

Changing Patterns of Migration in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

*Migration is the major factor that affects the change in the population of the given territory and its distribution of natural resources along with fertility and mortality. It also affects almost all areas of life i.e. social, economic, demographic, political, and environmental. The main cause of migration in Nepal is poverty, destitution, unequal allocation and distribution of resources, geographical variation of labor demand (Pull and push factors). The main objective of this study is to analyze the general patterns of migration in Nepal. This study is based on secondary data obtained from the census 1952/54 to 2011. The absentees and Labor statistics obtained from Nepal Labor Migration Report are also used. Regression analysis is applied to measure the trend values. Student's *t*-statistic is used to measure the significance between migration to India and other countries. The percentage of absentees is threefold (2.3% to 7.3%) within the given period. The trend of absentees is steady up to 2001 and then increases rapidly. The forecasted absentees are 2.1 million for 2021 and a 2.6million for 2031. The labor migration to India increases gradually while the migration to other countries increases rapidly. The *t*-test shows that there is no significant difference between trends of absentees of India and other countries. The main destination of labor migrants in Malaysia followed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia besides India. Though remittance contributes a major part of Nepal's economy more than seventy percent of out-migrants are involved in the private job and the majority of the migrants are unskilled.*

Keywords: Migration pattern, remittance, absentees, Nepal

INTRODUCTION

Migration, fertility, and mortality are three basic factors affecting change in the population of an area. Human migration plays an important role in the achievement of an efficient allocation of scarce resources. People are interested in migration because it affects all areas of life (social, economic, demographic, environmental, and political) that analyzes migration very applicable as well as more complicated (Hagen, 2010). The classical approach viewed migration as a result of spatial variations in labor supply and/or demand conditions causing wage differentials between geographical subdivisions of the economy (Westerlund & Wyzan, 1995). Modern approaches link the micro and macro level and also include less economic concepts, for example, social capital (Faist, 1997; Faist, 2000). The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) developed in the 1980s consider migration as a household decision and includes a more complete explanation for migration flows (Stark, 1995). New economic approaches to labor migration denied the individualistic bias and emphasized the role of family, households, and also communities in migration decision-making (Castles & Miller, 2009).

It is not a new phenomenon of In-migration to Terai and out-migration from Nepal. Nepali migration is generally imputed to poverty, deprivation, unequal allocation and distribution of resources, a geographical variation of labor demand, and so on (K.C., 2003). In Nepal, hill-to-Tarai migration became a leading demographic, socio-economic, and political phenomenon. The productive land, plain topography, easy access, and developed infrastructure were pulled factors, while the uneven topography, lack of arable and fertile land, and the miserable hills were push factors (K.C., 2003; Kunwar, 2015).

In the past, there was a high level of in-migration to Nepal, from China and India. Migrants from China were largely traveling Mongoloid people who wanted to escape the harsh climate of Tibet. The Indo-Aryans from India, especially the Brahmins and Rajputs, were fleeing the religious causes of attacking Mughals and their suppression against Hindus. Other migrants from India (especially Bihar and West Bengal) were fascinated by the agricultural potential of the Tarai land (Kansakar, 1984; Savada, 1991). The open border between Nepal and India do not disturb the movement of people from one country to another without any official registration which leads to both positive as well as the negative impact for Nepal (Kansakar, 2003).

Climate change, environmental degradation, natural and man-made disasters cause displacement and dislocation from the land, meaning that many Nepalese migrate to ensure

sustainable living (IOM, 2019). About 2011 census data, nearly two-fifths (37.2%) of the Nepali absentees are in India, however, the data has its limitations in the case of an open border where crossing can be short-term or seasonable and will be undocumented. There are also no records kept on how much Nepalese work in India or where they are (IOM, 2019).

Labor migration was the dominant factor for migration from Nepal. Population census 2011 showed that almost 50 percent of Nepal's households had a member who was either working overseas or had returned and played a significant positive effect on the national economy. The migration had a series of socio-economic impacts on the welfare of Nepali nationality and their communities. Kunwar (2015) explained that about seventy-four percent of Nepali workers in foreign labor markets are unskilled. Also, "Majority of the migrant workers are engaged in 3D works (Difficult, Dirty, Dangerous)". The manipulation of migrant workers is most frequent and aspiring labor migrants may find themselves in a situation of irregular migration or trafficking (IOM, 2019).

Remittances are the direct and most remarkable part of the Nepalese economy. Nepal was ranked 5th among the remittance recipient country in the world with receiving US\$ 8.79 billion in 2018/19. Remittance is the main source of foreign exchange earnings in Nepal. The volume of remittance was 68.5 percent of the total foreign currency accumulation in the fiscal year 2017/18. About 30 percent of Nepal's GDP comes in the form of remittance money sent by Nepalese workers who are working abroad (MoLESS, 2020). The main objective of this study is to assess the pattern of migration in Nepal.

Pattern of International Migration

The census is the major source of information about migration based on the place of birth and the member of the family currently residing at home. Though the census of Nepal started from 1911, the information was collected regarding the migration only from the census 1952/54 based on absent population. The census indicated that the internal migration rate was 8.6 percent and the international migration rate was 91.4 percent (CBS, 2003).

In the 1961 census, migration data was collected based on citizenship, place of birth, native-born, foreign-born, destination, sex, and age by districts and regions. This census indicated that 3.4 percent of the total population was absent. In the 1971 census, data was collected on migration only for the de-jure method (population is counted according to their regular or legal residence) and not the de-facto method and have no information about the absent population.

Sex and broad age groups (0-15, 15-59, and 60 years and above) of the migrated

population were included in the 1981 census. Further information about the foreign-born population including; duration of stay in Nepal, duration of stay in the present place of residence, and reason for a stay in the present place of residence was collected. The data on the absentee population (10 years and above) within and outside the country was recorded as about 188 thousand which is an outstanding feature of the census. Reasons for absentees were categorized as a) agriculture, b) trade, c) employment, d) education/training, e) dependency, f) others, and g) not stated. From this census, the absent population was categorized based on sex which indicated that 2.6 percent of the total were absent of which 81.5 percent were males and 18.5 percent were females (CBS, 2003).

Migration data was available by birth-place, citizenship, region, and countries of destination, age (five-year groups), sex, occupation, and duration of stay in 1991 census. This census indicated that that the total absent population was 3.4 percent of the total population of which 83.2 percent were males and 16.8 percent were females (CBS, 2014).

Data on migration were collected from complete enumeration and sample enumeration in the 2001 census. Place of birth was enumerated under the sample schedule by native-born and foreign-born. Similarly, the duration of residence in place and its reasons were also included under the sample schedule. The absentee population by sex, duration of absence, and reasons were included under the complete enumeration. This included the absentee population within the country and destination abroad by sex. The age at the time of absence and citizenship were also included in the complete enumeration. This census indicated that 3.2 percent of the total population was absent of which 89.2 percent were males and 10.8 percent were females (CBS, 2014).

Migration data from the 2011 census was obtained from both complete and sample enumeration. Complete enumeration has two categories of questionnaires, that is, a household questionnaire, and an individual questionnaire. The purpose or the reasons are categorized and close-ended questions. The absent population with sex, reason, age, and education level at departure time were included. The reason 'conflict' has been added for the first time in the census history is in light of the armed conflict that occurred in Nepal from 1996 to 2006 (CBS, 2014). This census indicated that 7.3 percent of the total population were absent of which 87.6 percent were males and 12.4 percent were females which are as follows in table 1.

Table 1

Absentee Population, Nepal (1911-2011)

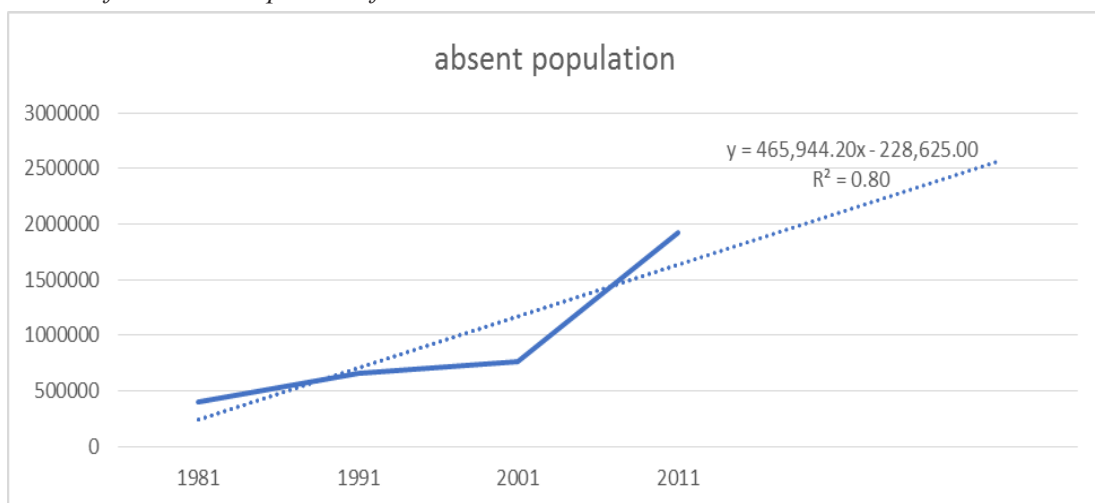
| Year | Total Population | Total absent (No.) | Total absent (%) | Absent male (No.) | Absent male(%) | Absent female No | Absent female(%) |
|---------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1911 | 5,638,749 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1920 | 5,573,788 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1930 | 5,532,574 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1942 | 6,283,649 | 87,722 | 1.4 | - | - | - | - |
| 1952/54 | 8,256,625 | 198,120 | 2.3 | 173,619 | 87.6 | 24,501 | 12.4 |
| 1961 | 9,412,996 | 328,470 | 3.4 | - | - | - | - |
| 1971 | 11,555,983 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1981 | 15,022,839 | 402,977 | 2.6 | 308,448 | 81.5 | 74,529 | 18.5 |
| 1991 | 18,491,097 | 658,290 | 3.4 | 548,002 | 83.2 | 118,288 | 16.8 |
| 2001 | 23,151,423 | 762,181 | 3.2 | 679,489 | 89.2 | 82,712 | 10.8 |
| 2011 | 26,494,504 | 1,921,494 | 7.3 | 1,684,029 | 87.6 | 237,400 | 12.4 |

Trends of Absentee Population

The trends of the absentee population are increasing rapidly since 2001. It may be due to political instability, unemployment, and for the purpose of better education.

Figure 1

Trends of Absentee Population from 1981 to 2011

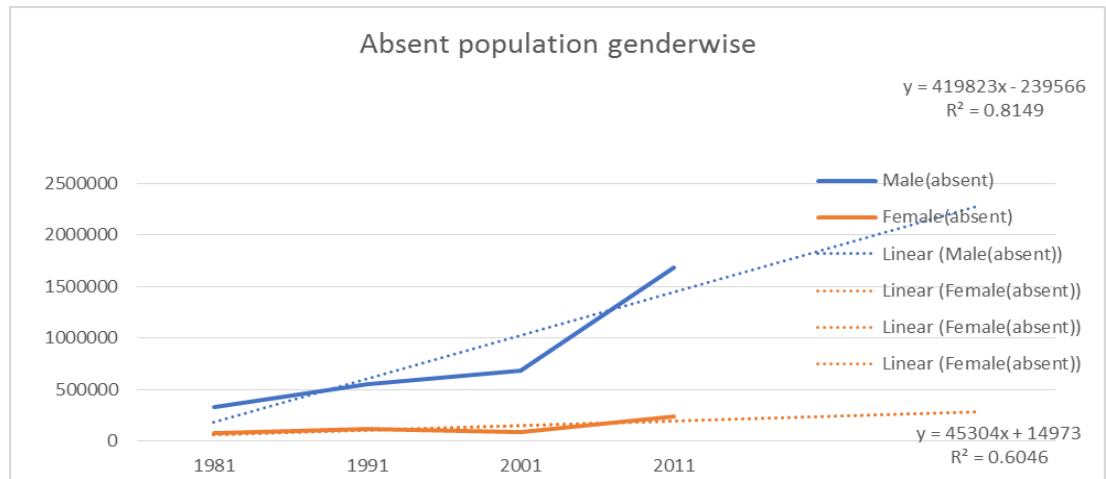


The absentee population is varied differently based on gender. The pattern of male absentee increased rapidly than that of the female. This indicates that the rate of increase of

male absentees in each succeeding census is 419,823 and 81.5 percent of the information about the absent male population can be explained by year. This indicates that the rate of increase of female absentees in each succeeding census is 45,304 and 60.5 percent of the information about the absent female population can be explained by the year. The forecasting values of females are 241,492 in 2021 and 286795 in the year 2031. The actual and trend lines for both sexes are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2

The Pattern of Absentee Population by Gender

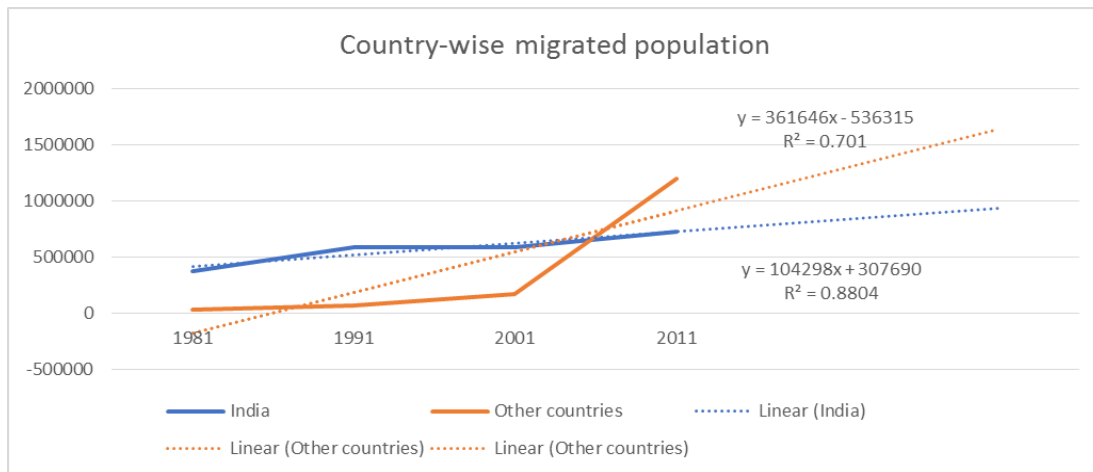


Distribution of Absentee Population

The pattern of absentee population in different countries is not homogeneous. The destination of out migration is also varied in different censuses. The destination countries can be broadly categorized into two groups: India and other countries for convenient analysis. The data indicates that the migration trend in India is smooth and not fluctuating but the migration to the other countries is increasing rapidly. The trend lines of the absentee population to India and other countries are shown in figure 3.

Figure 3

Trend of Out-migrants to India and Other Countries (1981-2011)



Trend of Labor Migration by Countries

The migration of labor workers to different destinations plays a vital role in the remittance economy of the country. The actual data of labor workers in India is not in recorded form due to the lack of a labor permit system and an open border. The data of Nepalese workers in the top seven countries in the period 2008/09 to 2014/15 is presented in figure 4. The pattern of labor permit indicates that Malaysia is the major destination for the labor and followed by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman respectively and the contribution of Malaysia is about 39.2 percent followed by Qatar (22.35%), Saudi Arabia (22.26%), UAE (11.6%), Kuwait (2.9%) Bahrain (1.0%) and Oman (0.7%) on average since 2008/09 to 2014/15.

Figure 4

Trend of Labor Migration by the major countries

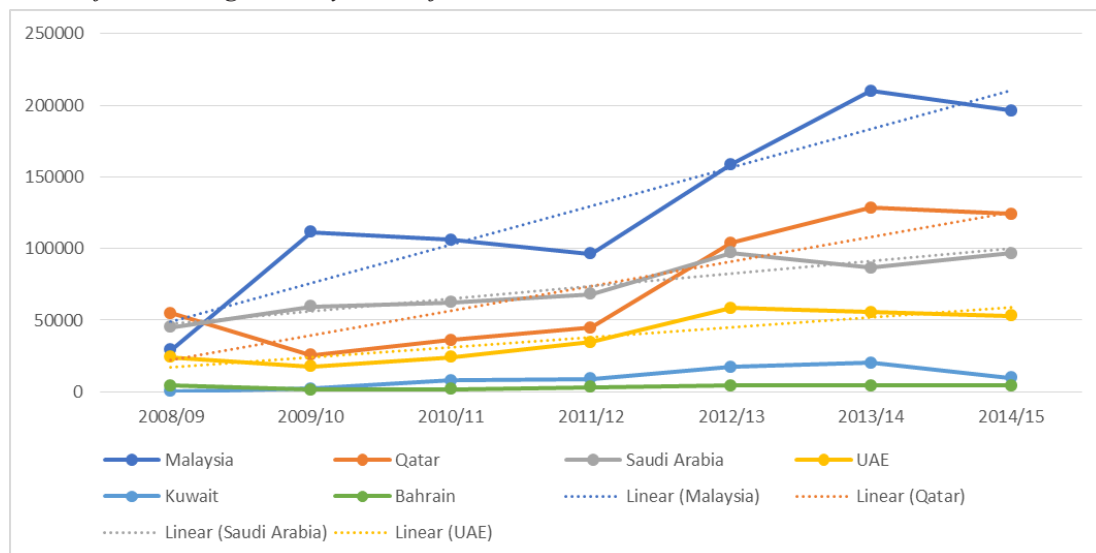


Figure 4 indicates that the number of work permits for labor migration in different countries fluctuates with time. The trends indicate that Malaysia is the major destination for Nepalese workers followed by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Bahrain.

Reasons for Migration

There are various causes for selecting out-migration. People choose a new destination for getting a better opportunity that can improve their mental and socio-economic status. Reasons for absence vary based on their ages, sex, etc. The sex-wise distribution of absentees from the census 2011 is presented in table 2. Among the absentees majority (87.64%) are male and females are in minority (12.36%). This data also indicates that the majority (71%) of the migrant is involved in the private job and followed by institutional job (10%), study (5.8%) and dependent (6.8%).

Table 2

Distribution of Absentee Population from Household by Sex, and Reason for Absence, 2011

| Reasons | Both Sexes | | Male | | Female | |
|-------------|------------|-----|---------|------|--------|------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Business | 11685 | 0.6 | 9773 | 0.6 | 1911 | 0.8 |
| Private job | 1364602 | 71 | 1270568 | 75.4 | 93993 | 39.6 |
| Inst. Job | 192484 | 10 | 181952 | 10.8 | 10529 | 4.4 |

| | | | | | | |
|------------|--------|-----|-------|-----|-------|------|
| Study | 110564 | 5.8 | 76886 | 4.0 | 33678 | 14.2 |
| Conflict | 2643 | 0.1 | 2249 | 0.1 | 394 | 0.2 |
| Dependent | 131109 | 6.8 | 54764 | 3.3 | 76341 | 32.2 |
| Others | 26681 | 1.4 | 20230 | 1.2 | 6451 | 2.7 |
| Not stated | 81726 | 4.3 | 67607 | 4.0 | 14103 | 5.9 |

Source: National Population Census 2011, District Report, CBS, 2014

Reasons for migration varied according to the sex of the absentees. For male absentees, the majority are involved in private jobs (75.4%) followed by institutional jobs (10.8%), study (4.6%), and dependent (3.3%). For female absentee majority involve in private job (39.6%) followed by dependent (32.2%), study (14.2%) and no stated reason (5.9%). Sex-wise distribution for the reason of absent population is presented in figure 7.

CONCLUSION

Nepal's migration situation is dominated by migrants for foreign employment. The 2011 census indicated that almost 50 percent of Nepal households had a member who was working or returns from abroad. Most of the migrants are engaged in private jobs followed by institutional, dependent, and study. In the past, the out-migrants are dominated by males. For the last few decades, the number of female migrants is also increasing due to domestic workers in the Gulf countries. The majority of the labor migrants are in Malaysia (besides India), followed by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain. The trend of the absentee population is gradually decreasing in India but have increased rapidly in other countries since 2001.

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