Unlocking economic opportunities: Analyzing relationship between educational attainment, skilled training and monthly income of labor migrants

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Abstract

This research examines the relationship between skill training, educational attainment, and monthly income among labor migrants, with a focus on recognizing the importance of education and skill in enhancing employability and income potential for unlocking their economic opportunities. Using a quantitative research approach, data is collected through surveys conducted among 385 labor migrants. The findings pointed out the correlation between the level of education and the monthly income of labor migrants as the calculated Chi-square value (χ^2) of 0.046 was lower than the predetermined significance level p of 0.05. Also, there is correlation between skilled training and monthly income as a Chi-square value (χ^2) of 0.000, which was lower than the predetermined significance level (p) of 0.05. The study reveals that labor migrants with more advanced education and specialized training typically earn greater monthly incomes in comparison to those without such training or with lower educational qualifications.

Keywords: Skilled training, educational attainment, labor migrants, monthly income, economic opportunities

Introduction

Migration for employment is a worldwide occurrence (Sharma, Pandey, Pathak, and Sijapati-Basnett, 2014) that has significant implications for individuals, communities, and economies. Many individuals migrate from their home countries in search of better employment or economic opportunities and improved living conditions (Mishra and Kunwar, 2020). Skill training plays a crucial role in equipping labor migrants with the necessary knowledge, competencies, and qualifications to succeed in the labor market of the host country in relation to enhance their employability, productivity, and income potential, ultimately leading to improved economic opportunities and financial well-being. Another study shows that engaging in vocational skills training has the potential to enhance the employment prospects and quality of work for migrant laborers (Zhao, Tang, and Li, 2022).

Also, the demand is predominantly driven by the skill category, accounting for the largest portion at 36.86 percent following closely behind are the semi-skill workers at 35.19 percent, with unskilled workers making up 26.37 percent of the total demand (CTEVT, 2014). In the same way, the anticipated monthly wages of skilled laborers were 41 percent greater than unskilled workers expected while the skill level remains the primary contributor to income disparities among migrant workers. Other elements, such as the educational qualifications of migrant workers, also play a crucial role in explaining income differences. In the same way, the Foreign Employment Board (FEB) offers skills-focused training to individuals embarking on international employment and those coming back, utilizing resources from the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund (MoLESS, 2022).

However, Nepalese migrants are still limited to seeking the employment opportunities demanded by Gulf countries for either unskilled or low-skill laborers as about 90 per cent of labor migrants went abroad without any skill training and getting low wages (GIZ and ILO, 2019). Another study shows that approximately 8 percent of Nepali migrant laborers are employed in unskilled positions (Bikash Udhyami, 2019). Most workers, comprising about two-thirds i.e., 64 percent, are engaged in semi-skill work, while one in four workers is involved in skill occupations with the average monthly income for Nepali migrant workers is around 48 thousand Nepali rupees in the destination countries.

Therefore, to predict whether there is any association between educational attainment, skill training, and monthly income of labor migrants or not this quantitative study is required. Through this investigation, the study aims to ascertain if labor migrants with a strong educational background and prior skill training earn higher monthly incomes in contrast to those lacking such training.

Methods

The study utilized a quantitative research design with the aim of examining the relationship between educational achievement, skill training, and the monthly earnings of labor migrants (Creswell and Clark, 2018). The research methodology comprises sampling, data gathering via survey questionnaires, ethical considerations, and data analysis. The sample unit for this study was labor returnees, however, the actual number of returnees has not been identified. Hence, the study considered 385 labor returnee as sample size ($n_o = ((1.96)^2 \times (0.5) \times (0.5))/(0.05)^2$ calculated by using a sampling formula ($n_o = Z^2pq/e^2$) of (Cochran, 1977) for unknown population to ensure the generalizability of the findings. In this context, "n_o" represents the sample size, "Z" corresponds to the critical value on the normal distribution curve that divides an area of α at the tails (usually obtained from statistical tables, e.g., Z = 1.96 for a 95% confidence level). "p" denotes the estimated proportion, "q" is the complementary value of "p" (i.e., q = 1-p), and "e"

represents the desired level of precision. This formula is commonly employed by researchers to determine the appropriate sample size in their studies. To make sample more representative including individuals from different areas of countries, occupation types, and migration destinations, the researcher used an airport exist survey (Prideaux and Sibtain, 2012) because the best source of labor returnees was airport. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling (probability) techniques to access a pool of labor returnees (Levy and Lemeshow, 1999).

Data were collected through surveys conducted among a representative sample of 385 labor migrants. The survey was designed to gather information on variables related to educational attainment, skill training, and monthly income. The survey questionnaire included items such as educational attainment, participation in skill training before migration, employment history, and monthly income levels. Educational attainment was measured as the education level of labor migrants before migration and skill training was measured as the participation in formal training programs or acquisition of new skills through informal channels. The survey included questions regarding the level of education, type of training, and perceived improvement of level of income after migration. Monthly income was served as the primary outcome variable and measured as the self-reported income earned by labor migrants monthly. The survey asked respondents to provide their monthly income after migration.

To mitigate potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations regarding the welfare of the respondents, the researchers clarified the study's objectives. Additionally, they assured the participants that the study would not include any language or terminology that could harm or insult any group of people. They also guaranteed the separation and confidentiality of sensitive information such as names, emails, addresses, and more, and committed not to disclose this information in any written or verbal communication. To protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants, any unusual references to locations, workplaces, institutions, or friends' names that might make them identifiable would be altered in the quotations. The participants were explicitly informed that the data collected from them would solely be used for research purposes. They were encouraged to provide information as comprehensively as possible but were also informed that they could cease their participation at any point if they had concerns. In this way, ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process to ensure the protection of participants' rights and confidentiality. Informed consent (Waluchow, 2003) was obtained from all participants, and data was anonymized and treated with strict confidentiality.

The collected data was analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques (Cronk, 2018) to examine the association between skilled training and monthly

income. Descriptive statistics (table with frequency and percentage) were used to summarize the characteristics of the sample, including the distribution of educational level, skilled training participation and monthly income levels. To analyze the association between educational attainment, skilled training and monthly income, inferential statistical methods chi-square test was employed.

Results

Details of Respondents Participated in the Study

To better understand the demographic characteristics and provide valuable insights into the composition of the surveyed population, the information on ethnic diversity, age distribution, occupational preferences, marital status, age at marriage, and types of marriages etc. are essential.

Table-1: demographic information

Demography	Structure	Frequency (#)	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity	*Brahmin/Chhetri*	29	7.5
	Dalit	63	16.4
	Janajati	49	12.7
	Madhesi	161	41.8
	Muslim	83	21.6
Age	10-24	51	13.2
	25-40	294	76.4
	>41	40	10.4
Household's Occupation	Agriculture	155	40.3
	Business	63	16.4
	Service	20	5.2
	Labor	147	38.2
Marital Status	Married	307	79.7
	Unmarried	78	20.3
Age at Marriage	<20 Years	131	34.0*
	>20 Years	254	66.0
Types of Marriage	Arrange	354	91.9
	Love	31	8.1

Source: (Field survey, 2023)

In this regard, table 1 shows that the study participants came from various ethnic backgrounds, including Brahmin/Chhetri 7.5 percent or 29 individuals, Dalit 16.4 percent or 63 individuals, Janajati 12.7 percent or 49 individuals, Madheshi 41.8 percent or 161 individuals, and Muslim 21.6 percent or 83 individuals. It means 92.5 percent, or 356 individuals migrated from the marginalized communities. They also represented different age groups, with 13.2 percent (51 individuals) in the 10-24 years age group, 76.4 percent (294 individuals) in the 25-

40 years age group, and 10.4 percent (40 individuals) in the >41 years age group. This means that 89.6 percent (345 individuals) of the respondents fell under the government of Nepal's definition of youth.

Among them, 40.3 percent (comprising 155 individuals) were employed in agriculture within their households, 16.4 percent (63 individuals) were engaged in entrepreneurial activities, 5.2 percent (20 individuals) held positions in the service industry, and 38.2 percent (made up of 147 individuals) worked as laborers. In this way, 78.5 percent or 302 individual migrated were having either agriculture or waged labor as an occupation. Regarding marital status, 79.7 percent (307 individuals) were married, while 20.3 percent (78 individuals) were unmarried. It's worth noting that 34 percent (131 individuals) of those married did so before the age of 20. It means they did child marriage because according to the legal regulations of the government of Nepal, specifically outlined in the Muluki Civil Code of 2074, the lawful age for marriage in Nepal stands at 20 years (Ministry of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs, 2017) while 66 percent (254 individuals) married after the age of 20. Among married individuals, 91.9 percent (354 marriages) were arranged marriages, while 8.1 percent (31 marriages) were based on love.

Labors Migrated to Destination Countries

It is essential for researchers to understand the distribution of labor migrants across destination countries and which countries they mostly preferred for their migration.

Table-2: destination country

Countries	Frequency (#)	Percentage (%)
Malaysia	162	42.1
Qatar	111	28.8
UAE	39	10.1
Saudi Arabia	61	15.8
Kuwait	6	1.6
Bahrain	4	1.0
Japan	1	.3
Oman	1	.3

Source: (Field survey, 2023)

Referring to table 2, it is observed that a significant portion of individuals migrated for labor to various countries. Specifically, 42.1 percent or 162 individuals went to Malaysia, 28.8 percent or 111 individuals chose Qatar, 10.1

percent or 39 individuals headed to the UAE, 15.8 percent or 61 individuals embarked on journeys to Saudi Arabia, 1.6 percent or 6 individuals traveled to Kuwait, 1 percent or 4 individuals opted for Bahrain, while 1 individual each went to Japan and Oman.

Migrants Engaged in Skilled or Unskilled Labor

Understanding whether migrants are engaged in skilled or unskilled labor is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of labor markets, economic contributions, and the well-being of migrants. The data mentioned in table 3 indicates that most migrants, specifically 66.5 percent or 256 individuals, were involved in unskilled labor. This was followed by skilled occupations 33.5 percent (129 individual) such as carpentry 4.2 percent with a count of 16, driving 2.3 percent with a count of 9, office assistance role 4.2 percent with a count of 16, plumbing 4.9 percent with a count of 19, supervisory positions 3.4 percent with a count of 13, and tailoring 3.1 percent with a count of 12. In contrast, other occupations exhibited lower levels of participation among migrants.

Table-3: types of works

Description	Frequency (#)	Percentage (%)
AC Mechanics	1	.3
Automobile Mechanics	3	.8
Beauty Parlor	1	.3
Board Keeper	1	.3
Carpenter	16	4.2
Cashier	1	.3
Cleaner	2	.5
Computer Operator	2	.5
Data Entry	4	1.0
Driving	9	2.3
Electrician	1	.3
Food Delivery	2	.5
Furniture	1	.3
Garment	1	.3
KFC Manager	1	.3
Kitchen Helper	1	.3
Labor	256	66.5
Mason	7	1.8
Office Boy	16	4.2
Petrol Pump Worker	2	.5
Plumber	19	4.9
Salesman	5	1.3
Sales Manager	1	.3
Storekeeper	2	.5
Supervisor	13	3.4
Tailoring	12	3.1
Waiter	5	1.3

Source: (Field survey, 2023)

Types of Skill Trainings People have before Migration

Labor migrants may have acquired a variety of skills, which can be beneficial for their employment prospects and income opportunities both within and outside their home countries. The distribution of skilled training might be quite diverse, reflecting the wide array of occupations and professions that labor migrants engage in.

Table 4 provides an overview of the types of skilled training received by labor migrants, along with their corresponding frequencies and percentages.

Table-4: details of skilled training people have before migration

Skilled Training	Frequency (#)	Percentage (%)
Automobile Repair	1	1.7
Beauty Parlor	1	1.7
Carpenter	7	12.1
Computer Operator	3	5.2
Driving	12	20.7
Electrician	10	17.2
Mason	3	5.2
Mobile Mechanics	5	8.6
Plumbing	3	5.3
Printing	2	3.4
Salesman	1	1.7
Tailoring	10	17.2

Source: (Field survey, 2023)

It reveals a diverse range of skill categories that labor migrants have acquired before or during their migration. Notably, "Driving" is the most prevalent skill category, with 20.7 percent of labor migrants having received training in this area. Other significant skill categories include "Electrician" 17.2 percent, "Carpenter" 12.1 percent, and "Tailoring" 17.2 percent. This diversity in skill acquisition reflects the versatility and adaptability of labor migrants, allowing them to engage in various professions and occupations, which can significantly impact their employability and income opportunities. This information is valuable for stakeholders such as policymakers, employment agencies, and training providers, as it sheds light on the range of skills that labor migrants bring to the job market and how these skills can contribute to their economic well-being.

Relationship between Level of Educational and Monthly Income

The level of education before migration has an impact on the distribution of monthly income after migration. Individuals with advanced level of education are likely to fall into the higher income categories, while those with lower education levels may have varied income distribution.

Referring to Table 5, the research examined a sample of 385 individuals and observed their educational backgrounds in relation to labor migration. The findings revealed that among the participants, 27.3 percent were illiterate, 30.6 percent had received basic education, 38.2 percent had completed secondary education, and 3.9 percent held bachelor's degrees. Notably, 16.3 percent of the illiterate individuals earned a monthly income between Nepali Rupees 10,001-20,000, while 35.7 percent of those with basic education and 41.9 percent of those with secondary education earned a similar income range. Similarly, 30.7 percent illiterate individuals earned between Nepali Rupees 20,001-50,000 monthly, compared to 30.7 percent with basic education and 34.6 percent with secondary education within the same income bracket.

Table-5: relationship between level of education and monthly income of labor migrants

Level of education before migration	Monthly income after migration					χ^2
	<10000	10001-20000	20001-50000	50001-100000	>100000	
Illiterate	4 (25%)	16 (16.3%)	61(30.7%)	14 (35.0%)	10 (31.2%)	0.046*
Basic Level	7 (43.8%)	35 (35.7%)	61(30.7%)	12 (30.0%)	3 (9.4%)	
Secondary	5 (31.2%)	41 (41.9%)	69 (34.6%)	13 (32.5%)	19 (59.4%)	
Bachelor	0 (0%)	6 (6.1%)	8 (4.0%)	1 (2.5%)	0 (0%)	

* $p<0.05$ (two-tailed)
Source: (Field survey, 2023)

Furthermore, 35.0 percent illiterate individuals earned monthly incomes ranging from Nepali Rupees 50,001-100,000, while 30.0 percent of those with basic education and 32.5 percent of those with secondary education fell within this income range. Additionally, 31.2 percent illiterate individuals earned more than Nepali Rupees 100,000 monthly, whereas 9.4 percent of those with basic education and 59.4 percent of those with secondary education achieved such

income levels. Moreover, a Chi-square test was conducted to explore the correlation between educational attainment and monthly income among labor migrants. The test indicated a significant association, as the calculated Chi-square value (χ^2) of 0.046 was lower than the predetermined significance level (p) of 0.05.

Relationship between Skill Training and Monthly Income

Skilled training plays a role in shaping the income distribution of labor migrants. The availability of such training appears to correlate with variations in monthly income following migration. Specifically, individuals who have received skilled training are more inclined to enjoy higher monthly incomes, in contrast to their counterparts who lack such training.
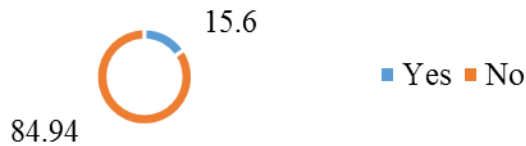

Figure-1: labor migrants received skilled training before migration

Figure 1 provides insights into the labor migration patterns of the 385 respondents in the sample. It reveals that 15.6 percent had received skilled training, while the majority, 84.94 percent, had not undergone any skilled training before migrating for labor.

Table-6: association between skilled training and monthly income of labor migrants

Skilled Training	Monthly income after migration					χ^2
	<10000	10001-20000	20001-50000	50001-100000	>100000	
Yes	5 (8.6%)	12 (20.7%)	19 (32.8%)	13 (22.4%)	9 (15.5%)	0.000*
No	11 (3.4%)	86 (26.3%)	180 (55.0%)	27 (8.3%)	23 (7.0%)	

* p<0.05 (two-tailed)   Source: (Field survey, 2023)

Table 6 shows that 22.4 percent of those with skilled training were earning between Nepali Rupees 50,001 and 100,000 monthly, whereas only 8.3 percent of labor migrants without any skilled training achieved this income level. Similarly, 15.5 percent of individuals with skilled training were earning more than Nepali

Rupees 100,000, in contrast to 7 percent of labor migrants without any skilled training reaching that income threshold.

Additionally, a Chi-square test was conducted to assess the relationship between skilled training and monthly income among labor migrants. The results of the test indicated a significant association, with a Chi-square value (χ^2) of 0.000, which was lower than the predetermined significance level (p) of 0.05.

Discussions

The study encompassed individuals from various ethnic backgrounds, including a significant portion of representation from marginalized communities, including Muslims, and other minority groups, as well as Hill Dalits, have the greatest likelihood of having a labor migrant. This pattern reflects both the exclusion of these communities from domestic labor market opportunities and the potential for migration and remittances to contribute to their future social and economic advancement (GIZ and ILO, 2019). Most migrants were youth based on the criteria set by the government of Nepal. Another study in the same field has also cited that labor migration among Nepalese youth is widespread. The regions experiencing the most significant labor outmigration include the rural Terai, rural Hills, and mountainous areas, as reported by the World Bank Group in 2018. It's worth highlighting a noteworthy finding: a substantial number of participants entered marriage before reaching the legal age of 20. Another study conducted by Bhattarai and colleagues in 2022 confirmed the persistence of early marriages in Nepal, although the trend appears to be on the decline.

The data underscores the diverse destinations chosen by labor migrants, with Malaysia emerging as the most popular destination. Other favored locations included Qatar and Saudi Arabia, indicating the widespread trend of labor migration to Gulf countries. Also, according to the Department of Foreign Employment's status report, the top five preferred destinations for Nepalese labor migrants outside of India are Qatar, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Kuwait (ILO, 2021). Out of the total demand, 95 percent originated from five prominent countries, including the UAE, Qatar, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Specifically, the demand from the UAE stood at 29.33 percent, with Qatar following closely at 28.02 percent, and Malaysia at 20.27 percent, among others (CTEVT, 2014).

Most migrants were involved in unskilled labor, while skilled roles such as driving, electrician, carpentry, and tailoring constituted a significant portion of the migrant workforce. Based on the labor permits recorded in foreign employment information management system (FEIMS) over the past two decades, most labor migrants were classified as unskilled, followed by semi-skilled workers. Skilled laborers comprised nearly one-fifth of the total, while the presence of professional and highly skilled laborers was minimal. The data indicated that a significant portion of migrant workers appeared to have received approval for jobs categorized as semi-skilled or unskilled positions at their destination (IOM, 2021). This reflects the broad spectrum of job roles undertaken by migrants, encompassing both manual labor and skilled trades.

The findings from this research demonstrated a notable link between educational achievement and the monthly income of labor migrants, as the computed Chi-square value (χ^2) of 0.046 was less than the predetermined significance level (p) of 0.05. The analysis uncovered that labor migrants with higher levels of education tend to receive higher monthly incomes compared to those with lower educational qualifications. Furthermore, the educational attainment of these workers substantially impacts their earnings prospects overseas, with individuals possessing advanced educational qualifications having a more promising earning potential (Udhyami, 2019).

Likewise, this study's outcomes pointed to a substantial correlation between skill training and the monthly income of labor migrants, as evidenced by a Chi-square value (χ^2) of 0.000, falling below the predefined significance level (p) of 0.05. The analysis showed that labor migrants who have received skill training tend to secure higher monthly incomes in comparison to those who have not undergone such training. Moreover, the skill level of the migrant worker plays a crucial role in determining their income prospects (Udhyami, 2019). Skilled workers earned substantially more than their unskilled and semi-skilled counterparts. For instance, skilled workers earned between 72 thousand to 188 thousand rupees in the destination countries. Notably, those categorized as professionals received the highest average salary, with earnings reaching Rs. 115,204.

In this way, among the participants who were highly educated and had received skilled training, the majority reported higher monthly income levels. This suggests that acquiring higher level of education and skills had a positive impact on

the income potential of labor migrants. The findings of this research carry significant implications for labor migration policies and skill development initiatives. To begin with, they underscore the significance of educational achievements and skill training for labor migrants in terms of bolstering their economic advancement. Labor migrants possessing pertinent and marketable skills, along with higher educational qualifications, have the capacity to substantially augment their income prospects and economic prospects.

Additionally, the findings emphasize the importance of educational attainment and skilled training to maximize the impact on monthly income. It's essential to acknowledge that this study possesses certain constraints. The information gathered from surveys is dependent on self-reported data, which could be influenced by recall bias or the inclination to provide socially desirable responses. Furthermore, the research centers on the correlation between educational achievement, skill training, and monthly income, without delving into the enduring stability of income increases or potential variances among various subgroups of labor migrants. Future research could delve deeper into these aspects by conducting longitudinal studies to track the income trajectories of labor migrants over time. In addition, qualitative research methods could be employed to gain a more nuanced understanding of the experiences and perspectives of labor migrants regarding educational attainment and skill training and its impact on their economic opportunities.

Conclusion

The research definitively established a direct link between educational achievement and the monthly earnings of labor migrants, indicating that those with higher levels of education earned greater incomes. Skilled training also played a crucial role, with migrants who had received such training earning higher monthly incomes compared to those who hadn't. Skilled workers, including professionals, earned substantially more, emphasizing the financial benefits of having marketable skills. This highlights the potential for educational attainment and skill development to enhance economic prospects for labor migrants.

In conclusion, the findings of this study carry important implications for labor migration policies and skill development programs. Prioritizing educational opportunities and vocational training for potential migrants can significantly improve their income-earning potential and overall economic well-being. These

results underscore the importance of investing in the education and skill development of labor migrants to maximize the impact on their monthly income and long-term economic opportunities.

A Conflict-of-Interest

We declare that we have no conflicts of interest to disclose regarding this journal article. This research was conducted with integrity and objectivity, and I have not received any financial or non-financial benefits that could be perceived as influencing the research, analysis, or conclusions presented in this article. I affirm that any external sources of funding or support, if applicable, have been acknowledged appropriately in the manuscript.

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