

Causes of Female Labor Migration in Nepal

Shiva Kumar Yadav, PhD

Faculty member of Political Sciences, Rural development
Patan Campus, Tribhuvan University
Email : yadav.shivakumar@yahoo.com
Doi : <https://doi.org/10.3126/ppj.v2i2.52969>

Abstract

This is related with female labor migration in Sindhupalchowk District in Nepal. Foreign labor migration is a global phenomenon that dates back to the time when payment in return for labor was first introduced. There is no country in the world where foreign labor migration has not occurred. However, economic globalization has speeded up the process way beyond its normal pace. Fast economic growth and slow economic development made people in poorer countries migrate for a better life. While previously only men used to migrate in search of employment, recently, women are leaving for foreign employment as well. Such migration for employment has added value to the national income of the country in the form of remittance. Most of the developing countries are thriving on remittance. Labor exportation has been an important solution for internal unemployment for developing countries. It is a major source of foreign exchange. Therefore, countries like the Philippines and Indonesia have integrated labor export as part of their development strategies. In case of Nepal, remittance helped sustain the economy throughout the conflict period and it continues to be so. Nepal has adopted an open policy towards foreign labor migration. Currently, there are 108 countries approved by the Nepal government for foreign labor migration. The paper was prepared on the basis of 40 households.

Keywords: Migration, labor, remittance, economic growth, poverty & unemployment.

Introduction

Human migration is the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location. It typically involves movements over long distances and from one country or region to another. Migration for employment has begun way before twentieth century. Introduction of payment in return for labor has made men and women seek for employment elsewhere other than their country of origin. The difference today is that there are far more migrant workers than any period of human history. Migration is not a new phenomenon as people have been travelling across countries and continents since time immemorial for survival and better opportunities. According to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the current global estimate is that there were around 244 million international migrants in the world in 2015, which equates to 3.3 per cent of the global population (UN DESA, 2016) and it is estimated that by 2050 international migrants would account for 2.6 per cent of the global population or 230 million (IOM, 2003).

International migration is a complex 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 of all walks of life and backgrounds. More than ever before, migration touches all States and people in an era of deepening globalization. Migration is intertwined with geopolitics, trade and cultural exchange, and provides opportunities for States, businesses and communities to benefit enormously. Migration has helped improve people's lives in both origin and destination countries and has offered opportunities for millions of people worldwide to forge safe and meaningful lives abroad (IOM, 2017).

Globalization of integration of regional economies has added impetus to the growing mobility of workers across abroad. In Asia the movement of labor is becoming an important and enduring phenomenon associated with economic growth and development since it eases skill imbalances in labor markets and provide broad cultural and economic benefits for sending and receiving countries. Migrants' remittances, for example, are now a valuable and stable source of foreign exchange to many origin countries. At the global level, the importance of migration to development is now reflected in the fact that it has become the part of agenda of multilateral institutions, as for example in the trade negotiations within the framework of General Agreement on Trade and Tariff Services (GATS).

Objectives of the research article

This research article is basically related with the relationship among income and employment status in female of Sindupalchowk, Nepal. The labor migration are taken as a key component that assists to reduce the level of poverty. Some confined objectives of the study are;

- To explore the relationship between investment and income in the micro enterprises
- To analyze the profitable areas of investment in these enterprises

Hypothesis of the research article

This study aims to test the hypotheses that are highly related with the objectives. The hypotheses are listed as below;

- There is a close relationship between women migration and income in the micro enterprises of Nepal.
- Labor migration is most lucrative alternative of Nepal.

Methodology of the research article

The study was based on descriptive and exploratory because it tries to present the simple picture of proposed areas with specific objectives (Wolff & Pant 2007, p.357). According to the official record (Nepal Gazette Section 66), Helambu rural municipality has total population 17671. It has been composed of previous Ichok VDCs' ward no. 1-5 now 6 and 6-9 now 7. Next Melamchi municipality contains 45343 as a total population. It has 13 wards in total. It has been restructured as previous Duwachaur VDCs' ward no. 1-6 now 7 and 7-9 now 8. Similarly, Chautarasangachowkgadhi has been restructured as previous ward

no. 5-6 of Chautara now 4, and previous 3,4,7 of Chautara now 5 and previous 8-9 now 7. In total it has 14 wards (Nepal Rajpatra Khand 66). Since this study focused on exploring the effect of migration on change in gender roles the design of this study is explorative.

For the ease of study, the then 3 Village Development Committees and now 3 wards of the village had been chosen at random from the district namely, previously Chautara (Now Chautarasangachowk Municipality Ward no. 4,6 and 7), Duwachaur (Now Melamchi Municipality Ward No. 7 and 8) and Ichok (Now Helambu Rural Municipality Ward No. 6 and 7). In the study, the unit of analysis was house hold as the research conducts on the family of a female migrant worker. The entire Sindhupalchowk district was the universe of sampling.

Data and methods

The research is based on descriptive cum analytical research approach accompanied by primary and secondary data. Labor migration is an important and effective instrument of poverty and unemployment reduction in least developed countries in the world. It is a tested instrument all over the world that additional employment can be created at least cost which still is the main concern of economists. In least developed countries in the world, there is a chronic scarcity of resources so that massive investment is not possible as of big push theory. Small level of investment is feasible in Nepal and our like country in the world.

This study is based on the primary as well as secondary data. Primary data was collected according to objectives from labor migration from Sindhupalchowk and secondary data was gathered from ward office, ministries, UNDP and so on.

Only two villages named Sangachok and Kadambas were selected for research. Most of the peoples were busy on their house hold work. They deserve the cultural norms and values along with social status. While doing interview, some of them were demanding money before to give answer. Some NGO/INGOs had given them money after completion their objective. So I was compelled to offer them tea and snacks. Very few numbers of people came to answer (40 out of 500 people in number).

The sample size for the study was 40 households. In village, it is difficult to collect large scale of data, so the proposed size is being considered as an average. Less than this also may be low level of data and may not get expected outcome. For the perfection of research report, this size is an accurate. A questionnaire can be designed to secure different types of primary data from the respondents: i) intentions ii) attitudes and opinions iii) activities or behavior and iv) demographic character (Wolff & Pant, 2007 p.200).

Result and discussion

Foreign Labor migration of women from Sindhupalchowk runs in the same vein. Initially, when the country opened up to the outer world in the 90s, more women had left to India for employment. However, most of them who went were either trafficked or ended up in brothels in cities. Such a tendency left women's employment to India stigmatized in the district. Any women leaving for employment in India would be considered as a prostitute

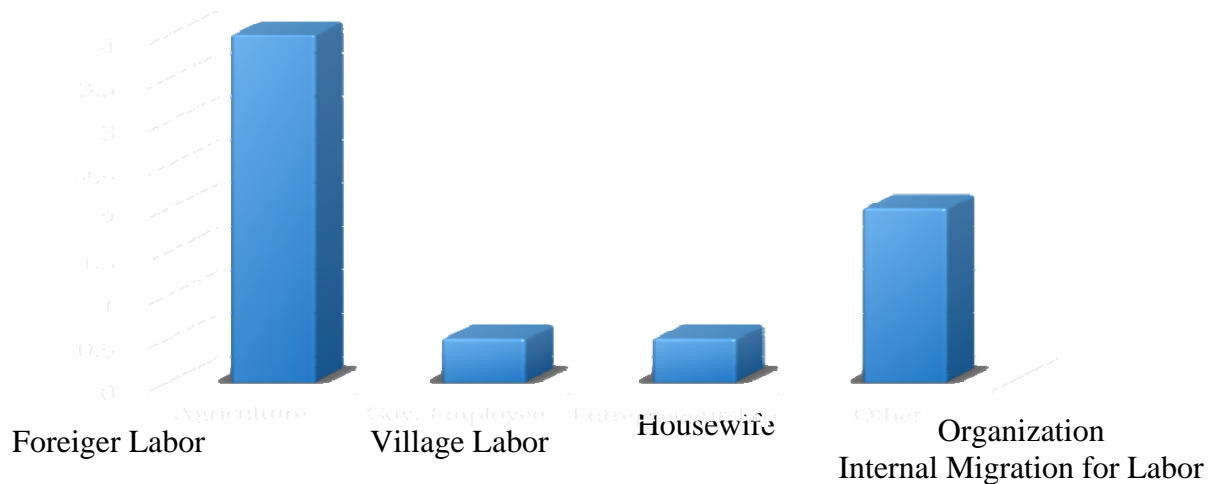
and ‘Bombay’ (now Mumbai) was almost the synonym for India to the district dwellers. In later years, especially after government opened foreign labor migration to Israel, India became a less favored option. Increasing demand for domestic workers acted as a catalyst to increased women's migration for employment in the gulf and the middle-east.

Poor economic condition and lack of education became the triggering factor for people to opt for economic opportunities abroad. Gender based violence became an added reason for women to leave for employment. Research shows that foreign employment was seen by people as a penance to the ills of poverty.

In case of choice of destination, more women chose the Gulf countries, particularly Kuwait. As much as 40% of families reported their family member/s were in Kuwait. One reason everyone seems to be opting for Kuwait, besides the relatively open government policies for women leaving for foreign employment in these countries, is the popular social understanding of people of these countries. For majority of villagers in Sindhupalchowk, Kuwait stands for the Gulf like Bombay for India. As a result of improved information and communication technology in the country catalyzed by mobile phones and internet, families reported that they were able to have regular communication with their migrated family members. Almost 58% of the respondents reported of owning a mobile phone. Such a high number of mobile phone users give an impression of the development of communication in Nepal that is able to connect the unconnected parts of the country nationally and globally.

Poverty

Poverty was the main cause of women labor migration in other countries especially in gulf countries of the world.



Study show that population going overseas for their heavy due to pay. Only 10% of populations are working in the village without any option. Other 10% are following their

traditional, social and cultural values. Remaining 30% of population is migrating to the city for the better opportunity as they expected.

Lack of vocational education

Migrant people are not taking any training before to move in foreign country. Though for them pre-departure orientation training is must. Graph of their education is also miserable.



The study shows that most of the female labor migrants are either just literate or have attained primary level of education. Only 19% had attended high school. Lack of higher education was reported as the cause to lack of economic opportunities in the district. Of the 93% of respondents who had at least one female member as foreign labor migrant, 58% mentioned that the incumbent female had gained primary level of education.

23% of all the families had a female migrant who had attended secondary level of education. 19% of the families reported that the incumbent had either attended high school or taken up vocational training before going abroad for employment. Lack of education set limits to economic opportunities for women which prompted them to leave for employment abroad. Foreign labor migration of women has elevated the economic status of their families. On the flip side it has created an added burden to other female members in their absence. Such a burden is more evident in a joint family. On the contrary, men are found to take part in the household chores and child rearing activities in a nuclear family.

However, if anything, women are able to step out of the threshold of their homes for employment means that they have economic independence compared to other women who stay at home. Nonetheless, women of ethnic groups enjoy relatively more social freedom compared to women of higher caste groups such as Brahmins and Chhetri. Hence, most women in Sindhupalchowk come from a hill ethnic family and enjoy relatively higher social freedom. Such social independence has worked in their favor as it allows them to cross their national and international boundaries to seek employment.

From the study at Sindhupalchowk area it has been known that labor migration has a long history. In the beginning people used to go to India. But today they are leaving for the gulf

and the middle-east which include both men and women. Women migration to India was previously perceived that women leaving for India were to be involved in prostitution. Social activists in the district said that, people perceived ‘India’ as a synonym for ‘Bombay’ and that was again the synonym for ‘prostitution’. Such a perception was the result of high rate of trafficking among women in the district who were lured by agents for employment in India and, sadly, ended up in brothels. However, nowadays female migrants are also migrating for employment in the countries other than India.

The perception of people on migration of female workers varies by social class and caste/ethnic background of people. Social perception regarding foreign employment of women still suffers from social stigma and women leaving for gulf or the middle-east are looked upon by high-caste people in the district. Countries like Australia, Japan and the US, however, are thought to be more respectable destinations.

The data reveals that women are more saving habits than their male counterpart. Their income level in households were increasing and able to pay their loan and can manage their small house and better provision of education to their children. In long run, this efforts may result in development of country. It is more clear with descriptive statistics can be compared as;

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of women migrant labor

After Migration		Before Migration	
Mean	261218.8	Mean	368744.75
Standard Error	12913.03321	Standard Error	12371.72076
Median	256045	Median	370512
Standard Deviation	81669.19289	Standard Deviation	78245.63238
Sample Variance	6669857067	Sample Variance	6122378987
Kurtosis	-1.372714968	Kurtosis	-1.277755235
Skewness	0.273795735	Skewness	-0.024083993
Range	249551	Range	247019
Minimum	150367	Minimum	250196
Maximum	399918	Maximum	497215
Sum	10448752	Sum	14749790
Count	40	Count	40

Source: Field Survey, 2020 & processed by Excel software

Foreign labor migration of women has given the migrant women some degree of authority over decision making regarding their child’s education in terms of whether their children should go to private schools with an increased income of the family. Many of them even enjoy certain degree of respect caused by their employed status and a much greater income compared to their spouse or male counterparts in the country. However, much of the major decisions were still made by men of the house.

Table 2 : Condition of household income of female labor migrant labor

	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
Mean	291790.75	362204.8
Variance	4776373099	4906216059
Observations	40	40
Pearson Correlation	-0.117248951	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	39	
t Stat	-4.28174342	
P(T<=t) one-tail	5.84434E-05	
t Critical one-tail	1.684875122	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000116887	
t Critical two-tail	2.02269092	

Source: Processing through Excel based on primary data, 2020

In table 2, mean income of household increasing significantly and p value (two tail) is statistically significant. Their work as migrant labor seems to fruitful when it is compared with their level of income.

While most of the respondents were female as the men were either out for work or not at home due to other reasons during the day, their views regarding female foreign labor migration went both ways. Almost all agreed that it was beneficial for the family's economic status as they were receiving money from the migrant member. Many families were able to pay off their debts already and could send children to good schools (private schools for that matter). Such perceptions were of the families where the incumbent was a daughter. However, families where a daughter-in-law had left for foreign employment viewed that it caused an added burden of child rearing and caring activities and taking care of household chores for the elderly in-laws of the incumbent. According to them, the male members, even if they had no jobs, were little or no help and it was the females either the mother or sister who took care of household chores.

Male perception on women leaving for foreign employment is no different. When asked about his views on the effects such independence to women might have on the social structure, one of the respondents replied: "When a woman leaves the house for foreign employment, usually it creates a mess. It is different with those who do not have children but it makes difficult for those who do. Having to do the household chores as well as take care of children such as feeding them, sending them schools leaves the household practically upside down."

References

- Bhachu, P., & Westwood, S. (Eds.). (1988). *Enterprising women: Ethnicity, economy, and gender relations*. London, England: Routledge.
- Chant, S., & Radcliffe, S. (1992). Migration and development: The importance of gender. In S. Chant (Ed.). *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries* (pp. 1-29). London and New York: Bellhaven Press.

- Charity, G. (1987). A day in the life of a single Spanish woman in West Germany. In H.C. Buechler, and J.M. Buechler (Eds.). *Migrants in Europe: The Role of Family, Labor, and Politics* (pp. 207-19). New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Cheng, S.A. (1999). Labor migration and international sexual division of labor: A feminist perspective. In G.A. Kelson and D.L. DeLaet (Eds.). *Gender and Immigration* (pp. 38-58). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Cox, P.R. (1976). *Demographic* (5th ed.). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Gautam, Tikaram (2013), *Ethnicity and Inequality: distribution of capability, employment and ownership; a contribution to ethnic debate in Nepal*. A Ph.d. thesis submitted to Central Department of Sociology TU, Kirtipur.
- HMG/Nepal (His Majesty's Government/Nepal) (1985). *Foreign Employment Act-1995*. Kathmandu, Nepal: HMG/Nepal.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P., & Cranford, C. (1999). Gender and migration. In J.S. Chafetz (Ed.). *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender* (pp. 105-127). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. Retrieved from <https://www.doi.org/10.1002/9781444351071.wbeghm354>
- Hugo, G. (1999). *Gender and migrations in Asian countries*. Liege, France: International Union for the Scientific Study of Population.
- Karki, R., Bhattarai, P., & Thapaliya, K. (2011). *Guidelines for dissertation writing*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus. Department of Sociology/Anthropology.
- Kibria, N. (1993). *Family tight rope: The changing lives of Vietnamese Americans*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lynne, B. (1986). Who moves: Women and migration in West Africa in the 1980s. In J. Eades (Ed.). *Migrants, Workers and the Social Order* (pp. 165-80). London, England: Tavistock Publications.
- Phizalacklea, A. (1983). *One way ticket: Migration and female labor*. London, England: Routledge.
- Ravenstein, E. G. (1989). The law of migration. *Journal of the Royal Statistics Society*. 48(2), 167-235.
- Ritzer, G. (2010). *Globalization: A basic text*. Wiley-Blackwell, USA: Chichester.
- Sharma, S. (2018). *Socio-economic perspective of migration* (Unpublished master's thesis). Trivhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Sharpe, P. (Ed). (2001). *Women, gender and labor migration: Historical perspectives*. London, England: Routledge.
- Shrestha, R. P. (2019). *Baideshik Rojgar Boardko Ek Dashak ra Bhawi karyakramharu*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Smarika.
- Sijapati, B., & Limbu, A. (2012). *Governing labor migration in Nepal: An analysis of existing policies and institutional mechanisms*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Centre for the Study of Labor and Mobility.
- Simon, R.J., & Brettel, C.B. (1986). *International migration: The female perspective*. Totowa, NJ: Rawman & Allanheld.
- Singh, M.L.(1998). Emigration from Nepal: Some major issues. *Journal of Population Development* (pp. 37-47).
- Thompson, W. (1953). *Population problems*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Book Company.
- Todaro, M.P. (1969). A model labor migration and urban employment in less developed countries. *American Economic Review*, 54.