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Exploring Perceptions of In-migration in Mahalaxmi Municipality of Lalitpur District

Manamaya Mishra¹

Mana.mishra@pmc.tu.edu.np

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5056-3846>

Associate Prof. Dr. Laxman Shingh Kunnwar²

kunwarlsk@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1463-8435>

1. Lecturer of Population Studies, Patan multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

2. Associate Professor of Population Studies, Patan multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Abstract

In Nepal, internal migration from rural to urban areas, particularly towards the Kathmandu Valley, reflects longstanding trends influenced by economic opportunities, educational aspirations, and familial ties. This paper focuses on Mahalaxmi Municipality, Lalitpur District, a burgeoning destination within the Kathmandu Valley, to explore the drivers and impacts of migration. Using primary data from 306 households, the study examines demographic profiles, migration motivations, and perceptions among migrants in Ward No. 7 of Mahalaxmi Municipality. Findings reveal that the municipality primarily attracts migrants due to employment opportunities (31%), followed by business ventures (27.8%), educational pursuits (13.7%), and marriage (13.4%). Migration is also driven by factors such as conflict (3.3%), natural disasters (2.6%), and various 'other' reasons (8.2%).

The major consequences of migration are reflected in numerous sectors. These effects are observed in various dimensions, including economic conditions, demographic structure, and environmental conditions. Additionally, migration has led to rapid urbanization. Other consequences include cultural exchange, family reunification and segregation, changes in lifestyle, and shifts in happiness and tensions. Policy recommendations include enhancing rural development to curb migration pressures, developing sustainable urban plans to accommodate growing populations, and leveraging migration as a catalyst for broader socio-economic development. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for formulating inclusive policies that support both migrant integration and regional development in Nepal.

Key words: Migration, cause, opportunities, perception and consequences

1. Introduction

The history of humanity is rooted in the necessity of mobility for essentials like food, water, shelter, and safety since ancient times. This innate mobility evolved into what we now term as migration—whether internal or international, and influenced by a multitude of factors. In contemporary times, migration is notably intensified from rural to urban areas, from less developed regions to more developed ones, and occurs within countries, provinces, and districts alike.

Recently, the National Statistics Office (NSO) of Nepal (2023) has introduced a new categorization system for the wards of municipalities. This system classifies wards into three groups: urban, semi-urban, and rural. This new classification provides a more nuanced understanding of urbanization patterns in Nepal by differentiating between areas based on their urban or rural characteristics within the context of municipalities.

Sapkota (2022) argues for the necessity of well-planned and systematic urbanization as a marker of development in Nepal. This perspective contrasts with the haphazard urban growth observed in many areas, emphasizing the importance of strategic urban planning to accommodate population influxes and ensure sustainable development.

According to United Nations estimates, around 763 million individuals engage in internal migration within their own countries (UN DESA, n.d.), while as of 2020, approximately 281 million people, constituting 3.6 percent of the global population, live outside their country of birth (IOM, 2022).

Tripathi and Kaur (2017) emphasize India's economic shift from a rural, agriculture-based economy to a more urbanized modern economy post-independence. The rate of urbanization in India has steadily increased, with the urban population rising from 28.53 percent in 2001 to 31.16 percent in 2011. They also highlight an intriguing finding: "Total self-employed females positively influence the percentage of rural-to-urban migration, whereas cities with higher percentages of self-employed males discourage urban migration" (Tripathi & Kaur, 2017).

According to Sapkota (2022), urbanization in Nepal is rapidly accelerating, primarily driven by migration from rural to urban areas. He highlights that the urban population share has steadily increased from 2.9% in the 1950s to 66.08% in 2015, coinciding with the promulgation of Nepal's new constitution.

Devkota (2012) asserts that serious urban environmental issues are on the rise in Nepal, such as inadequate drinking water supply, improper solid waste disposal, and uncontrolled physical development. These challenges are exacerbated by the influx of rural-to-urban migration driven by economic opportunities. Additionally, the political conflict from 1996 to 2006 and subsequent turmoil have significantly impacted the socio-economic and developmental trajectories of urban centers in Nepal (Timsina, 2020).

Dhakal (2022) finds that both push and pull factors equally influence migration from various origins to diverse destinations. He further contends that safety and the availability of urban facilities drive in-migration to Ratnanagar municipality in Chitwan, Nepal. He emphasizes that the visible consequences of in-migration include population pressure, rising land prices, unemployment, and poorly managed settlements. Additionally, he highlights that out-migration primarily results in a drain of skilled labor and intellectual resources from the origin, which is necessary for promoting entrepreneurship in the area.

In the 15th Plan, the Nepalese government has outlined a strategy to manage migration by implementing labor-intensive technologies, leveraging local skills and resources, and promoting local industries and entrepreneurship (NPC, 2020, p. 344). This approach aims to address economic disparities and foster sustainable development amidst increasing urbanization.

Aligned with Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda, which focuses on creating inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements, the National Planning Commission (NPC, 2023) has set specific indicators to measure progress in Nepal. These efforts are crucial for managing the rapid urbanization seen in districts like Lalitpur, located in Bagmati Province, Nepal.

Internal migration in Mahalaxmi Municipality is notably higher compared to the entire Lalitpur district. Internal migrants constitute 64.9 percent of the total population. This significant presence is evident. Although the NSO has not published disaggregated data by Ward for internal migration, it is reasonable to assume that the municipal-level migration patterns are reflected in Ward number 7. This Ward is one of the fastest growing among the 10 Wards in the municipality.

Mahalaxmi Municipality, renowned for its rapid urbanization in Lalitpur District, experiences substantial internal migration. People from rural areas migrate to urban centers seeking employment opportunities and improved living conditions. This migration contributes to urban population growth, thereby increasing the demand for housing, infrastructure, and essential services.

Migration-led urbanization presents a significant challenge for policymakers in Nepal. Lalitpur District in the recent few decades has experienced a rapid transformation from a rural to an urban settlement. The expansion of urban areas in Mahalaxmi Municipality requires an understanding of the factors influencing migration and their effects on urbanization to facilitate sustainable development and address associated challenges. From available bunch of literatures on migration and urbanization, it is observed that there exist

number of factors to lead migration. Among them, the primary factors are disparities, socio-economic conditions, push and pull factors, family dynamics, and the relationship between migration and development.

This study is based on primary data collected by the researcher herself. Where and when necessary and appropriate, secondary data published by the NSO has been used. Based on the results received by analyzing the primary data, comparisons have been made to draw valid conclusions. Further, published data from the National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) for the years 2001, 2011 and 2021 have been used.

In Lalitpur district, which ranks second in both area and population within the Kathmandu Valley, similar transformational changes from rural to urban settlement have been observed. This evolution makes Lalitpur an intriguing case for studying the factors influencing migration patterns and their impact on urbanization. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for informing policies aimed at fostering sustainable urban development, managing migration flows, and enhancing the quality of life for urban residents in rapidly growing areas like Lalitpur.

Comprehensive analysis of migration patterns into Mahalaxmi Municipality is crucial to understanding its impacts on households, society, and economic prospects. Such insights are essential for formulating targeted policies that ensure sustainable development and equitable growth in the municipality.

By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationship between migration and urbanization in Mahalaxmi Municipality. The municipality has experienced a notable surge in migration in recent years, driving urbanization. However, there remains a limited understanding of the factors influencing migration patterns and their impacts on urbanization within the municipality. This research seeks to shed light on these dynamics, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with this evolving process.

2. Objectives

- To access socio-demographic status of in-migration in Mahalaxmi Municipality of Lalitpur district.
- To find out causes of in-migration in Mahalaxmi Municipality of Lalitpur district.

3. Methodology

A descriptive and cross-sectional research design has been conducted to identify various economic and social educational effects of migration on urbanization. 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 mostly from NSO and website of Mahalaxmi Municipality. The total sample size for the study is 306 respondents. According to the National Population Census 2021, Ward No. 7 of Mahalaxmi Municipality has a total population of 7,506 people and 1,893 households. The sample size for this study has been determined as follows:

Formula:

$$n = N/[1+N(e)^2]$$

Where,

n = ideal size of the sample

N = Population

e = margin of error or expected level of precision

In this research, the value of N is 1893

Margin of error e = 5% = 0.05

$$(e)^2 = 0.0025$$

Thus, the sample size is:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= 1893/[1+1893(0.05)^2] \\ &= 1893/[1+1893(0.0025)] \\ &= 1893/[1+ (4.7325)] \\ &= 1893/[5.7325] \\ &= 330 \end{aligned}$$

The sample size was initially set up to 330 households, including migrant households and rented families. However, during repeated field visits for data collection, a total of 306 households were interviewed from Ward No. 7 of Mahalaxmi Municipality. Consequently, the final sample size for the study included 306 respondents from 306 households, representing approximately 16.2 percent of the total 1,893 households.

The questionnaire underwent initial testing among individuals residing in Kathmandu Valley who had migrated there. Based on feedback from the preliminary test, the questionnaire was refined to ensure clarity and comprehensibility for all potential respondents. All quantitative data for this study were collected from primary sources. After completion of data collection, data entry was performed using an application developed with CS-Pro software. The results are presented by tables and cross tables.

4. Results and Discussion

a) Socio-demographic Characteristics

Expecting nearly equal numbers of men and women in such social studies is illogical. The proportion appears to be rather acceptable. In terms of the age structure, the respondents' individual ages have been rearranged in class intervals of ten years. Majority of responders are between the ages of 37 and 46. Those between the ages of 27 and 36 and 47 and 56 come next, respectively. It might demonstrate that the respondents are below table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Migrant Respondents in Study Area

Age Group	Sex		Total	Percentage
	Male	Female		
16 to 26	18	22	40	13.1
27 to 36	27	42	69	22.6
37 to 46	58	38	96	31.4
47 to 56	43	24	67	21.9
57 to 66	18	8	26	8.5
67 to 76	6	2	8	2.6
Total	170	136	306	100

Source: Filed Survey, 2024

Most of the migrants fall within the 37-46 age group, representing 31.37 percent of the total. This suggests a significant proportion of migrants are in their prime working years. The 27-36 age group follows closely, accounting for 22.55 percent, further reinforcing the presence of a large workforce among migrants. Gender disparity is more pronounced in specific age groups. For instance, within the 27-36 age group, there are 42 females compared to 27 males, suggesting a higher proportion of female migrants in their late 20s and early 30s. Conversely, the 37-46 age group exhibits a greater number of males (58) compared to females (38), indicating a potential shift in the gender composition within different age ranges.

Duration of Living at Place of Residence

The duration of the stay of respondents at their destination, i.e., the study area has been analyzed by their age groups. It is observed that among all age groups the minimum year of stay is one year and the maximum is 40.

Table 2: Age Group and Duration of Stay at Place of Residence

Age Group	Mean	Maximum	Minimum
16 to 26	6	16	1
27 to 36	10	37	1
37 to 46	12	40	1
47 to 56	13	40	2
57 to 66	15	40	2
67 to 76	21	40	7

Source: Filed Survey, 2024

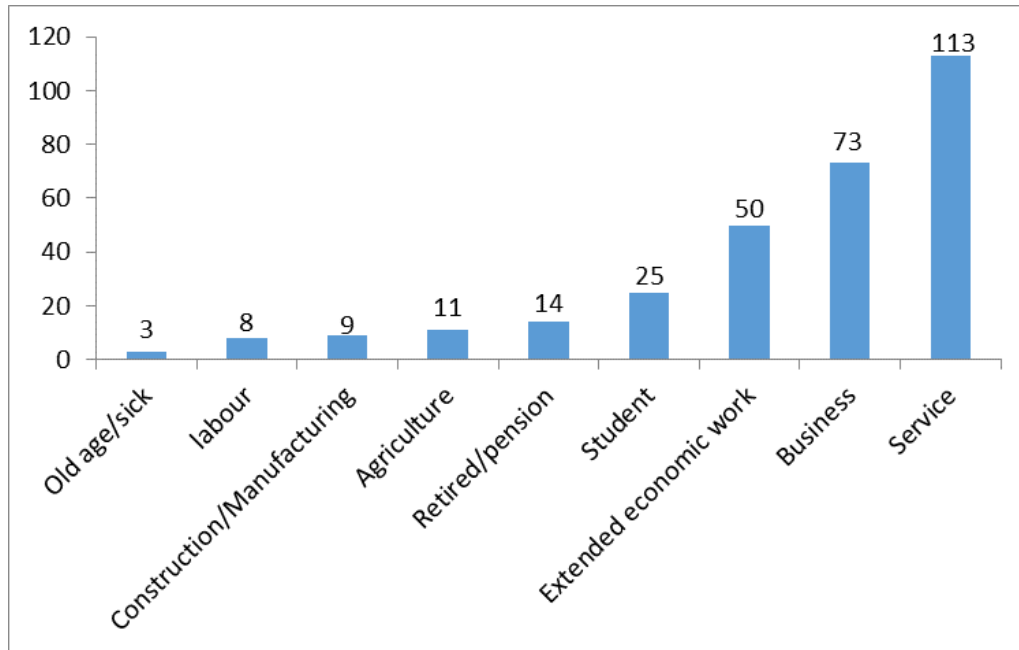
The average length of residence increases with age, starting at 6 years for the 16-26 age group and rising to 21 years for the 67-76 age group. This suggests that as people age, they are more likely to stay in one place for longer periods. Across all age groups, the maximum length of residence is 40 years, indicating a significant number of long-term residents. However, the minimum length of residence varies across age groups, with younger groups showing more mobility (minimum 1 year) compared to older groups (minimum 2 years for 47-56 and 57-66 groups, and 7 years for the 67-76 group). Fifty-six percent of households own their own houses while 41 percent are living in rented rooms or dwellings. The larger percentage of migrated people having their own house leads us to believe that they are good witness to any changes in their localities.

Caste and Ethnicity of Respondents

Out of 306 total respondents' 47.1 Percent are Janjati. Quite close to Janjati respondents are from Khas-Arya (46.4%) group. Madhesi and Dalit hold equal share having 2.6 percent each. The minimum (1.3%) share of respondents goes to religious and linguistic community, viz. Muslim and so on. From this, the dominance of Janjati and Khas-Arya is vivid in this area.

Occupation of the Respondents

In this figure the frequency has been arranged in an ascending order. The majority (36.9%) of the respondents are found engaged in the service sector. Similarly, second, third and fourth position are entertained by business (23.9%), extended economic work (16.3%), and student (8.2%) though not a profession. Those retired, doing agriculture, construction/manufacturing and labor have stood from fifth to eighth position respectively. Hence, a balanced inclusion of occupation is seen in the sample.

Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Their Occupation (in Number)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Marital Status of the Respondents

Marriage has been considered as one of the causative variables for migration. Among the total 306 (100%) respondents there is observed dominance (80.4 %) of married ones. The second (15.7%) share belongs to unmarried respondents.

Occupation of the Respondents by Marital Status (Number)

A logical scene appears by showing the occupation and marital status of the total respondents. In Table 8, we can simply observe the dominance (25.8%) of service holders among married respondents. Similarly, those engaged in the business sector hold the second position among married individuals, comprising 18.3% of the respondents.

The third (13.3%) place is held by those engaged in extended economic work. We can see 23 out of 25 students unmarried. Those retired or pension earners as well as engaged in the agricultural sector are equal, i.e., 2.8 percent among married respondents.

Table 3: Distribution of Occupation by Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital Status	Service	Business	Extended economic	Student	Retired/pension	Agriculture	Construction &	Labor	Old age/sick
Unmarried	18	3	0	23	1	1	0	2	0
Married	93	66	48	2	10	10	8	6	3
Divorce	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Widow/widowed	0	1	1	0	3	0	1	0	0
Total	114	72	50	25	14	11	9	8	3

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Birth Place of Respondents

Out of 306 (100%) respondents, 4.6 percent are found migrated within their own municipality. Another 9.2 percent of total households belong to same district. There is the highest number (82.4%) of responding households who are accounted as migrants from other districts. Those migrated to Nepal from other countries are less than 4 percent. This has replicated the highest trend of inter-district in-migration in Mahalaxmi Municipality. It is quite interesting to know the top 15 districts for pushing its residents to Mahalaxmi-7.

Table 4: Top 15 Districts from where people migrated to study area

S.N.	District	Number of households (%)	S.No.	District	Number of households (%)
1	Kavrepalanchok	21 (8.9)	2	Ramechhap	17 (7.2)
3	Dolakha	13 (5.5)	4	Khotang	13 (5.5)
5	Makawanpur	11 (4.7)	6	Dhanusha	11 (4.7)
7	Sindhupalchok	10 (4.2)	8	Saptari	8 (3.4)
9	Gorkha	7 (3.0)	10	Jhapa	6 (2.5)
11	Kailali	6 (2.5)	12	Kaski	6 (2.5)
13	Morang	6 (2.5)	14	Nuwakot	6 (2.5)
15	Mahottari	6 (2.5)			

Source: Field Survey, 2024

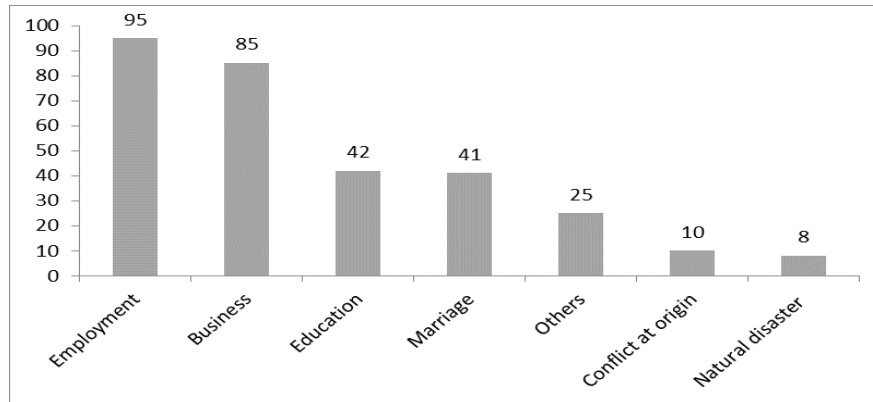
It has been identified that migrants to Mahalaxmi Municipality, Ward No. 7, originate from a total of 49 districts. The top 15 districts from which people have migrated to this area are prominently featured in the data. Conversely, the least represented districts, ranked from 34th to 49th position, include Ilam, Nawalparasi East, Panchthar, Pyuthan, Sankhuwasabha, Arghakhanchi, and Bara. Additionally, districts such as Dailekh, Jajarkot, Jumla, Kanchanpur, Kapilbastu, Lamjung, Parbat, Surkhet, and Tehrathum are among those with fewer households migrating to Mahalaxmi Municipality.

These districts span all seven provinces of Nepal. According to Ravenstein's law of migration, which posits an inverse relationship between distance and migration volume, the findings indicate that migration is notably higher among individuals from nearby districts compared to those from more distant areas.

There are a total of 12 households that have migrated to Mahalaxmi Municipality from India, primarily for business purposes. Reviewing the list of the 49 districts from which families have migrated to this municipality reveals several compelling insights. Firstly, majority of migrants originate from adjacent districts, highlighting proximity as a significant factor in migration patterns. Secondly, the study area exhibits a diverse population of migrants, characterized by variations in origin, professions, objectives, ages, family sizes, castes, ethnicities, and durations of stay. This diversity underscores the multifaceted nature of migration to Mahalaxmi Municipality, reflecting a wide range of individual and family circumstances driving relocation to this area.

Causes of Migration

It's intriguing to note that 95 out of 306 respondents, constituting 31 percent of the sample, migrated primarily for employment reasons. Within this category, migration for employment encompasses both job transfers and job searches, indicating a significant motivation for relocation. Business purposes accounted for 27.8 percent of migrations, with individuals seeking to establish new businesses in Ward Number 7 of Mahalaxmi Municipality. Education was cited as a reason by 13.7 percent of respondents, involving either students themselves or parents migrating for their children's educational opportunities. Marriage, exclusively cited by women in this study, constituted 13.4% of migration motivations. Figure 3 shows the reasons expressed by all 306 respondents included in this study.

Figure 3: Distribution of Causes of Migration (Number)

Source: Field Study, 2024

Like global trends, natural disasters also play a significant role in migration. In the study, 8 households (2.6%) migrated due to natural disasters that occurred in their places of origin. Additionally, 25 households (8.2%) cited 'other' reasons for their migration. These included involvement in politics, dependency on family, religious missions, threats, social discrimination, favorable environments at the destination, desires of family members, and migrations of relatives and households from their villages. These diverse factors underscore the complexity and varied motivations behind migration decisions in Mahalaxmi Municipality.

Main Reasons for Migrating to the Study Area by Migrants

Even within Lalitpur district, there are a lot of choices to migrate. The migrants could choose Lalitpur Metropolitan City and Godawari Municipality if they were opting for an urbanized area. Likewise, there are still better wards within Mahalaxmi municipality for better infrastructure and access to various services.

Table 5: Specific Reason for Choosing Destination by the Migrants

Reason of Choice	No. of Households	%
Price of land/cheap rent	72	23.5
Choice of family members	68	22.2
Social network	49	16.0
By chance	36	11.8
Sound infrastructure	30	9.8
Others	23	7.5
Good environment	13	4.2
Water facility	9	2.9
Proximity of market	6	2.0
Total	306	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Near about one-fourth (23.5%) of the respondents have indicated price of land and cheap rent as the most motivating factor to migrate to their destination, i.e., Ward No. 7 of Mahalaxmi Municipality. Choices of family members stand on the second (22.2%) position to determine the destination of next 68 households. As social network theory believes that social network at destination largely determines the choices of potential migrants to migrate, our data has closely coincided with the theory. Around 12 percent of have answered that they chose the place just by chance. In search of a piece of land (*ghaderi*) to build a house, they happened to come to this place.

About 10 percent of respondents have given credit to sound infrastructure of their area of selection. Infrastructure, as elsewhere, includes road, electricity, health facilities, market, water supply, sewerage, school/college and transport. Market facility also attracts some people. Market is needed for all. However, not all people give priority to market. Those having their own vehicles may not pay big price for access to the market. There are remaining 7.5 percent of respondents who have 'other' reason for choosing their location of migration. It includes proximity of working station and school/college, convenient distance to relatives and good friends and compulsion to buy the land due to bad debts. Some of them expressed that they are inspired by special small community of same caste, culture and religion.

Respondents' Perception towards Migration

Migration takes place in different forms and sizes. Some individuals migrate alone at first. In the course of time, they call their spouse, children (if any) and parents. Some others migrate together with their spouse. Sometimes a couple moves with their kids at the same time. About 40% of the respondents lived with their spouse and kids, 25% lived with their spouse and kids, and only 23% lived alone in the neighborhood. Depending on their age, education, occupation, and life experiences, people have different opinions about migration. When examining any topic and its ramifications, educational attainment is a significant factor.

Table 6: Perception about migration by level of education

Education level	Good	Not bad	Bad	Not Known	Total	%
Illiterate	4	0	0	1	5	8.06
SLC/SEE	21	29	0	14	64	103.23
Certificate level	2	3	1	2	8	12.90
Bachelor	21	20	2	9	52	83.87
Master	41	52	2	8	103	166.13
Literate	13	12	0	8	33	53.23
Class 1-9	10	11	0	20	41	66.13
Total	112	112	127	5	62	100.00

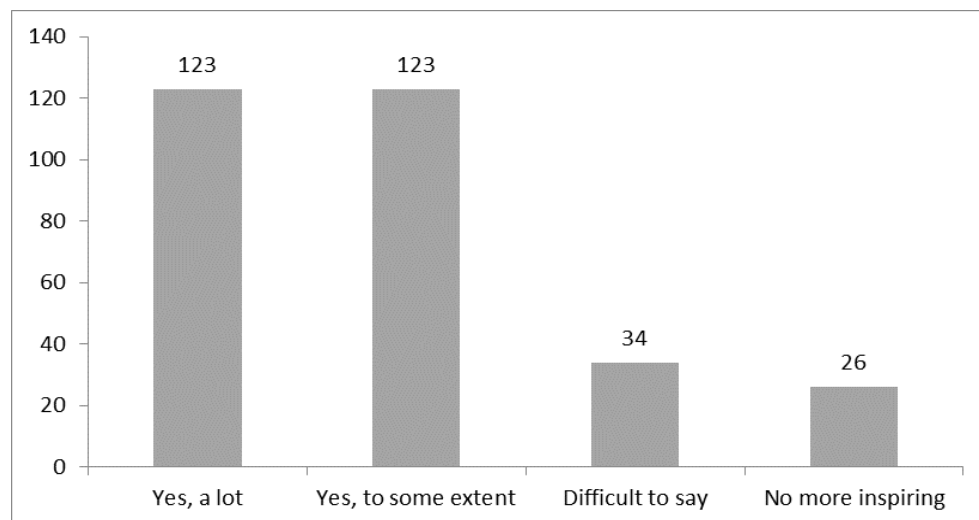
Source: Field Survey, 2024

Diverse range of perceptions about migration across different educational levels in Nepal. While most of the respondents from all education levels perceive migration as "good" or "not bad," there are some notable patterns. Individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher (including master's and "literate" category) are more likely to view migration positively, with "good" responses exceeding "not bad" responses. This suggests that higher education levels may be associated with a more optimistic outlook on migration. Conversely, those with lower educational attainment, like those who are illiterate or have only completed class 1-9, are less likely to perceive migration favorably, with "not bad" responses surpassing "good" responses. However, it's important to note that the "not known" category is relatively high across all education levels, indicating that a significant portion of the population may not have a clear opinion on migration or are unwilling to share it.

Post Migration Perception

It is quite interesting to see 123 (40.2%) respondents out of 306 have acknowledged that the pulling factors are still in existence at their destination where they are living now. Another 40 percent have also accepted that the factors to move their family from respective origins to Mahalaxmi-7 are still in existence to some extent. This gives ground to the conclusion that the pull factors are not expired. Meantime, it allows to argue that other potential migrants from various districts of the country will also find the place appropriate to migrate. Hence, the degree of urbanization is likely to accelerate in the future.

Figure 4: Post Migration Pull Factor Existence



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Migrants' Connection with Origin or Previous Place of Residence

In Nepal, observation has shown that migrants do have tendency of going back to original place of usual residence once their migration purpose is fulfilled. Some of the common purposes are retirement from job, self-reliance of children, protection of inherited parental property, political affiliation and future, social harmony of previous place, status in origin, and frustration from urban life and so on. The original push factors are equally likely to be pull factors in course of time.

Almost three quarters of the total are connected to their previous place socially and for their remaining property (land and/or building). Almost 19 percent of them are connected for social reasons. Next 3 percent are still attached to their previous place because of their remaining property. And 5 percent migrant households have no connection with the previous place of residence. Based on this data, it is logical to conclude that the nature of migration is different in Nepal. People have dual choices to live. One can see the possibility that improved infrastructure and other conducive pull factors potentially lead these migrants back to their origin.

Satisfaction of Migrants

Nearly 44 percent of migrant households are quite happy with their decision to migrate. Additionally, 44.8 percent of migrant households are happy to some extent, while around 10 percent of households are neutral, expressing that they are neither happy nor sad about their migration decision.

These findings highlight the importance of migrant satisfaction in shaping migration patterns. The high levels of happiness among migrants suggest that the destination, Mahalaxmi Municipality, provides favorable conditions that meet the expectations and needs of the migrants. This satisfaction can lead to a positive perception of the migration experience, encouraging others from the origin to consider relocating. By maintaining and enhancing the factors that contribute to migrant happiness, policymakers and local authorities can continue to attract new migrants, supporting sustainable urban growth and development in Mahalaxmi Municipality.

5. Conclusions

Mahalaxmi Municipality has emerged as an attractive destination for migrants from all provinces, particularly from Bagmati Province, with a significant number of migrants coming from adjacent districts. This indicates that distance is a critical factor in migration decisions and identifies six significant reasons for migration, predominantly influenced by pull factors at the destination. Employment opportunities, business prospects, and the

availability of good education are major attractions drawing people to the municipality. Conversely, the primary push factors driving migration include marriage, conflict, and natural disasters. Beyond these primary factors, other vital reasons influencing migration are dependency on family, political influences, social discrimination, threats, the migration of relatives, and the desires of family members. Affordable land and building prices, family preferences, social networks, a sound environment, and proximity to friends and relatives also play crucial roles in migration decisions. Additionally, people tend to prefer areas where they find a community with similar cultural, caste, and religious backgrounds.

Notably, these consequences impact not only the migrants' livelihoods but also the destination, specifically Ward Number 7 of Mahalaxmi Municipality. These effects are observed in various dimensions, including economic (income, occupation, livelihood, and lifestyle), demographic (increased population, household changes, age structure, and family size), and environmental (pollution and climate change). Additionally, migration affects the degree of urbanization, leading to rapid urbanization and increased pressure on existing infrastructure. Other consequences include cultural exchange, family reunification and segregation, changes in lifestyle, and shifts in happiness and tensions. Most migrants report satisfaction with their new residences, indicating that the pull factors are effective in retaining them. This satisfaction is likely to attract more migrants in the future, influenced by social networks and existing infrastructure. Based on migrants' perceptions, Mahalaxmi Municipality, particularly Ward No. 7, is rapidly urbanizing. The study shows a direct correlation between the pace and size of migration and the level of urbanization, suggesting that increased migration accelerates urban development.

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