

## **Economic Causes of Rural-to-Urban Migration in Karnali Province of Nepal**

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### **Abstract**

Migration is a natural phenomenon that is influenced by social, economic, political, geographic, and environmental factors. The main objective of this study is to identify the economic causes of rural-to-urban migration in Karnali province of Nepal. The study was conducted to test the research instrument so it took 40 respondents from the total 400 samples to test the readability and understandability of the survey questionnaire. The study was based on the quantitative data. It was a cross-sectional study. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondent. Crosstab, Chi-square test, and t-test were done to analyze the quantitative data. The result shows that the average mean value of each statement was a minimum of 3.7 to a maximum of 4.1 which is close to the 'Agree'. Overall, the total mean score for economic causes of rural-to-urban migration is 3.9625, indicating that respondents perceive these factors as moderately to highly significant drivers of migration. This underscores the complex interplay of economic factors in shaping migration decisions, highlighting the importance of addressing economic disparities between rural and urban areas to mitigate migration pressures and promote balanced regional development. Further study can be done to identify the economic changes in migrant family in between before and after rural-to-urban migration.

**Keywords:** Economic causes, Karnali province, Migration, Rural-to-Urban

## **1. Introduction**

Migration is a natural phenomenon that is influenced by social, economic, political, geographic, and environmental factors. In the course of human history, individuals have frequently moved from one location to another in search of a livelihood. According to classical theory, migration is a rational choice that an individual makes after considering the risks and rewards of migrating from a less beneficial position to a more advantageous one (Yarazari, Singh, Devegowda, & Shelar, 2019). Moving individuals from one place to another permanently or semi-permanently is known as human migration. Economic systems, population density, culture, and politics can all be impacted by this movement, which can take place locally or abroad (Mahama, 2013). Migration is often the result of a combination of push factors (e.g. conflict, poverty, disaster) and pull factors (e.g. job opportunities) (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Massey, et al., 1993). Migration refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one place to another, whether within a country or across international borders (IOM, 2018). Development, on the other hand, encompasses economic, social, and political processes aimed at improving the well-being and quality of life of individuals within a society (UNDP, 2020). The intersection of migration and development involves understanding how migration influences development outcomes and vice versa. A previous study emphasized income/employment, education, and facilities as the primary drivers of rural-urban migration in Uttarakhand, with environmental reasons playing a relatively minor role in the migration decisions of the respondents (Aryal, Karki, Mahat, & Neupane, 2024)(Hoffmann et al., 2019). There are two types of migration – temporary and permanent. Mostly internal migration is permanent though some people keep an activity in the rural area during the agricultural season. According to Cattaneo and Robinson, a sizable portion of internal migration from rural to urban areas leads to migration back to a rural area. They discover that it is most prevalent in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, where between 7 to 51 percent of male and between 3 to 32 percent of female migrants from rural to urban areas eventually return to a rural location at some point in their lives (Cattaneo & Robinson, 2020).

Historically, Nepal, like many other developing countries, has experienced a significant rural-to-urban migration trend. People from rural areas often move to urban centers in search of better economic opportunities, education (Ghimire, Khanal, Neupane, & Acharya, 2018), healthcare, and infrastructure facilities. This trend has led to rapid urbanization in many parts of Nepal, including the Karnali province. Karnali is one of the more remote and least developed provinces in Nepal, located in the western part of the country. The region faces various challenges related to infrastructure, basic services, and livelihood opportunities, which can contribute to the rural-to-urban migration trend.

In Nepal, outmigration and its effects on livelihoods are key topics in the scientific and policy debates. This is due to the unprecedented increase in outmigration for foreign employment over the past decades, which has resulted in remittances representing as much as 29% of the national gross domestic product (World Bank, 2016). In Nepal, several factors—decentralization of passport services after the restoration of democracy in 1990, national policies supporting labor migration (Foreign Employment Act 1985), liberal economic policies, and the construction boom fostered by the oil industry and related sectors—have accelerated the flow of Nepali labor migrants into Arabian Gulf countries as well (Jaquet, Shrestha, Kohler, & Schwilch, 2016).

The Capital City of Karnali Pradesh is located in Birendranagar Surkhet, which was declared in January 2018. There are 10 districts in Karnali Province. The Census data 2021 shows the data of population by former place of residence. There are 83.8% of people are in the same Palika, followed by 6.3% coming from other Palika of the same districts, 8.7% coming from other districts, and 1.2% came from foreign countries (National Statistics Office, 2021). It indicates the internal migration trend in Karnali Province. Due to the lack of employment opportunities and services, rural-to-urban migration is common in Karnali. Many young people leave their villages in search of better economic prospects and access to education and healthcare in urban centers or abroad.

## **2. Research objective**

The main objective of this study is to identify the causes of rural-to-urban migration in Karnali Province.

## **3. Research hypothesis**

There is no significant difference in the causes of rural-to-urban migration of migrant families between male and female respondents.

## **4. Research Methodology**

The study has followed the following research methodology to conduct this study:

**Study area:** The study was conducted in Birendranagar area of Surkhet district of Karnali provinces covering all 10 districts.

**Research Design:** The study was based on a cross-sectional research design. It followed the quantitative design (Neupane & Timsina, 2015).

**Sampling design:** The study adopted the simple random sampling technique to select the respondents. The household head of a migrant family was selected for the questionnaire survey.

**Sample size:** The statistical formula was used to calculate the sample size. The study has considered the 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and 50% prevalence for calculating

sample size. The final sample size was 400; so, among them, 40 samples were collected to test the research instrument.

**Data collection tools:** The researcher used a structured survey questionnaire to collect the quantitative data.

**Cronbach’s Alpha test:** The study tested the internal consistency of data of 10 study variables of causative factors of rural-to-urban migration. The study ran the Cronbach’s Alpha test which found the Alpha value = .768 which is acceptable. It indicates that the data is reliable.

**Data analysis plan:** The study used statistical software (SPSS) for quantitative data analysis. The study ran the Crosstab, Chi-Square test, and t-test to analyze the data. The study tested the research hypothesis from the statistical analysis of data.

## 5. Findings of the study

### 5.1 Causes of rural-to-urban migration

The study has asked the several questions to the respondents to know their perception regarding the causative factors of rural-to-urban migration in Karnali province. The data presented in Table 1 gives the detailed responses of respondents.

**Table 1: Causes of rural-to-urban migration**

Causes of rural-to-urban migration		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Chi-Square Tests Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
There was a problem managing the food for the whole year from own agricultural products	Male	0	4.3%	17.4%	73.9%	4.3%	100.0%	.048
	Female	0	23.5%		58.8%	17.6%	100.0%	
	Total	0	12.5%	10.0%	67.5%	10.0%	100.0%	
Lack of adequate land for cultivation	Male	0	4.3%	21.7%	69.6%	4.3%	100.0%	.225
	Female	0	17.6%	17.6%	47.1%	17.6%	100.0%	
	Total	0	10.0%	20.0%	60.0%	10.0%	100.0%	
Lack of market for purchase and selling of products	Male	0	8.7%	13.0%	69.6%	8.7%	100.0%	.146
	Female	0		11.8%	52.9%	35.3%	100.0%	
	Total	0	5.0%	12.5%	62.5%	20.0%	100.0%	
There was limited income sources which was not adequate for my family	Male	0	4.3%	4.3%	87.0%	4.3%	100.0%	.044
	Female	0	5.9%	17.6%	47.1%	29.4%	100.0%	
	Total	0	5.0%	10.0%	70.0%	15.0%	100.0%	
Lack of employment opportunity	Male	0			87.0%	13.0%	100.0%	.104
	Female	0	5.9%		58.8%	35.3%	100.0%	
	Total	0	2.5%		75.0%	22.5%	100.0%	
I wanted to find an appropriate job to my level	Male	0			91.3%	8.7%	100.0%	.046
	Female	0	5.9%		58.8%	35.3%	100.0%	

Causes of rural-to-urban migration		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Chi-Square Tests Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
of qualification and my profession in an urban city	Total	0	2.5%		77.5%	20.0%	100.0%	
I wanted to start a business for professional development and growth	Male	0			91.3%	8.7%	100.0%	.046
	Female	0		5.9%	58.8%	35.3%	100.0%	
	Total	0		2.5%	77.5%	20.0%	100.0%	
There was the problem of financial institutions for saving and credit in my original place	Male	0	4.3%	8.7%	82.6%	4.3%	100.0%	.077
	Female	0	23.5%		58.8%	17.6%	100.0%	
	Total	0	12.5%	5.0%	72.5%	10.0%	100.0%	
There was no one to financial support for my needs and emergency	Male	0	4.3%	4.3%	78.3%	13.0%	100.0%	.210
	Female	0	17.6%	11.8%	47.1%	23.5%	100.0%	
	Total	0	10.0%	7.5%	65.0%	17.5%	100.0%	
Migration is the only option for me or my family to improve our financial status	Male	0	4.3%		87.0%	8.7%	100.0%	.057
	Female	0	11.8%		52.9%	35.3%	100.0%	
	Total	0	7.5%		72.5%	20.0%	100.0%	

**Source:** Field Survey 2024

The Table 1 provides a comprehensive examination of the causes behind rural-to-urban migration, segmented by gender and assessed on a scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Across various factors influencing migration, distinct gender-based patterns emerge. Notably, concerning the challenge of managing food from agricultural products, both male and female respondents tend to agree that this poses a problem, with a majority leaning towards agreement, notably higher among males. Similarly, the scarcity of adequate land for cultivation is perceived as a concern by both genders, with a higher percentage of males agreeing compared to females, indicative of shared recognition of agricultural challenges in rural areas.

Moving forward, the absence of a market for purchasing and selling products emerges as a significant driver of migration, with a notably higher percentage of females agreeing compared to males. This underscores the importance of economic factors in migration decisions, particularly for females who may face limitations in accessing markets to sustain livelihoods in rural settings. Additionally, the perception of limited income sources deemed insufficient for families, is widely acknowledged by both genders, with a slightly higher agreement percentage among females. This suggests a shared understanding of economic constraints and financial instability in rural households.

Furthermore, the lack of employment opportunities emerges as a key catalyst for migration, with a notably high percentage of agreement among males. This underscores the significance of economic factors, particularly employment prospects, in driving migration decisions for males

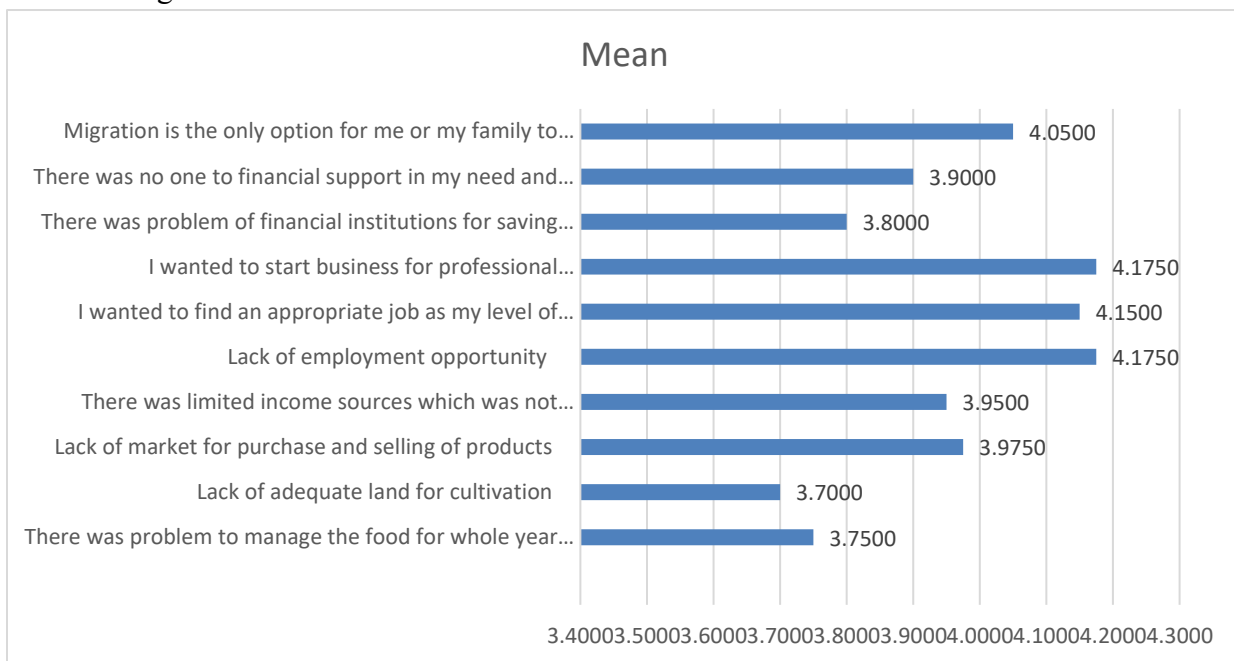
seeking better opportunities in urban areas. Similarly, the desire to secure appropriate jobs or initiate businesses for professional growth garners strong agreement from both genders, highlighting aspirations for economic advancement through migration to urban centers.

Moreover, issues related to financial institutions and the lack of financial support also feature prominently in respondents' perceptions, with a higher percentage of females expressing agreement. This suggests that access to financial resources and support systems may play a crucial role in migration decisions, particularly for females seeking economic stability and security in urban environments.

In conclusion, the data reveals a nuanced interplay of economic factors influencing rural-to-urban migration, with gender-specific variations in perceptions. While both males and females acknowledge the economic challenges inherent in rural living, their migration decisions are shaped by distinct considerations related to employment opportunities, financial resources, and professional development. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions addressing the multifaceted economic challenges faced by rural communities, with gender-sensitive approaches essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable urbanization.

### 5.2 Average Mean of each statement

The study has calculated the average mean value of each statement of causative factors of rural-to-urban migration.



**Figure 1: Average Mean of each statement**

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The above graph presents the economic causes of rural-to-urban migration, along with their corresponding mean scores as rated by respondents. Each cause is rated on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates low significance and 5 indicates high significance.

"There was a problem to manage the food for the whole year from own agriculture products": This cause received a mean score of 3.75, indicating that respondents perceive it as moderately significant. It suggests that difficulties in sustaining agricultural production to meet year-round food needs contribute to migration decisions.

"Lack of adequate land for cultivation": This cause received a mean score of 3.70, indicating a similar level of significance to the previous one. It implies that land scarcity or limitations on agricultural expansion play a role in prompting rural residents to migrate to urban areas.

"Lack of a market for purchase and selling of products": This cause received a mean score of 3.975, indicating a relatively high level of significance. It suggests that the absence of viable markets for agricultural products influences migration decisions, as it affects income generation opportunities.

"There were limited income sources which were not adequate for my family": This cause received a mean score of 3.95, indicating a high level of significance. It suggests that inadequate income sources in rural areas prompt individuals to seek better economic opportunities in urban settings.

"Lack of employment opportunity": This cause received a mean score of 4.175, indicating the highest level of significance among economic causes. It suggests that the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas is a significant driver of migration to urban areas.

"I wanted to find an appropriate job as my level of qualification and my profession in an urban city": This cause received a mean score of 4.15, indicating a high level of significance. It suggests that individuals migrate to urban areas seeking employment opportunities that match their qualifications and professional skills.

"I wanted to start a business for professional development and growth": This cause received a mean score of 4.175, indicating a high level of significance. It suggests that entrepreneurial aspirations contribute to rural-to-urban migration, as individuals seek better prospects for business success in urban settings.

"There was a problem with financial institutions for saving and credit in my original place": This cause received a mean score of 3.80, indicating a moderate level of significance. It suggests that



limitations in accessing financial services may contribute to migration decisions, albeit to a lesser extent.

"There was no one to financially support in my need and emergency": This cause received a mean score of 3.90, indicating a moderate level of significance. It suggests that a lack of social support systems in rural areas may influence migration decisions, particularly in times of need.

"Migration is the only option for me or my family to improve our financial status": This cause received a mean score of 4.05, indicating a high level of significance. It suggests that migration is perceived as a necessary step to enhance economic well-being for individuals and their families.

Overall, the total mean score for economic causes of rural-to-urban migration is 3.9625, indicating that respondents perceive these factors as moderately to highly significant drivers of migration. This underscores the complex interplay of economic factors in shaping migration decisions, highlighting the importance of addressing economic disparities between rural and urban areas to mitigate migration pressures and promote balanced regional development.

**5.3 Gender differences in causative factors of rural-to-urban migration**

The study did the independent sample t-test to test the research hypothesis. The data presented in Table 2 shows the significant difference between the males and females in their opinion on causative factors of rural-to-urban migration.

**Table 2: Gender differences in causative factors of rural-to-urban migration**

Group Statistics									
	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Causative factors	Male	23	39.3913	1.61637	.33704				
	Female	17	39.9412	5.87868	1.42579				
Independent Samples Test									
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper



Causative factors of rural-to-urban migration	Equal variances assumed	6.824	.013	-.429	38	.670	-.54987	1.28193	3.14500	2.04526
	Equal variances not assumed			-.375	17.798	.712	-.54987	1.46508	3.63041	2.53066

**Source:** Field Survey 2024

The group statistics indicate that male respondents (N = 23) have a mean score of 39.3913 with a standard deviation of 1.61637, while female respondents (N = 17) have a slightly higher mean score of 39.9412 with a higher standard deviation of 5.87868. The independent samples t-test reveals that Levene's test for equality of variances is statistically significant (F = 6.824, p = 0.013), indicating unequal variances between male and female responses. However, the t-test for equality of means shows no significant difference between male and female respondents in terms of the causative factors of rural-to-urban migration, with p = 0.670 (assuming equal variances) and p = 0.712 (not assuming equal variances). The mean difference between male and female responses is negligible, indicating that gender does not significantly impact the perception of causative factors for migration. Therefore, despite the variance discrepancy, there is no statistically significant difference in mean scores between male and female respondents regarding the factors influencing rural-to-urban migration.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendation**

There were 10 questions asked of respondents regarding the causative factors of rural-to-urban migration. The average mean value of each statement was a minimum of 3.7 to a maximum of 4.1 which is close to the 'Agree'. Overall, the total mean score for economic causes of rural-to-urban migration is 3.9625, indicating that respondents perceive these factors as moderately to highly significant drivers of migration. This underscores the complex interplay of economic factors in shaping migration decisions, highlighting the importance of addressing economic disparities between rural and urban areas to mitigate migration pressures and promote balanced regional development. There was no significant difference in causes of rural-to-urban migration of migrant families between male and female respondents because the statistical result of the independent sample t-test shows that the p-value is .712 which is more than the .05 significant level so the H01

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is accepted. Further study can be done to identify the economic changes in migrant family in between before and after rural-to-urban migration.

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