

Original Article

Exploring the Relationships between Parents' Foreign Employment and Children's School Education in Nepal

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Abstract: Employment is a general agreement between employer and employee, such that the employee provides certain services and the employer in return pays salary or hourly wage to the employee for the exercising their services. The foreign employment commonly known as temporary migration is the process of going from home country to foreign country with the intention of working and earning foreign currency. This study examined the intricate dynamics between parents' foreign employment and children's school education in Nepal. With a long history of labor migration, Nepal has seen a significant flow in international migration in recent years, prompting concerns about its impact on familial life and children's well-being. Drawing upon existing literature and qualitative research methods, this study explores how parental migration affects children's educational experiences, emotional well-being, and familial support structures. Through interviews with children, the study revealed a range of emotional responses among children, including feelings of loneliness, insecurity, and longing for their absent parents. However, some children also highlight the positive aspects of parental migration, such as increased family income and financial support for education. However, the absence of parental support presents challenges for some children, affecting their school performance and emotional health. Familial support, particularly from mothers and elder siblings, emerges as a crucial mitigating factor, providing encouragement and assistance with schoolwork. This study informed the educational policies and social interventions aimed at promoting the well-being and educational attainment of children left behind by migrant parents in Nepal. Overall, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between parental migration and children's school education, highlighting the importance of familial support and targeted interventions in mitigating the impact on children's lives.

Keywords: Foreign, employment, parents, transnational, relationship

1. INTRODUCTION

Employment is a general agreement between employer and employee, such that the employee provides certain services and the employer in return pays salary or hourly wage to the employee for the exercising their services. The foreign employment commonly known as temporary migration is the process of going from home country to foreign country with the intention of working and earning foreign currency [1]. Nepal has a comparatively larger and growing population of international migrants. People moving from one area to another is normal, just like our ancestors did for a better life. Nepal has a long history of foreign labor migration. For nearly 200 years, Nepali men (and to some extent women) have left home in search of employment and are living abroad. Even before joining the British-Indian Army Nepalese youths used to go to India, Bhutan, Burma [2]. Officially, the history of

foreign employment reflects that opting for foreign employment began with the establishment of First Gorkha Regiment by the British East India Company after the end of Anglo-Nepal war on 24 April 1815. At present, the system of globalization and gradual liberalization of the political system in the country, larger number of Nepalese youths and families started to exit from the country in search of better opportunities to support their families migrating outside Nepal for work is more beneficial than farming. Foreign employment plays an important role in absorbing the growing labor force against the backdrop that income from remittances has helped boost food security for most rural households [3]. According to the national census 2021 nearly 2.1 million Nepalis live outside Nepal, comprising 7.4 percent of the total population. In 2023, a total of 808,415 Nepalis left the country for foreign employment. According to the Department's data, 723,789 men and 84,604 women left Nepal for foreign employment, while 108,542 individuals went abroad for studies [4]. Similarly, around 550,000 people have acquired work permits for overseas employment as of April 12 of the current fiscal year 2023/24 (Foreign Employment Department, April 21, 2024). The main provisions of the Foreign Employment Act in Nepal, specifically the Foreign Employment Act, 2007 and its amendment, the Foreign Employment Rules, 2019, include regulations to ensure safe, managed, and decent foreign employment practices. The Act prohibits individuals fewer than eighteen years old from engaging in foreign employment, establishes the Foreign Employment Department, and mandates skilled training from government-recognized agencies. It also requires orientation training before departure, provides for compensation, a foreign employment welfare fund, and the Foreign Employment Promotion Board chaired by the Labor and Transport Management Minister [5]. These provisions aim to regulate the foreign employment sector and safeguard the well-being of Nepalese workers abroad. As per Article 39 of the Constitution of Nepal, children are entitled to fundamental rights. They have the right to name and birth registration, ensuring their identity. Additionally, they are guaranteed access to education, health care, maintenance, proper care, sports, entertainment, and overall personality development from both families (parents) and the State. Moreover, children have the right to elementary child development and participation, emphasizing their holistic growth (Constitution of Nepal, Article 39). Parent's migration often results in family dysfunction and adverse child psychological outcomes. Children affected by migration are at a great risk of suffering from a broad range of psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, loneliness and negative self-perception; they may also exhibit behavioral problems [6, 7]. There are psychological and behavioral problems in left-behind children of migrant workers. Left behind children of migrant workers were more vulnerable to have psychological problems which will have long lasting impact on overall psychosocial life of child and adolescent [8,9]. Poverty, unemployment, climate change, conflict, insecurity, political instability, marital issues, and high expectations have led to migration to cities and industrial foreign countries in Nepal. This has impacted family structure, children, aging parents, health, marital relationships, and livelihood, affecting the left-behind family members [10,11]. In recent decades, Nepal has witnessed a significant surge in foreign employment, with a growing number of parents seeking opportunities abroad to improve their economic circumstances. This phenomenon, while potentially enhancing financial stability for families, has raised concerns about its consequences on various aspects of familial life. Of particular interest is the impact of parents' foreign employment on the education of their children left behind. This research seeks to delve into the intricate relationships between parents' migration for work and the educational experiences of their children within the Nepalese context. As the World Bank (2019) notes, the migration of parents can have diverse effects on the well-being and development of children, with the educational sector being a key domain of concern. The dynamics of how parental migration influences children's academic achievements, attendance, and overall educational experiences warrant a comprehensive examination. The trend of parental migration has become a prominent feature of Nepal's socio-economic landscape, with remittances playing a crucial role in the national economy. However, as parents pursue employment opportunities abroad, their children often contend with a

many of challenges, including emotional adjustments, changes in family dynamics, and, significantly, the potential implications for their academic pursuits. The nexus between parental migration and children's school education is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that merits comprehensive exploration [12, 13]. Drawing upon existing scholarship on transnational migration and its repercussions on family structures and child development, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the subject. By focusing specifically on the Nepalese context, the research endeavors to offer insights into the unique socio-cultural factors influencing the relationship between parents' foreign employment and children's educational outcomes. Thus, this study seeks to highlight following question: How does parents' foreign employment contribution children's school education in Nepal? In what ways children are receiving support from their parents? What are the challenges faced by parents in foreign employment regarding the child care situation for their children?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the academic, psychological, and emotional experiences of children whose parents were engaged in foreign employment. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enabled an in-depth examination of participants lived experiences, perceptions, and social realities within their natural settings. The study was conducted in two schools located in Badikedar Rural Municipality of Doti District, Nepal. The study participants consisted of nine students aged between 10 and 15 years whose parents were working abroad. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who possessed direct experience and knowledge related to the research problem. Efforts were made to include students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives. In addition to the student participants, their parents or guardians and class teachers were included as key informants to provide complementary information and facilitate data triangulation. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students, parents, and teachers to gain deeper insights into the educational, emotional, and psychological consequences of parental migration. The interviews focused on issues such as academic performance, school attendance, motivation for learning, emotional well-being, behavioral changes, family relationships, and coping strategies adopted by children in the absence of their migrant parents. Participant observation was carried out within the school environment to observe students' classroom participation, interactions with peers and teachers, behavior, and overall engagement in academic activities. Furthermore, relevant documents, including students' academic records, attendance registers, progress reports, and other school-related documents, were reviewed to obtain additional evidence regarding their educational performance and development. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data were collected from multiple sources and methods, allowing for methodological and source triangulation. All interviews were audio-recorded with the informed consent of participants and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Field notes from observations and information obtained through document analysis were also systematically organized and integrated into the dataset. The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis process involved repeated reading of the transcripts, identification of meaningful units of information, coding of data, categorization of codes into broader themes, and interpretation of emerging patterns. Attention was given to themes related to academic achievement, psychological adjustment, emotional well-being, social relationships, and the overall impact of foreign parental employment on children's lives. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, while assent was obtained from child participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the use of pseudonyms, and all information collected was used exclusively for academic purposes. The

findings of the study provided a comprehensive understanding of how parental foreign employment influenced the academic performance, psychological conditions, and emotional well-being of school-aged children in the rural context of Badikedar Rural Municipality.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study on the relationships between parents' foreign employment and children's school education in Nepal, participants shared their experiences and perceptions through a series of questions and responses.

Table 01: Major Themes and Sub-themes Emerging from the Study

Major Theme	Sub-themes	Evidence from Participants
Academic Impact	Declining academic performance, irregular homework completion, reduced concentration in class	Students reported difficulties focusing on studies due to the absence of parents. Teachers observed lower academic engagement among some participants.
Psychological Impact	Loneliness, anxiety, stress, insecurity	Many children expressed feelings of emotional distress and concern about their parents living abroad.
Emotional Well-being	Sadness, feeling of parental absence, emotional attachment through communication	Participants frequently mentioned missing parental guidance and affection despite regular phone contact.
Social Relationships	Peer interaction, relationship with caregivers, teacher support	Children relied heavily on grandparents, relatives, friends, and teachers for emotional and social support.
Coping Mechanisms	Regular communication, family support, school involvement	Students adopted various strategies to cope with parental absence, including speaking with parents via phone and participating in school activities.

When asked about their feelings regarding their parents working abroad, participants expressed feelings of loneliness, lack of love, insecurity, and a sense of missing their parents. However, some mentioned benefits such as increased family income, purchasing personal items, and financial support for education. Regarding the impact on their school performance, some participants felt neglected in their studies due to the absence of parental support, while others did not perceive any effect. Emotional and psychological effects included feelings of insecurity, fear, and missing their parents during important events. Despite the absence of their parents, some participants felt supported by other family members in their education, primarily by mothers and elder siblings. Challenges in education ranged from irregular attendance to difficulty obtaining school supplies on time. While discrimination or challenges related to having a parent working abroad were not commonly reported, some participants mentioned difficulties attending school regularly. However, parents' efforts to care for their children were evident through regular communication, financial support, and motivation to study. Many children expressed feelings of loneliness and insecurity due to their parents working abroad. Participant 1 (P1) mentioned, "I feel lonely," while Participant 2 (P2) shared, "I feel a lack of love and

couldn't get courage." Participant 5 (P5) highlighted a sense of insecurity, stating, "I feel a lack of security." These responses indicate that the absence of parents has a significant emotional toll on children, affecting their sense of well-being and security. Despite the emotional challenges, children reported various financial and material benefits from their parents' foreign employment. For instance, Participant 2 (P2) noted, "My father sends me money," and Participant 3 (P3) mentioned, "I can pay my tuition fee. Increased family income has made household expenses easier." Participant 5 (P5) added, "My father bought land and jewelry for my family." These benefits help to alleviate financial constraints and support the educational needs of the children. The absence of parents due to foreign employment has mixed effects on children's education. While some children feel unsupported, others do not perceive a significant impact. Participant 1 (P1) said, "Nobody said anything about the study," and Participant 4 (P4) mentioned, "No one helps me with homework." However, Participant 3 (P3) stated, "No," indicating no adverse effects on their education. The lack of parental encouragement and assistance with schoolwork can hinder academic performance and motivation. Children receive varying levels of support from other family members in the absence of their parents. Participant 1 (P1) receives help from an elder brother, while Participants 3, 4, and 5 (P3, P4, P5) are supported by their mothers. Participant 2 (P2), however, stated, "No," indicating a lack of support. This highlights the reliance on extended family members for educational support in the absence of parents. Children face several challenges in their education due to their parents' foreign employment. Participant 2 (P2) mentioned, "I cannot go to school regularly," and Participant 3 (P3) said, "I cannot get copy pens on time." Participant 5 (P5) is "busy with household work," which interferes with their schooling. These challenges reflect the practical difficulties children face in managing their education without the daily presence of their parents. The absence of parents is felt more acutely during special occasions and sport's day. Participant 3 (P3) noted feeling sad during "festival celebrations, birthdays, and Parents' Day," while Participant 4 (P4) misses their father "when I feel sick." These moments underscore the emotional void created by the absence of parents during significant personal and cultural events. Despite being physically absent, many parents continue to care for their children through regular communication and financial support. Participant 1 (P1) said, "My father calls me daily," and Participant 3 (P3) shared, "My father always calls and motivates me to read." Participant 2 (P2) mentioned receiving "money and other necessary goods," indicating ongoing efforts by parents to support their children's needs remotely. Overall, the study highlights the varied experiences and challenges faced by children with parents working abroad and underscore the importance of familial support and communication in mitigating the impact on children's education. The study "Exploring the Relationships between Parents' Foreign Employment and Children's School Education in Nepal" delves into the multifaceted effects of parental migration on the educational experiences of children left behind. As Nepal witnesses a significant increase in foreign employment, particularly among parents seeking better economic opportunities, the study seeks to understand how this phenomenon influences children's schooling [14]. Drawing upon the Constitution of Nepal, which guarantees children's rights to education, health care, and overall development, the research underscores the importance of examining the impact of parental migration on educational outcomes [15]. By conducting qualitative interviews with parents and children, the study sheds light on various dimensions of this complex relationship. Participants shared their experiences, revealing both challenges and benefits associated with parental migration [16]. While some children expressed feelings of loneliness, insecurity, and a sense of missing their parents, others acknowledged the financial support received for education and household expenses. However, the absence of parental support was noted as a significant factor affecting school performance for some children, leading to feelings of neglect and lack of motivation [17]. Emotional and psychological effects of parental migration were also evident, with children reporting feelings of insecurity, fear, and longing for their parents during important events. Despite these challenges, familial support emerged as a crucial mitigating factor, with mothers and elder siblings often stepping in to provide encouragement

and assistance with schoolwork. However, challenges such as irregular attendance and difficulty obtaining school supplies persisted for some children [18]. The study also highlights the role of government regulations, such as the Foreign Employment Act, in ensuring safe and managed migration practices. Moreover, it emphasizes the need for tailored interventions and support mechanisms to address the diverse needs of children affected by parental migration [19]. By amplifying the voices of children and parents through qualitative research, the study aims to inform educational policies and social interventions aimed at promoting the well-being and educational attainment of children left behind by migrant parents in Nepal [20].

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study investigates into the complex interplay between parents' foreign employment and children's school education in Nepal, highlighting both the challenges and benefits associated with parental migration. The research underscores the significant impact of parental migration on children's emotional well-being, academic performance, and familial support structures. Through qualitative interviews with parents and children, a range of emotional responses were revealed, including feelings of loneliness, insecurity, and longing for absent parents, alongside acknowledgment of the positive aspects such as increased family income. However, the absence of parental support presents challenges for some children, affecting their school performance and emotional health. Familial support, particularly from mothers and elder siblings, emerged as a crucial mitigating factor, underscoring the importance of family cohesion and communication in mitigating the impact of parental migration on children's education. Moreover, the study highlights the role of government regulations, such as the Foreign Employment Act, in ensuring safe migration practices and protecting the well-being of migrant workers. It emphasizes the need for tailored interventions and support mechanisms to address the diverse needs of children affected by parental migration, aiming to inform educational policies and social interventions. Overall, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between parental migration and children's school education in Nepal, emphasizing the importance of familial support and targeted interventions in promoting the well-being and educational attainment of children left behind by migrant parents. This research is significant for policymakers, educators, and social workers seeking to create an enabling environment that ensures the holistic development of children in the context of transnational familial experiences.

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