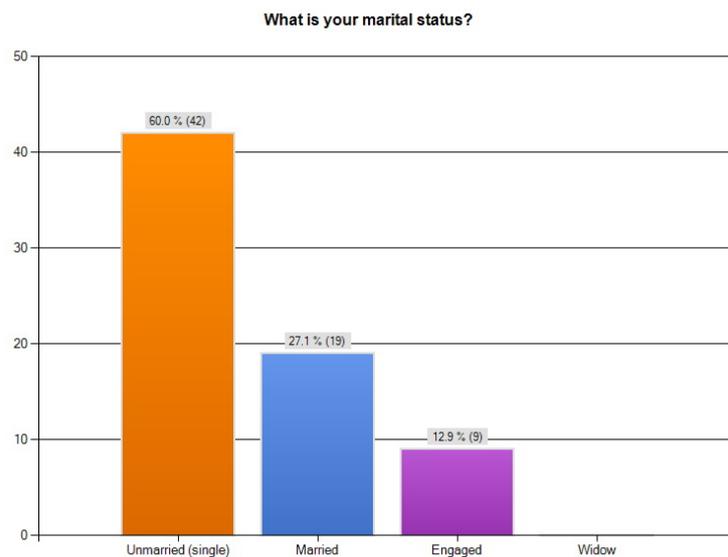
Graph 4: Marital status for the women in the social survey (source: Author's retrieved from Survey Monkey)

The six women who have a husband abroad all have a university degree (100%) and reside in urban areas. Primarily, they characterise themselves as having an average economic and social position, and four women are working and two women are house-wives.

To analyse the survey data, all answers were carefully reviewed. Through Survey Monkey, a number of methods of analysis were available and were used. First of all, a review of the summary of all the responses indicating the response count and response percentage for each question was

conducted. Furthermore, a cross tab function allowed me to compare the results of a particular question to other questions in the survey. Answers were also filtered in order to differentiate and compare e.g. the unmarried women, the married women and the married women with husbands abroad. It was also possible to apply multiple filters in order for me to only view the data I was interested in. Finally, all comments in the survey were reviewed in accordance with the question, and recurrent words and phrases were identified.

Kasparian's (2003) comprehensive survey on characteristics, employment, and migration in Lebanon since 1975 was used as a secondary data source, which was used to illuminate general trends and to contextualise the findings in the primary data source. The study was carefully reviewed in order to extract the most important data. Finally, informal interviews (not recorded) were conducted with experts in the migration field from where important secondary information was withdrawn. Interviews were conducted with Mdm. Kasparian regarding her study, with the director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC), as well as with a representative from Amel Association a Non-Govermental Organisation working, among others, with women's group in the suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon[18]. Notes were taken from these interviews which were reviewed upon return.

4.2. Measuring Women's Empowerment

The analytical framework used in this paper to analyse if male migration has the ability to empower women left behind or not is found in Naila Kabeer's theoretical entry point to measuring women's empowerment (Kabeer 1999). Kabeer comprehensively explains how empowerment should be conceptualised and understood, and she emphasises that empowerment:

> "...is inescapably bound up with the condition of disempowerment and refers to the processes by
> which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability. In other
> words, empowerment entails a *process of change.*" (ibid.: 437)

Choice is central in the analysis of empowerment and a distinction should be made between first- and second-order choices, where first-hand choices are those "critical for people to live the lives they want" (ibid.: 437). In the following these are called strategic life choices, as done by Kabeer,

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[18] See Appendix 5 – Overview of Informants

and could be exemplified as choice of livelihood, whether to marry, whether to have children and so on. Hence, empowerment should be perceived as the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices, and is also how empowerment should be understood in this thesis. Moreover, the concern should be placed on the inequalities in people's capacity to make choices rather than on the differences in the choices they make. Drawing on Amartya Sen's capability approach, Kabeer argues that when there are systematic gender differences within basic functioning achievements, such as proper nourishment and shelter, it can be taken as evidence of inequalities in the underlying capabilities rather than differences in preferences (ibid.: 439). However, in societies that are characterised as better-off, such as urban Lebanon, where inequalities in basic well-being are less evident, there may still be other social restrictions on women's ability to make choices.

resources	agency	achievements
(pre-conditions)	(process)	(outcomes)
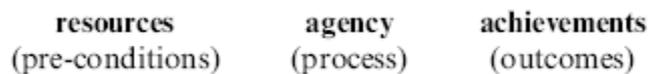
Illustration 1: Three dimensions of empowerment (Kabeer 1999: 437)

The figure above (Illustration 1) illustrates the three interrelated dimensions of empowerment as conceptualised by Kabeer.

4.3. Three Dimensions of Empowerment and the Main Findings

All three dimensions should be evaluated in terms of measuring women's empowerment. In the following a thorough examination of the three dimensions will be presented, followed by an analysis of all data sources. All data sources will be examined simultaneously in order to create a more coherent analysis.

However, before moving on, it is important here to state the heterogeneity of impacts of male migration on the lives of the women left behind. Economic, social and psychological implications, both positive and negative, were articulated through all data sources. Moreover, the women interviewed would in the same interview express the big changes in their lives and at the same time express that they felt no big changes. The paradox shows that the women have multiple experiences and impressions of the migration of their husbands. Nonetheless, in the following, the main findings will be presented in accordance with Kabeer's (1999) three-dimensional framework to

empowerment, and an emphasis will be placed on the transferability between the different dimensions.

4.3.1. Resources

Resources are in simple terms understood as the pre-conditions for empowerment. It should be understood as not only resources in the economic, more conventional sense, but also in terms of human and social resources. Access to resources reflect the rules and norms of the different social relationships that are present in the various institutional domains[19] and gives certain actors authority over others in the distribution of those resources (ibid.: 437). Access to resources has been determined by many analysts as an indicator of empowerment. However, according to Kabeer access to resources cannot be directly translated into empowerment (or change in agency and achievement), but should rather be seen as a potential for empowerment (ibid.: 443).

The household level will be investigated in this thesis rather than the community level or broader arenas. As presented in the introduction, a typical family pattern tends to position the husband or father as the decision-making authority and thus empowers him to exercise authority over the rest of the household. In households where the husband is residing abroad, a new reality presents itself. Hence, male migration is interesting in the way that new rules and norms may occur in the household. Furthermore, the woman left behind may have access to new resources, which leaves way for a potential change of choices. In this regard it is interesting to understand how remittances (both social and financial) can be a potential for empowerment.

4.3.2. Resources as Remittances – a Potential for Empowerment?

As described in the introduction, the main motivation for migration is the prospect of better job opportunities and thus the economic advances. The remittances are received by the women left behind and to a certain extent also managed by them. This new access and control over resources could be a potential engine for women's empowerment or, in Kabeer's terms, be a change in the women's precondition for empowerment (Kabeer 1999: 437). Therefore remittances are in this study regarded as resources and "resources are at one remove from choice, a measure of *potential*

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[19] Institutional domains should here be understood as the various arenas that constitute society, e.g. family, market, community (Kabeer 1999: 437).

rather than *actualized* choice." (ibid.: 443). Besides the financial remittances, social and human resources, have been included in the study to get a full understanding of the potential of choice and empowerment. Nevertheless, the following will be focusing on the financial remittances since the biggest changes for the women were found in this regard.

The group of women interviewed represents different social strata and is thus very diverse. The economic impact of the remittances therefore differs greatly, certainly also depending on the job of their husbands abroad. Nevertheless, they are all receivers of remittances and common to them all is that the remittances have entailed an increase in income. Some of the women express that the remittances just cover what they need while others indicate that the remittances entail better lifestyles. The women point out that the majority of the money is spent on the household and on the children. As one woman answers when asked if she spends money on herself:

> "No, very little, no, even when I want to go to the Doctor I will think very well, I will postpone it.. Like, I'm having for example back pain, but I postpone it, till.. Ehh.. Maybe because of the situation maybe because of my personality, I don't know exactly..." (Interview 4, 09.12.2010)

And another woman says:

> "I spend them only on the necessary expenses, like food, drinking, and what the house need only" (Interview 2, 29.11.2010)

As pointed out in the interview with the representative from the Amel Association, the remittances bring along an improvement in the quality of life due to the increased possibility to earn more money is present abroad. In two of the cases, the women are working themselves; however, they explain that their husband earns 80-90 per cent of the household income and is still by far the biggest contributor. In those cases, the women still prioritise the household and their children, but seem to be able to spend more on themselves. Then women express that there is no change in the way that they spend the money. This could indicate that even though the migrant male is influenced by the new cultural context in which he finds himself a translation of those new ideas and notions (i.e. social remittances) are not translated into a changed consumption pattern.

The changed financial situation as a result of remittances is noteworthy in regards to the financial constraints that many Lebanese families are experiencing and how this affects the labour market participation. The study of Kasparian (2003) shows that more and more women are forced into the labour market because of the hard time economically, and as stated by two women in the social survey in a comment box;

> "The situation is changing i think in lebanon, and we can say that we're living a transational period... But taking into consideration the economical difficulties and needs that are increasing,,i think that women are obliged to work and this what oblige their husbands and parents to accept the idea. Hope in the future the work of women won't be only for a material reason but also to be a part of her achievement and career."

> "Actually the economic situation in my country obliged men to accept their wives working. One salary is not enough anymore, sometimes 4 salaries are not even enough. Again, the pay is awful."

This suggests that there is a tendency that women enter the labour market because they are forced into it, as the families need both incomes in order to sustain their lives. However, in a situation where there is an increase in the money, through remittances, the wives are not forced to enter the labour market, and the traditional gender roles can therefore be sustained. The analysis of the results from the survey shows that the total number of housewives is three, out of which two have husbands abroad. Out of all the women with husbands abroad, they constitute 33.3 per cent which is a much higher proportion than for the total. Furthermore, the data also shows that the majority of the women interviewed are housewives (4 out of 6). As one of the women says in the interview: "He didn't like me to work... [...] He was providing everything" (Interview 2, 29.11.2010). In Kabeer's term, the increase in access and control over economic resources that all the women experience as a result of male migration is a potential for the initiation of an empowerment process. However, as analysed above this potential does not seem to be actualised. Other dimensions that were expressed by the women; responsibilities, decision-making and mobility, seemed to hinder the agency of the woman, as will be discussed below.

4.3.3. Agency

Agency (or the process of empowerment) can be defined as "the ability to define one's goals and act upon them" (ibid.: 438). Agency can be explained in relation to the semantic root of empowerment, power. Power can be operating as power to, power over and power within (Oxaal

and Baden 1997: 1) and thus also comprises both negative and positive meanings. *Power to* is positive in the sense that it refers to people's capacity to define their own strategic life-choices and act upon them. *Power over* involves a domination/subordination relationship as one actor has the capacity to override the agency of the other. *Power within* can be understood as the individual's sense of agency (of self confidence, self awareness and assertiveness). Agency, can thus take on many forms, such as negotiation, bargaining and manipulation. However, agency should here be primarily regarded as decision-making agency (Kabeer 1999: 445).

In a household with male migration and a husband that is no longer present, women's decision-making agency may change as new roles and responsibilities can be assigned to the woman. In this regard, however, it is important to identify the power and responsibilities that are already assigned to her through existing gender roles. This is connected to the decision-making hierarchy that gives the woman certain decision-making capacities in the first place, in contrast to an improved decision-making capacity relating to her strategic life-choices or to choices which have been denied her in the past (ibid.: 446-7).

4.3.4. Agency as Responsibilities – a Process of Empowerment?

As a result of the women interviewed and when talking to experts in the field it became clear that the women, when their husbands migrated, experienced a major change in their life situation, even though most of the women would also stress that the migration of their husbands did not imply any significant changes. Nevertheless, these statements were modified further into the interview. As expressed by one woman; "I think that my whole life changed" (Interview 3, 04.12.2010). Likewise, all the women explained the increase of responsibilities in the household after the migration of their husbands as a major change, and responsibility was a recurrent theme in the interviews;

> "The life of the woman changes when her husband is not available, because she took responsibilities of the children, of raising them" (Interview 2, 29.11.2010)

> "The responsibilities... in the mother, the responsibility of four children is not easy to be handled on her self..." (Interview 4, 09.12.2010)

> "I feel to take the responsibilities of things..." (Interview 3, 04.12.2010)

As further elaborated by the women, the increased responsibilities resulting from male migration do put a burden on their shoulders that could seem to limit their capability to choose. The analytical framework of Kabeer (1999: 440-442) pointed to the limitation of the range of choices in this regard and to women's adherence to social norms and practices that underpin women's subordinate status.

In the study conducted by Kasparian (2003), it is measured that the main reason (74.9%) for why the woman does not enter the labour market is family responsibilities, and as mentioned above, female labour market participation is generally low. This could indicate that there is a relation between family responsibility and the women's limited entrance to the labour market. However, this does not provide evidence for a valid correlation between male migration and the limited female labour market participation. The collected data does not tell about all the variables that affect female labour market participation, but it does reveal the increased responsibility and the limitations in the choice they have when their husbands are abroad. As expressed by one of the respondents who has never been employed:

> "It is difficult to find a job that is comfortable for you and at the same time you have enough time for your family, and sometimes I doubt whether I have the ability to have... to give my family enough time or my work enough time, I'm afraid" (Interview 5, 09.12.2010)

The women here are not subject to coercion or direct conflict, but are rather subject to a power relation that operates through the lack of choice and the consent of women. This finding stands in contrast to the online social survey, which shows that the majority of the women are employed (65.7%) and are not subject to this power relation. However, the majority of the respondents are likewise unmarried (60.0%), which could indicate that they are still not burdened with the family responsibility that seems to limit the women in exercising choice. The same opinions are also expressed in the group discussion by the young women who realise that they want to have a job after university, but may have to give it up when they enter marriage. To sum up, the increased family responsibility that is caused by male migration could seem to hinder the range of choices and thus the agency of the women and is, simply put, not positively affecting the empowerment process. However, do these increased responsibilities change the decision-making hierarchy?

4.3.5. Agency as Decision-making – a Process of Empowerment?

Another recurrent theme for the women was the decision-making hierarchy. When asking the women on their decision-making power, many women answered that there was no change in the decision-making process even though one may assume that the absence of a husband would lead to a change in the decision-making process. When talking to the women about the different choices they had to make in their lives, a more diverse picture emerged. In one interview a woman expresses herself in the following way:

> "Mainly, I take the decisions alone. Maybe because he is not always available.. I don't know! There are some areas I have to ask him about it, I have to take his opinion, but mainly I can take my decisions alone.." (Interview 6, 09.12.2010)

The majority of the women, when referring to smaller day-to-day decisions, refer to themselves as the decision-making authority, which is a role that is held among the women no matter if the husband is present or not. In those situations they certainly feel that they have experienced an expansion of their decision-making power. On the other hand, the majority of the women and a staff member in a local non-governmental organisation refer to the situation as unchanged, and they explain how they are dependent on their husbands when bigger decisions have to be taken;

> "Before he left I was responsible for the money and nothing changed [since then]" (Interview 4, 09.12.2010)

> "In most of the cases here, there is no problem. All the women here handle the responsibility of the money at the houses. It will be not a big difference, when he travels" (Interview with staff at Amel Association 09.12.2010)

> "I was here and whatever I needed I take any decision... [...] I take his advice, I never takes any decision without his advice" (Interview 2, 29.11.2010)

At first, it may seem that the increased responsibility would lead to a change in the decision-making hierarchy and roles. Nevertheless, the situation seems unchanged even though their husbands are away. The decision-making authority already possessed by the women is thus to a greater degree evidence of pre-existing gender division of roles and thus does not confirm an increased power to make strategic life choices (Kabeer 1999: 447). To conclude, the psychical absence of the husband

does not seem to provide the basis or precondition for the empowerment process to start. This finding corresponds well to parts of the literature that argue that the traditional gender relations are persisting even though the family is split, like in migration cases (Ramirez et al. 2005).

The results of the online social survey can shed some light on this finding. The respondents who are married but have their husbands abroad agree that they can make their own decisions. At the same time, 66.7 per cent of them answer to the question "who (if any) has an influence on the decision I make?" that the husband has an influence on their choices, and only 16.7 per cent answer that the only one who has an influence is themselves. This is remarkably similar to the women who are married, but do not have a migrated husband. 53.8 per cent of them answer that their husband has an influence and only 15.8 per cent answer "only myself". Hence, this point is well in line with the finding above, that the women do not experience a difference in the decision-making process no matter if their husband are abroad or not. In contrast, when analysing the answers of the rest of the respondents (unmarried, widows and engaged), 51.0 per cent answer that the only one that has an influence on the choices they make are themselves. Once again, this could also indicate that the married woman, compared to the unmarried, is restricted to the underlying social norms and thus finds herself within a decision-making hierarchy, and her power to choose (or agency) is limited. As one woman answers in the survey on the statement "I can make my own choices in life":

> "I personally believe in this statement but there are social constraints at times that delay the process to achieving your goal. For instance, family ties are very important here in the Middle East and certain "obligations" to one's family can sometimes alter your choices because of social stigma that can follow if you ignore everyone and just do what you want to do"

Likewise, in the majority of the cases the decision of the husband's migration does not include the woman. Once again, the woman is subject to a traditional gender role, and as she is not the primary bread-winner, she does not seem to have a say in the migration decision. The women either directly stated that they did not have a say in this regard or explained that there was no other opportunity as the man needed to have a job. The lack of choice in this regard is limiting the agency of the women. To conclude, the migration of a husband affects the life of the woman and the family who are left behind, but there seems to be no major change in the decision-making power or role of the woman. In Kabeer's term, this limitation must be regarded as an impediment to the empowerment process.

4.3.6. Agency as Mobility – a Process of Empowerment?

Another recurring theme in the data sources is the freedom of mobility, or the lack of it. Freedom of mobility as an indicator of empowerment is a persistent theme in the literature, as pointed out by Molhotra et al. (2002). In the empirical studies of male migration in Morocco (Haas and Van Rooij 2010; Sadiqi and Ennaji 2004), it is also put forward how women are limited by the community around them, through e.g. gossiping, as they would have to keep up the appearances while their husbands were away. Similarly, the women interviewed point out how they are restricted in the freedom of mobility when their husband is not home as they are afraid of what will be said about them. One of the women expresses how she would not permit herself to go out on social visits when her husband was not at home. Another woman expresses that her children wished for their father to be home as there were new rules and more restrictions as a result of the wife being alone with her children. Finally, a third woman says:

> "Cause I can do whatever I want, I can take whatever I want like decision, but in the same way it is harder because I have to think twice if I'm doing the right thing and I have to take the decision that doesn't affect in a bad way our family. That's why I have to think twice and I have to think and to be sure that I'm taking the good decision. Harder, it's harder.. It's not easy.. It's not like I'm taking and I'm free now and I can do whatever I want. It is a bended freedom. I can't be full free. I have to think twice about what I'm doing. [...] If I go somewhere they say..ehh... [Respondent is laughing] That I'm living my life the way that I want, that I'm not respecting my husband. [...] When he is abroad I must be always at home." (Interview 6, 04.12.2010)

The quote of this woman describes the pressure under which she lives when her husband is abroad. At one hand, she feels freer to do what she wants, and at the same time she explains the social restrictions that limits her, hence limits her choices and her agency. Honour and gossiping is also a recurrent theme in the group discussion. The young women are very aware of how society will perceive them, and they have to behave in the "correct" way in order to be accepted. They similarly express how they have to maintain a certain state of honour towards their family and future husband. Hence, the limitation in freedom of mobility that is experienced by the women is another limitation of agency and an impediment to the empowerment process.

4.3.7. Achievements

The achievements, or outcomes, of empowerment should be seen as equality within the basic functioning achievements such as proper nourishment or shelter. However, other achievements to measure could be equality in the political system or other valued achievements. Hence, achievements are repeatedly used as indicators of empowerment[20], nonetheless the challenge in this regard is to understand if the achievements are an actual translation of women's empowerment or if the achievements are a result based on other factors (ibid.: 451).

In this thesis, female labour market participation has been viewed as an achievement of empowerment [21]. First of all, other studies have identified the importance of studying this relation, however, mostly through statistical analysis (Mendola and Carletto 2009). Secondly, as previously described, there is a significant gender gap within the labour market in Lebanon, which makes it an interesting achievement to study. Finally, in urban areas of Lebanon there do not seem to be any other significant gender inequalities in basic functioning, such as life expectancy, literacy, fertility rate and maternal health and so forth, which normally could be related to empowerment measures (UNDP 2009b).

4.3.8. Achievement as Female Labour Market Participation – an Outcome of Empowerment?

As already mentioned, empowerment should be measured on all three dimensions, and when resources are translated into agency, which again is translated into achievements, then empowerment is achieved. In the above analysis, reference to female labour market participation has already been made. To sum up;

The changed reality when a husband migrates was identified as a potential of empowerment or a precondition for the process. The remittances that are received by the women and the increase in access and control over the money could be seen as a potential resource for empowerment. However, based on the empirical evidence, the increase of income through remittances implied the

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[20] Internationally, the GDI and GEM constitute measures of achievements of gender equality and women's empowerment.

[21] Other variables could also have been interesting to investigate as achievements. In retrospect, it would have benefitted the research to have included several of indicators, as a broader picture of how male migration affects women's empowerment would have been achieved. On the other hand, in the light of the limited data sources, it is reasonable to only include labour market participation which shows the biggest gender gap in Lebanon.

limited need for the wife to take on a paid job, as opposed to the general trend, which indicates that more women are pushed into the labour market due to economic burdens.

As part of the changed reality for the women, they expressed three major themes that were affected by their husbands' migration; Increased responsibility, decision-making reality and freedom of mobility.

The increase in responsibilities was considered a burden for the women. Taking care of the household with a husband abroad seemed to limit the women's choices and agency rather than broadening them, thus limiting the women's capability to join the labour force. The decision-making hierarchy seemed to be maintained even though the husband was abroad. The husband was still in charge of the major decisions, and the traditional patriarchy was kept in place. Hence, the agency of the woman was not enlarged by the new reality, which could have been a push factor into the labour market. Finally, the limited mobility that the women would experience while their husbands were away put an extra pressure on them. They expressed the worries that appeared as a result of what the society around them says or may say. Once again, the woman is limited in her choices and agency, which again restricts her in her strategic life choices, such as entering the labour market. In this regard, it is important to stress that female labour market participation is influenced by many other factors, which this research does not include. Nevertheless, the research finds that male migration seems to restrict the agency of the women, which is limited to traditional gender roles where women are not supposed to take on a paid job (Joseph 1996).

4.4. Critical Considerations and a Revised Model

One of the major strongholds of Kabeer's analytical framework in measuring women's empowerment is the emphasis on the interconnectivity between the three dimensions, or in other words, it is impossible to establish the meaning of one indicator, as a dimension of empowerment, without referring to the two other dimensions (Kabeer 1999: 452). Another stronghold in this regard lies within the meta-level of the framework. The interrelations between the different dimensions and the measuring of all resources, agency and achievement make it possible to investigate the process of empowerment (or the transferability), which is neglected in many studies. Nevertheless, it is also within this meta-level of Kabeer's three dimensional model that problems arise as it appears to be more of a framework for the critique of other studies rather than an applicable model for the study

of empowerment in itself. Kabeer (1999) pinpoints the many empirical studies of empowerment that lacks an analysis of all three dimensions of empowerment and the transferability, as they only draw attention to one or two dimensions and their relation. However, she does not present how to use the theoretical conceptualisation in study of empowerment. Nevertheless, Kabeer's intention with the three dimensions to empowerment may not be to create an applicable model for analysis but rather present a theoretical discussion of how empowerment should be measured.

Furthermore, her analytical framework does not look into the time dimension of empowerment. Certainly, time is important as empowerment is viewed as a process, which evidently is something that acquires a time-dimension (Molhotra et al. 2002: 19-20; Ashraf et al. 2009). This is not problematic in itself (nevertheless a challenge) in the analysis of empowerment as different methodological considerations can either include the time-dimension or adjust to it. Nevertheless, it is surprising that Kabeer (1999) has not included it in her analytical considerations on measuring empowerment. As a result, the time-dimension was not included in this study, but was taken into consideration as women were asked about the changes after the migration of their husbands.

In the light of the above, it has both been useful and interesting to test the ability of Kabeer's analytical framework to analyse the impact of male migration on the potential empowerment of the women left behind, which has also spurred methodological considerations and choices.

Nevertheless, at this point, I would like to introduce a revised model. The purpose of the revised model is to give a clearer representation of the understanding of the three empowerment dimensions and how they are interrelated and finally to strengthen the applicability. The arrows between the dimensions of the model put emphasis on their interrelationship, which illustrate that empowerment is a process. All dimensions are connected and empowerment will evolve as if one dimension is translated into the other and back again in a dialectic relationship. The big arrows around the three dimensions symbolise the time-perspective of the process of empowerment.
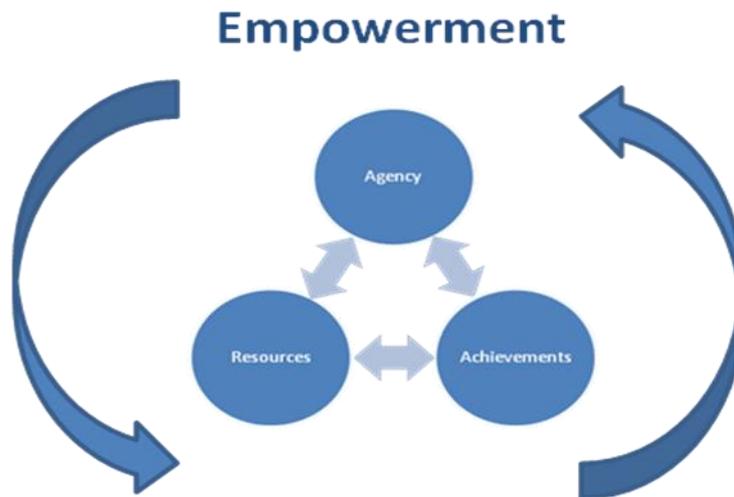
Empowerment

Illustration 2: Revised three-dimensional model of empowerment (Source: Author's)

5. Conclusion

The overall purpose of this thesis was to explore how male migration affects the women left behind in the urban settings of Lebanon and in particular whether male migration influences the women's capability to make strategic life-choices. In order to understand this relation, a review of the existing literature was conducted, and Kabeer's (1999) three-dimensional view on empowerment was chosen as an analytical framework. The model was chosen due to the emphasis on the need to understand the links or transferability of the different dimensions (or indicators) of empowerment. Hence, the thesis also aimed to test the applicability of this model in relation to measuring empowerment.

A gender approach has found increasing favour in the study of migration phenomena, in particular when studying the effects of female migration. This thesis thus tackled a narrower and less studied perspective within this field and examined the social impact of migration in the sending communities.

The thesis was based on a deductive approach through testing the hypothesis that male migration changes the life-situation of women left behind, and that this change could be a potential for empowerment. However, it was also based on an inductive approach as the study was based on the

experiences and perceptions of the women themselves. Through a qualitative inquiry as well as through a quantitative method, the thesis has made some important findings.

First of all, male migration has both an economic and a social impact on the women and their families left behind. The women expressed the multiple impacts, while at the same time they also expressed that the situation was unchanged after the migration of their husbands. However, through the three-dimensional model, a picture was painted of how male migration affects women left behind.

Within the resource-dimension, the study found that remittances have positive economic effects on the women and their families left behind, which corresponds well with large parts of the literature (Hermele 1997; Ratha and Hohapatra 2007; IOM 2008; Chaaban 2009; Haas 2010). Through the data sources, it became clear that women's increased access to and control over the remittances could be a potential source for empowerment, however, this was not transferred into an increased capability to make strategic life-choices, hence strengthened agency. Three major themes that related to their agency were articulated by the women; increased responsibility, decision-making hierarchy and limited mobility. The increased responsibility was regarded as a burden and limited their ability to make strategic life-choices as a greater attention to the household was needed. The increased responsibility entailed greater decision-making authority for the women. However, the study found that this decision-making authority only regarded minor day-to-day decisions, as the women expressed that their husbands would still be the main decision-making authority when bigger decisions had to be taken. Therefore, it could be concluded that women remain in their traditional gender roles and place in the hierarchy even when their husbands are away. Finally, the women experienced a limited freedom of mobility as a result of being alone and living in a society that regards the male as the authority. The women were worried how they would be perceived by the society around them. In other words, they expressed a limitation in their agency.

In this research, women's participation in the labour market was regarded as an achievement of an empowerment process. As the analysis showed, the women did not seem to have an opportunity to make their own strategic life-choices. On behalf of this study, it is still not possible to determine whether there is a valid correlation between male migration and the women's limited participation in the labour market because many other variables could affect such an outcome. On an overall

level, the study found that the biggest difference in the labour market participation was found between married and unmarried women. Nevertheless, the study shows that the women's agency is limited as a result of the migration of their husbands, so at any rate, there is no reason to think that male migration would increase female labour market participation. More likely, it will limit the capability of these women to make such a choice.

These findings correspond well with the literature, which points towards restrained empowerment or the heterogeneity of outcomes that male migration may entail (Menjivar and Agadjanian 2007; Loksin and Glinskaya 2009; Haas and Van Rooij 2010; Sidiqi and Ennaji 2004; Elbadawy and Roushdy 2010). However, the research stands in contrast to Khalaf's (2009) study on the impact of male migration on women left behind in Lebanon as her conclusion was an increased empowerment of women with migrant husbands.

In contrast to any other study, this research has used Kabeer's (1999) three-dimensional perspective on empowerment and employed a more specific theoretical understanding of empowerment. It has proved useful as an emphasis on the interrelations and transferability of the different dimensions is important in measuring women's empowerment. Some critical points towards Kabeer's three-dimensional approach to empowerment resulted in a revised model with the purpose of giving a clearer representation of the understanding of the model and strengthen the applicability.

Besides the challenges and limitations in data collection and sources, the research still poses some interesting findings, which show a more diverse picture of female empowerment. On an overall level, these findings indicate that male migration, despite its potential, does not seem to initiate an empowerment process or to be translated into increased agency or improvements in empowerment achievements, such as female labour market participation.

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7. Appendixes

Appendix 1 - Characteristics of Legal Outward Migration Flows in Lebanon

		Stock			Stock		
		Male	Female	TOTAL	Male	Female	TOTAL
Outward migration (by age)		223045	130455	353500			
1987-2001	15-24	63379	45460	108839	28.4	34.8	30.8
	25-34	108405	55344	163749	48.6	42.4	46.3
	35-44	48375	26672	75047	21.7	20.4	21
	45-65	2886	2979	5865	1.3	2.3	2
		Stock			Stock 2007 (latest available year)		
Outward migration (by level of education)		Male	Female	TOTAL	Male	Female	TOTAL
1975-2001	None			40680			6.7
	Primary			258463			42.6
	Secondary			142991			23.6
	University			154278			25.4
		Stock			Stock		
Outward migration (by countries of destination)		Male	Female	TOTAL	Male	Female	TOTAL
1975-2001	Africa	28149	9907	38056	7.2	4.6	6.3
	North America	110367	68914	179281	28.3	31.9	29.5
	Central and South America	18471	7536	26007	4.7	3.5	4.3
	Asia	1610	1076	2686	0.4	0.5	0.4
	Australia	44023	35551	79574	11.3	16.4	13.1
	Europe	107214	49817	157031	27.4	23.0	25.9
	Arab States	80704	43262	123966	20.7	20.0	20.4
	Undetermined	98	114	212	0.0	0.1	0.0

Source: Chaaban 2009: 29

Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

Interview guide	
General information on the interviewee	
Name of interviewee:	
Date:	
Start time:	
End time:	
Municipality:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Age/date of birth:	
Level of education:	
Occupation:	
What religion do you belong to?	
What sect do you belong to?	
Name of the head of the household:	
Information on the household and remittances	
Who are the individuals that comprise the household (age, gender, level of education, business)?	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
- Can you explain to me how the family is sustained financially?	
o Does all who have an income contribute to the household?	
o Are there differences in the contributions by gender?	
- How would you characterize your family's economic and social position?	
Before migration: - Living conditions, house? The type of housing? Rental, granted for free, granted in return for a service? How many rooms? Shared bathroom? - Availability of services in the house? - Sewage, electricity, generator service, landline, mobile phone, government drinking water, air-conditioning, heating, cabel, satellite tv, internet,	
- Does the family receive money (remittances) from abroad? And through what means (banking system)? Is the regular?	
- In addition to money, are any other types of shipments made? (like clothes)	
- How much of the household income would you say is from remittances?	

o How big is the increase in income after the member of your household migrated?	
Information on the migrant	
- Can you please tell me about the household member/members that live abroad?	
o Where does he live?	
o How is he earning a living now abroad? (Occupation)	
- How was the decision to migrate taken? (What were the reasons for migration?)	
- How often does the migrant come home?	
o And for what occasions?	
- What would you say is affecting how often he comes home?	
Changes after the migration	
- On an overall level, can you explain what has happened after the migration of the household member?	
o Did any other changes occur in employment or activity of those who stayed behind?	
- Can you explain to me what is the money spent on?	
o How does each family member benefit from the money received?	
o What was done now that was not possible before?	
o Investment in health and education? Investments in business, purchase of property? Agricultural activities?	
- Would you say that the living conditions of the household improved as a result of the migration?	
Migration, remittances and its impact on the wife left behind	
Agency	
- After the migration of the household member, who would you say heads the household?	
o What has that as implications for you?	
- Before the migration, who took decisions in relation to 1) finances 2) social and domestic matters like cooking 3) child-related issues?	
o Would you say that this has changed after the migration? And how?	
- Would you say that you can take decisions for yourself?	
o And in that case, what kinds?	
- Who decides how much money to send from abroad?	
o How is it decided?	
- How has the relation between you and your spouse been affected by his migration?	
Resources	
- Can you explain to me about your access to the remittances?	
o Who receives the remittances? And why?	
o Who manage the money?	
o Who would you say decides how the remittances are spent at home?	
- Have you been able to use the remittances for you own personal benefit?	
o If yes, how?	
o If no, why?	
- Do you believe that the remittances are spent in a correct	

way?	
o If not what do you think should be prioritized?	
- Would you say that you have any financial resources that you can access and control?	
o Did you make any savings or investments of your own?	
Mobility	
- After the emigration of the member of your household would you say that you can move freely or do you have to ask permission to anyone?	
- How has your activity been in terms of participating in social and cultural life after the migration?	
o More active or more restricted?	

Appendix 3 – Survey Questionnaire

Questions	Answer			
1. Where do you live?	Beirut		Other city in Lebanon	Small town or country site in Lebanon
2. How old are you?	Below 18	18-35	36-60	Above 60
3. What is your achieved educational level?	Elementary Education (Brevet) Secondary	Education (Baccalaureat)	Vocational Education University	Education / Other, Please specify!
4. How would you classify your household's social and economic position?	Below average		Average	Above average
5. What is your occupational status?	Student	Unemployed	Employed	House-wife / Other, please specify
6. Have you been employed at some point?	Yes		No	
If yes, for how long?				
7. What is your marital status	Unmarried (single)	Married	Engaged	Widow
8. *If yes,* Is your husband living abroad? (Or has been living abroad?)	Yes		No	
9. *For married only:* How much do you agree with this statement: "My husband takes the most important choices in my family and in our lives"	I strongly agree	I agree	I agree to a certain extent	I don't agree
10. *For married with husbands abroad:* For how long has your husband lived abroad?	Less than 6 months		Less than 3 years	More than 3 years
11. *For married with husbands abroad:* If your husband sends money home to you and your family, who decides on what they are spent?	My self		My husband	Other family member
12. How much do you agree with this statement: "I can make my own choices in life"	I strongly agree	I agree	I agree to a certain extent	I don't agree
13. How much do you agree with this statement: "I have access and control over material, social and human resources"	I strongly agree	I agree	I agree to a certain extent	I don't agree
14. Who (if any) has an influence on the choices I make?	Only my self / My husband	My father	My mother	My siblings / My friends / My family
15. How much do you agree with this statement: "To take on a paid job would increase my wellbeing"	I strongly agree	I agree	I agree to a certain extent	I don't agree
16. How much do you agree with this statement: "I have the possibility to take a paid job, but I don't want to?	I strongly agree	I agree	I agree to a certain extent	I don't agree
17. How much do you agree with this statement: "It is easier for women with husbands abroad to take on a paid job than it is for married women with their husbands abroad"	I strongly agree	I agree	I agree to a certain extent	I don't agree

Appendix 4 – Introductions to the Survey

Introduction at Facebook:

Are you a Lebanese woman and do you have 5-10 minutes to answer some questions on being a woman in Lebanon? Then you will contribute to a master thesis! Please clique on this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GZ595VS and answer the questions! All answers will be anonymous! THANK YOU...!

Introduction via e-mail:

Are you interested in Lebanese women's wellbeing?
My name is Stephanie Hjorth, I'm a master student at Lund's University in Sweden studying women's situation in Lebanon – and I'm asking for your help!

Are you a Lebanese woman (or can forward it to one) and do you have 5 minutes to answer some questions on being a woman in Lebanon? Then you will contribute to a master thesis! Please clique on this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GZ595VS and answer the questions! All answers will be anonymous!

Thank you SO much - your answer is absolutely necessary and appreciated! If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me at stephaniehjorth@gmail.com or stephaniehjorth@hotmail.com

Please forward this e-mail to everyone that might find this interesting!

Introduction just before answering the survey:

Thank you SO much - your answer is absolutely necessary and appreciated!
Please answer all the following questions, it should not take more than 5-10 minutes.
Please answer as correct as possible. All answers will be anonymous!
If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me at
stephaniehjorth@hotmail.com
THANK YOU!

Appendix 5 – Overview of Informants

Interview no.	Area of Residence	Age Bracket	Educational level	Occupational status	Social and economic position	Marital status
Woman 1 (did not want the interview recorded)	Suburb to Beirut	36-60	Elementary Education	House-wife	Below Average	Widow
Woman 2	Suburb to Beirut	36-60	Elementary Education	House-wife	Below Average	Widow
Woman 3	Other city in Lebanon	36-60	University Education	Employed (since 3 months, before that housewife)	Above Average	Married
Woman 4	Suburb to Beirut	36-60	Elementary Education	House-wife	Below Average	Married
Woman 5	Suburb to Beirut	36-60	Secondary Education	House-wife	Average	Married
Woman 6	Beirut	18-35	University Education	Employed	Above Average	Married

Interviewee	Topic	Method
Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University, Lebanon	General situation of Lebanese emigration and more specifically gender relations in this regard.	Not recorded, but field notes taken. Analysed through review of notes.
Mdm. Kasparian at St. Joseph University, Beirut, Lebanon	The method and results of the comprehensive study on migration and young Lebanese entrance to the labour market.	Not recorded, but field notes taken. Analysed through review of notes.
Representative at Amel Associaton, local NGO in the suburb of Beirut, Lebanon	Experiences and understanding of how women express their lives and in particular the women with male migrants.	Recorded, transcribed and analysed. Field notes taken and analysed through a review.

Appendix 6 – Summary of Survey Results

Lebanese Women

SurveyMonkey

1. Where do you live?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Beirut	64.3%	45
Other city in Lebanon	25.7%	18
Village or country side in Lebanon	10.0%	7
answered question		70
skipped question		0

2. How old are you?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Below 18	1.4%	1
Between 18-35	81.4%	57
Between 36-60	17.1%	12
Above 60	0.0%	0
answered question		70
skipped question		0

3. What is your achieved educational level?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Elementary education (Brevet)		1.4%	1
Secondary education (Baccalaureat)		1.4%	1
University education		**90.0%**	**63**
Vocational education		0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		7.1%	5
	answered question		70
	skipped question		0

4. How would you classify your household's social and economic position?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Below average		4.3%	3
Average		**67.1%**	**47**
Above average		28.6%	20
	answered question		70
	skipped question		0

5. What is your occupational status?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Student		10.0%	7
Employed		**65.7%**	**46**
Unemployed		4.3%	3
House-wife		4.3%	3
Other (please specify)		15.7%	11
		answered question	70
		skipped question	0

6. Have you been employed at some point?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		**88.6%**	62
No		11.4%	8
	If YES, for how long?		48
		answered question	70
		skipped question	0

7. What is your marital status?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Unmarried (single)		60.0%	42
Married		27.1%	19
Engaged		12.9%	9
Widow		0.0%	0
	answered question		70
	skipped question		0

8. Is your husband living abroad? (or has been living abroad?)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		31.6%	6
No		68.4%	13
	answered question		19
	skipped question		51

59

9. How much do you agree with this statement: "My husband takes the most important choices in my family and in our lives"

	Response Percent	Response Count
I strongly agree	0.0%	0
I agree	5.3%	1
I agree to a certain extent	47.4%	9
I don't agree	47.4%	9
	Any comments?	5
	answered question	19
	skipped question	51

10. For how long has your husband lived abroad?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 6 months	0.0%	0
Less than 3 years	14.3%	1
More than 3 years	85.7%	6
	answered question	7
	skipped question	63

11. If your husband sends money home to you and your family then who decides on what they are spent?

		Response Percent	Response Count
My self		83.3%	5
My husband		16.7%	1
Other family member		0.0%	0
	Other (please specify)		0
	answered question		6
	skipped question		64

12. How much do you agree with this statement: "I can make my own choices in life"

		Response Percent	Response Count
I strongly agree		38.2%	26
I agree		29.4%	20
I agree to a certain extent		30.9%	21
I don't agree		1.5%	1
	Any comments?		12
	answered question		68
	skipped question		2

13. How much do you agree with this statement: "I have access and control over material, social and human resources"

		Response Percent	Response Count
I strongly agree		11.8%	8
I agree		41.2%	28
I agree to a certain extent		41.2%	28
I don't agree		5.9%	4
	Any comments?		3
	answered question		68
	skipped question		2

14. Who (if any) has an influence on the choices I make?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Only my self		41.2%	28
My husband		20.6%	14
My father		19.1%	13
My mother		25.0%	17
My siblings		7.4%	5
My friends		20.6%	14
My family		38.2%	26
	Any comments?		13
	answered question		68
	skipped question		2

15. How much do you agree with this statement: "To take on a paid job would increase my wellbeing"
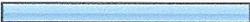
		Response Percent	Response Count
I strongly agree		38.2%	26
I agree		39.7%	27
I agree to a certain extent		16.2%	11
I don't agree		5.9%	4
	Any comments?		3
	answered question		68
	skipped question		2

16. How much do you agree with this statement: "I have the possibility to take a paid job, but I don't want to?

		Response Percent	Response Count
I strongly agree		1.5%	1
I agree		14.7%	10
I agree to a certain extent		26.5%	18
I don't agree		57.4%	39
	Any comments?		10
	answered question		68
	skipped question		2

17. How much do you agree with this statement. "It is easier for women with husbands living abroad to take on a paid job than it is for married women with their husbands at home"

		Response Percent	Response Count
I strongly agree		4.4%	3
I agree		16.2%	11
I agree to a certain extent		19.1%	13
I don't agree		60.3%	41
	Any comments?		9
	answered question		68
	skipped question		2