

Research Article

Effects of Foreign Labour Migration on Left Behind Their Children

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Abstract

This paper based on Effects of Foreign Labour Migration especially focus on their Children” and objective of examining the effects of foreign labour migration on the left their children. It helps to understand the economic, social and demographic effects on the left behind family members, particularly spouses located in Ward No. 4, Gauradaha Municipality of Jhapa district. Quantitative data from 150 respondents, particularly spouses and parents of the foreign labour migrants, have been collected by employing a structured questionnaire and scheduled interview technique. It uses census method for data collection. This study illustrates that majority of the migrants are Limbu and Tamang males motivated by economic push factors and social pull factors to migrate abroad. Malaysia (56%), Quater (25%) are main destination countries. Average household wealth score and household income have both increased after foreign labour migration. The left behind spouses are more comfortable talking to their family members instead of other people and institutions located in the community regarding the social discrimination that they experience. Given that these effects are diverse, balancing them requires comprehensive government policies that address the specific needs of families left behind. Community level awareness is necessary to educate the people regarding the challenges faced by left behind spouses and to dispel the negative stereotypes pertaining to foreign labour migration. It is necessary to consider the diverse challenges associated with left behind children.

Keywords

Labour Migration, Education, Health Left Behind Migration and Pull and Push Factors

1. Introduction

Migration is the process of changing the usual place of dwelling. Along with fertility and mortality, it is a significant component of change in demography. Labour migration is defined as the movement of people from their home state to another state for employment [2]. There are several reasons why individuals choose to migrate for work, including improved employment prospects, greater earnings, and better living conditions. In 2019 A.D, there were 169 million international migrant laborers globally, which consisted of 4.9

per cent of the global labour force in the countries of destination [3].

The Nepalese government has recognized the importance of foreign labor migration for the country's economy and has introduced various policies and programs to support migrant workers and their families. The Nepalese government has facilitated the labor migration process through various acts, rules, policies and agreements with other countries. The government has established the Foreign Employment Act and

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Foreign Employment Rules, which governs foreign labor migration in Nepal. Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) is the main government body in Nepal, which is responsible for formulating policies, laws and guidelines that manage and regulate foreign labour migration in Nepal. However, the sector also faces significant challenges, including issues related to the recruitment process, working conditions, and the social, psychological and economic effects on left-behind family members [4].

Foreign labour migration in Nepal has been driven by various factors, including high unemployment rates, low wages, poverty, and political instability [6]. In Nepal, labor migration is seen as a means of subsistence. It is dominated by men and has roots in colonial history [5].

The history of foreign labour migration in Nepal initiated from 1814-1816 A.D, following the Anglo-Nepalese war. A total of 4,650 Nepalese youths were recruited in the British-Gurkha regiment after the war ended and Sugauli Treaty of 1816 A.D was signed [7]. The recruitment of Nepali men into the Indian army was made possible by the 1947 Agreement between the governments of India, Nepal, and Britain. Thus, the practice of enlisting young Nepalese people in foreign armies (the British and Indian as well as the Singapore police) persists even after two centuries [7]. Treaty of Peace and Friendship between India and Nepal of 1950 A. D established unrestricted travel between the two countries, without a need for documents like passports or visas. The population of Nepalese migrants expanded throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, settling in Bhutan, Burma, Malaysia (then known as Malaya), Thailand, Bangladesh (then a part of India), and Tibet. While most Nepalese migrants to Tibet were traders, those who migrated to Malaysia worked on plantations producing rubber, sugar, and palm oil. Similarly, in Thailand, Nepalese migrants were employed at major Bangkok marketplaces [7]. As reported in the NLSS 2010/11, more than a half (53%) of households in Nepal have at least one absentee living within or outside the nation. According to the census data, between 2001 A.D and 2011 A.D, the number of Nepalese residing outside of the nation has increased by more than twofold [7].

Labour migration in Nepal is predominantly male while the proportion of female migrants has been increasing over the recent years [9]. According to the preliminary 2021 Census Data, a total of 2.2 million Nepalese are abroad, out of which 81.28 percent are male and 18.72 percent are female [1]. Out of 77 Districts, five districts i.e. Kathmandu, Kailali, Jhapa, Rupandehi and Morang have the highest proportion of Nepalese who were abroad in 2020 A.D. Nonetheless, the top five districts in 2021–2022 where Nepali migrant laborers originated were Dhanusha, Jhapa, Siraha, Sarlahi, and Mahottari [10].

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men and has roots in colonial history [7]. Growing differences in wealth, human rights, security, and income between nations act as push factors for migration [8]. The economic growth in the Middle East over the last two decades, which led to increased demand for laborers, subsequently increasing the rate of foreign labor migration from Nepal, is considered as a key pull factor [11].

Malaysia and the six GCC nations continue to be the most sought-after locations for Nepali labor migration, accounting for more than 85 percent of the laborers migrating from Nepal [9]. Since 2008/09, DoFE has granted over 4 million "new entry" labor approvals to Nepali workers seeking employment abroad. Similarly, over 11.8 million labor approvals have been renewed since 2011/12 [10]. The majority of Nepal's migrant labor force consists of young adults, with half falling between the ages of 25 and 34, which is the economically most productive age group [10].

The total labor approvals granted in 2022–2023 was 630,089. Similarly, the proportion of women receiving labour approval was 10 per cent in 2021/22. The median age of migrant workers was 28.4 years. Saudi Arabia was the most popular destination for migrant workers from all the provinces in 2021–2022. The most popular destination countries for Nepalese migrant workers were six Gulf council countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE) followed by Malaysia and Japan. According to the same report, the migration of workers from the South Asia to Malaysia in 2022 was also highest for Nepal [10].

Foreign labor migration can have both positive and negative effects on the economies and societies involved. On the one hand, it can provide an important source of income for individuals and families and can help to boost economic growth in both sending and receiving countries. It can also lead to cultural exchange and the sharing of ideas and skills.

Despite several benefits, there are also social and emotional costs of foreign labour migration. The separation of family members, estrangement in husband-wife relationships, dispute between the families' members for control over resources, tainting the image of the wife left behind etc. are some of the challenges families must deal with [12].

Foreign Labour Migration is a way of livelihood for many Nepalese households. Foreign labor migration can have different effects on left behind men, women, children and the elders. The absence of a family member due to migration can have significant effects on the emotional and social well-being of left-behind family members, especially spouses, elders and children. Women may have to take on additional responsibilities in the household, which can affect their own work and career opportunities. Men may feel a sense of loss of their traditional role as breadwinner, which can affect their mental health. Children might feel abandoned, and the elders may not get proper care in the absence of able-bodied adults in the household. Thus, it is important to understand the relation between foreign labour migration, overall wellbeing of the left

behind family members and how it affects development.

Several studies having been conducted in other parts of Nepal regarding the effects of labour migration on migrants' households and empirical literatures suggest that there are needs for further studies regarding this matter. In addition, there have been no previous studies conducted on Gauradaha Municipality, Ward No. 4, focusing on the effects of foreign labour migration on the left behind their children. There is still unavailability of foreign labour migration related official documents at this ward office. This study will thus help to fill the gap in available data by understanding the effects of foreign labour migration on the left behind family members of the migrant households of the study area. This study will be important because it can be used as a tool for understanding the positive or negative effects of foreign labor migration. It is possible to use the results obtained from this study for better understand the effects of migration, developing and implementing effective policies that promote economic growth, social cohesion, and political stability which will ultimately enhance the quality of life of the people.

2. Research Questions

The research questions associated with this study are as follows:

- 1) What are the effects of foreign labour migration on the left behind their children?
- 2) What kind of socio-economic and demographic effects of foreign labour migration can be identified on the left behind children?

3. Objectives

The specific objectives are as follows:

- 1) To understand the demographic effects of foreign labour migration on the left behind their children.
- 2) To examine the socio-economic effects of foreign labour migration on the left behind their children.

4. Methodology

A descriptive and cross-sectional research design has been conducted in order to identify various economic (remittance, household income, household expenses), social (change in family dynamics/ roles and responsibilities, community level effects), educational (effects on children regarding their ed-

ucation) and demographic (household composition, gender roles) effects of foreign labour migration on the left behind their children and family. The primary respondents are children. The nature of the data used both primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been collected from the field survey. Similarly, secondary data have been gathered from books, journals, articles and reports have been used for literature reviews. Quantitative data has been collected from the left behind children and family. Total sample size for the study is 150 respondents. Complete household listing has been done in order to determine the total number of households from which at least one person has migrated to a foreign country for employment. There are 152 households in Ward No. 4 from which at least one person has migrated to a foreign country for employment. Census method has been applied to select the left behind children age group 6 to 18 years. Although majority of the population in the study area belong to Janajati specifically Limbu and Tamang Caste. For the collection of quantitative data for this study, a structured questionnaire with close ended questions has been developed. Data collection has been performed by using Kobo based electronic application called Kobo Collect. After the data collection, the raw data has been cleaned for any discrepancies and ready to entry into Computer software. Finally, data has been analyzed by using SPSS 26 version software. Data analysis for this study is mainly based on descriptive type of analysis. The results are presented by frequency tables and cross tabulations, and other necessary information from edited and cleaned dataset. Then analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data in the forms of tables have been prepared.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1. Socio-demographic and Economic Characteristics

UAE has been separated from other GCC countries in this study due to its better economic indicators and standard of living. All the European countries, USA, Canada, Australia, Japan and South Korea have been categorized as industrialized countries. Table 1 shows that more than half (56%) of the foreign labour migrants' destination country was Malaysia while almost a fifth (19%) went to industrialized countries. Destination for more than a tenth (14%) were Gulf countries excluding UAE. Destination for a tenth (10%) was UAE.

Table 1. *Distribution of Foreign Labour Migrant's Destination Countries based on their Gender.*

Migrant's Destination Countries	Migrant's Gender (%)		
	Male	Female	Total
Malaysia	52.34	77.27	56.00
GCC countries excluding UAE	17.19	0	14.67
Industrialized countries	19.53	18.18	19.33
UAE	10.94	4.55	10.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Slightly less than half (52%) of males migrated to Malaysia while more than three quarters (77%) of women migrated to Malaysia for employment. Almost a fifth (19.5%) of males migrated to industrialized countries while slightly less than a fifth (18%) of females migrated there. A quarter (25%) of the males migrated to GCC countries including UAE. None of the

female migrated to other GCC countries apart from UAE. More than a tenth (11%) of the males migrated to UAE and a small proportion (4.5%) of the females migrated to UAE, mainly to cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi for employment.

Table 2. *Distribution of Average Monthly Income of the Foreign Labour Migrants based on Destination Countries.*

Destination Countries	Estimated Monthly Income		
	Mean Monthly Income (NPR)	SD	Frequency
Malaysia	56,300	10,330	80
GCC excluding UAE	69,545	13,175	22
Industrial countries	1,26,852	48,894	27
UAE	68,667	15,523	15

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The highest average monthly income of the foreign labour migrants was for industrialized countries, which was around NPR 1,26,852. Meanwhile the lowest average monthly income was for Malaysia, which was NPR 56,300.

Table 3. *Distribution of Problems in Migrants' Households Before and After FLM.*

List of Problems	Before FLM (%)	After FLM (%)
Financial instability/Unstable Jobs	32.50	0
Indebtedness	40.00	96.30
Family pressure	1.00	3.70
Limited opportunities	2.50	0
Unemployment	23.50	0
Others	0.50	0

List of Problems	Before FLM (%)	After FLM (%)
Total	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Indebtedness was the predominant problem in the migrant's household before FLM, which accounted for less than half (40%). Indebtedness accounted for a large majority (96%) of the problems after FLM. The reason for this is that a significant number of the respondents reported that the migrants borrowed money from friends and relatives and took out loan from financial institutions for FLM.

Financial instability or unstable jobs were problems in the migrant's household before FLM in almost a third (32.5%) of the cases. Interestingly, none of the respondents reported having faced the same problem after FLM. Similarly, unemployment comprised of almost a quarter (23.5%) of all the problems before FLM. However, in none of the cases the respondents reported unemployment as a problem after FLM.

Table 4. Distribution of Average Monthly Remittance based on Migrant's Destination Countries.

Destination Countries	Average Monthly Remittance (NPR)	SD	Frequency
Malaysia	33,485	17,808	82
GCC excluding UAE	45,000	13,323	21
Industrialized countries	46,131	21,358	28
UAE	46,333	16,952	15
Total	38,887	18,765	146

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Average monthly remittance received for all destination countries is NPR 38,887. It was highest for UAE, which was NPR 46,333. This is followed by remittance received from industrialized countries, which was NPR 46,131. The lowest remittance received was for Malaysia, which was NPR 33,485. This shows that the migrants from Malaysia were likely to send less remittance compared to those who travelled to other countries.

Almost two-thirds (63%) of the respondents reported that the proportion of remittance out of the total household income was three quarters. Furthermore, a fifth (20%) reported that the proportion of remittance was half. Similarly, just over a tenth (12%) reported that the proportion was whole. Only a small proportion (5%) of the respondents reported that the proportion was one quarter. The remittances covered a substantial portion of the household's monthly income.

Table 5. Distribution of Changes in Monthly Household Expenditure.

Items	Percentage Change (%)				Total
	Increased Significantly	Increased Slightly	Decreased Slightly	Remained the Same	
Food	5.33	61.33	8.00	25.33	100.00
Healthcare	2.00	35.33	0.67	62.00	100.00
Education	12.00	36.67	0	51.33	100.00
Festivals	22.00	58.00	0.67	19.33	100.00
Others	8.67	64.67	0	26.67	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Just under two-thirds (61%) reported that the household expenditure on food increased slightly while a quarter (25%) reported that it remained the same. Less than a tenth (8%) reported that the food expenditure decreased slightly and a small proportion (5%) reported that it increased significantly after FLM.

Similarly, just under two-thirds (62%) reported that the household expenditure on healthcare remained the same. Meanwhile, more than a third (35%) reported that the healthcare expenditure increased slightly. A small proportion reported that it increased significantly and that it decreased slightly after FLM.

5.2. Effects of Foreign Labour Migration on the Left Behind Children

FLM can lead to changes in caregiving arrangements and

the left behind children can face challenges associated with access to education, healthcare, counseling and other essential services. This section discusses primary caregivers of left behind children in the household after FLM, change in left behind children's school performance/grades after FLM, left behind children's educational institution before and after FLM and educational support to left behind children at home after FLM. It also discusses about the type of left behind children's current schooling based on remittance received by the household and the communication between the foreign labour migrants and their left behind children based on average duration of the migration.

During the survey, two-thirds (67%) of the respondents reported that they had left behind children in the household.

Table 6. *Distribution of Primary Caregiver of Left Behind Children in the Household after FLM.*

Primary Caregiver's Relation to Left Behind Children	Frequency	Percent (%)
Father	14	13.86
Mother	84	83.17
Grandmother	2	1.98
Other household members	1	0.99
Total	101	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The majority (83%) reported mothers and almost 14 percent reported fathers as the primary caregivers of the left behind children after FLM. A small proportion reported grandmothers and other household members as primary

caregivers of the children after FLM. This illustrates that majority of the left behind spouses took on the responsibility of childcare after their spousal FLM.

Table 7. *Distribution of Change in Left Behind Children's School Performance/ Grades after FLM.*

Change in Children's School Performance/Grades	Frequency	Percent (%)
Significantly better than before	12	11.88
Slightly better than before	33	32.67
Significantly worse than before	1	0.99
Slightly worse than before	4	3.96
Same as before	39	38.61
Not applicable/ Does not go to school/	12	11.88
Total	101	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

More than a third (39%) of the respondents reported that the children's school performance was the same as before. In the meantime, a third (33%) reported that their school performance was slightly better than before. Over a tenth (12%) reported that their school performance was significantly better than before while the same proportion of children did not go

to school. A small proportion (4%) reported that the children's school performance was slightly worse than before. Only around 1 percent reported that the children's school performance was significantly worse than before. This illustrates that in general school performance improved among majority of the children left behind after FLM.

Table 8. *Distribution of Left behind Children's Educational Institutions Before and After FLM.*

Left Behind Children's Educational Institution	Before FLM (%)	After FLM (%)
Government school	79.21	73.27
Private School	7.92	18.81
Not applicable/ Does not go to school	12.87	7.92
Total	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

More than three-quarters (79%) of the children went to government school before FLM while this declined to less than three-quarters (73%) after FLM. Similarly, less than a tenth (8%) of the children went to private school before FLM

and this increased to almost a fifth (19%) after FLM. This shows the increase in proportion of left behind children going to private schools after foreign labour migration.

Table 9. *Distribution of Educational Support to Left Behind Children at Home after FLM.*

Adults that Assist Children with Studies	Before FLM (%)	After FLM (%)
Parents	68.32	45.54
People other than parents	15.84	40.59
No one	1.98	4.95
Not applicable	13.86	8.91
Total	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

More than two-thirds (68%) of the parents assisted children with their studies before FLM while this proportion declined to just under a half (45.5%) after FLM. Around 16 percent of the people other than parents assisted children with their studies before FLM. This proportion increased to almost half (41%) after FLM. The proportion of children getting no assistance in their studies increased from around 2 percent to around 5 percent after FLM. This shows that an increasing number of children left behind depended upon people other than parents for education related assistance at home. In ad-

dition, an increasing number of children received no assistance for their studies at home.

The average remittance was around NPR 39,622 per month for households that sent left behind children to government school while it was around NPR 52,895 per month for those who sent the left behind children to private school. This shows that households that received more remittances were more likely to send their children to private school when compared to those that received less remittances.

Table 10. Distribution of Communication between Foreign Labour Migrants and their Left Behind Children based on Average Duration of Migration.

Frequency of Communication	Mean Duration (Months)	SD	Frequency
Daily	38.49	29.59	53
A few times a week	37.88	26.59	25
Once a week	47	52.51	9
Monthly	126	8.485	2
More than a month	133	0	1
Total	42.16	34.89	90

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The frequency of communication between the foreign labour migrants and their left behind children likely decreases as the duration of the migration increases. As far as support system for left behind children to deal with their parents' absence is concerned, three-quarters (75%) of the respondents reported that such systems were available while over a tenth (14%) reported that such systems were not available. The remaining respondents reported that such systems were not required. This illustrates that although majority of the children left behind had support system available at home to deal their parental absence, there were few children, who were in need of such support system at home.

6. Conclusions

FLM can be a boon and a bane. On the boon side, FLM brought economic and social benefits to the left-behind family members. Remittances contributed towards improvement in economic well-being of the migrant households and enabled them to invest towards essential needs such as children's education, healthcare, festivals and productive use such as housing and savings. In addition, foreign labour migrants played an important role in household decision-making. Similarly, the school performance improved among majority of the children left behind after FLM. Majority of the left behind spouses had the availability of smart phones and internet to communicate with their migrant spouse to cope with separation on a frequent basis. In addition, households that sent left behind children to private school received marginally more remittances than those who went to the government school. This indicates that the households were likely spending more money on children's education than before. On the other hand, the proportion of the left behind children who did not have any supervision at home for their studies increased after FLM. Similarly, the children left behind were still in need of support systems such as guidance from family and counseling to help cope

with their parents' absence. It also illustrates that factors such migrant's education level and the country of destination can be determining factors in how and where the remittances are used. Given that the effects of FLM are complex and multifaceted, balancing these effects requires comprehensive and well-thought-out policies that address the diverse challenges associated with FLM.

Abbreviations

FLM.	Foreign Labour Migration
IOM	International Organization of Migration
ILO	International Labour Organization

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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