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Causes of Abroad Study in Higher Education from Nepal

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Abstract

This study explores the factors that motivate Nepali students to study abroad as well as the obstacles they face in order to understand this phenomenon. Every year, the number of students going to study abroad from Nepal is increasing. Considering this situation, this study tries to find out why Nepali students choose to pursue their higher education overseas. A quantitative approach using surveys was used to acquire opinions from one hundred Nepali students. The findings indicate a significant propensity to study overseas in order to advance professionally, advance personally and obtain better employment prospects. Concerns regarding Nepal's political unrest and lack of employment opportunities also play a role in decision-making for abroad study. These results highlight the complex interplay between socio-political, economic and personal factors when influencing decisions about educational migration. In order to meet the various needs of Nepali students and improve the regional educational system, policymakers and educational institutions must have a thorough understanding of these dynamics. Considering all things, the study adds to the conversation about globalization, educational mobility and the goals of young people in Nepal in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords: Overseas, opportunity, globalization, motivational factor

Introduction

In a time of globalization and interconnectedness, students from all over the world are compelled to investigate opportunities outside their home countries as the pursuit of higher education crosses national borders (Killick, 2014). Situated in the center of Asia, Nepal has seen an increase in the number of its aspirational youth choosing to pursue their education overseas (Kölbel, 2015). This phenomenon



Copyright 2024 ©Author(s) This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License. represents a paradigm shift in Nepal's traditional higher education system as students become more aware of the numerous advantages and opportunities provided by foreign universities.

Nepali students are increasingly opting to study abroad for various reasons. One significant factor is the desire for access to higher quality education and specialized programmes that may not be readily available in Nepal (Acharya, 2012). Rather than being based on any specific discipline, the various universities of Nepal are being operated based on the same nature. A study by Poudel and Gautam (2019) found that many Nepali students perceive foreign universities as offering superior academic opportunities, modern facilities and innovative teaching methods. Additionally, the allure of gaining international exposure and enhancing career prospects post-graduation motivates Nepali students to pursue education abroad (Dhungana & Neupane, 2018). The limited availability of certain fields of study and the perception of better employment opportunities overseas also contribute to this trend (Pokharel, 2016). Furthermore, the aspiration for cultural enrichment and personal growth through exposure to diverse societies and perspectives plays a significant role in Nepali students' decision to study abroad (Poudel & Gautam, 2019). Thus, the increasing number of Nepali students seeking education abroad reflects a complex interplay of academic, career and personal motivations.

This study explores the dynamic landscape the causes of study abroad for Nepali students. It is critical for educators, policymakers and stakeholders to comprehend the factors driving this migration as the demand for high-quality education rises and global competition intensifies.

Studying abroad is an experience with many facets, including intellectual, cultural and personal aspects (Immetman & Schneider, 1998). The number of Nepali students choosing to pursue higher education overseas has significantly increased recently, indicating a growing desire for international academic opportunities. This trend is influenced by a wide range of factors, such as the desire to experience different cultures, the availability of top-notch educational institutions and the pursuit of specialized programmes that might not be easily accessible in Nepal (Aveni, 2005). Nepali students who are looking for high-quality education and better career prospects are increasingly choosing to study in the US, the UK, Australia, Canada and European countries. The appeal of an international network, the availability of scholarships and welcoming immigration laws are all important factors in drawing in Nepali students.

Understanding the complex reasons underlying this trend is a research challenge pertaining to the reasons why Nepali students are choosing to pursue higher education overseas. Especially in Nepal, despite the fact that there are so

many universities that provide higher education, every day students go out for higher education (Joshi, 2018). This entails looking into the institutional, cultural and socioeconomic elements that influence people to look for educational opportunities outside Nepal. Investigating the factors that lead Nepali students to choose foreign universities requires looking at things like perceived educational quality, specialized programme availability, career opportunities, language ability, exposure to different cultures, political unpredictability and constraints in the home educational system (Acharya, 2012). Determining the root causes of these issues can help clarify the nuances affecting educational migration trends and provide guidance for policies intended to improve higher education accessibility and quality in Nepal.

For a number of reasons, the investigation into the factors that lead Nepali students to pursue higher education overseas is essential. The present time is the era of competition and quality education. Various studies have shown the fact that higher education in western countries is better than in Nepal (Witenstein & Palmer, 2013). In such a situation, Nepali students going abroad for higher education cannot be considered otherwise. But it may not be the only reason, it is also an important purpose of this study to find out what other reasons are causing this situation. First of all, it seeks to shed light on the socioeconomic, cultural and educational dynamics of Nepal by identifying the underlying motives and factors that push students to pursue education abroad (Thieme, 2017). In order to improve the local educational system, close gaps and keep talent in Nepal, policymakers, educational institutions and stakeholders can benefit greatly from an understanding of these causes. The research can also assist families and aspiring students in making wellinformed decisions about their options for higher education, taking into account the advantages, difficulties and alternatives of studying overseas. The research adds to larger conversations on globalization, educational mobility, and the goals of Nepali youth in an increasingly globalized world by exploring the causes of this trend.

There is still a discernible lack of data about the complex incentives and decision-making processes underlying Nepali students' increasing interest in and participation in international higher education (Ra & Joshi, 2020). While numerous studies have examined general motivations like access to high-quality education, employment opportunities and international exposure, a thorough examination of the particular socioeconomic, cultural and individual elements that influence Nepali students' decision to pursue their academic goals abroad is lacking. Going out of Nepal, every year for higher education is a serious challenge to spend a lot of money outside the country. On the one hand, new universities are opening day by day in Nepal and on the other hand, students are leaving for higher education. This is the serious issue about the higher education of Nepal. The government is increasing

investment in higher education, but the problem is that a large number of students from Nepal are going abroad for higher education. The objectives of this study are to find out why Nepali students choose to pursue their higher education overseas, and to identify the underlying causes that impact their decision-making processes by comprehending these motivations.

The study of Nepali students pursuing higher education abroad provides valuable insights into international education and cross-cultural exchange. Factors such as limited opportunities, quality education, diverse perspectives and global career prospects drive this trend. This knowledge helps policymakers, educators and students make informed decisions about education and promotes cultural exchange, ultimately contributing to the advancement of global education systems.

Literature Review

Global Status of Higher Education in the 21st Century

In the 21st century, higher education has experienced significant global transformations, driven by technological advancements, economic shifts and evolving societal needs. This era has witnessed a remarkable expansion in access to higher education worldwide, with enrollment rates soaring across diverse regions. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), global enrollment in tertiary education reached 220 million in 2019, marking a substantial increase from previous decades (UIS, 2020). This surge in enrollment reflects the growing recognition of higher education as a vital driver of economic development, social mobility and innovation on a global scale.

Furthermore, the landscape of higher education in the 21st century is characterized by increasing internationalization and interconnectedness. Universities and colleges have become hubs of multiculturalism, attracting students, scholars and researchers from various parts of the world. The globalization of higher education is evident in the rise of international student mobility, collaborative research endeavors and the establishment of branch campuses and partnerships between institutions across borders (Altbach & Knight, 2007). This globalization trend has enriched academic discourse, fostered cross-cultural understanding and facilitated knowledge exchange on a global scale.

Moreover, the 21st century has witnessed a paradigm shift in the pedagogical approaches and learning methodologies within higher education. Digital technologies have revolutionized teaching and learning, enabling the proliferation of online education, blended learning models and the integration of immersive technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality into curricula (Brown & Costanzo, 2018). The emergence of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has democratized

access to high-quality educational content, offering learners around the world the opportunity to engage with top-notch faculty and prestigious institutions without geographical constraints.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist in the global higher education landscape, including issues of equity, affordability and quality assurance. Disparities in access to higher education persist across regions and socioeconomic backgrounds, with marginalized communities often facing barriers to entry due to financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure and systemic inequalities (UNESCO, 2020). Moreover, concerns about the commercialization and corporatization of higher education have raised questions about academic freedom, intellectual autonomy, and the commodification of knowledge in the contemporary university system (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

The global status of higher education in the 21st century is marked by unprecedented expansion, internationalization and technological innovation. While these developments have enhanced access to learning opportunities and fostered cross-cultural exchange, they have also brought forth challenges related to equity, quality and sustainability. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from governments, educational institutions, and stakeholders to ensure that higher education remains a force for positive societal transformation and inclusive development in the 21st century.

Current Status of Higher Education in Nepal

Although there are still ongoing difficulties, Nepal's higher education system has seen substantial changes in recent years (Chauhan, 2008). The nation has made progress in increasing access to postsecondary education, as more and more universities offer a wide range of academic programmes. Nonetheless, problems in the higher education sector continue to exist, including inadequate funding, limited infrastructure and differences in accessibility and quality (Teferra & Altbachl, 2004). In an attempt to give students across the country fair opportunities, efforts are being made to decentralize education services to rural areas, even though Kathmandu continues to be the focal point for higher education institutions. Furthermore, collaborations with foreign colleges and organizations are growing more frequent, allowing for the sharing of information, resources and skills that raise the standard of higher education in Nepal as a whole (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023).

Notwithstanding these developments, Nepal's higher education system continues to face numerous obstacles that prevent it from reaching its full potential (Ghimire & Kim, 2018). There are still gaps in quality assurance systems, which causes differences in credentials and educational requirements. Furthermore, the

curriculum frequently finds it difficult to adapt to the changing demands of society and industry, which hurts graduates' employability and competitiveness in the global labor market (Knight & Yorke, 2004). Furthermore, efforts to reform education continue to be hampered by bureaucratic inefficiencies and political unpredictability. In order to effectively address these problems, government organizations, academic institutions, and other stakeholders must work together to give infrastructure, curriculum development, faculty training, and regulatory frameworks top priority (Herbert et al., 2020). This will help to create a more robust and inclusive higher education environment that can better serve the diverse needs of Nepalese student body.

Issues of Higher Education in Nepal

Nepal's higher education system is beset by a number of serious issues that impede the country's overall growth and advancement. Lack of access to high-quality education, particularly in rural and isolated areas, is one of the main problems (Devkota, 2021). Due to inadequate infrastructure, a lack of resources and financial obstacles, many students especially those from marginalized communities find it difficult to pursue higher education. This difference hinders the nation's attempts to attain inclusive growth and development and maintains social inequality.

Furthermore, Nepal's higher education system frequently falls short of international standards in terms of quality (Kapur & Crowley, 2008). Colleges and universities have to deal with issues like out-of-date curricula, poor programmes for developing faculty, and few opportunities for research (Levine, 2006). This has an impact on graduates' employability as well as the country's ability to innovate and compete on a worldwide scale. To ensure that higher education in Nepal satisfies the needs of both students and the larger society, addressing these issues calls for extensive reforms that include investments in infrastructure, improvements to teaching standards, and the encouragement of research and innovation (Panth & Hinchliffe, 2001).

It is impossible to overestimate the extent to which the government has contributed to problems in Nepal's higher education system (Panth & Hinchliffe, 2001). A multitude of challenges has resulted from inadequate funding, ongoing political interference and a failure to prioritize education. Universities in Nepal suffer from antiquated facilities, a lack of funding and a faculty shortage (Chauhan, 2008). Furthermore, bureaucratic red tape stifles creativity and makes it more difficult to adapt to the changing needs of the labour market and students (Teofilovic, 2002). Because of this, many young people in Nepal have limited access to high-quality higher education, which exacerbates poverty cycles and impedes the socioeconomic

development of this nation (Joshee, 2016). To address these systemic problems and guarantee that education continues to be a driving force behind advancement rather than a hindrance, immediate reforms are necessary.

Methods and Procedures

Numerical data is gathered and analysed as part of the quantitative research in order to comprehend and explain phenomena (Williams, 2007). Survey research design was used for this study. To collect data from a representative sample of Nepali students who are studying abroad or who plan to study abroad, rating scale was used. One hundred students were selected in this study. Specifically, snowball sampling was used to exclude other respondents on the basis of person-to-person relationships. Among them, 30 students were selected from among the students who went to Japan for study and 70 students were selected from among the students who were in contact with the Consultancy of Kathmandu. This selection process was based on stratified and snowball sampling method.

I used rating scale for collecting the expected data. If one question is placed in the rating scale, then 10 statements are placed in it, among which the respondent has to give a rating on one statement. I gave the online and in-person rating scale to the selected students. Maintaining privacy and anonymity to promote truthful answers, I have used statistical techniques for analysis and interpretation of data. I got participants' informed consent by outlining the rights they have, the goal of the study, and how their data have been used. I made sure the information gathered is kept private and utilized exclusively for study. By excluding any personally identifiable information from the dataset or research findings, I could safeguard the identity of the participants. For the validity, I made sure the questionnaire measures the relevant constructs (e.g., reasons for studying abroad) accurately. I have used table to clearly and concisely present the results, utilizing the quantitative data to be illustrated. I have talked about the implications of the findings and how they connect to the goals and research questions.

Results and Discussion

Out of the rating scale form provided to 100 respondents, the responses received in the rating scale form were filled and returned by 70 people. The rating scale consisted of 10 statements in which the respondents had to assign a number from 1 to 10 based on their preference. In the rating scale, I asked what the reason was for going to study abroad.

Table 1 *Rating Response from Students*

S.N.	Statement	Number of Rating Given Priority Number One	Percentage
1	Better employment opportunity in study abroad	20	28.57
2	Study abroad enhances career prospects	11	15.71
3	Personal growth and independence in study abroad	9	12.85
4	Employment problem in Nepal	8	11.42
5	Better quality life in study abroad	7	10
6	Challenge related to political instability in Nepal	7	10
7	Limitations in career growth in Nepal	4	5.71
8	Better academic opportunity in study abroad	2	2.85
9	Faced challenge in accessing quality education within Nepal	1	1.42
10	Lack of specialized course in Nepal	1	1.42

Based on the data presented, it seems that people have priorities or preferences when it comes to different aspects of education, work and overall well-being, especially when it comes to studying overseas as opposed to remaining in Nepal. This is one interpretation:

Better employment opportunity while studying abroad: Out of all the options, this one garnered the most ratings and was assigned priority number one. With 20 responses, or 28.57% of the total responses, this option was selected. This implies that a sizeable proportion of participants appreciate the possibility of enhanced career prospects that come with studying overseas.

Study abroad enhances career prospects: With 11 responses (15.71%), this option received fewer priority one ratings than the first option, despite still

being significant. It suggests that although career prospects are significant, actual employment opportunities may be viewed as being more important.

Studying abroad can lead to personal growth and independence: As evidenced by the nine priority one ratings this option received, a sizable percentage of respondents value these benefits. It received 12.85% of the answers.

Nepal's employment issues: Although this is a concern, this option received 8 priority one ratings, suggesting that although employment issues do exist in Nepal, they might not be the main reason to think about studying abroad. It makes up 11.42% of the answers.

Improved quality of life while studying abroad: This was rated as having seven priority one ratings, suggesting that some respondents placed a high value on the overall standard of living provided by studying abroad. It accounts for ten percent of the answers.

Problem relating to political unrest in Nepal: Similarly, this option was given top priority by 7 respondents, indicating that some people who are thinking about studying abroad are quite concerned about political unrest. Additionally, it accounts for 10% of the answers.

Career growth restrictions in Nepal: This option received four priority one ratings, suggesting that although these restrictions do exist, respondents may not be as concerned about them as they are about other factors. It makes up 5.71 percent of the answers.

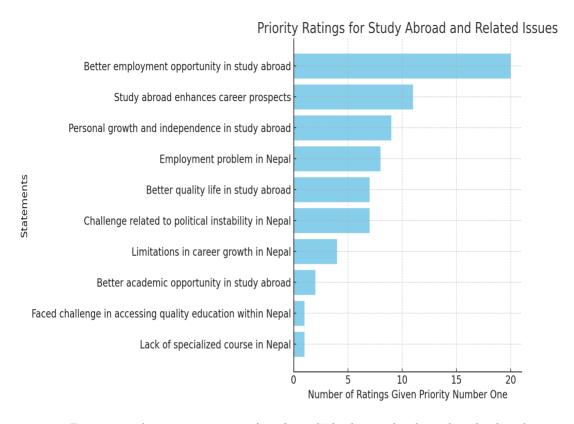
Better academic opportunities through study abroad: Just two respondents gave this option top priority, indicating that factors related to employment may be more important motivators than academic opportunities. It accounts for 2.85% of the answers.

Challenges in obtaining high-quality education in Nepal: This option was rated as a priority one, meaning that, although access to high-quality education is a concern, it might not be the main factor in deciding whether to study abroad. It makes up 1.42% of the answers.

Absence of specialized courses in Nepal: As with the preceding option, this one also received a priority one rating, indicating that most respondents may not find the lack of specialized courses to be a compelling reason to study abroad. Furthermore, it accounts for 1.42% of the replies.

Table 2

Priority Rating for Study Abroad



"Better employment opportunity abroad" is the study abroad and related issue statements' top-rated priority, according to the bar graph. This indicates that the possibility of better employment opportunities in foreign country is highly valued by students and those thinking about studying abroad. The focus on overseas employment prospects is part of a larger trend in which employers place a high value on international work experience and view it as a competitive advantage in the labour market (Blackmore et al., 2017). This goal is in line with the expanding understanding of the need for a worldwide workforce skilled in intercultural communication and global business procedures.

"Personal growth and independence abroad" and "Study abroad enhances career prospects" are closely behind. The notion that career enhancement can result in better career opportunities both abroad and domestically is supported by the high priority placed on it. This may be brought about by the development of a variety of skills, exposure to various educational environments, and capacity for global networking (Wilson et al., 2009). In the meantime, the focus on individual

development and independence emphasizes how important it is for students to study overseas to have a well-rounded education. Living abroad can help develop independence, flexibility, and a more global perspective all of which are valued qualities in both personal and professional settings (Tadmor et al., 2012). Overall, these priorities show a thorough comprehension of the numerous advantages of abroad study.

Overall, the data indicates that the main reasons people think about studying abroad are greater job opportunities, career prospects, personal development, and independence; however, other important factors that influence their decision-making process include political unpredictability and general quality of life.

The information provided sheds important light on the preferences and priorities of those who are thinking about studying overseas vs staying in Nepal. The emphasis on greater employment opportunities that come with studying abroad is a recurring theme that shows up. The appeal of improved career prospects that come with international education is highlighted by the sizeable percentage of respondents who rated it as their top priority. The fact that the most people responded to this aspect indicates that a lot of people think studying abroad can help them land good jobs (Kinginger, 2008). Studying abroad places a strong focus on personal development and independence, which is another noteworthy finding. Even though a small percentage of respondents gave this feature more weight than improved job prospects, it was still highly discussed. This shows that people recognize the opportunity for self-development and cultural immersion that studying abroad offers, and they value the all-encompassing advantages of international education beyond merely advancing their careers (Ikendi, 2022).

Interestingly, the decision to study abroad was also found to be significantly influenced by worries about political unrest and Nepal's job problems. Better job opportunities and personal development received higher priority ratings, but these aspects still attracted a lot of attention. This suggests that broader socio-political factors and worries about the general standard of living in Nepal may have an impact on the decision of some people to pursue education overseas (Acharya, 2012). All things considered; the information presents a complex picture of the reasons why people would want to think about studying abroad. While personal development and professional advancement are important motivators, other elements like political stability and standard of living also have a big impact on how decisions are made. In order to address the needs and aspirations of individuals in Nepal's education landscape, legislators and educational institutions must have a thorough understanding of these priorities (Carney & Bista, 2009).

The results of the data analysis indicate that people who are thinking about studying overseas as opposed to staying in Nepal have different priorities and preferences when it comes to work, education, and general well-being. The relationship between studying abroad and the alleged greater job prospects it provides is a recurring theme in the findings (Aveni, 2005). The greatest percentage of respondents gave this feature the highest priority one rating, demonstrating how highly they regard the possibility of improved career prospects that come with an international education. The data indicates a strong correlation between international education and future employability, highlighting a common participant belief that studying abroad can significantly improve their job prospects.

Furthermore, the results underscore the importance linked to individual development and self-reliance in relation to studying overseas. Even though a smaller percentage of respondents gave this factor more weight than improved job prospects, it still attracted a lot of attention, suggesting that people are generally aware of the comprehensive advantages of international education that go beyond simple career advancement. This supports a linkage theory in which people view studying overseas as a way to advance their personal and cultural development in addition to their employment prospects, strengthening the notion that international education has many benefits beyond advancement in the workplace (Stone & Petrick, 2013).

However, worries about political unrest and job prospects in Nepal also play a role in the decision-making process when it comes to studying overseas (Sunam & McCarthy, 2016). Even with the focus on increased career prospects and personal growth, a sizable percentage of respondents still give careful thought to these sociopolitical and economic factors. This implies that decisions about education and migration are shaped by a complex interaction between sociopolitical context, economic conditions, and individual goals (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). The results highlight how crucial it is to comprehend these complex priorities and issues when developing programmes and policies meant to meet the various needs and goals of people within Nepal's educational system.

Conclusion

The data analysis reveals distinct priorities and preferences among individuals considering studying abroad compared to remaining in Nepal. The predominant emphasis on the perceived greater job opportunities available through international education emerges as a consistent theme throughout the findings. This is evident from the significant percentage of respondents who prioritize this aspect, indicating a widespread belief in the potential for enhanced career prospects associated with studying overseas. The findings underscore a strong association between

international education and future employability, suggesting that many participants perceive studying abroad as a pathway to significantly improving their job prospects.

Moreover, the results highlight the significance attributed to personal development and self-reliance in the context of studying abroad. Despite a smaller proportion of respondents assigning greater weight to this factor compared to improved job prospects, it still garners considerable attention. This suggests a broader recognition among participants of the multifaceted benefits of international education beyond mere career advancement. Such findings support a comprehensive perspective wherein studying abroad is perceived as facilitating not only professional growth but also personal and cultural development, underscoring the diverse advantages associated with international educational experiences.

However, the decision-making process regarding studying abroad is also influenced by concerns regarding political instability and job prospects within Nepal. Despite the predominant focus on increased career opportunities and personal growth, a notable percentage of respondents remain mindful of these socio-political and economic factors. This indicates that educational and migratory decisions are shaped by a nuanced interplay between individual aspirations, socio-political contexts, and economic conditions. The complexity of these priorities underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the diverse needs and goals of individuals within Nepal's educational landscape through informed policy-making and programme development.

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