

Rural elderly and migrant youth: A case of gender analysis of overseas-employment and shifting roles in Bagamati province of Nepal

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Abstract

Nepalese Society is diverse, complex and known as unique due to its social-cultural and political dynamics. Gender is considered a vibrant issue in modern society. This study is designed to find out the current situation of abroad employment trend and shifting role of Gender in the absence of Migrants. Purposively Makwanpur and Chitwan district of Bagamati Province were chosen for this research execution that covers all three geography. Two Urban municipalities Hetauda and Bharatpur city were chosen for the interview conforming to the high migrant rates conducted interview was conducted between Novembers to December 2024

The study found that the shifting role in the absence of migrant's transferred to the old age people significantly high. The farming practice of farmers are traditional and migration trend is high. The food sufficiency is limited and inspiring for the migration to earning. Both Male and Female rate is out migration in some cases. The domestic work is initiated by the elderly people with extra burden and aloneness is recorded high. The youth absences is questionable to the Policymakers for the sustainable development planning process. The migration uplifted the lifestyle of the houses and expenses more towards the loan repayment, education, and health and so on. The study concluding that the lack of youth creating a gap in the community is not taking over by the elderly people in most of the houses. The smart plan are suggesting for the agriculture and other sectoral areas involving such peoples who can contribute in sustainable development and local resource and local available skills and people aligning is the best sustainable approach advised.

Keywords: Gender; Overseas employment; Livelihood; Sustainable development

1 Introduction

National Planning Commission (2013) and ILO report of 2004 shows that for around 200 years, Nepali men (and to a lesser extent women) have been leaving homes to seek employment and living abroad. Even before the well-known recruitment to British-Indian armies, poor Nepalese fled excessive taxation, curve labor and exploitation from state agencies (ILO, 2004). In recent times, the government has recognized overseas employment opportunities to alleviate poverty and unemployment in the country. The GoN endorsed its ninth five-year plan (1997-2002) sought to increase employment opportunities for a rapidly growing labor force, by accelerating social development and improving access to basic infrastructure while reducing regional, gender and ethnic disparities (NPC, 2013).

After Government permission to recruiting agencies has send laborers to 20 countries. The Government of Nepal-GoN has the authority to add other countries based on the labor request of the Country.

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Countries which the government permits agencies to send workers include: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Maldives, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Brunei, Macao, Saipan, South Korea, Kosovo, Latvia, the Seychelles and South Africa (The Kathmandu post, 2021).

Various study have shown that people working legally in the USA, UK, France, Germany, and other countries too (ILO, 2004). Likewise many development report have similar statement that from Nepal only nearly 3000 people monthly basis migrating to abroad and USA and Australia destination is limited but Dubai and Gulf rates are high.

Migration increased in Nepal (Push and Pull factor). These can be economic, social, political or environmental. It impacts on both the places (Origin and destination) where migrants settle and impacts can be both positive and negative (Magar, Pandit, & Rola-RUBjen, 2024).

From time immemorial Nepali households have had at least one member away from home for work or education, depicting a pattern of migration in the country. The number of out-migrants as per the Department of Foreign Employment (MoLE, 2014) in Nepal was only 3,605 in 1993/ 94, which has now increased to over five million as of 2019/20 published in the Nepal Migration Report 2020 by the Ministry of Labor Employment and Social Security (Mishra, 2022) (MoLE, 2014).

However, labor migration in Nepal has mostly remained a male phenomenon as the female migrant workers accounted for a little more than 5 percent in the last decade. Given such a situation, it is imperative to delve into the trends of female labor migration in Nepal, its reasons and patterns over these years.

These services are still based on human-labour, and they require patience, perseverance and dexterity of work performance; this is something that only women are capable of performing due to their “coercive” traditional gender roles (Bhadra, 2007).

In the current global labor market, the household-level care activities of women in the industrialized, newly industrializing and the petro-rich Gulf countries are substituted by women from developing countries, especially Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (D’Cunha, 2005).

In recent years, Nepalese women have also been in high demand in this “care economy”, especially in private homes. One recent study found that the vast majority (66%) of migrant women workers were engaged in domestic work as “care givers” (Adhikari et al, 2006).

NLSS, 2010/11, presents findings on the absentee female population. Under this, in terms of proportion, more women than men traveled to pursue education. However, the relocation for females is bound by difficulties starting from their homes/families, their country, to the country of transit, and the country of employment. Women encouraged to labor migration (CBS, 2011).

UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Cyprus are the top five countries where 77 % of total female migrants of Nepal go for employment. Moreover, over 50 % of Nepali female migrants hail from districts of Provinces 1 and 3 such as Jhapa, Sindhupalchok, Makwanpur, Morang, Kathmandu, Kavrepalanchok, Ilam, Nuwakot, Sunsari, and Chitwan (DoFE, 2017)

More than 176,000 women have received labor permits since 2008 to go to labor destinations such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Jordan. Contrastingly, another report by the DoFE stated that only 21,412 Nepali women were legally working overseas as of 2014/15. The number of labor permits received by female migrants surged by 106 % between 2010/11 and 2014/15 in comparison to an increase of only 39% of male migrants. The share of female migrants stood at around 8.5% in 2018/19(Nepal Labor Migration repot by DoFE, 2018)

The Migration has become one of the most salient features of our times. Much of the literature on migration focuses on the economic benefits of remittances sent home by these migrants. As of 2018, remittances amounted to USD 689 billion and was the largest source of foreign capital for developing countries (WB, 2016)

This transformation in gender roles is one of the central features of labor migration from Nepal, where over half of the country’s households have at least one migrant member and remittances account for more than a more than a quarter of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (UNDP, 2020)

Indeed, in the decade ending in 2018, over 4 million Nepalese workers received government permits to pursue foreign employment and more than 90 percent of these migrants were men.(UN, 2016)

Male migration freedom to Women and greater access to economic and social resources during men's absence, but these opportunities are often constrained by women's position in the household, their education and employment background, and gendered social norms (UN, 2020)

Most migrant wives also faced higher social scrutiny and increased vulnerabilities during their husbands' absence, limiting their participation in social spaces. Women who took on the role of household heads in their husband's absence often had to step into public spaces out of necessity to maintain their livelihood (going to the market, health center or bank)

Maoist Insurgencies, Mega earthquake 2015, Federal establishment and COVID-19 Pandemic has become the National devastation if Nepal that increased Overseas Employment due to the Scarcity-Limited Economy (Chhetri, Basnet, Dhungana, & Nepal, 2020).

The Government act and Policies has given freedom and equal access to Women and Marginal, Ethnicns ensured equal Livelihood and access and opportunity through Agriculture/ Social development (*MoALD, 2022; GoN, 2020; Law Commission, 2020*).

Thus, the context and review stated that Gender study in the present context is the main gap and witnessed that many youth out-migrated for wage and the role of women/ men is questionable. Thus this can plays a vital role in the development history of Nepal. Overseas employment is vibrant issue not only affecting the development practice rather the old age peoples and gender role is questionable. The absence of youth and old age peoples are the ground reality if Nepal that adversely affecting the cycle of sustainable development process because the leading sectors like agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and hard hand works are dropped due to the absence of youth in the rural areas, thus this study is conceptualized from the sense of Gender Justice theory and Sustainable Development Approaches to overcome the possible way out in the coming days. Thus, the study prepared a conceptual framework that can explain and future way out to the policy makers

The main objectives of this study are:

- To find out the overseas employment situation in the study area.
- To analysis the gender role in the absence of Migrants.

1.1 Importance of Gender study in the present Context

This study revealed the current situation of Nepalese society who are out migrated and the role of Women's/ Men are doubled. In addition the old age people are recorded more in number this indicates that the absence of young people is challenging to promote the state goal and planning and the aim of sustainable development is somehow challenging in the recent and future.

The following scopes are listed herewith:

- All three tiers of Government Like Federal, Provincial and Local Government can benefit from the Overseas migration
- The policy makers working in the fields of Agriculture, animal Husbandry, Forestry, health and Infrastructure will be benefited view the scenario and absence can made a perfect plan to invest more on Local areas and resource mobilization based on the status of the area.
- Women health issues and economic empowerment can be enhance from the finding of this research study because the presence of Old people and youth absence may generate opportunities for those who are available in the study area.

2 Methods

A cross-sectional mixed method analysis applied to collect data from the migrant's houses limited for this study because migration for the higher study in USA and Australia will not cover for this study.

Two consecutive district Makwanpur and Chitwan as a Representative sample of the Bagmati Province (*Figure-1*) will be chose for this execution both district represents Terai, Hills and Moiuntain district of the Bagmati Province.

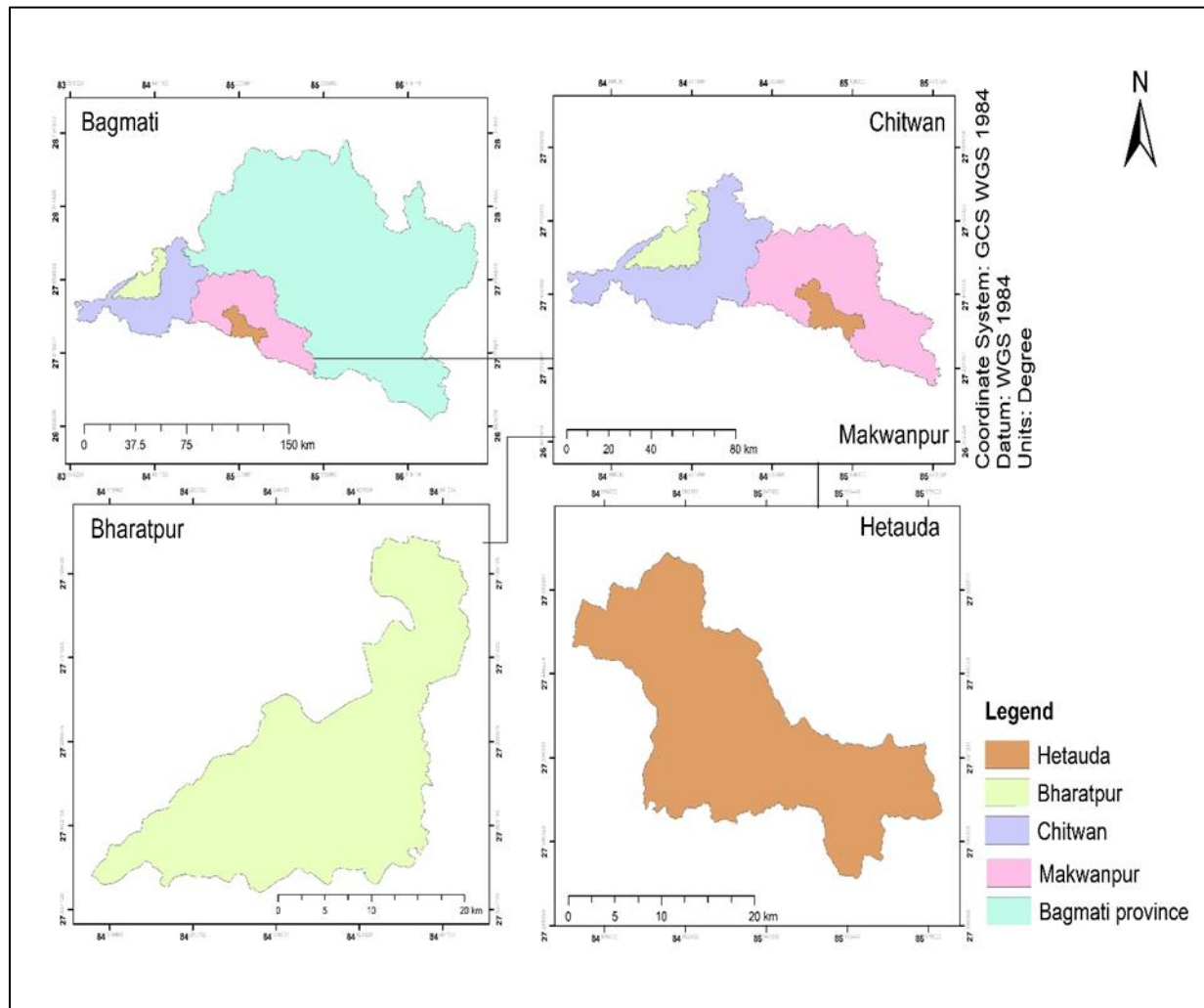


Figure 1 Study area of Makwanpur and Chitwan district within Bagmati Province of Nepal

After consulting with LG Hetauda and Bharatpur LGs were chosen to conduct this study as both are urban and migrations rate is higher to the Saudi and Gulf Countries found and selected accordingly.

The Sample site and summary of respondents are mentioned below:-

Table 1 Summary of household samples

District	Caste						Total
	Tamang	Magar	Dalit	Chhatriya	Brahmin	Others/ Dusnami	
Makwanpur	29	2	5	8	8	1	53
Chitwan	3	8	6	5	8	20	50

(Source: Field survey, 2025)

A total of 103 samples were surveyed in between Jan-Feb 2024 keeping objective in center.

Qualitative analysis: qualitative tools like FGD and KII from the Local Government and various interview. Ward no 12 and 13 of Makwanpur and ward no 27 of Chitwan was taken purposively taken as the majority of Ethnic/ Non ethnics were high following overseas employment for earning.

A HHs questions (*Annex-1*) and FGD, KII and other check list were prepared to captured the filed insights. Prior to the field visit LG were informed and letter of approval were received from the LGs (*Annex-2*) that helps to coordinate and selection of houses consulting with Local elected Peoples at Ward Levels.

2.1 Data Analysis

The collected data were entered into SPSS-Vol 24 and barious analysis were made using that. Table, graphs presentation were prepared. Mean Median, Mode and P value were analyses through the SPSS.

2.2 Findings

The results were drawn based on the objective set herewith;

2.2.1 Overseas Employment Situation

Table 2 No of surveyed people trend who out migrated

Total out-Migrated	1	2	4	Total
Ethnics	55	20	0	75
Non Ethnics	23	4	1	28
Total	78	24	1	103

(Source: Field Visit, 2025)

It was found that the majority of single person migration is higher in both district. From the ethnics/ non ethnics trend also have similar trend. The 2 person migration from the houses are increasing trend. Somehow 4 people recorded migrated as this case noted while all families employed in Quatar for earning belongs to the same family.

The trend also indicates that ethnics migration rate is little higher than Non ethnics. Field visit also validate that marriage less than 20 years and limited education ultimate way out migrants to visit abroad and ethnics are more in social marriage then else.

Male migration is significantly high (*Annex-3*) than Female and both Male and female also noticed average trend indicates that one earning one caring strategies of the houses are high.

Table 3 The destination of migration

Destination	Gulf	Malaysia	Dubai	Quatar	India	Europe	Total
Ethnic	35	2	5	20	8	5	75
Non ethnics	7	5	1	2	1	12	28
Total	42	7	6	22	9	17	103

(Source:- Field data, 2025)

The majority of migration recorded high in Gulf Countries (42 Responses) followed by Quatar (22 responses). The majority of migrants are engaged in wage work like plumbing, electrician, farming, gardening, caretakers and working in companies taking responsibilities. Whereas, Europe and India migration recorded limited deals with hospitality business-based work like cooking, serving and working in street fast food business of own/ others.

During field interaction with a women at Bharatpur 27 (*Appendix-1*) told that his husband went to Gulf Countries and working in owner's farm and engaged nearly 8 to 10 hours per day.

Table 4 Reason of Migration

Reason of Migration	Scarcity	Opportunity	Both	Total
Ethnics	48	7	20	75
Non-Ethnics	5	9	14	28
Total	53	16	34	103

(Source: Field visit, 2025)

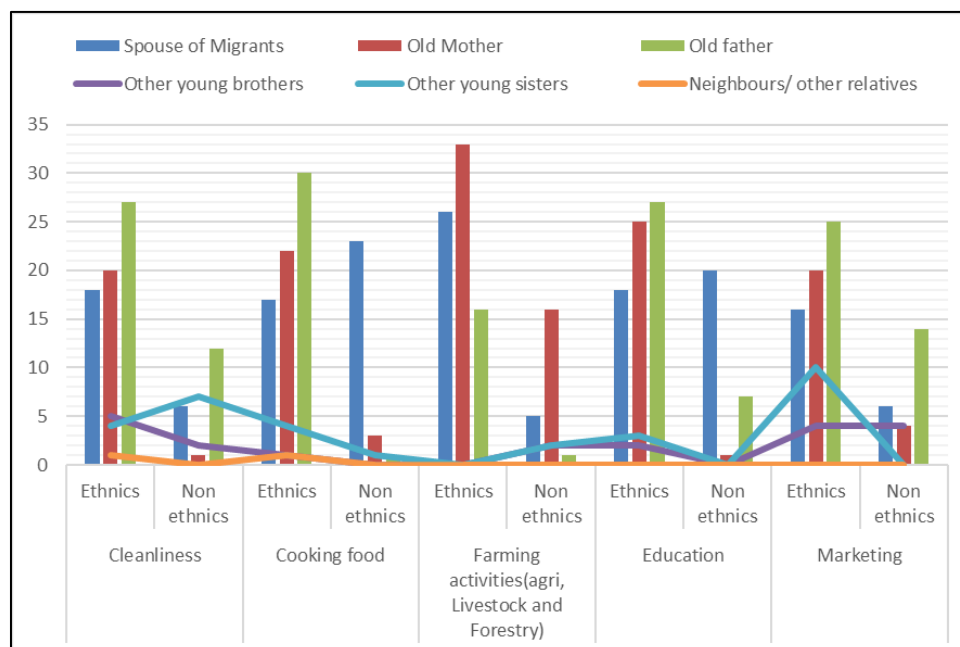
From the table-3, the prime reason of overseas employment is scarcity (53 answer) responded by the respondents. The scarcity indicates that the higher loan, limited food security and debt ultimately way out for the migration. Opportunity rate also significant low because migrants at least paid some cost and earning are the main purpose for this but both cases are significant this indicates that both earning and investment nearly stands to both means, the lack of employment and limited access over the study area ultimately pushed people abroad.

Annex-4 clarify that the food self-sufficiency from own production last for 3 and 6 months for the majority of people, this indicates the food scarcity from own and limited production causes food insecurity to the people and yearly feeding is challenging and migration for earning is the best alternatives.

Annex-5 illustrating that quality education and manage food security are the benefits of overseas employment. But from the other perspectives, this also left many challenges of work load to old age peoples and other peoples and alones are the challenges (Annex-6).

Group discussion added that Elderly people are taking care of the activities within community, starting from the domestic to the community level interactions.

2.3 Gender role in the absence of Migrants



(Source: field study survey, 2025)

Figure 2 Who look after the houses in absence of migrants

In absence of migrants, the cleanliness, cooking, farming, education and marketing related activities are looking after by the old age mothers/ fathers and spouse of the families in most of the cases that asked. Figure-2 explain that the cleanliness required some time to clean domestic and cattle's shed, this required effort, water and time both and usually spouses do often in normal time but in absence of young male Old found doing such work. The wife's and old peoples are engaged in hard works (Appendix-2).

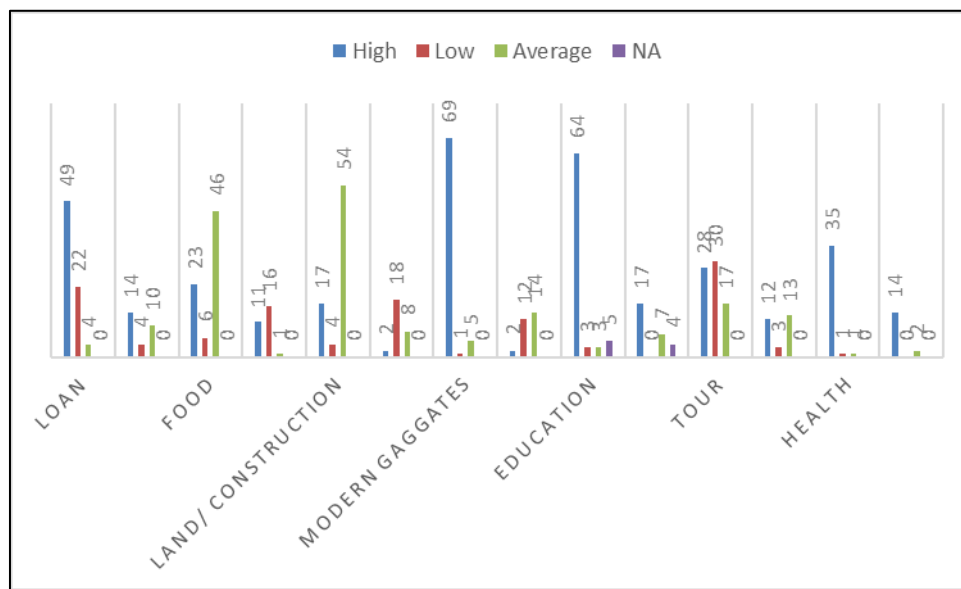
Cooking and farm activities like agriculture, livestock, and forestry activities are looking after by the same hands because there is no alternatives of people's arounds

FGD added that people using hired labors in Chitwan nowadays and paying due to local unavailability of peoples.

Whereas in Makwanpur rural areas neighbor exchange farm work means community participating in farming activities and supporting houses that won't cost because in each farm the team members contributes wage in team members plot.

For education and marketing the story is same and private education involvement is high nowadays because of good earning and quality education providing by the Private sectors attraction and facilities are higher.

KII and FGD added that role of old age people and women has tremendously increased. It has also saw that the social security grant helps old age people to survive. Most of the people at villages are old and womens and their elders and male youth have out migrated for the employment.



(Source:- Field visit, 2025)

Figure 3 Expenses trend

The data trend shows that Modern gaggates, education, loan ad Health costs are more spending in the surveyed houses. The remittance amount noticed reaching market through food and construction that see average trend, but in loan repayments and modern devices purchase like mobiles and digital device purchases is higher in the study area.

LG added that the life style of migrants families have changed, private boarding teaching intention is high due to gain of quality education, similarly, life style of houses little increased as purchase rate and demand is high.

LG added that policy level implementation on agriculture and forest sectors is challenging because there is no youth in the villages so sustainable development is questions and ongoing disasters, climate change impact and social conflict are raising day by day and sustainable development is challenging.

2.4 Proposed Model of this study and Conceptual; framework for the present and Future Gender Study

Based on the finding of study a research frame cum conceptual design is proposed that will guide and support to the researcher and policy makers for the future sustainability.

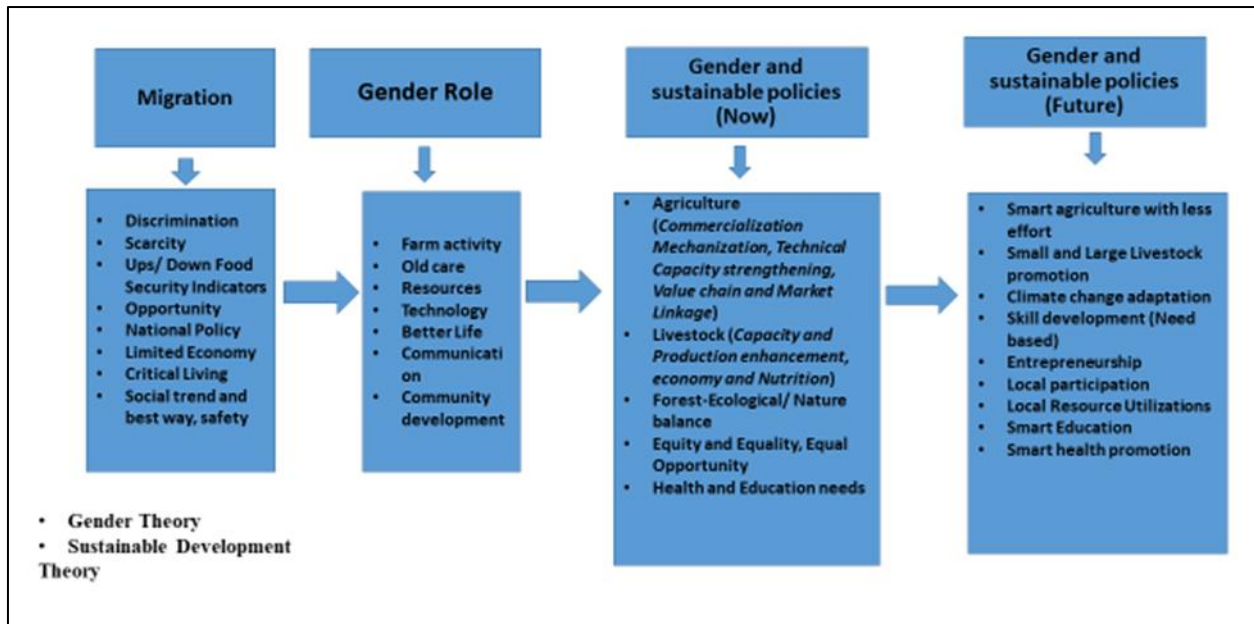


Figure 4 Research framework and future sustainable approach

The research found many theoretical relationship of each variables that was set in the title and objective, among which Gender and Sustainability was a major variables that can influence each other. Figure-4 demonstrating that Migration caused due to various social-economic and Political causes like discrimination, scarcity and various economic trends and safety purposes and the gender role and Present Policies and Sustainable Development progress are not aligning with each other. For example the recent Policies promoting agriculture activities to promote the local production and young peoples are not available that means either old age people are forced to do or women engagement is challenging for the state to manage the goals, Instead a smart agriculture promotion like cash crop and high value crops sale can changed the economy for those who are old and all age groups can promote easily.

In addition, Smart Livestock promotion education, Health system and food practices can manage local resources well and the community participation will increase rapidly and Sustainable development practice will accelerate accordingly. Through this frame, if we apply Gender Theory and Sustainable Development Theory approach both through prescribed frame can lead society accurately.

3 Conclusion

The study concluded as overseas employment is the most usual trend of Nepalese Societies and in the study area found in increasing trend. Migration cause due to several reason among which scarcity and opportunity is prime reason. In an absence of young people, the work load to men/ women is somehow shifting and hectic role for the elderly people who perform all regular task and looking after the domestic activities. From the development lenses, absence of young people is challenging at present and future from the policy and program implementation as the farm to feed activities required hard work and young absentees is one of the silence indication of trouble for the Nepalese sustainable development. Hence, participation to policy implication need to rethink and local human availability and local resource mobilization and participation can only address the migration issue. Hence, local level of participation and need to be fulfilled and LG and all development agencies are requested to provide economic and skilled opportunities to the People who are available.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

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meetings were taken with consent and the author thanks all participants for providing quality notes and data that will help in generalizes the ground reality.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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Annexes

Annex-1, HHs questions of the study area

HHS Questionnaires

My name is Kabita Khatiwada, a Ph.D. scholar from Pokhara University conducting research and analyzing Gender role in domestic for such families who Overseas Employment (wage), Your consent and true answer will support me to find out the real status and consequences of Gender for the Policy research that anticipate Policy makers.

HH Caste:..... Respondents age:....., Gender of respondents:.....

Ward no:.....

Q No	Questions	Responses
1	Total HHs family members	Total.....Nos, Above than 50 years.....less than 15 years.....16 th to 49..... (Physical Presence)
2	Total out migration No

3	Gender who out-migrated	Male, b) Female, c) Both
4	Destination	Gulf, b) Malaysia, c) Dubai, d) India, e) Europe
5	Reason of Migration	Scarcity, b) Opportunity, c) both
6	Residing in	Thatched, b) CGI, c) Wood / Plunk, d) Concreate, e) Mud
7	Agriculture area (Own/ Lease)Kattha
8	Farming practice	Cereal (Maize, millet) with Leumes, b) Only Cereals.
9	Food Sufficiency from own production	Up to 1 month or less than that, b) Up to 3 months, c) Up to 6 months, d) Up to 9 months, e) Up to 12 months and above
10	Cultivation practice through	Own-Neighbors, b) Labors, c) Own-Labours, d) Through mechanization
11	Livestock information's	Goat/ Sheep....., Cow/ Buffaloes..... Hen/ Duck/ Pigeon....., Pig.....
12	Challenges of agriculture	No human, b) Climate change impact, c) No input support, d) No technical support, e) Poor Market, f) Poor technical extension, g) Dependency in market purchase
13	Benefits of Migration	Kitchen gardening increased, b) Quality education, c) Urbanization/ safety and security, d) Saving and opening of multiple accounts for Minors, e) Separate living decreased violence's in home, f) Communication and learning skills increased, g) Social networking, h)
14	Challenges of Domestics	Aloneness, b) Extra burden to old people, c) Conflict in between old and young people, d) Leisure time of peoples, e) Over expenses on hotels/ Restaurants, f) No care of chils/ Old age peoples.
15	Source of irrigation	Rain fed, b) Lowland/ Irrigation through river,
16	Livelihood-First	Agriculture, b) Livestock, c) remittances, d) salary, e) Business, f) Wage labor, g) Social grant, h) Forest product sale
17	Total number of people going for the education
18	Destination of the Education	Government School, b) Private Boarding school, c) Community school/ Colleges
19	Who take care of cleanliness in home	Spouse of Migrants, b) Old Mother, c) Old father, d) Other young brothers, e) Other young sisters
20	Who prepared food	Spouse of Migrants, b) Old Mother, c) Old father, d) Other young brothers, e) Other young sisters
21	Who do farming/ Livestock/ Forest activities	Spouse of Migrants, b) Old Mother, c) Old father, d) Other young brothers, e) Other young sisters
22	Wo care education	Spouse of Migrants, b) Old Mother, c) Old father, d) Other young brothers, e) Other young sisters
23	Who do marketing for purchasing	Spouse of Migrants, b) Old Mother, c) Old father, d) Other young brothers, e) Other young sisters
24	How often money inflow	Monthly, b) in Two Months, c) In three Months, d) Randomly
25	Expenses ratio or Priorities	Loan: High/ Low/ average b) Food: High/ Low/ average, c) Construction or Buy of buildings. Land: High/ Low/ average , d) Gaggates: High/ Low/ average, e) Education: High/ Low/ average, Tour/ visit/ purchasing of clothes and expensive items required in domestic: High/ Low/ average
26	Training receive in	Agriculture....., Livestock....., Forest....., Business....., Cash Crop....., Entrepreneurship like Knitting, stitching and other cash income....., Beauticians

27	Training requirements	Agriculture....., Livestock....., Forest....., Business....., Cash Crop....., Entrepreneurship like Knitting, stitching and other cash income....., Beauticians (High/ Low/ average)
28	How do you rate the violence rates in your community Like (Fighting? Quarrelling, Gossiping)	High/ Low/ average
29	How do you rate the thefting/ Looting incidences in your areas	High/ Low/ average
30	How do you rate the presence of young male in your community	High/ Low/ average
31	Presence of Young Female	High/ Low/ average
32	Presence of Old age people	High/ Low/ average
33	Presence of Government and other administration peoples	High/ Low/ average
34	Gathering and Social Discussion for the Community Development	High/ Low/ average

Annex-2, Sample letter and letter from the LGs.

भरतपुर महानगरपालिका
२७ नं. वडा कार्यालय
भरतपुर, चितवन जिल्ला, नेपाल
Bharatpur Metropolitan City
27 No. Ward Office
Bharatpur, Chitwan District, Nepal

आ.सं. ०८१/०८२
च.सं. २२८२

मिति २०८१/१२/०९

श्री कविता खतिवडा
पोखरा विश्वविद्यालय
मानविकी तथा सामाजिक विकास संकाय।

विषय :- अनुसन्धानको लागि अनुमति दिएको सम्बन्धमा ।

प्रस्तुत विषयका सम्बन्धमा तहाँको विश्वविद्यालयमा पि.एच.डि. अध्यापनरत श्री कविता खतिवडाले यस भरतपुर महानगरपालिकाको वडा नं. २७ स्थित विभिन्न स्थानहरूमा विभिन्न विषयहरूमा अनुसन्धान कार्य सञ्चालन गर्न अनुमति पाउँ भनी पेश गर्नु भएको निवेदन अनुसार उक्त कार्य गर्न अनुमति प्रदान गरिएको छ ।

राम बहादुर मण्डारी क्षेत्री
वडा अध्यक्ष
वडा अध्यक्ष

Annex-3, Gender summary of Migrants

Gender who migrated	Male	Female	Both	Total
Ethnics	29	30	16	75
Non ethnics	20	5	3	28
Total	49	35	19	103

Annex-4, Food Self-sufficiency from own Production

Food sufficiency from own (Months)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	More than 10	Total
Ethnics	6	3	21	6	2	18	10	1	1	3	4	75
Non Ethnics	0	0	1	3	1	8	1	2	3	5	4	28
Total	6	3	22	9	3	26	11	3	4	8	8	103

Annex-5, Migration benefits

Migration benefits	Kitchen gardeni ng increas ed	Quality educati on	Urbanizati on/ safety and security	Saving and openin g of multiple accoun ts for Minors	Separat e living decreas ed violenc e's in home	Social networki ng	Advan ce life	Manag e food securi ty	Tot al
Ethnic	8	14	5	11	7	0	10	20	75
Non ethnics	3	7	3	3	1	1	9	1	28
Total	11	21	8	14	8	1	19	21	103

Annex-6, Challenges of Migration

Challenges	Aloneness	Extra burden to old people	Conflict in between old and young people	Leisure time of peoples	Over expenses on hotels/ Restaurants	No care of child/ Old age peoples.	Over expenses/ Low saving	Total
Ethnics	6	33	9	13	9	3	2	75
Non ethnics	13	3	1	5	0	5	1	28
Total	19	36	10	18	9	8	3	103

Appendixes

Appendix-1, Researchers interaction with households women answering the male migrants information



Appendix-2, Old people engaged in hard work due to out migration of migrants.

