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The Status of Foreign Labor Migration in Jhapa District

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Abstract

This paper describes the labor migration of Shivasatakshi Municipality of Jhapa District. The main objective of this research study is to examine the foreign labor migration from Nepal to Gulf countries including Malaysia. Information was collected through 136 respondents and respondents' households' information and sample selection has been based on a systematic sampling method. The highest percentage of foreign labor migrants (23.53%) was found in the age group of 25-29 years. 55.88 percent of the respondents are married. About 44.12 percent of foreign labor migrants went to Malaysia due to unemployment. About 58.09 percent of respondents went for factory labor work. Hill Brahmin/Chhetri occupies the highest percentage. The Hill Brahmin/Chhetri respondents are 32.36 percent in first position and Tarai Janajati respondents are 26.47 percent in the research area. Most of the Hill Brahmin/Chhetri and Tarai Janajati people are involved in the agriculture sector and lack employment opportunities and services in other sectors. Moreover, this community is migrated from hills and holds less percentage of agricultural land in the research area. Due to unemployment and insufficient agricultural land, most Hill Brahmin/Chhetri and Tarai Janajati migrate to Gulf countries. Selection for Gulf countries as destinations by Hill Brahmin/Chhetri and Tarai Janajati people in the research area due to the low-privilege households and lack of skills in this manpower. The Government of Nepal should guarantee/ manage safer and better foreign labor migration. Foreign labor migration sends a large amount of remittance to Nepal, but they do not utilize it properly.

Keywords: Labor migration, remittance, marital status, employment, & destination countries.

Introduction

Migration is the third component of population change. The mass migration from the unified territory to the neighboring countries to escape the new State's taxation system, which was often exploitive, could be considered the first incidence of outmigration of

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labor from Nepal (Gurung, 2004). The United Multilingual Demographic Dictionary defines migration as "A form of geographic or spatial mobility between one geographic unit and another involving a permanent change in residence from the place of destination" (UN, 1973). Two broad types of migrations are identified: international and internal. The former refers to movement across national boundaries. It is designated as emigration from the standpoint of the nation from which the movement occurs and as immigration from that of the receiving nation. The term internal migration refers to migration within the boundaries of a given nation (Shryock and Siegel, 1976).

Migration can have a direct effect on poor people's livelihoods and migrants send money to their families' livelihoods and social relations. Migration can also act as a social security mechanism for poor households. For many poor households individuals across the world, remittances constitute a major source of income, insurance, and capital accumulation. The outcomes can flow directly into the pockets of the poor but they can also be indirect. The livelihood outcomes depend on several issues of migration (Nyberg, 2002). The government has made promotional policies regarding foreign employment but at the same time, less attention has been paid to providing services and facilities in the home ground. Some of the provisions mentioned in the Foreign Employment Act -2042 are like controlling the foreign employment business rather than promotional one. The importance of international labor migration as an income source for Nepal's households and to the economy of Nepal. In the 1990s, Nepal emphasized the importance of agriculture in the national economy, and the National Planning Commission (NPC) deemed agriculture to be the key to rural development (NPC 2007).

All migration is not the result of poor economic conditions but is also caused by complex mechanisms of social psychological, political, and individual determinants. The economy is linked with people's livelihood. Modern migration system that evolved as a response to the concentration of development activities in the urban center is mainly guided by better social status and a high standard of living. As the majority of the people are poor, migration is mainly for food and better agricultural land in Nepal.

Globally, with the rise in migration of workers across countries, the economic and social well-being of migrants, their families, and their communities has been increasing. Growth in the number of international migrants has been robust over the last two decades, reaching 281 million people living outside their country of origin in 2020, up from 173 million in 2000 and 221 million in 2010. Currently, international migrants represent about 3.6 percent of the world's population (UN DESA, 2020). Migration is a vital phenomenon

that touches on a multiplicity of economic, social, and security aspects affecting our daily lives in an increasingly interconnected world. Migration is a term that encompasses a wide variety of movements and situations involving people from all walks of life and backgrounds. Migration for employment is an important part of the global agenda of the current period (ILO, 2010). The emergence of migration at the top of the international policy agenda, issues, and challenges of labor migration to guide ILO action (ILO, 2010).

This article concentrates on 'livelihood studies' that may explicitly specify a sustainable livelihoods approach, a broader livelihoods approach to labor migration, or may simply be a consideration of household wellbeing that extends beyond income. The poorer families are more likely to migrate to send remittances to support the families. In some cases, the household that stays put, and that does not have enough activities for a sufficient or sustainable livelihood is dependent on remittances, and other resources such as increased vulnerability resulting from out-migration. Remittances may be a crucial form of insurance for households engaged in migration; family members who stay put may be very dependent on their male relatives for protection and loans. The absent population of Nepal has played a major role in the demographic, social, and economic aspects of the country.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the foreign labor migration from Nepal to Gulf countries including Malaysia. The specific objective of this study is to identify the causes and consequences of foreign labor migration in the research area.

Limitations

This paper is limited only to the demographic and socio-economic status of 136 respondents and limited to foreign labor migration from Shivasatakshi Municipality including wards 1 to 11, based on foreign labor migrants of Gulf countries. This paper is based on the causes and consequences of foreign labor migration in the research area.

Methodology

The study area is Shivasatakshi Municipality of Jhapa District. The research design was descriptive and cross-sectional, based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected by using an interview schedule. There are different castes/ethnicities and religious groups having different socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

This research investigated and explored the hidden issue of foreign labor migration in this area. The data was analyzed by the descriptive methods whereas the primary data was collected by the lists of the foreign labor migrants' households. First of all, the researcher listed every ward's number of migrant households. Total households of 15297 are included in 1 to 11 wards and the sample size was 136 by the systematic sampling methods.

In this study, various data collection tools have been applied to collect primary information: interviews, schedules, observation, etc. The data has been collected through a survey of the migrants' households. Information about the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of migrants (age, sex, caste, marital status, education attainment, and household assets) are also collected. This study defines foreign labor migration as the emigration of at least one year complete as labor migration abroad. The required secondary data are also collected and processed from the office profile of Shivasatakshi Municipality and the population monograph of Nepal. The required number of households and total sample population are also collected from the office of Shivasatakshi Municipality of Jhapa District.

Interpretation of the Data and Results

A household is defined as a person or group of persons who live and eat together. The study attempts to define the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents and households' populations. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics play important role in the development of the society. It provides valuable input into social and economic development in the study area. It is also useful for understanding and identifying the major factors that influence the basic demographic indicators of the population.

Age sex composition

The age composition of a population refers to the number of people in different age groups in a country. Sex refers to the physical differences between people who are male, female, or intersex. Age is a crucial demographic process for social study. Age and sex are very important factors in foreign labor migration. The age structure of the study area is divided into 5-year age cohort groups.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents' 2023

Age Group	Migrants				Total	
	Male		Female			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
15-19	10	8.09	7	6.62	20	12.50
20-24	15	11.03	10	7.35	25	18.38
25-29	19	13.97	13	9.56	32	23.53
30-34	14	10.29	8	5.88	22	16.17
35-39	11	7.35	9	5.15	17	14.71
40-44	9	6.62	2	1.47	11	8.09
45-40	7	5.15	2	1.47	9	6.62
Total	85	62.5	51	37.5	136	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows the total number of respondents 136 are male and female. The proportion of the age group 25-29 is relatively higher than that of other age group. The highest percentage of foreign labor migrants (23.53%) was found in the age group of 25-29 years, followed by the age group of 20-24 years with 18.38 percent, age group 30-34 years with 16.17 percent, age group 35-39 years with 14.71 percent, age group 40-44 years with 8.09 percent respectively. The percentage of females is very low in comparison to males.

Marital Status

Marital status has been one of the influential and important variables of an individual's position in Nepalese society. Happily married life is one of the components of quality of life. Marriage plays an important role in social prestige and honor. Marital status is an important element of fertility behavior particularly in a non – contraception society where most of the births take place within the marital union as in Nepal (CBS, 2001). The information on marital status of obtained from the place of current residence among those aged 15 years and above at the time of study. The marital status of the population of this research is presented in the below table.

Table 2: Distribution of population by marital status, 2023

Marital Status	Migrants				Total	
	Male		Female			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Unmarried	20	14.71	11	8.09	31	22.8
Married	51	37.50	25	18.38	76	55.88
Separated	7	5.15	6	4.41	13	9.56
Divorced	5	3.67	5	3.68	10	7.35
Widowed	2	1.47	4	2.94	6	4.41
Total	85	62.50	51	37.50	136	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 shows the marital status of the study area. It shows that 55.88 percent of the respondents are married followed by unmarried with 22.8 percent, separated with 9.56 percent, divorced with 7.35 percent, and widowed with 4.41 percent respectively. The total number of married male is highest (37.50%), which is higher than female married number (18.38%). The unmarried male are 14.71 percent of respondents and unmarried female respondents are 8.09 percent.

Caste/ Ethnicity and Religion

The religion is a strong belief in a supernatural power that controls human destiny. Nepal is one of the multi-diverse countries in caste and language composition. In Nepal, though there are 125 caste and ethnic groups with distinct languages and cultures, these diverse groups and ethics (CBS, 2014). The study of caste and ethics is an important factor in population studies. It demonstrates the socio-economic structure of population composition.

Table -3: Distribution of the population by caste/ ethnicity and religion group, 2023

Cast/Ethnicity	Religions of the Respondents				Total	
	Hindu	Buddhists	Kirat	Christian	Number	Percent
Hill Brahmin/ Chhetri	40	-	-	4	44	32.36
Hill Janajati	15	10		2	27	19.85
Tarai janajati	20	4	10	2	36	26.47
Tarai Brahmin/ Chhetri	9	-	-	8	17	12.50
Others	5	1	2	4	12	8.82
Total	89	15	12	20	136	100
Percent	65.44	11.03	8.82	14.71	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 exhibits that the total number of selected respondents is 136. Hill Brahmin/ Chhetri occupied the largest percentage in the research area with 32.36 percent which is followed by Tarai Janajati respondents are 26.47 percent, Hill Janajati respondents are 19.85 percent, Tarai Brahmin/ Chhetri respondents are 12.50 percent and others with 8.82 percent respectively. The highest number of respondents are Hindu with 89 people which occupies 65.44 percent, Christian respondents occupied the second position with 20 people which occupies 14.71 percent, Buddhist respondents occupied 15 people which occupies 11.03 percent and Kirat respondents 12 which occupies 8.82 percent.

Agricultural land size of land holding Size

There is a great relationship between the land and foreign labor migration. The majority of the people in Nepal are directly or indirectly involved in agriculture due to a lack of employment opportunities. In the last five decades, while the population has increased by nearly threefold, the volume of cultivated land has increased by less than twofold (CBS, 2014). Landholding means the area of land covered by the respondent's family for cultivation.

Table 4: Percentage distribution of the respondents by area of land holding size,2023

Area of Land (Katha)	Number	Percent
<5	10	7.35
5-10	24	17.65
10-15	25	18.38
15-20	55	40.44
>20	15	11.03
Landless	7	5.15
Total	136	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 exhibits that 40.44 percent of the respondents have 15-20 Katha of agricultural land, followed by 18.38 percent of respondents have 10-15 Katha of agricultural land, 17.65 percent of respondents have 5-10 Katha of agricultural land, 11.03 percent respondents have more than 20 Katha agricultural land,7.35 percent respondents have less than 5 Katha agricultural land, and less percentage of the households (5.15%) have not been holding the land or landless respondents.

Educational Attainment of Foreign Labor Migrants

Education is one of the single indicators, which depicts the real image of various demographic and socio-economic variables of any community or nation. Migrant's educational level plays a vital role in selecting the destination country. Destination country means that country where labor migrants go for foreign labor. The desire of people to select the destination country for foreign employment is different from one to another. There are categories of educational levels such as SLC, SLC to Intermediate, Bachelor, and Master.

Table 5: Distribution of destination countries of foreign labor migration by the level of education, 2023

Educational Level	Destination Countries							Total	
	Malaysia	Qatar	UAE	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Israel	Oman	Number	Percent
Under SLC	50	10	8	7	5	3	4	87	63.97
SLC to Intermediate	5	5	4	6	4	3	3	30	22.06
Bachelor	5	4	3	2	1	-	1	16	11.76
Master	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	3	2.21
Total	60	20	16	15	11	6	8	136	100
Percent	44.12	14.71	11.76	11.03	8.09	4.41	5.88	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5 illustrates those migrants who have under SLC educational level have the highest percent (63.97%), followed by migrants who have SLC to intermediate educational level (22.06%). The lower percentage of the respondents who have Bachelors and master's degrees are 11.76 and 2.21 percent. The above table shows that Malaysia is the one destination for Nepali migrants followed by other countries like Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Israel and Oman. Likewise, Malaysia is selected by 44.12 percent of respondents as the destination country which is followed by Qatar (14.71%), UAE (11.76%), Saudi Arabia (11.03%), Kuwait (8.09%), Oman (5.88%), and Israel (4.41%) respectively in the research area.

Jobs in Destination Countries

The outflow of the active labor force, both skilled and unskilled, could have eroded Nepal's productivity and hindered its growth if the value that migrants would have created had they stayed home is higher than the value of remittance sent (Taylor, 1999). The type of job is categorized by agriculture, factor labor, hotel and restaurant, construction, driving, trading/ business, security guard, and housekeeping.

Table 6: Distribution of foreign labor migration by the status of employment among destination countries, 2023

Employment Status	Destination Countries							Total	
	Malaysia	Qatar	UAE	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Israel	Oman	Number	Percent
Agriculture	3	2	3	1	-	-	-	9	6.62
Factory Labor	50	8	7	5	4	-	5	79	58.09
Hotel/ Restaurant/	4	5	4	4	3	1	1	22	16.18
Construction	1	1	1	2	1	-	-	6	4.41
Driving	1	3	1	3	3	-	1	12	8.82
Trading/ Business	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.73
Security guard	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	2.21
Housekeeping	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	4	2.94
Total	60	20	16	15	11	6	8	136	100
Percent	44.12	14.71	11.76	11.03	8.09	4.41	5.88	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 shows that 58.09 percent respondents are involved in factory labor which is followed by hotels/ restaurant (16.18%), driving (8.82%), agriculture (6.62%) construction (4.41%), housekeeping (2.94%) security guards (2.21%) business (0.73%), respectively in the research area. This table shows that all types of foreign labor migrants heap in Malaysia (44.12%) followed by Qatar (14.71%), UAE (11.76%), Saudi Arabia (11.03%), Kuwait (8.09 %), Oman (5.88%), and Israel (4.41%) respectively. The above table shows that most of the respondents are involved in indoor work.

Conclusion

This research attempts to conclude that migrants from low-privilege households lack skillful manpower, and significant Hill Brahmin/Chhetri and Tarai Janajati people are migrating to Gulf countries as foreign labor migrants. It also exhibits that common Hill Brahmin/Chhetri and Tarai people are involved in the agriculture sector following the traditional occupation as they lack employment opportunities and services in other sectors. The highest percentage of foreign labor migrants (23.53%) was found in the age group of 25-29 years. 55.88 percent of the respondents are married. About 44.12 percent of foreign labor migrants went to Malaysia

due to unemployment. About 58.09 percent of respondents went for factory labor work. Hill Brahmin/Chhetri occupies the highest percentage. The Hill Brahmin/Chhetri respondents are 32.36 percent in first position and Tarai Janajati respondents are 26.47 percent in the research. Furthermore, this community is seen to cover a low percentage of agricultural land in the study area. It is also found that the majority of the foreign labor migrated to the Gulf countries from informal agents rather than formal institutions. It is also suggested that provisions for vocational training and skills should be provided to migrant workers so that they can have better opportunities in the foreign labor markets to earn more money and get better job opportunities. Nepalese people are also facing language and communication problems in their destination countries. Lastly, lack of vocational training, unskilled labor, illiteracy, language skills, different religions and cultures are the great challenges for foreign labor migration.

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