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Role of Foreign Employment in Socioeconomic Development of Beldandi Rural Municipality, Kanchanpur, Nepal

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Abstract

This study is about the role of foreign employment in socio-economic development of Beldandi rural municipality. The main objective of this study is to analyze the nature and the role of foreign employment in the socio-economic development of Beldandi Rural Municipality of Kanchanpur district. A micro-level case study type research design was applied in which primary data were collected from a household survey with random sampling methods. A semi-structured questionnaire was applied for primary data where secondary data related to foreign employment were collected from different published sources.

Simple mathematical procedures were used to analyze the data. The study findings show that 85 percentage of households got economic security by increasing their economic status from remittance income, and 65 percentages of respondents improved their knowledge and skills and used their skills in their community after arrival. This study also shows that foreign employment has positive changes in the socioeconomic status of respondents. However about 11 percent of respondents' economic status is worse, 35 percent of respondents' socioeconomic status did not change and around 54 percent of the respondent's social attitude changed due to foreign employment.

Keywords: Foreign employment, Remittance, Socioeconomic Status, Household survey, Economic security

Introduction

Foreign Employment generally refers to going from one home country to another country for employment activities that support earning money. Foreign employment is

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not a new phenomenon for humans. People have been usually starting migrating since the beginning of human civilization. With time, foreign employment has emerged in diverse forms and now has become necessary and common everywhere in the world. Millions of people from least developed countries around the world are leaving their birthplace for seeking better employment opportunities in developed countries and improve the living standard of their dependents through employment activities. Globalization in the twenty-first century and the integration of regional economies has a significant role in the growing mobility of youths as workers across borders.

Foreign employment is an important source of earning for Nepalese job seekers as it reduces the pressure on the local as well as domestic labor market. Different surveys show that there is a large number of Nepali migrant workers working in over 125 countries in the world (Ministry of Finance [MOF], 2014). However, the majority of Nepali workers are working in selected developing countries such as India, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Malaysia, Qatar, Kuwait, Canada, Australia, and the UK. The poor job market in the home country leads to a large number of youths working as migrants globally and causing different socioeconomic development in local communities (MOF, 2019).

Remittances are financial transfers made by overseas employees or remitters from their host nations back to their own, and they are a vital source of funding for economic growth. International Money Express (IME), Western Union, and other official organizations have been used by migrants to transfer their income. Remittance flows have grown in popularity as a quick way to get cash or money to recipients. However, due to the advent of an unofficial channel, it is challenging to estimate the precise quantity of the remittance flow in Nepal. According to estimates, more than half of the registered flows in developing nations are considered to be unrecorded flows through informal channels (Ratha, 2005).

Today, along with investments, trade, water, and tourism, remittances are regarded as one of the six pillars of the economy. It aids in balancing household consumption and investment in both physical and human resources. If recipients spend remittance on products and services made in their own country, it also improves the local economy and reduces poverty. Remittance penetration in Nepal's situation contributed to a decrease in poverty. According to the IMF countries, the percentage of local poverty would be 36 to 37 in the absence of remittances (Shrestha, 2019).

Researches show that remittances significantly boost the national economy. The remittances that migrants send back home have an impact on both household and societal growth. Remittances at the home level assist in lowering poverty, raising living standards, and pursuing higher education. It is likely that remittances will be used for business ventures

and profitable investments, thus increasing the number of jobs available and the average income in the country. Foreign exchange reserves are increased and the current account situation is improved by remittance inflows (Panta, 2011).

An empirical study revealed that remittances have a beneficial and considerable impact on economic growth in Pakistan. The study also discovered that remittances had a considerable and statistically significant impact on lowering poverty. Therefore, the significance of remittance inflows in terms of promoting growth and reducing poverty, which subsequently improves the social and economic conditions of the recipient country, cannot be questioned (Javid, Arif, and Qayyum, 2012).

There are various influence factors for foreign employment which influence a significant number of Nepalese to migrate abroad for a long time as well as temporary overseas employment. According to Central Bureau of Statics (2011), about 50% of Nepali households had at least one family member abroad who was either working as a foreign employee or had returned from overseas employment recently.

According to records of the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), there is no systematic database for migrants headed to India from Nepal. However, to date more than 47 lakhs labor working in 125 countries for various purposes of work worldwide (Nepal Labor Force Survey [NLFS], 2017/18). Nepalese people do not require labor approvals or any official records to work in India and hence, the migration to India from Nepal has not been recorded properly.

The Nepalese Overseas Employment Act of 1985 and National Labour Policy of 1999 both handle many concerns relating to foreign employment, such as counseling, complaints, compensation, etc. Following these, the Employment Policy 2005 was introduced in order to solve the problems with forced labor practices and to advance production-oriented employment with just labor. According to a quick poll, the top 10 destinations for Nepalese laborers are Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Malaysia, and Dubai, where the majority of unskilled and semi-skilled laborers from Nepal have an equal chance of finding employment. Approximately 47,92,096 Nepali nationals (95.06% men and 4.94% women) were employed abroad as of the FY 2077–78.

According to transfer data that are now accessible, Nepal has progressively noted remittance income from international work. The status of overseas employment and remittance revenue for the previous ten years are shown in the following table.

Table 1

Trends of Foreign Employment and Its Relation With GDP from 2008/09 to 2018/19

FY	People in Foreign Employment	Growth Rate Percentage	Remittance received in RS in Billion	Annual growth Rate (%)	Ratio of Remittance to GDP
2008/09	1459626	39.24%	183.01	82.75%	21.2%
2009/10	1753720	20.15%	231.7	10.50%	19.4%
2010/11	2055685	17.22%	253.6	9.42%	18.5%
2011/12	2437111	18.55%	359.6	41.81%	23.5%
2012/13	2852929	17.06%	434.6	20.86%	25.6%
2013/14	3164491	10.92%	543.29	25.01%	27.7%
2014/15	3201268	01.16%	617.27	13.62%	29.0%
2015/16	3619981	13.08%	665.06	7.74%	29.5
2016/17	4003474	10.60%	695.50	4.58%	26.0
2017/18	4365415	9.04%	755.10	8.57%	24.8
2018/19	4601708	5.41%	879.3	16.45%	25.4%

Source: Economic Surveys report (2008/09-2019/20), and Economic Bulletin of Nepal Rastra Bank 2019/20

The above table describes the ratio of remittance to GDP from 2008/09 to 2018/19 fiscal year. The collected data depicts the ten years changing patterns of remittance ratio to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The data shows that there is a substantial contribution of remittance income from foreign employment to GDP growth in the Nepalese economy. The last ten years remittance ratio average and GDP is more than 25 percent which can be seen in the above table.

The history of foreign employment is not new in Nepal. It starts in mid- nineteenth century when Nepalese youths start working as soldiers for the British army. Gradually the number of workers working in the British and Indian armies increased.

According to NLFS (2017/18), based on the calculation of absent population records there were about 976,625 Nepalese residing in India. A higher number of workers from Nepal are engaged in temporary and seasonal employment in hilly parts of India like Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. These temporary and sessional workers basically engaged in seasonal harvesting activities which are less than six months of employment.

According to NRB as the number of migrants increases for foreign employment, the total contribution of foreign employment income to GDP significantly increases and is about 25% of the total GDP in 2019/20 (NRB, 2020). Foreign employment supports the national economy through remittance and which provides economic security at the household level and supports to balance of payment in national economic records. Nepal's socio-economic development is significantly affected by foreign employment.

Kharel(2020) has stated that foreign employment has been the sole dynamic factor to deal with the depressing scenario of the Nepalese economy. Remittance income significantly contributes to rural households' economy which has significant impacts on the alternative livelihood strategy of the community people. Foreign Employment provides economic security to the family by improving the income of the family to a considerable extent for middle and poor-class families in the community. Hence, remittance from foreign employment has been considered a significant means to rescue the national economy from the low level of equilibrium trap and household poverty reduction. In general, foreign employment has been instrumental, in survival, poverty alleviation, and improving the living standard of people (Signal, 2017).

Related literature review discovered that foreign employment has raised the gross development product and support to sustain the economy in context of Nepal. But intensive studies related to selected research problem in Kanchanpur district are rarely found which is taken as research gap for this study. Remittance lead development theory for communities emphasizes the socioeconomic transformation of households from foreign employment in developing countries.

In this regard, the purpose of this study is set to analyze the nature and the role of foreign employment in the socio-economic development of Beldandi Rural Municipality of Kanchanpur district. To fulfill the objectives of this study, research questions are designed as: what is the role of foreign employment on social development of Beldandi Rural Municipality? and what is the role of foreign employment on economic development of Beldandi Rural Municipality? To address these research questions, this study tries to analyze the nature and role of foreign employment in the household level economy in the Beldandi rural municipality and the impact of foreign employment at the household level by analyzing the remittance consumption information received from primary and secondary sources of information.

Methods and Procedure

Beldandi is a Rural Municipality, one of the smallest local government bodies of Kanchanpur district, Sudurpashchim Province of Nepal with a total of 5 ward numbers and

37 square kilometers of geographical area. According to a survey of 2011 conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics, Beldandi Rural Municipality had a total population of 21,949 from a total of 3,760 households. From which 21.85 percent male and 3.80 percent female were engaged in foreign employment (CBS, 2011).

Research Design, Sampling, and Data Collection

This research is carried out with a descriptive as well as explanatory field-based research approach guided by case study designs which tries to compile and analyze the available quantitative and qualitative data on foreign employment from various primary and secondary sources to summarize the results. Initially, a semi-structured questionnaire for the household survey was developed and tested before the household survey. The data and other necessary information obtained from primary and secondary sources were analyzed with simple statistical methods.

Altogether 1543 HHs were engaged in the foreign employment in the study area, which is considered as total population households from which family members were in overseas for the foreign employment and from these sampling, households were selected by simple random sampling method. The sampling formula as shown below with a ninety percent level of confidence was applied to select the sample households.

Sampling formula for known population (www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html)

$$S = Z^2 NP (1-P)/D^2 (N-1) + Z^2 P (1-P)$$

Where S= required sample size

Z²= value (e.g. 1.64 for 95% confidence level), N= total population

P= the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size), D= the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion

Here, N= 1543, Z= 1.64, D= 0.05

$$S = 1.64 * 1.64 * 1543 * 0.05 * 0.5 / (0.05 * 0.05 * 1542 + 1.64 * 1.64 * 0.1 * 0.1) \\ = 308$$

In this method, 308 HHs were allocated for the household survey. The household was considered the lowest unit of sampling. To minimize the error due to the heterogeneity of the community and representation from each ward stratified random sampling method was applied for data collection. The basis for stratification was the population size of the ward, ethnicity, caste, and physical location. Due to variance in population proportion, 60%

more than the calculated sample size households were surveyed and each household for HHs survey from each ward were selected as the sample proportion with population and the detailed number of households from each ward were selected as shown in the table below.

Table 2: Sample Size Distribution for the Household Survey

Ward No.	Total Number of Households	No. of Emigrant Household	Number of Sampled Households
1	868	356	71
2	1106	425	85
3	728	302	60
4	320	146	29
5	738	314	63
Total	3760	1543	308

Source: District profile of Kanchanpur and researcher's calculation, 2021

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic Contribution of Foreign Employment in Beldandi Rural Municipality

One of the main pillars of the Nepalese economy for the past few decades has been foreign employment. Foreign employment reduces the strain on the domestic labor market, increases economic opportunity, aids in the fight against poverty, boosts remittance, and promotes national economic development. One-third of adults are using foreign work to break into the global job market.

Foreign employment plays a vibrant role in socioeconomic reformation and development in Nepal. Foreign employment contributes in poverty reduction and national economic development as the major sources of remittance income (Pandey, B. 2016). In the same way, it also plays a major role in the renovation of skill, knowledge and learning from various cultures. Remittance can noticeably change a household's income, socioeconomic development and living standard of people (Kapri, K., & Ghimire, S., 2020). Remittance has not only contributed in poverty reduction but also played a vital role for the economic development of nation. The table below shows the average monthly income of selected families of Beldandi rural municipality from Malaysia and Gulf countries.

Table 3: Income Earned Abroad for Different Ethnic Groups

Caste/ Ethnic Group	No. of Respondents	Average Monthly Income (Rs. in '000)							
		Based on Destination		Based on Education		Types of Jobs			
		Gulf	Malaysia	Educated	Uneducated	Mech.	Hotel	Industry	Agriculture
Chhetri /Brahmin	36	16.43	24	20	18	16	15	19	-
Tharu	48	31.43	24.4	22	18	18	18	18	8.5
Madhesi	10	26.01	28	21	21	21	20	23	9.5
Kami/ Damai	2	21.5	19	19	18	-	-	19	-
Others	8	24.6	36	18	19	15	14	-	10.5
Total	104	25.32	23	20	19	17.5	16.7	19.1	9.5

Source: Field survey, 2022

Result in the table 3 from household survey shows that the workers of Gulf countries earn more than those who had foreign employment in Malaysia. Based on these two countries, the average monthly income of respondents in Malaysia is Rs 23 thousand while the average monthly income of respondents in Gulf countries is Rs 25.32 thousand. According to the results of comparing the incomes of the respondents according to their caste, those from Chhetri/Brahmin, Tharu make more money on average than the other respondents because they are familiar with the rules and regulations concerning their works and salary before leaving for their destination. As a result of most of the workers from the Damai caste not having some form of education, the monthly average income in Gulf countries and Malaysia is the lowest. Overall result of this table revealed that the average income of skilled workers and unskilled workers is not similar. An average monthly income of 18.5 thousand rupees is earned by skilled workers, compared to 16.7 thousand rupees for unskilled employees. Mechanical workers in Gulf countries earn average of 17 thousand rupees per month, which is higher than the workers in hotels, industries, and agriculture. In terms of caste-wise variation, most of the Brahmin and Chhetri are employed as mechanical workers, so their average monthly income is higher than that of other castes. On the basis of job types, an average monthly income of Rs 16.7, Rs 18, and Rs 19 respectively was found for the workers working in hotels, industry, and agriculture. Results also indicate that the agricultural workers receive very little income of Rs 9.5 thousand per month.

Utilization of Remittance and Skills after Foreign Employment

The use of remittances is influenced by a variety of factors, including the importance

given by various industries, the amount sent, the time money takes to reach its destination, the chance to invest, and many more. The bulk of migrant workers leave their native countries for work because of household poverty and joblessness. They typically don't make a lot of money. Borrowing is used to cover the expense of employment abroad; therefore income must be used to pay back the loan's principal and interest. Perhaps a family is waiting for you. The respondents were questioned about how they used the money they made while working overseas while keeping all of these conditions in mind. Each person used the money for multiple purposes. Respondents were asked to list their uses of money under different headings in order to determine how remittances are employed.

Since most migrant Nepalese laborers are inexperienced, these individuals have acquired a variety of skills abroad (Wagle, 2012). They are expected to use those abilities in their home nation when they return, but they have already done so. It might be based on several circumstances. These conditions could include workplace accessibility or conditions for availability. These factors could include location, industry accessibility, skill level, lack of technology, financial accessibility, etc. The respondents were asked to give explanations in order to determine the perceived causes. The response provided by the respondents is displayed in the table 4 below.

Table 4: Use of Remittance and the Skills Learned in Foreign Employment

Caste/ Ethnic Groups	No. of Respondents	Utilization of Remittance %				A number of respondent use skills after returning to their home country	
		Household's expenses	Loan Payment	Investment (Land, share)	Social activities	Yes	No
Chhetri/ Brahmin	36	68	20	10	2	16	20
Tharu	48	64	32	3	1	14	34
Madhesi	10	56	36	6	2	2	8
Kami/Damai	2	75	20	2	3	2	-
Others	8	71	24	4	1	5	3
Total	104	66.8	26.4	5	1.8	39	65

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The information regarding how revenue from international employment is used, as well as how skills acquired while working abroad, is shown in table 4 above. We can infer

from it that out of all respondents and their households, 54.80 percent of respondents use their income for household expenses such as food, clothing, health care, and education for their family, while 29.8 percent of households use their income to pay off loans for their family that may have been taken for the same reason or that may have been incurred prior to his employment abroad. Only 11.53 households use their foreign income for investments, such as purchasing real estate, homes, stocks, or starting businesses. Only 3.84 percent of all respondents spend some of their income on social activities such as paying for roads, water, and other such expenses. Apart from those examples including Kami, Damai, and others, only the responders from Chhetri/Brahmin and Tharu spend practically all of their income on routine household expenses and loan repayments. It is concluded that a significant portion of the respondents' income from foreign employment in the research region is being used to pay for ordinary household expenses as well as loans and interest.

This table also includes information on the use of talents acquired through employment abroad. Only 37.5% of respondents overall state that they used the skills they acquired while working abroad in their home country. Sixty-two percent of respondents overall say that the abilities they acquired while working abroad won't be useful to them in any aspect of their future lives.

Changes in Household Economy Due to Foreign Employment

People often assume that if they get a job abroad, their household economics will also improve. Change may occur in a variety of contexts, including the economy, living standards, skill levels, and social standing, among others. Only when the respondents' income exceeds what is required to support their family, pay their debts, including principal and interest, will their financial situation improve and their property problem subside. The responder was asked to give their own assessment about their economic state before foreign employment and after foreign employment and compare this to time in order to determine the change in household economic condition as a result of foreign work; their responses are presented in the following table.

Table 5: Socioeconomic Changes in the Respondents

Indicator	Change in <i>socioeconomic</i> conditions			
	Increased	Decreased	Unaltered	Total
Economic Status	85	11	4	100
Standard Living	53	7	40	100
Social Status	62	5	33	100
Skills	70	-	30	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

The aforementioned study is based on the total sample size without classification rather than the ethnic component or group. It demonstrates that 85 of the respondents said that their economic situation has improved as a result of employment abroad. 4 percent of respondents state that their financial situation has not changed. The economic situation of 11 percent of the respondents has declined as a result of employment abroad, which means they have accrued more family debt as a result of such employment. The decline in financial standing can have led to expensive and underpaid foreign employment or temporary foreign employment (Patel, S.P. 2012). Another 54.8 percent of respondents reported that their standard of living had grown, 38.46 percent reported that it had remained the same, and 6.73 percent reported that their standard of living had deteriorated following their return from employment abroad as a result of rising debt. 35.57 percent of respondents' social attitudes stayed the same when considering social attitude and rest.

Regarding a different element of working abroad, 67.3 percent of the respondents said they had picked up some new talents, whether or not they would be useful in this country. The remaining 32.69 percent of respondents state that their experience working overseas did not teach them any new skills.

According to the above table, the majority of respondents said that their household's economic situation, social attitude, skill development, etc. had improved due to earning from foreign employment. A study by conducted by Kapri, K., & Ghimire, S. (2020) also highlights the significant improvement of households due to the earning from foreign employment. Where, Kharel (2020) has stated that foreign employment has been the sole dynamic factor to deal with the depressing scenario of the Nepalese economy, which significantly contributes to rural households' economies and provides economic security to the family by improving the family's income to a considerable extent for middle- and poor-class families in the community.

Conclusions

To analyze the impact of foreign employment on socioeconomic development this study was conducted in Beldandi rural municipality of Kanchanpur district of Nepal. Studies conclude that foreign employment is one of the major sources of household income in rural areas of Beldandi rural municipality which played a significant role in poverty reduction and expansion of economic activities in Nepal. However, the study concluded that about two third portion of remittance income was used for household expenses and a very small portion was only used for investment in land and share market. Caste-based, ethnicity, and education-based difference is not significant to vary the remittance income from abroad however working sectors are important to change the income standard of

foreign employment. The study also shows that contribution to social institutions increased when remittance income increases in any household. This may be due to the attraction of migrants to their native communities. Due to improper records of migrants from Nepal to India, there is a massive leakage in the calculation of the inflow of remittance from foreign employment. At the same time, most of the laborers from India prefer to send their earnings through informal channels than banks because of the service charge imposed on them which makes it more difficult to properly record and calculate the inflow of remittances from foreign employment. Therefore, the government of Nepal should make plans and policies to encourage and support the migrant database records to follow the formal channels to send their earnings and to utilize their remittance income for longtime investment then household consumption only.

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