

[ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE]

Family's Perception of Death of Foreign Labour Migrants and Its Impact on Their Economy

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Article History

Submitted 10 October 2023; Reviewed 10 December 2023; Accepted 23 December 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/ajps.v3i1.61831>

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Published by

Department of Population Studies
Prithvi Narayan Campus
Tribhuvan University
Pokhara, Nepal



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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of families of foreign labour migrants who have experienced an increasing number of deaths in their workplaces. Nearly one thousand foreign labour migrants died in their workplace in the year 2019, this number is increasing day by day. This study analyzed the family's perceptions of the death of foreign labour migrants and its impact on their families. It uses a sequential mixed method to show the experiences of schooling children (age 8–18 years). Purposive sampling was used to choose the Bagmati province and districts, while simple random sampling was used to choose schools and students. The reason for selecting the province and districts was the higher foreign labour migration in 2019. About 77 respondents were selected by using simple random sampling, and a semi-structured questionnaire was used for quantitative data collection. The death of parents in foreign labour migration raises many difficulties for the persons left behind at home. Nearly thirty per cent of families, including children, were suffering sensitively from the loss of parents. Missing remittance from the death

of the breadwinner hurt the family's food consumption, accommodation, and health facilities. Some families could not get government support and insurance due to the loss of legal documents. Parental death also impacts children's schooling like attendance and academic achievement. It also raises family complications like remarriage, separation, and divorce. The demise of a family member increases the social and economic burden on the migrant community. It negatively impacts family harmony and child education. To support family migrants, an awareness programme is recommended to slow down the psychological stress on families, and a special support mechanism is recommended for orphan children's education.

Keywords: Foreign employment, scholarship, insurance, academic achievement, family harmony.

INTRODUCTION

Out of the three components of demography, migration is one of the vital components. Labour migration has offered employment opportunities to the young population in Nepal. Foreign labour migration refers to the cross-border movement of citizens for employment in a foreign country.

About 169 million people crossed international borders in 2019 worldwide to search for work. It was 4.9 per cent of the global labour force and approximately 69 per cent of migrant people worldwide (ILO, 2021; Adhikari & Paudel, 2022). In Nepal, 4 million labour approvals have been issued to Nepali workers from the Department of Foreign Labour Employment (MoLESS, 2020). Thousands of Nepali are seeking better opportunities abroad. They leave the country annually for better opportunities and contribute to the economy through remittances (Mandal, 2020; Paudel & Adhikari, 2023).

Ravenstein explained in his seven laws of migration that most migrants travel just a short distance, there are certain desirable factors in the destination that affect the migrants and the distance between the origins determines the volume of migration between the place of origin and destination (Ravenstein, 1889). On the other hand, Everett Lee has explained the factors associated with the decision to migrate and the process of migration. He explained about four factors that influenced the migration of a person. Michael Todaro has provided four models including relative benefits and costs, wage difference, probability of job and Urban-rural expected income differentials (Todaro, 1968). A theory of migration, New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) has centred on the effects of remittances on the microeconomic motivations of family members who are left behind. NELM theory suggests that migration is a way for households to overcome market failure and problems of credit and insurance markets. It supports by providing liquidity through remittances, financing new production technologies, and income. It hypothesizes about migrants' motivations to remit and the impacts of remittances on the migrant-sending economy (Taylor, 1999).

Many people invest in migrants with expectations of profits from foreign employment. The economic model has focused on protecting migrants and their dependents and shows the collection of remittances for the expansion of household income. It further stresses that remittances help household savings and finally increase assets inherited (de la Brière et al., 1997; de Haan & Yaqub, 2009).

When a male died at foreign labour migration, his wife became a widow. Widow has risk factors for transition into poverty. She had faced the loss of resources and had only a few options available to improve their economic status. Women widowed at younger ages are at risk for hardship after widowhood, and their situation declines with the duration of widowhood (Simmons, 1983).

People migrated abroad for better opportunities and to improve their lives. Migration has increased the value of the human development index and decreased poverty through remittance in Nepal. About 56 per cent of Nepali households receive remittances; it positively impacts on living values of people, increases years of schooling, and better quality medical care (Bansk et al., 2015). The remittances help to increase household income and contribute to improving human development, increasing food security, access to education, and overall level of living. Nepal was listed as the fifth highest remittance recipient in 2018, by the share of GDP worldwide. Nepali families can save money from that income (IOM, 2019). A situation has raised problems at the family level when persons have died/were injured in the foreign labour migration. It affects the household economy, family harmony, and health and education of children when they meet an accident at foreign labour migration.

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Nearly one thousand foreign labour migrants died in the destination countries last year. Accident at work is the leading cause of death; others are heart attack, cardiac arrest, job mishaps, natural disaster, homicide, suicide, and undetermined reasons (IOM, 2019; Adhikari & Paudel, 2022). A comparative study of low and middle-income countries among non-migrants and left-behind children shows that 52 per cent increased the risk of depression, 70 per cent increased the risk of suicidal ideation, and 85 per cent increased the risk of anxiety in left-behind children (Aryal et al., 2019).

Family migration affects the left-behind children, the elderly, and the spouse in both positive and negative ways. It impacts on macro-economic growth and development of households, communities, and countries (Maharjan et al., 2011). Foreign labour migration from Nepal is devastatingly a male phenomenon. The husband's migration creates various responsibilities for women. In most cases, they became household heads. The position of household headship increased the roles and responsibilities of women.

Women typically take care of the home, the kids, the cooking, and washing clothes. After the migration of husbands, their roles and responsibilities have increased in the household. According to migration studies in Nepal, when a spouse leaves home, the labour load increases in women as all the household responsibilities are inside and outside the home (Bhurtyal, 2015).

In the agricultural society, the migration of husbands provides the women extra responsibility of agriculture production to feed their children. The feminization of agriculture has effects on social and economic domains, creating social injustice for women due to family stress, family breakdown, and children growing up while economically the agriculture sector lacked labour and abandoned productive land. It results in food insecurity, nutrition scarcity, and chronic malnutrition for millions of people (FAO, 2019).

Case & Ardington (2006) found that orphanhood hurts children's education. Yamano and Jayne (2005) found that the negative effect of orphanhood is solely limited to poor children. The death of a male worker in foreign labour migration increased female-leading households in developing countries. Out of the total (7467) deaths of migrants, nearly 98 per cent were male in Nepal (MoLESS, 2020). This tragedy brings several issues like access of the market for land, labour, finance, and insurance. It further impacts high dependency, economic immobility, and the "double day burden" on their heads (World Bank, 2008).

Studies on remittances have shown positive impacts on the household economy. Remittance helped to reduce household poverty. Many studies show social and psychological problems for wives and children left behind at home. Children and women are losing their breadwinners in their families due to the death of foreign labour migration.

The loss of the family head will bring many problems to the family. One of the biggest issues is the family's socio-psychological reaction to the migrant's passing. It affects the family's socio-economic situation and kids' educational opportunities. Therefore, this study aims to study the family-level moral perception of the death/injury of foreign labour migrants in Bagmati province and its socioeconomic impact on their family and child education.

Government's response to victim families in Nepal

Children of foreign workers who passed away and or suffered physical disabilities are awarded a scholarship. Those schooling children who are under 18 years old and have enrolled in schools (from pre-primary through Class 12) are eligible to apply. The scholar's amount is NRs. 8000 for the primary level and NRs. 12000 for the Secondary level (MoLESS, 2021). Depending on the nature of the injury or illness, the Board has provided some compensation (Rs. 7 lakh) to the family of migrant labour. It was provided about 1 million to the demise family of the board. It also included the cost of transportation

from Kathmandu airport to their hometown as well as other financial and logistic support (MoLESS, 2020).

Although the government of Nepal has responded to the death or injury of foreign labour migrant families with various financial and social schemes, there may remain various unsolved factors in the society. Death or injury may arise to the family level problems like family, demographics, parenthood children, and caring, social, and ritual problems for their parents who have died or were injured in the foreign labour migration from Nepal.

About 236208 foreign labour migrants had get permits in 2018/19 in Bagnati Province, and 7467 Nepali migrants dying in their host countries over the last decade (MoLESS, 2020). That death raised obstacles in accessing land, labour, credit, insurance markets, and cultural norms. Most of the deaths of migrant workers occur in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, and Bahrain (MoLESS, 2018). Major causes of diseases include natural death, suicide, cardiac arrest, traffic accidents, murder, workplace accidents, and investigation pending. This study aims to analyze family-level perceptions of the death/injury of breadwinners and socio-economic threats to their families in Bagmati province.

This study has focused on family's perception of foreign labour migration death and its impact on their economy. The role of remittance has significant importance in reducing poverty. The family, who lost their breadwinners have had psychological perceptions and have faced various economic threats. This study has covered information on selected four districts from Bagmati province. The researcher has found that there were fewer studies on this issue. This study has provided baseline information on the family's perception death of a breadwinner and economic threats from the death of foreign labour migrants. Further, it provides the change that occurs from the death of parents on child education and development. The researcher hopes that this study will be helpful to policymakers, researchers, and students who are interested in the field of death of migrant labour and child health and development. This article has studied the family level perception of foreign labour migrants' deaths and the economic threats they pose to their families.

DATA AND METHODS

This study has used sequential mixed methods, with a quantitative strategy in the first phase and a qualitative approach in the second phase. It is a cross-sectional study targeting schooling children aged 8–18 years who receive scholarships from the Foreign Labour Employment Board of Nepal. The study was conducted in Bagmati Province. The researcher had taken four out of thirteen districts that (Kathmandu, Chitwan, Kavreplanchowk, and Sindhupalchowk) have taken due to higher foreign labour migrations in 2019. Purposive sampling was utilized in the study to choose the Bagmati province, and districts while simple random sampling was used to employ schools and students. The study employ both primary and secondary materials such as published and unpublished articles, journals, books, and official records from the Foreign Labour Promotion Board Nepal.

There are 135 students in four districts (54 in Kathmandu, 43 in Sindhupalchowk, 27 in Chitwan, and 24 in Kavreplanchowk districts) and receiving scholarship from the government. Two round selection methods had employ to select the respondents. First, the researcher listed the names of schools and students from the annual foreign labour employment board. At second-round selection, 25 students were found under the age of 8 years for the interview. So they were excluded from the roster of respondents. Finally, 77 respondents were selected out of 110 respondents using a sample size formula for defined sample with a 95 per cent confidence level and a 5 per cent level of significance. To collect quantitative information, a semi-structured questionnaire has been used to collect information. Information has been taken from face-to-face interview methods. The data entry

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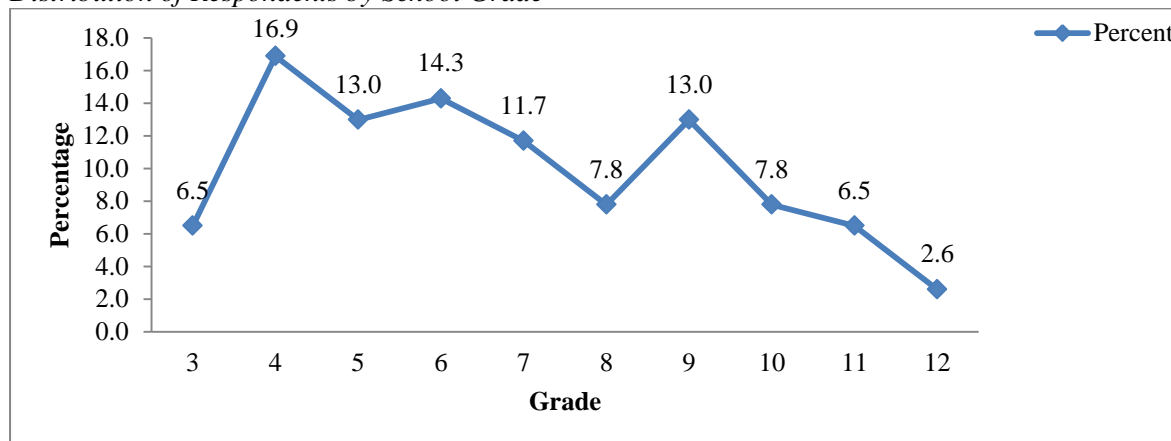
has been conducted in the computer software of the 20th version of the SPSS. The data was analyzed through cross-tabulation and description form. The study provides valuable insights into the experiences of students receiving scholarships from the Foreign Labour Employment Board of Nepal.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proportion of females was higher at ages 9, 12, 14, 15, and 17 years, and male respondents were higher at 10, 11, and 18 years.

Figure 1

Distribution of Respondents by School Grade



The mean age of the respondent was 13.6 years in the study area. A higher proportion of respondents (20.8 per cent) were observed at the age of 14 years and the lowest proportion (1.3 per cent) at 9 years. Female respondents are higher (55.8 per cent) than males (44.2 per cent) in the study area.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents by Age and Sex

Age	Sex				Total	
	Male	Per cent	Female	Per cent	No	Per cent
8	1	50.0	1	50.0	2	2.6
9	0	0.0	1	100.0	1	1.3
10	4	57.1	3	42.9	7	9.1
11	4	57.1	3	42.9	7	9.1
12	3	30.0	7	70.0	10	13.0
13	2	50.0	2	50.0	4	5.2
14	6	37.5	10	62.5	16	20.8
15	4	44.4	5	55.6	9	11.7
16	6	50.0	6	50.0	12	15.6
17	2	28.6	5	71.4	7	9.1
18	2	100.0	0	0.0	2	2.6
Total	34	44.2	43	55.8	77	100.0

There were 55.8 per cent female and 44.2 per cent male respondents. Female respondents are higher in grades 4, 5, 9, and 11, and male respondents are higher in grades 3, 6, 7, and 12. According to the headship status of respondents, about 5 per cent are heads of the household. More than 80 per cent of respondents are sons/daughters of foreign labour migrants. Nearly 8 per cent are grandsons/daughters, and 7 per cent are brothers/sisters. The majority of respondents (55 per cent) have attained a primary level, and 45 per cent are at secondary level education. Over 70 per cent of respondents are Hindus, 23 per cent are

Buddhists, five per cent are Bon and one per cent are Sanyasi. The majority (50 per cent) of respondents speak the Nepali language, nearly 33 per cent of respondents speak the Tamang language, and about 12 per cent of respondents speak Magar, four per cent of respondents Gurung, and 2.6 per cent of respondents Nepali languages.

Causes of death and injury at foreign labour migration

More than 70 per cent of the deaths occur from work-related accidents. Other causes of death are heart attack, cardiac arrest, workplace accidents, natural causes, murder, suicide, and unknown (IOM 2019). About 7467 Nepali foreign labour migrants have died during the last decade in the foreign labour migration and most of them were male (MoLESS 2020). This death raises various obstacles (access to land, labour, credit, insurance markets, and culture), and their family has suffered from high dependency burdens, economic immobility, and the double day burden (World Bank 2008).

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents by Condition and Causes of Injury of Parents

Condition of Injury	Sex				Total	
	Male	Per cent	Female	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Injury (lost hand or leg)	19	48.7	20	51.3	39	69.6
Disable (need care)	7	41.2	10	58.8	17	30.4
Total	26	46.4	30	53.6	56	100.0
Causes of death						
Disease	1	25.0	3	75.0	4	19.0
Traffic accident	3	60.0	2	40.0	5	23.8
Workplace accident	3	27.3	8	72.7	11	52.4
Investigation pending	1	100.0	0	0.0	1	4.8
Total	8	38.1	13	61.9	21	100.0

The causes of death of migrant workers were diseases, natural death, suicide, cardiac arrest, traffic accidents, murder, workplace accidents, and investigation pending (MoLESS 2078). Nearly 70 per cent were injured, and 30 per cent dead were found in Bagmati province. Among them, 39 per cent of labourers were injured from traffic accidents, 36 per cent from workplace accidents 20 per cent from murder and 5 per cent have investigations pending. Among dead cases, a higher proportion (52 per cent) were dead from workplace accidents, 24 per cent from traffic accidents, 19 per cent from diseases, and nearly 5 per cent said investigation pending (table 2).

Moral perceptions of family members

A male's death in foreign labour migration led to challenges for his wife. Women who become widowed at younger ages may face various hardships at her life in traditional societies (Simmons, 1983). The time of death or serious injury is very critical to their family members and relatives. About 95 per cent of children were psychologically impacted by the death/injury of their parents. About fifty per cent of children and family members were involved in disposing of the dead bodies of their relatives. Of those who had been involved in the disposal of a dead body, 53 per cent of males and 47 per cent of females. About 92 per cent of respondent said that their grandparents became serious at the time of death/injury.

The family-level economy of dead/injured labour

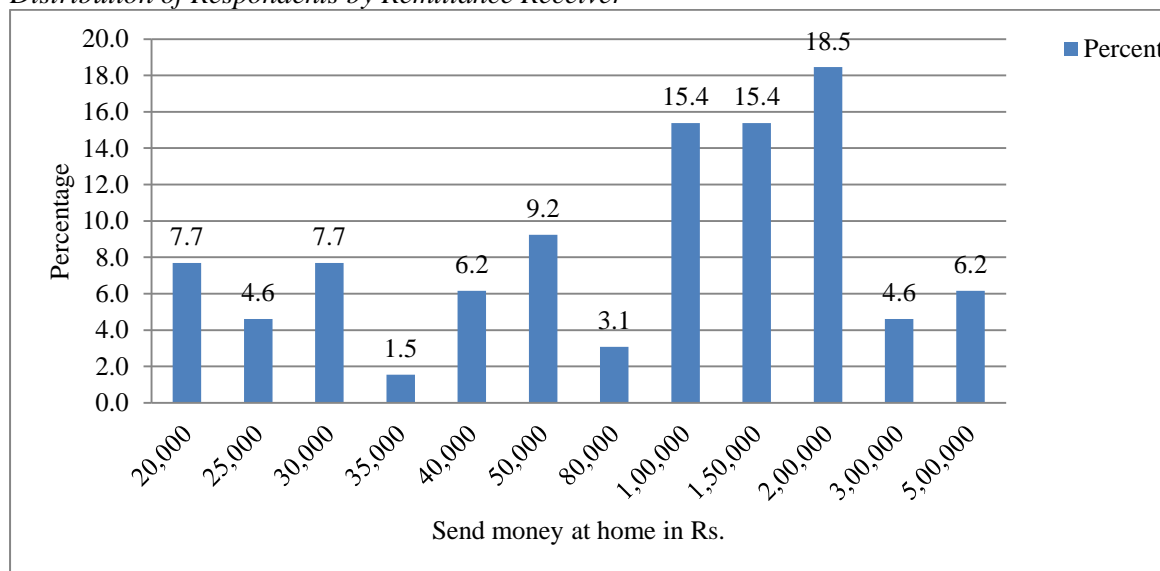
About 56 per cent of Nepali households receive remittances from foreign labour migration, which positively impacts on living standards of people, increases years of schooling, and better quality medical care (Bansk et al. 2015). The effect of remittances in increasing household wealth affects human development, increasing food security, allowing access to education, and improving the general standard of living. In 2018, Nepal ranked fifth highest remittance recipient as a share of GDP amongst all countries. Migration enables Nepali households to save (IOM 2019).

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More than 84 per cent family had received remittance before their parents met death/injury. The mean amount of remittance is Rs. 1, 35,076.9 where the minimum amount is Rs. 20,000.0 and the maximum amount is Rs. 5, 00,000. About 19 per cent family had received NRP two lakh remittance last time before the injury/death of their parents. Nearly 15 per cent received one lakh to one lakh fifty thousand, and 11 per cent had received more than three lakh remittances.

Figure 2

Distribution of Respondents by Remittance Receiver



The Foreign Employment Promotion Board of Nepal has been providing injury benefit compensation amounts to the returnee migrants depending on the severity of the injury or illness of the migrant (MoLESS, 2020). About 20 per cent of labour migrants did not have valid insurance when they became death/injured. They lost the document of insurance due to various reasons. Due to the loss of legal documents, only 88 per cent had received death compensation from the government. Among injury benefits receivers, 57 per cent said they had not covered the money for treatment to their parents, and the majority (35 per cent) of the family had to bear the medicine cost themselves. The injured family had to face the extra burden of medicine for the migrant labour.

Economic threats and occupation change of family from death/injury

Nearly 42 per cent of the respondents had said that they had faced economic burden from the death/injury of parents. About 27 per cent of respondents lost agriculture production, 22 per cent had lost food-taking system of family and household amenities, 12 per cent had lost rental/house, and 9 per cent lost jobs from the death/injury of their parents.

Figure 3

Economic Threats of Death/Injury on the Household Economy



Some parents send money to their family before their death/injury. The financial support also impacts the household economy of their family. Over forty per cent of respondents feel an economic burden due to the death/injury of their parents. It also differs with money receivers before the death/injury of parents. About 29 per cent lose food taking system, 29 per cent lose agriculture production, 18 per cent lose business, and 12 per cent lose rental/houses from the injury of migrants. Nearly 26 returnee migrants have received injury benefits from the government and employers. Some of their families had invested money and time in medicine for the injured person.

Table 3

Economic Threats of Injury/Death of Labour at Family Level Economy

Response	Send money before death/ injury				Total	Per cent
	Yes	Per cent	No	Per cent		
Feel economic burden	21	65.6	11	34.4	32	41.6
Family loses house/rental room	6	66.7	3	33.3	9	11.7
Family lose food-taking system	9	52.9	8	47.1	17	22.1
Family lose business	10	71.4	4	28.6	14	18.2
Family loses agri. Production	16	72.7	6	27.3	22	28.6

Parental death and child education

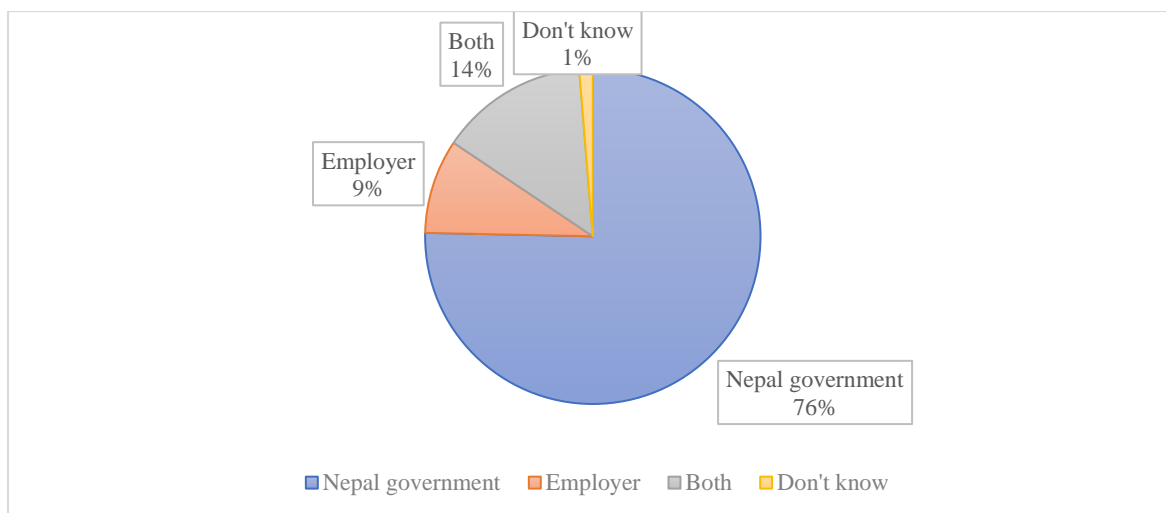
The children of foreign-employed individuals who died or became physically disabled abroad. Their schooling children will get some amount of scholarship. The scholar's amount is NRs. 8000 for the primary level and NRs. 12000 for the Secondary level. One scholar will be paid the annual amount for one class at a time (MoLESS 2071). About 77 per cent of respondents had received a scholarship from the scheme of the social contribution of the Foreign Employment Promotion Board, Kathmandu, Nepal. A majority of respondents (73 per cent) have received an amount of Rs. 8,000 and 27 per cent have received an amount of Rs. 12000.

The majority of respondents (78 per cent) said that they got a scholarship from their parent's account, 14 per cent from their account, and eight per cent from the school's account. Among self-bank account receivers, 64 per cent of respondents are male respondents, and 36 per cent are female respondents. Among parent bank account receivers (58 per cent) and school bank account receivers (68 per cent) are female.

Figure 4

Distribution of respondents by sources of scholarship

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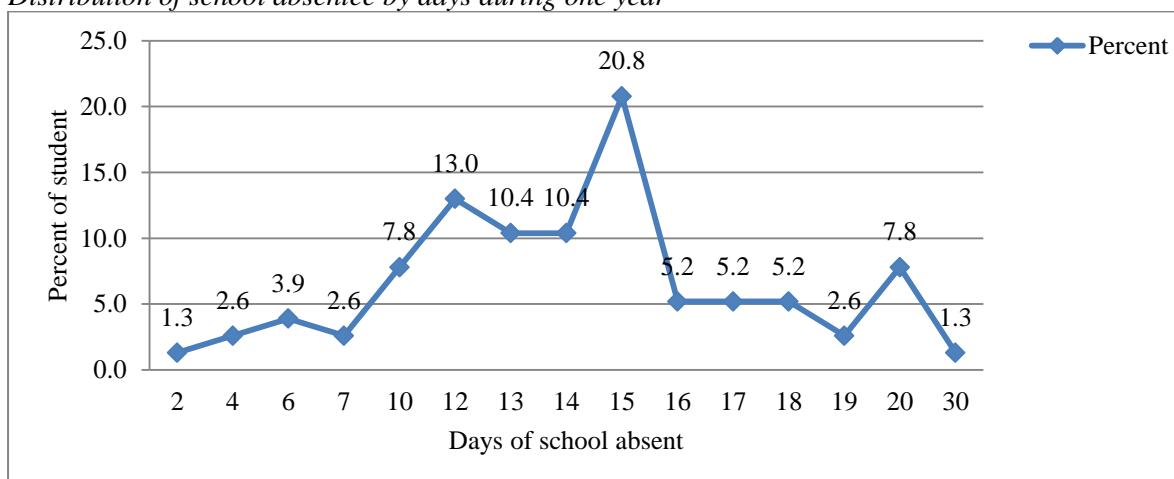


The knowledge of sources of the scholarship varies among the respondents. The majority of them (75 per cent) said that they had received a scholarship from the Nepal government, 14 per cent said both (government and employer), nine per cent said employer, and one per cent said that they do not know the sources of the scholarship.

Children's education has been impacted by their parental death/injury. It mostly impacts on their school attendance and academic achievement. The mean days for school absence are 14 days, where the minimum absence is two days and the maximum absence is 30 days during one year. The majority of the respondents had been absent from school due to the financial crisis. Nearly 80 per cent of a student said poor school attendance was the reason for dropping out their school. Other reasons are a financial burden, family migration, and poor academic achievements.

Figure 5

Distribution of school absentee by days during one year



Parental death and family structure

Out of 77 respondents, 20 per cent accept the marriage of a family member due to the death/injury of parents at foreign labour migration, and the majority are male migrants. On the other hand, 22 per cent of women of migrant had separated and 7 per cent had remarriage at the death or injured foreign labour migrant family (table 5).

Table 5

Distribution of respondents by impact of parental death on family structure

Face sudden marriage	Number	Per cent
Yes	15	19.5
No	62	80.5
Total	77	100.0
Got marriage		
Mother	17	22.1
Face separated		
Yes	5	6.5
No	72	93.5
Total	77	100.0
Who separated		
Mother	4	5.2

CONCLUSION

The death of a husband at a younger age raises many difficulties for women left behind at home. Nearly one-third of migrants had met death, which caused the family and relatives psychologically. It was observed that more than ninety per cent of the family members, including children, psychologically suffered from the death of their parents. Receiving remittance has many positive roles in the household economy, it supports the education of children, their food consumption, accommodation, and family health but more than eighty per cent of families have lost their remittance from the death of their breadwinner of the family. Government support like insurance and scholarship programmes for children's support to their families. However, one in five families is facing difficulties in getting insurance. The cause of difficulty is the loss of legal documents at the place of destination. Nearly one-third of the families have been bearing the extra burden of treatment of injured persons. Government support for children's education is not sufficient to continue their education. The loss of parents also impacts their school attendance and academic achievement. Lower school attendance and poor academic achievement of students increased their school dropout. The main reasons for lower school attendance are a financial burden, family migration, and poor academic achievements. Death of parents at foreign employment impacts family harmony. One in five has accepted the re-marriage of a family member or cause of death/injury of parents at foreign labour migration. It is mainly, more male migrants remarriage, some women have separated and remarriage when their husbands died/were injured in foreign labour migration. Death / injury conditions and economic burden for medicine increase family dis harmony at the migrant's family. A financial support to injured family and an awareness programme to dead family is recommended to slow-down the psychological stress at their families. Support mechanism is recommended to those children whose parents are died and left their mother alone children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author acknowledges the Research Directorate, Rector's Office Tribhuvan University for providing research funds to carry out this research. This article is a part of the mini-research report on Family Level Implications of Dead/Injured Foreign Labour Migrants which was submitted to the Research Directorate, Rector's Office, Tribhuvan University.

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