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Impact of Migration on the Livelihood of Migrant Families: Cases from the Karnali Province

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Abstract

Migration is a natural phenomenon that occurs due to different reasons like jobs, businesses, education, and other physical facilities. Rural to urban migration is very high in the Nepalese context so this study aims to explore the impact of migration on the livelihood of migrant families in the case of Karnali province. The study was conducted among 196 migrant families who migrated from different parts of rural areas at the headquarters of Karnali province, Birendranagar Municipality of Surkhet district. The simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the migrant family. The result shows significant changes (before migration mean = 22.8, and after migration mean = 27.44 with p = .000) in the livelihood of migrant families after migration. Migration has markedly improved various facets of migrant families' lives, including livelihood, financial stability, social conditions, and access to essential services like education and healthcare, leading to enhanced overall quality of life and happiness. To sustain these positive outcomes, policymakers should support migration policies that offer better opportunities and services for migrant families, while also providing targeted assistance for vulnerable groups. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensuring the long-term success of migration initiatives.
Keywords: Families, Improvement, Livelihood, Migration, Services

1. Introduction

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another, often involving a change in residence, occupation, or social environment (Lee, 1966). It is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been a part of human history, shaping the social, economic, and cultural fabric of societies (Castles & Miller, 2009).

Internal migration from rural to urban areas refers to the movement of individuals or households from rural regions to urban centers within the same country. This type of migration involves people relocating from countryside areas, typically characterized by agricultural activities and smaller populations, to cities or towns with higher population densities and more diverse economic opportunities. Internal migration from rural to urban areas is a common phenomenon globally and is driven by factors such as seeking better employment prospects, access to education and healthcare, improved living standards, and overall quality of life (Menashe-Oren & Sánchez-Páez, 2023).

Rural-to-urban migration in Nepal is a significant trend that has been observed in recent years. The country has experienced rapid urbanization, with the urban population increasing from 23% in 2014 to 66% in 2017. Rural-to-urban migration in Nepal is a significant trend that has been observed in recent years. The country has experienced rapid urbanization, with the urban population increasing from 23% in 2014 to 66% in 2017 (Bhattarai et al., 2023). The urban population in Nepal grew from 2.9% in 1952/54 to 66.2% by 2021. This represents a dramatic increase in urbanization levels over the decades, particularly notable between 2014 and 2021 when the urban population more than doubled from 27.2% to 66.2% (Joshi, 2023).

The impact of rural-to-urban migration on the livelihood of migrant families in Nepal is a complex issue with both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, migration can offer better employment opportunities, increased income, and improved access to essential services like healthcare and education, enhancing the overall well-being of migrant families. It also allows for the diversification of income sources through non-farm activities or small businesses. However, this shift often disrupts traditional livelihoods, such as agriculture, which are vital for rural development. Additionally, migrant families may experience a loss of social networks and community ties, making them more vulnerable to poverty, exploitation, and social exclusion in urban environments (Jaquet et al., 2016; Rai & Dangal, 2021).

Rural-to-urban migration in Karnali province of Nepal is a significant trend that has been observed in recent years. According to the Nepal: Population Vulnerability and Resilience Profile, rural areas in Karnali province had a higher percentage of food insecurity, which was 44.6% compared to 24.1% in urban areas. The same report also mentioned that 34.6% of households in rural areas had a high dependency ratio, which indicates a high proportion of dependents, including children and the elderly (United States Census Bureau, 2024). The Capital City of Karnali Pradesh is located in Birendranagar Surkhet, which was declared in January 2018. There are 10 districts in Karnali Province. The population growth of Birendranagar Municipality is significantly changed within one decade as presented in Table 1. The growth rate from 2011 to 2021 is 221.12%.

Table 1: Population of Birendranagar Municipality

Year	Total Households	Total Population	Male	Female
2011	12,029	47,914	23,396	24,518
2021	38,377	153,863	75129	78734
Difference (2021-2011)	26,348	105,949	51,733	54,216
Growth Rate %	219.04	221.12	221.12	221.13

Source: National Census 2011 & 2021

Poverty and food insecurity are widespread issues affecting many rural households in Karnali province. These challenges are compounded by the region's limited infrastructure, inadequate education and healthcare services, social difficulties, and a lack of employment opportunities. Faced with these harsh conditions, many residents are compelled to migrate to urban areas in search of better prospects. This migration trend has prompted researchers to study the impact of such movement on the livelihoods of the families left behind and those who migrate, exploring how these changes affect their economic, social, and overall well-being.

2. Materials and Method

The study is based on the descriptive as well as explanatory research design. It has followed the quantitative research design. The study was conducted among the 196 respondents who were from the migrant family. The sample was calculated by considering the 95% confidence level, 50% prevalence, and 7% margin of error. The primary data was collected by using the structured questionnaire survey which is the common tool used by many previous authors (Karki & Rawal, 2023; Khadka et al., 2021). The instruments were pre-tested to ensure their reliability and validity. The study has calculated the Cronbach Alpha's test to check the internal consistency of data. The value of Cronbach is .924 (92.4%) which ensure the high quality of reliability of data. The study has used statistical model like frequency distribution, mean value, and t-test. The data are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Origin-wise Sex of Respondents

			Origin		Total
			Within District	Out of District	
Sex	Male	Count	40	67	107
		%	53.3%	55.4%	54.6%
	Female	Count	35	54	89
		%	46.7%	44.6%	45.4%
Total		Count	75	121	196
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 2 provides an analysis of the sex distribution of respondents based on their origin, whether within the district or out of the district. Among the 196 total respondents, 107 are male, comprising 54.6% of the sample. Of these males, 40 (53.3%) are from within the district, and

67 (55.4%) are from out of district. Females make up 45.4% of the total respondents, with 89 females in total. Of these, 35 (46.7%) are from within the district, and 54 (44.6%) are from out of district. The data indicates a slightly higher proportion of males compared to females both within and out of the district, with the overall percentages of males and females remaining relatively consistent regardless of origin. The total distribution ensures a balanced representation from both within and out of the district, maintaining an equal 100% distribution across the different origins.

2.1 Household's financial situation of migrant family

The data on the household financial situation of migrant families reveals notable changes before and after migration. Before migration, 5.6% of households reported their financial situation as much worse, and 27.2% considered it worse, which totals nearly a third of the families experiencing a negative financial status. Additionally, 30.8% of households reported neither better nor worse conditions, indicating stability without improvement. On the positive side, 35.9% of families felt their financial situation was better, and a mere 0.5% reported it as much better. The overall mean score for financial status before migration was 2.9846, reflecting a tendency towards a slightly better than neutral financial situation, but the statistical significance of .000 indicates these results are robust and not due to random variation.

Table 2: Household's financial situation of migrant family

	Much Worse	Worse	Neither better nor worse	Better	Much Better	Total	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Before Migration	5.6%	27.2%	30.8%	35.9%	.5%	100.0%	2.9846	.000
After Migration		3.6%	27.6%	59.7%	9.2%	100.0%	3.7449	

Source: Field Survey 2024

After migration, the financial outlook appears to have significantly improved for many families. The percentage of households reporting a worse financial situation dropped to 3.6%, and those who felt neither better nor worse constituted 27.6%. A substantial majority, 59.7%, felt their financial situation had improved, while 9.2% reported it as much better. The mean score after migration rose to 3.7449, indicating a shift towards a generally better financial situation. This significant increase in the mean score highlights the positive impact of migration on the financial status of these households, reinforcing the statistical evidence of improvement with a significance level of .000.

2.2 Social changes in migrant family

The data on social changes in migrant families before and after migration presents a clear picture of how social conditions have evolved. Before migration, the majority of families reported mixed or moderate social conditions. Specifically, 1.5% of families experienced their social situation as much worse, and 17.3% felt it was worse. A significant 43.4% of families perceived no change in their social conditions, suggesting a neutral impact. However, 35.2%

of families saw their social situation as better, and 2.6% reported it as much better. The mean score for social conditions before migration was 3.1990, indicating an overall moderately positive perception of social conditions. The significance level of .000 underscores the reliability of these findings, suggesting that the reported social conditions are statistically significant.

Table 3: Social changes in a migrant family

	Much Worse	Worse	Neither better nor worse	Better	Much Better	Total	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Before Migration	1.5%	17.3%	43.4%	35.2%	2.6%	100.0%	3.1990	.000
After Migration		1.0%	24.5%	63.3%	11.2%	100.0%	3.8469	

Source: Field Survey 2024

After migration, there is a noticeable shift towards improved social conditions. The percentage of families who reported their social situation as worse increased to 24.5%, which might indicate some initial adjustment challenges or variations in individual experiences. Despite this, a large majority, 63.3%, felt their social conditions remained unchanged. Importantly, the proportion of families who felt their social situation was better increased to 11.2%. The mean score post-migration rose significantly to 3.8469, reflecting a more positive overall social condition. The significant increase in the mean score highlights an overall improvement in social conditions following migration. The significance level remains at .000, indicating that these improvements are statistically significant and not due to chance, underscoring the positive social impact of migration on the families studied.

2.3 Household living conditions of the migrant family compared to other households of the same village

The data on household living conditions of migrant families compared to other households in the same village reveals significant changes before and after migration. Before migration, the distribution of living conditions shows that 1.0% of families considered their conditions much worse and 13.8% felt they were worse. A large portion, 44.9%, perceived their living conditions as neither better nor worse compared to other households, indicating a neutral standpoint. Meanwhile, 38.3% of families reported better living conditions, and 2.0% described their conditions as much better. The mean score before migration was 3.2653, reflecting a generally positive but not overwhelmingly favorable perception of their living conditions. The significance level of .000 confirms that these perceptions are statistically significant and not due to random chance.

Table 4: Household living conditions of the migrant family compared to other households of the same village

	Much Worse	Worse	Neither better nor worse	Better	Much Better	Total	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Before Migration	1.0%	13.8%	44.9%	38.3%	2.0%	100.0%	3.2653	.000
After Migration		1.5%	23.0%	67.3%	8.2%	100.0%	3.8214	

Source: Field Survey 2024

After migration, the data shows a shift in the perception of household living conditions. The percentage of families who viewed their living conditions as worse increased to 23.0%, and those perceiving their conditions as much worse rose slightly to 1.5%. Despite these increases, the majority of families, 67.3%, felt their living conditions remained unchanged. However, the percentage of families who considered their living conditions better dropped to 8.2%, and there were no reports of conditions being much better. Interestingly, the mean score after migration increased to 3.8214, indicating an overall improvement in living conditions despite the drop in the 'better' category. This significant rise in the mean score suggests that, on average, families experienced better living conditions post-migration. The significance level of .000 reaffirms the reliability of these results, highlighting that the improvements in household living conditions post-migration are statistically significant.

2.4 Children's access to health services

The data on children's access to health services for migrant families before and after migration illustrates significant changes. Before migration, access to health services was mixed. A notable 7.7% of families reported that their children's access to health services was much worse, and 12.8% felt it was worse, indicating that 20.5% of families faced considerable challenges. Meanwhile, 34.2% of families saw no change in access to health services, suggesting stability without improvement. Positively, 40.3% of families felt their access was better, and 5.1% reported it as much better, highlighting that nearly half of the families experienced good access to health services. The mean score before migration was 3.2245, indicating an overall moderately positive perception of children's access to health services. The significance level of .000 confirms that these observations are statistically significant.

Table 5: Children's access to health services

	Much Worse	Worse	Neither better nor worse	Better	Much Better	Total	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Before Migration	7.7%	12.8%	34.2%	40.3%	5.1%	100.0%	3.2245	.000
After Migration		1.5%	26.0%	52.6%	19.9%	100.0%	3.9082	

Source: Field Survey 2024

After migration, the data shows a marked improvement in children's access to health services. The percentage of families who viewed their access as much worse dropped significantly to 1.5%, though the proportion who felt it was worse increased to 26.0%. This rise might reflect transitional difficulties or initial challenges faced by migrant families. Despite this, the majority, 52.6%, perceived no change in access, suggesting that access to health services remained stable for many families. Notably, the percentage of families who considered their access better fell to 19.9%, but there was no category for 'much better' post-migration. Despite these mixed perceptions, the mean score after migration increased significantly to 3.9082, reflecting an overall improvement in children's access to health services. The significance level of .000 reaffirms the robustness of these results, underscoring that the improvement in health services access post-migration is statistically significant.

2.5 Children's Access to Education

The data on children's access to education for migrant families before and after migration shows significant positive changes. Before migration, a considerable portion of families faced challenges, with 12.2% reporting that their children's access to education was much worse, and 10.2% feeling it was worse, indicating that over one-fifth of the families struggled with educational access. Meanwhile, 32.7% of families experienced no change in access, suggesting stability but no improvement. On the positive side, 39.3% of families felt that their access to education was better, and 5.6% reported it as much better, showing that a substantial proportion of families had good educational access. The mean score before migration was 3.1582, reflecting a moderately positive overall perception of children's access to education. The significance level of .000 confirms that these findings are statistically significant.

Table 6: Children's Access to Education

	Much Worse	Worse	Neither better nor worse	Better	Much Better	Total	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Before Migration	12.2%	10.2%	32.7%	39.3%	5.6%	100.0%	3.1582	.000
After Migration	.5%	2.6%	23.5%	46.4%	27.0%	100.0%	3.9694	

Source: Field Survey 2024

After migration, the data indicates a remarkable improvement in children's access to education. The percentage of families who viewed their access as much worse dropped drastically to 0.5%, and those who felt it was worse decreased to 2.6%. This significant reduction in negative perceptions highlights the positive impact of migration. Additionally, 23.5% of families perceived no change in access, which is a decrease compared to pre-migration levels, suggesting fewer families are stuck in a neutral position. Importantly, the proportion of families who felt their access to education was better rose to 46.4%, and those reporting it as much better surged to 27.0%. The mean score after migration increased significantly to 3.9694, indicating a strong overall improvement in children's access to education. The significance

level of .000 reaffirms the robustness of these results, underscoring that the enhancements in educational access post-migration are statistically significant and not due to random chance.

2.6 The overall quality of life (based on indicators of economy, health, and education) in your household

The data on the overall quality of life for migrant families, considering indicators of economy, health, and education, shows notable changes before and after migration. Before migration, 2.0% of families reported their overall quality of life as much worse, and 19.4% felt it was worse, indicating that a significant portion of families faced substantial challenges. Meanwhile, 25.0% of families saw no change in their quality of life, suggesting stability without improvement. On a more positive note, 49.0% of families felt their quality of life was better, and 4.6% reported it as much better. The mean score before migration was 3.3469, reflecting a moderately positive perception of the overall quality of life. The significance level of .000 confirms that these findings are statistically significant and reliable.

Table 7: The overall quality of life (based on indicators of economy, health, and education) in your household

	Much Worse	Worse	Neither better nor worse	Better	Much Better	Total	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Before Migration	2.0%	19.4%	25.0%	49.0%	4.6%	100.0%	3.3469	.000
After Migration		1.5%	14.9%	73.8%	9.7%	100.0%	3.9179	

Source: Field Survey 2024

After migration, the data indicates significant improvements in the overall quality of life. The percentage of families who reported their quality of life as worse dropped to 1.5%, and those feeling it was worse decreased to 14.9%, showing a reduction in negative perceptions. A large majority, 73.8%, felt that their quality of life remained unchanged, which is a considerable increase compared to pre-migration levels, suggesting that many families maintained their quality of life post-migration. Notably, the proportion of families who felt their quality of life was better decreased to 9.7%, but this is offset by the overall increase in the mean score to 3.9179. This significant rise in the mean score indicates a substantial improvement in the perceived overall quality of life, encompassing economic, health, and educational factors. The significance level of .000 reaffirms the robustness of these results, highlighting that the improvements in the overall quality of life post-migration are statistically significant and not due to random chance.

2.7 The overall happiness of migrant family

The data on the overall happiness of migrant families reveals significant changes before and after migration. Before migration, 0.5% of families reported their overall happiness as much worse, and 12.4% felt it was worse, indicating that a small yet notable portion of families experienced lower levels of happiness. Meanwhile, 22.3% of families saw no change in their

happiness, suggesting a neutral stance. The majority, 61.7%, reported feeling better, and 3.1% described their happiness as much better. The mean score before migration was 3.5440, reflecting a generally positive perception of overall happiness. The significance level of .000 confirms the statistical reliability of these findings, indicating that the reported levels of happiness before migration are significant and not due to chance.

Table 8: The overall happiness of migrant family

	Much Worse	Worse	Neither better nor worse	Better	Much Better	Total	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Before Migration	.5%	12.4%	22.3%	61.7%	3.1%	100.0%	3.5440	.000
After Migration		1.6%	3.1%	64.2%	31.1%	100.0%	4.2487	

Source: Field Survey 2024

After migration, the data indicates a marked improvement in the overall happiness of migrant families. The percentage of families reporting their happiness as worse decreased to 1.6%, and those feeling it was worse dropped significantly to 3.1%, showing a reduction in negative perceptions. A majority, 64.2%, felt their happiness remained unchanged, which is a substantial increase compared to the pre-migration period, suggesting stability in their happiness levels post-migration. Importantly, the proportion of families who felt their happiness was better increased significantly to 31.1%, with no families reporting much better happiness. The mean score after migration increased to 4.2487, indicating a strong improvement in overall happiness. This significant rise in the mean score highlights that the overall happiness of migrant families has greatly improved post-migration. The significance level of .000 reaffirms the robustness of these results, underscoring that the enhancements in overall happiness post-migration are statistically significant and not attributable to random variation.

2.8 Overall changes in livelihood of migrant family

The data provided in the table offers a detailed comparison of the overall changes in the livelihood of migrant families before and after migration, as measured through a paired sample statistical analysis.

Table 9: Overall changes in livelihood of migrant family

Paired Samples Statistics				
Overall changes in livelihood	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 — Before migration	22.8385	192	5.72402	.41310
Pair 1 — After migration	27.4479	192	3.34686	.24154

Paired Samples Test							
	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			

					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Before - After	-4.60938	5.89334	.42532	-5.44829	-3.77046	-10.838	191	.000

Source: Field Survey 2024

Initially, the table presents the paired samples statistics, showing the mean, number of participants (N), standard deviation, and standard error mean for the livelihood scores before and after migration. Before migration, the mean livelihood score is 22.8385, with a sample size of 192 participants. The standard deviation is 5.72402, indicating some variability in the livelihood conditions among the participants, and the standard error mean is .41310, which reflects the accuracy of the sample mean as an estimate of the population mean.

In contrast, after migration, the mean livelihood score significantly improves to 27.4479 for the same sample size of 192 participants. The standard deviation here is 3.34686, which is lower than the pre-migration standard deviation, suggesting a more consistent improvement in livelihood conditions among the participants. The standard error mean post-migration is .24154, indicating a relatively precise estimate of the population mean.

The paired samples test further elucidates these changes by providing the paired differences in livelihood scores before and after migration. The mean difference (Before - After) is -4.60938, showing a substantial increase in livelihood scores post-migration. The standard deviation of these differences is 5.89334, and the standard error mean is .42532, which helps in understanding the variability and precision of the mean difference, respectively.

The 95% confidence interval for the difference ranges from -5.44829 to -3.77046, suggesting that the true mean difference in the population is highly likely to fall within this interval. The negative values indicate an improvement in livelihoods post-migration. The t-value is -10.838, which is a measure of how many standard deviations the mean difference is away from zero. With 191 degrees of freedom, this t-value is associated with a significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) of .000, which is highly significant. This indicates that the observed improvements in livelihood are statistically significant and not due to random chance.

In summary, the statistical analysis clearly demonstrates a significant improvement in the overall livelihood of migrant families after migration. The increase in mean scores reduced standard deviation, and the highly significant t-test results all corroborate the positive impact of migration on the livelihoods of the families studied.

3. Summary

The series of tables provided detailed insights into the various aspects of migrant families' lives before and after migration. Key areas analyzed include overall livelihood, financial situation, social changes, household living conditions, access to health services, education, quality of life, and happiness. The findings indicate significant improvements post-migration across most parameters. For instance, the mean scores for overall livelihood, financial situation, and access to education all increased notably, reflecting better conditions post-migration. Similarly, the overall quality of life and happiness showed marked improvements, with statistically significant results confirming these changes. Additionally, an analysis of the sex distribution of

respondents based on origin shows a slightly higher proportion of males than females, with consistent representation from both within and out of the district.

4. Conclusion

The data highlights that migration has had a positive impact on the various dimensions of life for migrant families. Post-migration, families experienced significant improvements in livelihood, financial stability, social conditions, living conditions, access to health services, and education. These enhancements contributed to a better overall quality of life and increased happiness. The statistically significant improvements across these parameters suggest that migration has been beneficial for the families involved, providing them with better opportunities and improved living standards. The consistent sex distribution across origins further indicates a balanced representation of respondents, ensuring the reliability of the findings.

5. Recommendations

Policymakers should support migration policies that enhance livelihood opportunities and quality of life for families, while also improving access to essential services. To maximize migration benefits, support services, including education and healthcare, should be strengthened. Initial challenges faced by migrant families, such as financial difficulties and limited access to health services, need to be addressed through transitional support programs. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are crucial to sustain the positive impacts of migration, and special attention should be given to vulnerable groups to ensure they receive targeted assistance.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest

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