

Use of acquired skills by returnee labor migrants in the home country

Krishna Kumar Regmi

E-mail: regmikrishna08@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examined the use of newly acquired skills by returning migrant workers in Nepal. It was found that only one-third of the returnees worked in similar occupations to their native country, and two-thirds were deskilled due to difficulties in applying their skills. Self-employed individuals accounted for over one-third of returns, indicating a desire to operate their own firm. Both genders used the acquired skills in statistically insignificant ways, but the difference between wage-employed and self-employed individuals was significant. The study also found that administrative, political, economic, and technological obstacles hindered the returnees' reintegration into society. The study suggests that if returnees are employed in a related field, the human capital they gained in the host nation adds value to their employment. However, most returnees were unable to use their newly acquired talents due to not being hired for similar positions upon their return. To contribute to the country's economic progress, politicians must create programs and policies to protect returnees from losing their skills.

Keywords: Acquired Skills Use, Return migration, Reintegration, Barriers in Reintegration.

Introduction

Migration is a significant economic factor that drives people to relocate from their place of origin to industrialized metropolitan centers with advanced infrastructure and technology. This migration provides opportunities for making money, acquire new skills and knowledge, and contributes to the socioeconomic progress of the nation. The latest technological advancements, knowledge, expertise, remittances, skills, and experience brought back by migrants boost economic growth, reduce poverty, and provide basic needs for better living standards in their home country.

The study examines the challenges faced by labor migrants returning home when attempting to find employment in a related sector and how they use the skills they have acquired there. It highlights the abilities that returnees bring with them and the causes of their difficulties reintegrating into their home society. The International Labor Organization (ILO) projected that 164 million of the estimated 258 million foreign migrants were labor migrants. Nepal is similarly impacted by global migration due to political instability, extreme poverty, and high unemployment rates.

Currently, around a thousand young Nepali people go for labor migration every day. Between 1994/95 and 2021/22, 5,508,593 labor permits were granted, or 86% of the total, for employment in Malaysia and the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Data from the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) showed that 64% of young people from Nepal who traveled were unskilled or low-skilled workers, demonstrating the vulnerability of Nepali migrant workers who accept precarious jobs overseas in the lack of training and experience.

Migrants give their home country human, financial, and social capital, acquiring new abilities and information, making financial contributions to their households and native nations, and helping their family's social capital grow. Demotivation and expectations are major factors in the emergence of work migration.

Foreign Policy of Nepal (2077) focuses on effective utilization of skills and knowledge, technology, remittances, and expertise linked with economic development related activities for productive work and to reduce poverty, increase national GDP, and uplift the livelihood of the household family in the National Interest.

Returning migrants contribute to local economic growth by creating new job opportunities and supporting government policies. They leverage remittances, experience, and knowledge for local and national development. Remittances improve living standards, reduce poverty, and grow the GDP. The study investigates if returnee migrant workers' skills and knowledge have a positive causal relationship with their home countries' productive sectors.

Review of Literature

This research draws upon labor migration theories, emphasizing the concept of human capital. Originally introduced by Theodore W. Schultz in the 1960s, human capital refers to both inherent abilities and acquired skills, which can be enhanced through investment (Wall, 2017; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2017; Schultz, 1981). It encompasses natural talents alongside skills developed through education and workplace training (Blundell et al., 1999; Fleischhauer, 2007).

Hagan and Wassink (2016) highlight the importance of human capital transfer, particularly social and technological skills gained abroad, in shaping returnees' career trajectories. This transfer benefits their home countries by introducing diverse knowledge, skills, and attributes. The study aligns with Cassarino's (2004) migration theory classification, emphasizing human capital's role in labor migration.

Cassarino's framework offers nuanced perspectives on applying human capital in labor migration. From a neoclassical economics perspective, skills acquired abroad may not align with local needs, making them less effective. In contrast, structuralist theories suggest that political, economic, and social constraints can hinder returnees' ability to utilize these skills (Cassarino, 2004). Both viewpoints address barriers to leveraging human capital in home countries. Transnationalism theories propose that

education and skills gained abroad enhance career prospects, while cross-border social network theory underscores the value of knowledge and experiences in facilitating reintegration and professional growth. These perspectives highlight how human capital acquired abroad can support socioeconomic development, provided returnees effectively apply their skills and knowledge.

Migration, an enduring aspect of human history, includes categories such as laborers, sojourners, refugees, asylum seekers, and diasporic migrants. Labor migrants, who temporarily relocate to wealthier countries, often do so due to poverty, unemployment, and limited opportunities at home. They migrate to earn higher wages, improve their living standards, and save for future endeavors. Although labor migration boosts developing countries' economies, it is sometimes regarded as a sociological loss due to its associated physical, cultural, and psychological challenges (Wahba, 2014; Kariyil et al., 2020; Markley, 2011).

In its 2024 assessment of migrant countries of origin, the UN reported that Asia accounted for 43% of global migrants in 2015, with 104 million labor migrants. Europe followed with 62 million, and Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for 37 million. India had the largest diaspora at 16 million migrants, followed by Mexico with 12 million (Wickramasekara, 2011; Williams, 2009).

These statistics reflect migration trends, especially from South Asia, driven by poverty and dense populations. The 1970s Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) oil boom spurred foreign labor demand for infrastructure projects (Ministry of Labor and Employment [MoLE], 2016). While political instability and declining oil prices later reduced demand, South Asia remains reliant on cyclical migration to GCC countries on fixed-term contracts (Trifan, 2015). Migration often involves multiple relocations and serves various purposes, including economic opportunities. Circular migration, as noted by Segal (2016), benefits both origin and destination countries.

This study explores how labor migrants apply skills gained during migration. Migration is dynamic, enabling individuals to acquire new abilities, knowledge, and traits. Terms like "skills," "knowledge," and "traits" are often used interchangeably in discussions of labor due to their interconnectedness in workplace success. According to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER, 2013), skills are task-specific abilities developed through training or practice. The European Union Commission (2015) categorizes skills as hard (technical and job-specific) or soft (general abilities like teamwork and communication), both essential for worker performance.

In labor migration, migrants acquire and share skills through interactions with peers and supervisors in host countries. Upon return, they are expected to apply these skills in local contexts. Studies show that returnees often possess advanced skills compared to local workers due to their foreign experience. For instance, returnees in Albania

were found to be more skilled than local workers (Kule et al., 2002). Similarly, time spent abroad impacts skill transferability in Pakistan and Tunisia (Ndreka, 2019). However, the relevance of skills gained in advanced host countries to Nepal's local context remains uncertain.

Duleep and Regets (2002) propose that migrants benefit from leaving their home country with foundational skills, which enable them to acquire advanced abilities while abroad. A study on Mexican immigrants in the U.S. revealed that 30% of the skills they gained were directly applied, while 70% were beneficial but not actively utilized, pointing to issues such as deskilling (Duleep & Regets, 2002). Similarly, the Safer Migration Project (2018) found that Nepali migrants acquired technical skills abroad but encountered significant gaps between their home-country education and the skill requirements in host nations. While outdated technology in their home country limits the direct application of these skills, it aids in acquiring new capabilities during their overseas work experience.

Friedberg (2007) noted that extended stays abroad are associated with more advanced skill development and higher earnings. Over time, migrants leverage their skills to negotiate better pay and benefits (Wahba, 2014, 2015). Exposure to diverse cultures further enhances their adaptability and understanding. However, the World Bank (2013) observed that migrants with only high school education often find themselves employed in semi-skilled or unskilled roles, reflecting the limited transferability of home-country education and skills to host-country labor markets. For example, Nepali skilled migrants in GCC countries frequently face low wages and poor working conditions, though repeated migration cycles often lead to improved opportunities.

Dustmann and Glitz (2011) argue that labor migration can result in brain drain as skilled workers leave their countries of origin. However, the Migration Policy Institute (World Bank, 2013) advocates viewing migration as brain circulation rather than solely brain gain or brain drain. In host countries, low-skilled migrants are often employed in menial jobs, with employers expecting them to learn necessary skills on the job rather than investing in formal training.

Although on-the-job training is vital, economists often prioritize formal and general education over workplace learning (Iskander & Lowe, 2010). Wassink and Hagan (2017) assert that on-the-job training, which involves observation and collaborative knowledge exchange, is frequently more effective than traditional education in fostering human capital development. Consequently, during labor migration, efforts should focus on aligning human capital development with labor market demands. However, migrants' contributions are often constrained by the lack of formal recognition for their acquired skills (Wassink & Hagan, 2017).

Migration theories indicate that skills gained abroad can be transferred back to home countries when migrants return. Nevertheless, obstacles such as remigration and circular migration persist. Policy studies underscore the importance of reintegration programs to prevent remigration. Nepal's Foreign Employment Policy acknowledges the need to reintegrate returnees, yet its practical implementation remains pending. This disconnect highlights a gap between policy objectives and reintegration practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study explores the concept of human capital within the framework of labor migration theories. Originally introduced by Theodore W. Schultz in the 1960s, "human capital" refers to the combination of innate and acquired qualities and abilities individuals possess, which can be further developed through appropriate investments. Human capital plays a vital role in shaping the career trajectories of returnees by enabling them to transfer the knowledge, skills, and attributes acquired while working abroad.

Labor migration theories often emphasize the importance of gaining human capital. Cassarino (2004) highlights that skills acquired overseas may not always be transferable to a returnee's home country or aligned with local labor market demands. Structuralism and the new economics of labor mobility view human capital as acquired skills that vary based on the likelihood of return. Meanwhile, theories of transnationalism and cross-border social networks underscore the significance of human capital in fostering the socioeconomic development of the host country.

However, the returnee's decision to remain in their native country or remigrate is based on how valuable the gained human capital is there.

Methodology and Data

The study examined the application of skills among returnee workers and identified obstacles through a survey design. Data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire (80% open-ended, 20% closed-ended), field visits, and focus group discussions. The study was conducted in one of the most migrated districts in Terai, Rupandehi and having highly migrant population municipality, i.e. Tilottama Municipality. The study focused on two high-migration wards to explore the attitudes, beliefs, actions, and traits of the sample population. The convenience sampling method is used for data collection. The study analyzed returnees' views on skills and employment opportunities, with the sample comprising 30% females and 70% males for a comprehensive gender-based analysis.

The study analyzed questionnaire data using SPSS software, employing a quantitative design for statistical interpretation. A Likert scale measured preferences and barriers to skill application, with ordinal scales, mean scores, standard deviations, and cross-tabulations assessing agreement levels. Descriptive statistics summarized data, while inferential statistics generalized findings.

Based on Best and Kahn (2006), mean values and standard deviations quantified response dispersion. Cross-tabulations examined associations and variable correlations, highlighting the measurable nature of attitudes and preferences.

Data presentation and interpretation

The data that was gathered is presented, examined, and explained in this chapter. The following research questions were supported by the data that was gathered.

1. To what extent do returnees use their acquired skills in their home country?
2. Is gender significant in determining the use of acquired skills and the barriers that returnees face while using those skills?
3. Do the use of acquired skills and barriers returnees face while using those skills differ significantly between wage employed and self-employed?

Following components were used to analyze and evaluate the primary data:

- i. Demographic data
- ii. How much the returnees have used the newly acquired skill back home.
- iii. Elements influencing the returnees' ability to apply their learned skill in homeland

In order to comprehend the transfer of acquired skills, it is crucial to analyze the migration process, which encompasses the skills acquired prior to migration, the skills acquired during foreign employment, and the utilization of the acquired skills in wage and self-employment upon their return from foreign employment.

According to Hagan and Wassink (2016), skill transfer is gendered and reflects the differences in the occupations that males and females in the US pursue. The researcher has included gender as an independent variable in light of the variations in skill utilization and challenges encountered in the job. In order to better understand how returnee respondents applied the skills they had learned while working and conducting business in Nepal, a thorough analysis of the questions pertaining to skill use was conducted with those who were employed in the same profession (both wage and self-employed).

Demographic Information of Returnees

This section discusses the demographic information like age, sex, ethnicity, general and technical education background of the graduates has been presented descriptively.

Age, Gender, and Ethnicity of the Respondents

We looked at the age group, gender, and ethnicity statistics as well as the corresponding percentages. Of the data, there are 20% (n=15) females and 80% (n=60) males. As per the 2020 Nepal Migration Status Report, the proportion of female migrants is slightly higher than 5%. To improve the data's representativeness and offer more precise gender-related results, the researcher chose 20% of female respondents in proportion to the returnee data that was acquired from the Foreign Employment Board (FEB).

The returnees' age distribution illustrates the trend of migration during the prosperous economic times. Considering two or three migration cycles, the majority of labor migrants opt to work abroad when they are young, as evidenced by the 60% (n=60) of respondents who were between the ages of 35 and 49. Of the respondents, 5.33% (n=4) belonged to the 25–34 age bracket, while 34.67% (n=11) were over 50. The average age of the male and female was 44 years and 34 years, respectively. The movement of young people during their prime working years is a sign that the government is not producing enough jobs, which drives up the unemployment rate.

Overall, 40% (n=30) of the respondents belonged to Janajati or ethnic groupings, followed by Brahmin/Chhetri (53.33%; n=40) and Dalits (6.67%; n= 5). The Janajatis made up about 33.33% (n=20) of the male population; Brahmin/Chhetri made up 90% (n=36) and Dalits made up 6.67% (n= 4). In terms of females, 26.66% (n=4) were Brahmin/Chhetris, 6.67% (n=1) were Dalits, and 66.67% (n=10) were Janajatis. This demonstrates that there was a significant labor migration rate among males in the Brahmin/Chhetri communities, followed by Janjati and Dalits. In a same stratum, Janjati saw a high labor movement rate among women, with the Brahmin/Chhetri group and the Dalit population following. Of the total responders, 33 (44%), or 44%, returned after a year, and 42 (56%), after two years.

Level of Education Received

Table 1 : *Respondents' Gender & Level of Education*

General Education	Gender	Number	Percent
Illiterate	Male	1	1.67
	Female	2	13.33
	Total	3	4.00
Basic Education (1-8 grade)	Male	12	20
	Female	4	26.67
	Total	16	21.33
Higher School (9-12 grade)	Male	41	68.33
	Female	9	60.00
	Total	54	72.00
Bachelors and above	Male	2	3.33
	Female	0	
	Total	2	2.67

Source: Field Survey

As seen in Table 1, just 2.67% (n=2) of the respondents had a bachelor's degree or above, while 72% (n=54) of the respondents had completed higher secondary school. A total of 4% (n=3) of the respondents were illiterate, and 21.33% (n=16) of them had

only completed basic education. Of the female respondents, two had a basic education level of 26.67%, four had a higher secondary education level of 60%, and nine had no education beyond a bachelor's degree. Of the total, 13.33% of the female respondents were illiterate. Given that many are persuaded to travel as domestic workers, the high migration rate of women with lower levels of education helps to explain the possibility of exploitation in the new nation. Among the male respondents, 1.66% (n=1) had no formal education, 20% (n=12) had some schooling, 68.33% (n=41) had higher secondary education, and 3.33% (n=2) had at least a bachelor's degree. Of the respondents who were male, 98.33% were literate, but most of them had only completed high school.

The data also shows that when they were unable to complete their education past grade 10 due to a lack of a conducive learning environment in the villages, financial hardship that forced them to work rather than study, and/or pressure from family members to enter the workforce, 25.33% (n=19) of the respondents chose to work abroad.

Years Spent in Foreign Employment

The average amount of time respondents spent working overseas was 4.6 years, with a standard deviation of 3.1 and a minimum and maximum of eight months and eight years, respectively, for each respondent. This demonstrates that there are dramatic differences or outliers in the data, which is generally distributed. 74.67% (n=56) of the respondents who were migrants spent two to seven years abroad, showing that they migrated in three cycles to earn enough money to start a business when they got back home.

According to the report, 18.67% (n=14) of the respondents said they had worked overseas for eight to eighteen years. It was discovered that the respondents chose to return to working abroad after living in Nepal until they had depleted all of their savings. If the respondents' family established a profitable business, they were less likely to immigrate.

Skill Acquisition at Work Abroad

It was noted that 62.67% (n=47) of the respondents had no prior training or orientation; instead, they picked up skills over time by watching their peers work and picking up new skills by doing. Of them, almost 16% (n=12) claimed to have been mentored by their supervisors instead of receiving official training. The 4% (n=3) of respondents who lacked formal training were led by their colleagues. Merely 16% (n = 12) of the workforce underwent training; of these, 10.67% (n = 8) obtained technical training relevant to their line of work, and 6.66% (n = 5) got solely occupational health and safety and orientation at work. This shows that the majority of the migrants learned skills informally. The employers were not keen to provide training on the skills they would be performing. The vulnerability of the migrants increases when they

are neither well educated nor received proper skill training both in the home country and at work abroad.

Preparation of Work Plan before Returning Home

Table 2 : *Work Plans Made Abroad and Employment Start after Return*

Made Plans Abroad Started Working					
Scale Total	Respondents	Within 3 Months	Within 6 Months	6 Months to 1 Year	Total Working
Strongly disagree	9.33% (7)	14.28% (1)	28.57% (2)	14.28% (1)	57.13% (4)
Disagree	40% (30)	30% (9)	10% (3)	10% (3)	50% (15)
Neutral	4.00% (3)	Null	33.33% (1)	33.33% (1)	66.66%(2)
Agree	36% (27)	59.25% (16)	14.81% (4)	7.41% (2)	81.47% (22)
Strongly agree	10.67% (8)	37.50% (3)	25% (2)	12.50% (1)	75% (6)
Total	100% (75)	38.67% (29)	16% (12)	10.66% (8)	65.33%(49)
Mean = 3.08; SD=1.23					

Source: Author's Calculation

Table 2 indicates that, with a mean value of 3.08, the respondents were somewhat ready for their return before leaving for home. The standard deviation of 1.23 indicates that there are disparities among respondents' opinions due to the dispersed data.

In total, 46.67% (n=35) of the participants had devised arrangements for their return home, whereas the remaining participants had no plans at all. Out of the responders, only 10.67% (n=8) claimed to have a meticulously planned work schedule. Even when they were still employed overseas, they began preliminary work by speaking with friends and family. Of them, 36% (n=27) concurred that they planned while away from home but did not start them. Of the responders, 4% (n=3) had some generic plans but were unsure about them. 40% (n=30) of the interviewees denied having made any preparations, but they did consider what they would do when they returned. Merely 9.33% (n=7) of the participants expressed no consideration whatsoever regarding their plans for returning. They would spend the money they brought, therefore they would often remigrate since they were unprepared for what would happen to them when they returned.

But as soon as they got home, they started worrying about how they were going to pay their bills and what kind of job to take. They started to realize how they could support themselves. While the participants began their job search prior to their return home, only 38.67% (n=29) of them were able to successfully reintegrate into the workforce within three months of their return. However, 10.66% (n=8) of them required longer than six months to obtain employment, and 16% (n=12) of them began working after six months.

Examining the connection between the job plan they established overseas and their current employment status, of the 10.67% (n=8) who firmly agreed to make plans, 62.5% (n=5) began working within six months of their return, and 75% (n=6) of them were employed within a year overall. 74.06% (n=20) of the 36% (n=27) who consented to make plans began working within six months, and 81.47% (n=22) of them were employed within a year overall. Just 66.66% (n=2) of the 6% who were neutral began employment within a year.

Comparably, just 40% (n=12) of the respondents who denied having made any arrangements were discovered to be employed within six months, and only 50% (n=15) of them were employed within a year. 42.85% (n=3) of the 9.33% (n=7) of them who strongly disagreed with ever having thought of any intentions began working within six months of their return, and 57.13% (n=4) of them were employed within a year overall. This explained why individuals with well-thought-out strategies for their economic reintegration overseas had a 30% higher employment rate than those without any such plans. Within six months of their return, the majority of them found employment.

Employment Status in Homeland after Returning from Abroad

After coming home, it was discovered that the labor migrants were working for pay, working for themselves, being unemployed but looking for work, and not looking for work. In addition, they were divided into two categories: those who worked for pay and those who worked for themselves, either in the same or a different profession than they did while working overseas.

Waged Employment, Self-employment, and Unemployed

Table 3 : *Respondents' Employment Status in Nepal after Return*

Respondents' Employment Status in Nepal	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Waged Employment in Same Occupation	14	23.33%	2	13.33%	16	21.33%
Self-employed in Same Occupation	12	20%	2	13.33%	14	18.67%
Waged Employment in Different Occupation	8	13.33%	1	6.67%	9	12%
Self-employed in Different	11	18.34%	2	13.33%	13	17.33

Occupations						
Unemployed, Searching for Work	9	15%	1	6.67%	10	13.33%
Unemployed, Not Searching for Work	6	10%	7	46.66%	13	17.33%
Total	60	100%	15	100%	75	100%

Source: Field Survey

The employment status data in Table 3 above shows only 70.67% (n=53) of the respondents were working. Out of these, 33.33% (n=25) were in wage employment and 36% (n=27) were self-employed. The respondents accounting for 17.33% (n=13) were not interested in working and were not searching for jobs. Only 13.33% (n=10) of respondents reported they were unemployed but were searching for jobs. The data explains that more returnees preferred their self-business to wage employment when they returned home because they had financial capital for investment. Self-employed migrant workers worked in sectors such as agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry, retail shop, construction, hotel business, grocery, and vegetable shops.

The respondents accounting for 40% (n=30) worked in the same occupations they worked abroad. Of them, 21.33% (n=16) were in wage employment and 18.67% (n=14) were self-employed. On the other hand, 29.33% (n=22) of the respondents reported they worked in different occupations, i.e., 12% (n=9) reported in wage employment, and 17.33% (n=13) were self-employed. This shows that those who worked in other occupations were mostly engaged in business.

Concerning female respondents, 53.33% (n=8) were not employed and only 46.67% (n=7) were working. Among these working women, 26.67% (n=4) were self-employed and only 20% (n=3) of them were in wage employment. Compared to females, only 25% (n=15) of the male respondents were unemployed. Out of 75% (n=45) working males, 38.33% (n=23) were self-employed and 36.67% (n=22) were engaged in wage employment. This explains that after returning, women preferred to be self-employed because they did not find a similar occupation they worked abroad in the proximity of their residence and women had family obligations that restricted them from wage employment. For males, interest in wage and self-employment are similar.

The data also reveals that 43.33% (n=26) males were working in similar occupations compared to just 26.67% (n=4) females. This indicates that the work males were engaged in abroad is more suitable in Nepal than for females. The majority of female returnees worked as cleaners and domestic helpers. These vocations are stigmatized in society and are not yet established as industries.

Satisfaction Working in Nepal and Opinion on Retention

Few open-ended questions were asked to understand the respondents' opinions on skill certification, strategies to reintegrate the returnees in the community, returnees' expectations, and their interest in re-migration. The data received was quantified for easy assessment. Strategies to assess the gap were also identified and explained.

Satisfaction in Working in Nepal

Out of 60 respondents who were working, 78.33% (n=47) said that they were satisfied working in Nepal, and this shows a high level of satisfaction in their work and being together with the family. The mean value of 3.69 shows high job satisfaction working in Nepal with a standard deviation of .913 depicting the majority of the working respondents having the similarity in opinions on working in the home country.

Proactiveness in Taking Training to Enhance their Existing Skills and Certification

Out of 60 respondents, only six respondents took training to boost up their careers. This explains that either the respondents were not interested in training, or they did not have access to information about the suitable training to reskill and upskill their existing skills to work in Nepal.

Only 3.33% (n=2) of respondents were found to have taken NSTB skill certification after they returned. Of all, 28.33% (n=17) respondents did not know about the skill tests conducted by NSTB. Although 40% (n=24) of them heard of the NSTB skill test, they did not know how to proceed. Out of 68.33% (n=41) respondents who did not take any skill test, 65% showed interest in undertaking a skill test and receive a national certification if they were given the opportunity.

Though the percentage of those who have acquired skill certification is quite low, looking at the interest of the respondents to participate in the skill test for national certification, the returnees valued skill certification as it adds value to their career. Hence, it is important to recognize the acquired skills of returnees through skills certification that would help the returnees and contribute to their lifelong learning.

Support Required to Improve the Work:

Out of 75 respondents, 6.67% (n=5) of the respondents expressed that they did not require any kind of support as they were self-sufficient. Of all, 61.33% (n=46) of the respondents felt that they needed support like easy and low-interest loans to expand their work and business. On the other hand, 32% (n=24) of the respondents felt that they needed to study further to increase their educational qualifications required for business expansion.

Summary and Conclusion

The study reveals that most returnees had less education and skills training before migration, learning new skills informally. Only 45% of females were working, and

many worked in occupations not related to their acquired skills abroad. Only 35% worked similar occupations. Respondents found generic skills more useful in their home country due to the varied technologies in destination countries and Nepal. Soft skills were found to be useful in the work front. A significant difference was found in generic and specific hard skills used by male and female respondents, with wage-employed individuals using more of both skills than self-employed individuals.

The study reveals that labor migrants face significant obstacles in education, politics, and the economy, with male returnees feeling more powerful than female ones. The data also reveals socio-cultural barriers, with wage and self-employed individuals showing significant variations. The majority of respondents are young, male, and from various ethnic groups, with low education levels. Many migrants choose to work abroad due to limited opportunities and financial hardship, with the average working time being 4.6 years. Lack of formal training and education makes them vulnerable to exploitation and career progression. Self-employment is a popular option, especially among females, but many work in low-status or unskilled jobs. Support for accessible loans, further education, and skills certification is needed to improve the prospects of returning labor migrants.

Thus, the largely neglected area in migration - the human capital gain and its effective use in nation building need to be explored further. A few questions are still unanswered by this research: How can human capital gained abroad be brought to the attention of the policymakers for successful reintegration to minimize youth migration? What types of returnees' skills are ideal for up-skilling considering the availability of work opportunities? How can employment opportunities be generated in the areas in which the returnees have the expertise?

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