THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR MIGRATION RESEARCH

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Abstract

Migration is a spatial or geographical mobility of human population. Present paper deals with the concept of theoretical and conceptual framework in a research with specific reference to migration studies. A theory provides guidelines for a research work whereas conceptual framework is based on a theory or it is a modified model of the previous researchers that can be developed according to the nature of present research proposed. The researcher has to identify variables affecting migration and develop hypotheses in order to establish relationship between dependent and independent variables to be used in the study.

Key words: *Social research, migration, population change, theory, model, hypothesis, theoretical framework, conceptual framework,*

Context

A number of opinions and views are available on the concept of research. Hornby (1992:1073) has described a research as a careful study or investigation in order to discover new facts or information. The main purpose of the research is based on finding facts and truth. Research is an academic activity and the term should be used in a technical sense (Kothari, 1990:1). The Webster's International Dictionary defines a research as 'a careful critical inquiry or examination in seeking facts or principles; diligent investigation in order to ascertain something.' A good research should be systematic, logical, empirical and replicable.

It is an exploration or an inquiry about the social phenomena. Research is associated with human behavior. It is a long process of investigation through which expected results or goals can be achieved. It is an activity to achieve the truth. In its process, a researcher has to collect data and information, analyze them and derive conclusion. Social research is explained as a systematized investigation to gain new knowledge about social phenomena and problem. The objectives of social research are to solve problems of society, develop or extend the theory and test the existing theory. Demographic research is a part of social research. In the same way, population policy is a part of social policy. In this context, demography is a social as well as a policy science. In geography, population phenomena are studied with reference to spatial distribution.

Krishnaswami (1993) identifies research into: i) pure, (ii) applied, iii) exploratory, iv) descriptive, v) diagnostic, vi) evaluation, and vii) action research.

This classification is based on intent. In conducting a research, an investigator has to face several problems but the most important and the most difficult ones are: i) definition of the research problem and ii) writing the first draft (Knight, 1996).

In the first step, a researcher identifies the topic. In most of the cases, new researchers select research topic without the knowledge of theoretical issues. It creates problem in a process of research. In the second step, the researcher has to justify the selection of the research problem. In order to develop the ability of justifying the significance of the study, the researcher must be familiar with the theoretical knowledge. Thirdly, a researcher should develop his/her own argument for the research to be conducted. The researcher's argument will have some challenges on the existing situation and will argue to add something innovative on the basis of new findings (Jnawali, 2001).

There are mainly two approaches to the types of research (a) quantitative and (b) qualitative. In the first approach, data are collected and analyzed by adopting advanced statistical and mathematical tools. The qualitative approach is concerned with subjective assessment of attitude, opinion and behaviors. In such a situation, a research becomes the function of researcher's insights and impression. In such research, there is no need of advanced statistical tools. The techniques for data collection may be group interviews, projective techniques and depth interviews (Kothari, 1990:5-6).

Since the paper deals with the issues of migration, the discussion has been focused on the review of selected migration models and the process of

developing conceptual framework for migration studies. Of the three components of population change in a region, migration is very important. It is a key element to population change especially in urban areas. Migration is a spatial or geographical mobility of human population. It is a change of residence, either permanent or temporary. These days migration has been emerged as a global population issue.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the concept of theoretical and conceptual framework for social research with specific reference to migration studies.

Materials and Methods

The paper is based on secondary sources of data and information. A number of papers, reports, dissertations and books were reviewed for preparing the paper. Internet search was also made to consult necessary information on migration theories/ models and the experiences of the developed and less developed countries.

Discussion

Theoretical Framework

A theory helps to summarize the existing knowledge and put it in order in a particular area. It clarifies and gives meaning to previously isolate empirical findings. It provides an explanation for observed events and relationships. The theory links together the independent and dependent variables in a research and works as a bridge. It explains how and why one would expect the independent variable to predict the dependent variable. The theoretical framework is based on the theory that can support a research work. It explains why the problem under study exists. Thus, the theoretical framework serves as a basis for conducting a research.

The theoretical framework of the study is a structure that can hold or support a theory of a research work. It presents the theory which explains why the problem under study exists. Thus, the theoretical framework is but a theory that serves as a basis for conducting research. The theoretical framework helps the researcher see clearly the variables of the study; it provides him/her with a general framework for data analysis; and it is essential in preparing a research proposal using descriptive and experimental methods.

Lee proposed four types of factors affecting migration. They are associated with the areas of origin and destination, intervening obstacles and personal factors. The three factors are presented in figure 1. They are: i) factors associated with the areas of origin, ii) factors associated with the areas of destination and iii) intervening obstacles.
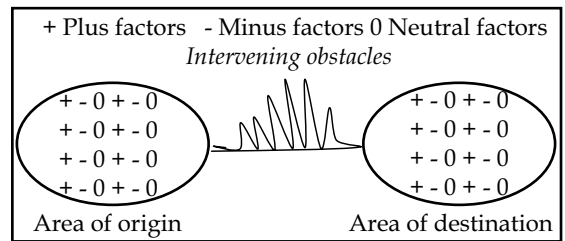

Figure 1: Lee's conceptual framework for migration.

The theories of migration are classified into four types (Figure 2). They are sociological, economic, geographical and unifying theories (Bijak, 2006).

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES	ECONOMIC THEORIES	GEOGRAPHICAL THEORIES (SPATIAL INTERACTION)	UNIFYING THEORIES
Intervening opportunities (Stouffer, 1940) Push pull factors (Lee, 1966) Migrant network (Taylor, 1986) Transnational social spaces (Pries, 1999 and Faist, 2000)	*Macroeconomic theories* Classical (Lewis, 1940) Neoclassical (Harris and Todaro, 1970) Keynesian (Hart, 1975) Dual labour market theory (Piore, 1979) *Microeconomic theories* Neo-classical (Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1970; Borjas, 1980) Value-expectancy (De Jong and Fawcett, 1981) New economics of migration (Stark and Bloom, 1984)	Gravity model (Stewart, 1941; Zipf, 1946; Isard, 1968; Lowry, 1966) Entropy (Wilson, 1967) Catastrophe and bifurcations (Wilson 1981) Mobility transition (Zelinsky, 1971)	Migration system theory (Kritz et al., 1972) Multi-disciplinary approach plus mobility transition (Massey, 2002)

Figure 2: Migration theories (Bijak, 2006).

Under sociological theories, the intervening opportunities by Stouffer, push pull factors by Lee, migrant network by Taylor, and transnational social spaces by Pries and Faist are included. Economic theories are further classified into macro and micro types. The macroeconomic theories are described as classical by Lewis, neoclassical by Harris and Todaro, Keynesian by Hart and dual labour market theory by Piore. The microeconomic theories are known as neo-classical, value-expectancy, and new economics of migration. The geographical theories focus on spatial interaction. They are described as gravity model, entropy, catastrophe and bifurcations, and mobility transition. The unifying theories are identified as migration system theory and multi-disciplinary approach plus mobility transition.

Conceptual Framework

After developing the idea of theoretical framework, the researcher has to develop the conceptual framework for the study. Theory works as the foundation for social research. In population research, various models are used to develop conceptual framework. The use of sociological framework for fertility analysis developed by Ronald Freedman based on Davis and Blake's concept is a suitable example. This model has been used in many fertility studies at macro and micro levels (Figure 3).
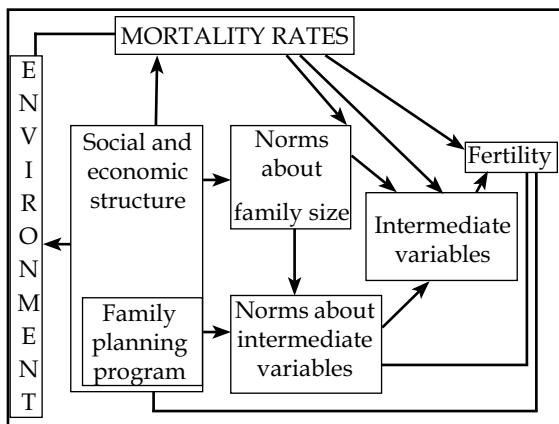

Figure 3: Sociological framework for fertility analysis (Jnawali, 1999).

A concept is an image or symbolic representation of an abstract idea. It is defined as a complex mental formulation of experience. The theoretical framework is the theory on which the study is based, whereas the conceptual framework is the operationalization of the theory. It is the researcher's own position on the research problem. It provides a direction to the study (Khan, date unknown). The researcher can adapt a model used by previous researcher, with a modification according to the nature of his/her problem. It helps a researcher to establish the relationships between dependent and independent variables.

In order to provide some guidelines for developing conceptual framework, a model of migration developed by Beaumont et al. (1997) has been presented in figure 4.
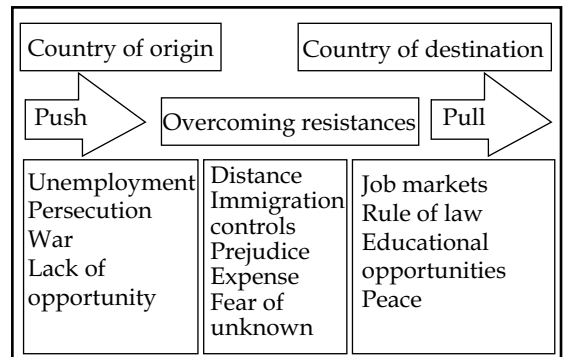

Figure 4: Framework for migration study.

Formulation of Hypotheses for Migration Research

First of all, a researcher has to identify variables affecting migration. In other words, the factors affecting migration are identified as variables. In order to establish relations between dependent and independent variables, hypotheses are formulated. They are tested by applying correlation, regression and path analysis. The methods to be adopted are selected according to the nature of research. Here, an attempt is made to present an example of formulation hypotheses based on some of the models reviewed.

In figure 3, a model developed by Beaumont et al. (1997) has been presented. This is a push-pull model of migration. The push factors in this model are identified as unemployment, persecution, war and lack of opportunity. They compel individuals to leave the area of origin. Job markets, rule of law, educational opportunities and peace are considered as pull factors attracting migration at the area of destination. Distance, immigration controls, prejudice, expense and fear of unknown are identified as overcoming resistances. Lee has used the term 'Intervening obstacles' for them. Based on the model proposed by Beamount et al., the three hypotheses can be formulated as:

- Unemployment is the main cause of labour migration in a study area.

- A large number of people leave their area of origin due to war and conflict.

- Lack of opportunity in the home country is the major cause of emigration.

Lee has propounded conceptual framework for migration analysis. He has developed 19 hypotheses. They are categorized into three groups – volume of migration, stream and counter-stream and characteristics of migrants. Gravity has long been one of the most successful empirical models in economics, ordering remarkably the enormous observed variation in economic interaction across space in both trade and factor movements (Anderson, 2011). In some cases, the movement of people is related to distance. The number of migrants and distance are inversely related. Greater the distance, the less the number of migrants involved. The gravity model is related to Newton's Law of Gravitation.

It is also said that the gravity model was developed on the basis of Ravenstein's first law of migration which is explained as 'Most of the migrants go only a short distance'. This movement is related to Zipf's model of spatial interaction and gravity model based on the Newton's law of gravitation. According to this law, 'the volume of migration is inversely proportional to the distance traveled by the migrant's. Zipf's concept is associated with the 'principle of least effort'. It points out that the less the effort, the greater will be the desire to migrate. If the distance is greater, the effort required to overcome the difficulty will also be greater. As a result, the number of migrants becomes smaller (Jnawali, 2001).

Formulation of Some Hypotheses

According to nature of proposed study, hypotheses can be fixed. The number of hypotheses can be developed by using variables identified for a research.

First of all, let us consider Ravenstein's model. There are eleven laws of migration developed by him. His model is based on the experience of Britain. The British data reported by 1861, 1871 and 1881 censuses were used in his analysis. Ravenstein thought that migration was governed and influenced by general laws. The laws of migration put forward by Ravenstein are mentioned above. In this section, some hypotheses are developed.

Law 1: The first law proposed by Ravenstein is that 'Most of the migrants go only a short distance.' We can formulate our own hypothesis as "Geographical distance and volume of migration are inversely related. Higher the distance, lower will be the volume of migration."

Law 2: Another law is that 'Most migrants are adults; families rarely migrate out of their country of birth.' This hypothesis can be modified as "Most of the migrants selected are adults. They are from economically active age group.

Law 3: Migration increase in volume as industries and commerce are developed and transport improves. This law can be reformatted as 'The volume of migration and industrial development of a place are inversely related'.

Law 4: The major direction of migration is from the agricultural areas to the centers of industry and commerce. It can be simplified as 'There is a trend of population movement from agricultural areas to the centers of industry and commerce.

Law 5: The major causes of migration are economic. It can be revised as 'People migrate in order to improve their economic status.'

Ravenstein concludes this way– 'The most important causes of migration are economic.' It means that the major motive of people to migrate is economic. In this case, the hypothesis can be formulated as 'Migration is affected by the level of economic development in a place.'

Ravenstein's laws have been widely used and reformatted by other scholars like Lee. His laws were applicable in England. Even today, some of his laws are applicable not only in the developed countries but in the developing countries also. For example, let us consider the first hypothesis. It is stated as 'the majority of migrants go only a short distance'. If we observe the settlements developed in the areas of Butwal to Bhairahawa and Taulihawa of Nepal, majority of immigrants are from the neighbouring districts of Palpa, Gulmi, Arghakhanchi, and Syangja.

Migrants usually prefer the areas with short distance because they have to take a greater risk for moving to the areas located at a greater distance. A family from Ilam or Jhapa rarely migrates to the above mentioned areas. Similarly, the eleventh hypothesis that 'the major causes of migrations are economic' is also acceptable because people want to migrate to new areas for improving their economic status (Jnawali, 2001).

In carrying out a research, a scholar can apply few of existing hypotheses or formulate his/her own hypotheses based on Lee's model. Here an attempt has been made to formulate hypotheses based on Lee's model.

Hypothesis 1: The volume of rural to urban migration is affected by the diversity in the Tarai and other urban centers of Nepal. Higher the diversity, larger will be the volume of migration.

Hypothesis 2: The volume of rural to urban migration is affected by the diversity of people in terms of race, ethnic origin, education, income and tradition. Higher the diversity of population, larger will be the volume of migration.

Hypothesis 3: Higher the difficulty of surmounting the intervening obstacles, lower will be the volume of migration but the efficiency of migration will be high.

Hypothesis 4: Fluctuation in economy affects volume of migration. In the period of economic expansion, the migration curves move upward whereas during economic depression, it suffers a downward trend.

Hypothesis 5: Migration is selective. High quality migrants are positively selected in the area of destination.

Five hypotheses are formulated here. A researcher can modify and adjust hypotheses according to the nature of his/her study proposed.

Conclusion

Present paper was prepared with an objective to deal with the concept of theoretical and conceptual framework in social research with specific reference to migration studies. It is obvious from the discussion that a number of models are used in social research. A theory provides guidelines for a research work whereas conceptual framework is based on a theory or it is a modified model of the previous researchers that can be developed according to the nature of present research proposed. The researcher has to identify variables affecting migration and develop hypotheses in order to establish relationship between dependent and independent variables to be used in the study.

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