

Problems and Perspectives of Foreign Migration in Rural

Nepal: A Case Study of Narja, Nuwakot

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Abstract

International migration stands as a significant livelihood strategy for individuals in developing countries such as Nepal. The primary objective of this study is to comprehend the underlying factors that drive foreign migration in Narja, Nuwakot. Employing a mixed-method approach, this study combines surveys with qualitative insights gathered through direct questionnaires and interviews conducted with respondents. Data collection took place in September 2023. Our findings revealed that foreign migration has emerged as a noteworthy phenomenon in Nuwakot, propelled by a combination of push and pull factors, including economic opportunities, unemployment, poverty, and aspirations for a better life. These factors collectively influenced the decision of Narja residents for international migration. In our study, a higher percentage of labor migrants were observed in the Gulf states, followed by Malaysia, Australia, USA, and Japan. The majority of these labor migrants were male and predominantly within the age group of 20-40 years. A

significant portion of applicants obtained their visas through Recruiting Agencies/Consultancies. Our results demonstrated that over 60.0% of migrants earned an income ranging from Rs. 50,000 to 1,00,000 per month and sent remittances to support their families' livelihoods. While these remittances play a crucial role in sustaining the local economy and enhancing living standards for families, in the long term, they may pose serious threats to the country's human resource and economy.

Keywords: foreign, migration, Narja, remittance, employment

Introduction

Migration encompasses the movement of people from one place to another, whether within a country (internal migration) or between countries (international migration). Several factors, including economic, social, political, and environmental aspects significantly influence people's decisions to relocate from one place to another. Primarily, individuals often migrate in pursuit of better employment, education, and social security, leading them to urban areas or other countries (Thomas, 2019; Fejes et al., 2022). Seeking improved living standards, access to resources, and higher income prospects can drive individuals or families to relocate to areas offering greater amenities and job opportunities. Additionally, environmental factors and personal reasons, such as family

reunification, also compel certain individuals to migrate (Ou-Salah et al., 2022).

These diverse factors collectively contribute to the dynamics of migration.

International migration stands as one of the prominent trends, particularly from developing countries to developed ones, a phenomenon notably observed in the context of Nepal. Limited employment opportunities within the country have led many Nepalese individuals to consider international migration as a key livelihood strategy. According to the 2021 Population Census Data, over 2 million Nepalese reside abroad, with more than 90% of them falling within the age group of 19-49 years. Statistics indicate that over 3,300 Nepalese depart for foreign employment daily (Nepalis Leave for Foreign Employment in a Day, 2023). The departure of these productive age groups poses a significant threat to the country's human resources. Primarily, Nepalese migrate abroad for employment and education opportunities, with the youth being prominent among these migrants. Both the push and pull factors of migration contribute to encouraging Nepalese youth to seek opportunities in destination countries. The Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) has approved 110 countries as destinations for labor migration. However, a greater percentage of Nepalese migrants are observed in Gulf States, Malaysia, India, USA, UK, Kuwait, Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea, and various European countries (Nepal brief, 2019; Nepalis Leave for Foreign Employment in a Day, 2023; Nepal Labor

Migration Trends and Outlook, 2023). Foreign employment migration has emerged as a major source of income for Nepal, as migrant workers have been remitting over US\$ 5 billion annually for the past decade, with remittances received by Nepal showing an increasing trend each year (World Bank Open Data, 2023). Despite the opportunities foreign employment provides in terms of higher salaries and social benefits, migrant workers often experience feelings of isolation and emotional stress due to prolonged separation from their families. The continuous loss of intellectual and productive manpower from the country poses significant threats in the long run.

Foreign migration rates from Nepal are evident nationwide; however, this present study focuses on one of the rural areas in central Nepal, Narja. This study holds high significance due to its originality in targeting a phenomenon existing in our country but receiving little attention in research, using Narja as a representative case study. Narja is one of the densely populated wards in Tandri Rural Municipality, Nuwakot district, Nepal. The total population of Tandri Rural Municipality is 15,933, with Narja accounting for about 14.65% of the municipality's population (CBS, 2021). According to the 2021 Census Data, the population growth rate of Narja has decreased by 6.6% over a decade (CBS, 2011; 2021), potentially influenced by various factors, including migration. This study aims to examine the detailed status of foreign migration

in Narja, alongside exploring the associated problems and perspectives linked with migration.

Materials and Methods

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection. To achieve this, sets of questionnaires were prepared, comprising a blend of qualitative and quantitative questions. These questionnaires encompassed information concerning respondents and migrant individuals.

Primary data were gathered through fieldwork employing scheduled questionnaires, observations, and interviews. The data was collected from 50 households in the study area. Furthermore, the study incorporated supplementary data from various sources. Following the collection of primary and secondary data, statistical analysis was conducted using EXCEL.

The study is empirically based on Narja village, which is situated within the Tadi Rural Municipality of Nuwakot District in the Bagmati Province, Nepal. Geographically, the municipality covers an area of 69.80 square kilometers, located at 27°55'16"N latitude and 85°18'27"E longitude within the Nuwakot district. It is bordered by Suryagadhi Rural Municipality to the west, Dupcheswor Rural Municipality to the east, Panchakanya Rural Municipality to the south, and Rasuwa district to the north. Tandi Rural Municipality comprises 6 wards, with Narja positioned in Ward No. 5. It stands out as one of the most

populated wards in the municipality. The population of Tandi Rural Municipality totals 15,933, with Narja accounting for approximately 14.65% of the municipality's total population (CBS, 2021). There are 402 households in this ward, with an average family size of 5.1 members per household (CBS, 2021).

Results and Discussion

It includes information about respondents and migrants. Data was collected from 50 households in the study area (N=50). The results are illustrated in tabulated form (Table 1-6).

Table 1.

Age, gender, marital status, education level and relation of migrants to the respondents

Age-group	Number	Percent
20-29	11	22.0
30-39	23	46.0
40-49	14	28.0
50 and above	2	4.0
Gender	Number	Percent
Male	19	38.0
Female	31	62.0
Status	Number	Percent
Unmarried	6	12.0
Married	41	82.0
Separated	3	6.0

Level of education	Number	Percent
Primary	22	44.0
Lower-secondary	8	16.0
Secondary	5	10.0
Higher-secondary	9	18.0
Bachelor and above	6	12.0

Relation	Number
Husband	14
Wife	2
Son/Daughter	18
Father	12
Mother	4

Source: Field Survey 2023

The majority of respondents fall into the 30-39 age group, followed by the 40-49, 20-29, and above 50 age groups. The majority of respondents were female. The marital status of the majority of the respondents was found to be married. Regarding the education level of respondents, we found that the majority have only completed primary education. Additionally, we inquired about family members who have been abroad, and our study showed that mostly sons/daughters of the family members have been abroad, followed by husbands and fathers.

Table 2.

Family type and age-group in family member

Family type	Number	Percent
Nuclear	27	54.0

	Joint	23	46.0	
Age-group	0-9	10-18	19-59	60 and above
Percent	30.11	31.67	15.83	22.39

Source: Field Survey 2023

The majority of the respondents' family type was found to be nuclear. Among the family members, most of them are in the 0-18 age group. The 19-59 age group was found to have a lower number in the family.

Table 3.

Destination country, average amount of money paid (migration cost), and mode of going abroad

Country	Number	Percent	Cost (Rs.)
Gulf states	17	34.0	260,000
Malaysia	7	14.0	300,000
Kuwait	2	4.0	475,000
USA	5	10.0	2,800,000
Australia	6	12.0	2,000,000
Japan	5	10.0	1,200,000
Korea	3	6.0	400,000
Canada	3	6.0	3,000,000
European countries	1	2.0	2,200,000
India	1	2.0	30,000

Means	Number	Percent
Relatives/friends	1	2.0
Manpower/Consultancy	47	94.0
Own efforts	2	4.0

Source: Field Survey 2023

The present study showed that most migrants go to Gulf states and Malaysia, followed by Australia, the USA, and Japan. We also inquired with respondents about the approximate amount migrants need to pay for going abroad. The maximum amount to pay is for Canada, which is Rs. 3 million followed by 2.8, 2.2, 2.0, and 1.2 million for the USA, European countries, Australia, and Japan, respectively. For their visa processing, the majority of migrants (94.0%) applied through a Manpower agency/Consultancy. Very few migrants (2.0%) had been abroad through their own efforts.

Table 4.

Reasons for going abroad

Push factors	Number	Percent
Unemployment	7	14.0
Poverty	11	22.0
Conflict	1	2.0
Loan burden	10	20.0
Pull factors	Number	Percent
Employment	10	20.0
Better living standard	5	10.0
Better education/health	6	12.0

Source: Field Survey 2023

The present study showed that both push and pull factors compelled the people of Narja to migrate abroad. In push factors, unemployment, poverty, and loan burdens are the main causes for migration. Meanwhile, in pull factors,

employment, a better living standard, and improved education/health are the main reasons for migration.

Table 5.

Technical skills, occupation at the destination country, and monthly salary of migrants

Technical skills	Number	Percent
Yes	20	40.0
No	30	60.0
Work	Number	Percent
Technical	4	8.0
Labor	15	30.0
Official	1	2.0
Security guard	9	18.0
Academic	21	42.0
Monthly income (Rs.)	Number	Percent
50,000-1 100,000	31	62.0
100,000-200,000	8	16.0
200,000-300,000	9	18.0
> 300,000	2	4.0

Source: Field Survey 2023

We asked respondents whether they acquire any technical skills before going for foreign migration. Our results showed that the majority of migrants don't have any technical skills before going abroad. Most migrants go abroad for study, followed by labor work and security guard positions. Regarding the monthly income of remitters in foreign countries, more than 60% of migrants

earn between Rs. 50,000 and 100,000 per month. Only a very few (4%) migrants earn more than Rs. 300,000 per month.

Table 6.

Frequency of sending and patterns of spending remittances

Duration	Number	Percent
Every month	23	46.0
Quarterly	15	30.0
Semi-annually	9	18.0
Anually	3	6.0

Ways	Number	Percent
Housing	21	42.0
Investment	3	6.0
Loan repaying	18	36.0
Land purchase	8	16.0

Source: Field Survey 2023

The frequency of receiving funds by respondents was inquired. The majority receive money monthly from their relatives who are abroad. Only a very few migrants (6.0%) send remittances annually. Additionally, respondents were also asked about how remitters spend their income in their homeland. The majority of migrants spend their income on housing, followed by repaying loans and purchasing land.

There are various factors that compel people to migrate to other countries (Thomas, 2019; Fejes et al., 2022). This study aimed to explore both the

pushing and pulling factors that led individuals to migrate abroad. Specifically, poverty, unemployment, and burden of family loan were identified as the major pushing factors for migration (Table 4). Conversely, factors such as employment opportunities and a higher standard of living were pulling factors which attract people to migrate abroad (Table 4). The destination countries for labor migration have undergone changes over the past three decades. Until 1990, India was the primary destination for Nepalese labor migration.

However, the current trend has shifted towards Gulf States, Malaysia, and other developed countries (Adhikari et al., 2023), which aligns with our study findings (Table 3). Foreign employment can offer increased opportunities with higher salaries and various social benefits, allowing young individuals to stay for longer periods, with many aspiring to obtain permanent residency in their respective host countries.

Nepalese migrants frequently remit money back to their home countries, contributing significantly to their economies and improving the living standards of their families (Tables 5, 6). However, simultaneously, migrant workers often experience isolation and emotional **stress** due to prolonged separation from their families. This emotional aspect needs careful consideration. Migrant workers abroad encounter various challenges (Adhikari et al., 2022; 2023). The formulation and effective implementation of

appropriate migration policies are essential in addressing these issues. However, the Nepalese government faces challenges in adequately implementing such policies. It is crucial for the government to take a proactive role in foreign employment, integrating and adhering to the principles of economic diplomacy.

Conclusions

The majority of people who migrate to other countries are hardworking, intellectual, educated, and highly skilled, leading to a loss of productive and skilled manpower from Nepal. In our study area also, most of the foreign migrants were educated, high skilled and belong to productive age group (20-40 years). The government of Nepal needs to address this issue by preventing the outflow of such productive manpower and offering opportunities within Nepal that align with their qualifications and skills. The continued migration of skilled individuals over the next few years could result in a significant loss of human capital, ultimately impacting the socio-economic value in the study area (Narja) and undoubtedly affecting the country as a whole. Such circumstances might force the country to rely on importing foreign goods, services, and even basic necessities, leading to potentially devastating consequences in the near future. Hence, it is imperative for the Government of Nepal to focus on retaining the country's youth by providing employment and

improved opportunities domestically. Most citizens would prefer not to immigrate to other countries if they find better opportunities in their homeland. Therefore, the government should prioritize measures aimed at keeping the youth within the country.

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