



Socio-Economic Transformation and Occupational Shift in Nepal: Explorations in Generational Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Studies in the global context show a variation in the occupational relationships in between father-son, father-daughter, mother-son and mother-daughter. However, such studies in Nepal are insufficient. This paper describes the socio-demographic features of people in between successive generations, and their occupational relationships, typically of father and son. A semi-structured questionnaire schedule was used to collect information from a total of 385 father son pairs during June to September 2018 in Gajuri Rural Municipality of Bagmati Province, Dhading District, Nepal. Information was collected from those fathers whose eldest son got married by the time of interview. The findings from bivariate analysis revealed that along with the changes of several socio-economic variables in the rural households in Nepal, there is both continuity and change in the parental occupations in between the father and son. Among various characteristics of father, the level of education and monthly income, in the case of son's characteristics, the level of education and migration; and in the case of household characteristics, the caste/ethnicities and residential locations were related with the father-son occupational change. Hence, these findings indicate that the rural society in Nepal is undergoing socio-economic transformations; there is both continuity and change of fathers' occupation by the son.

KEYWORDS: Generations, socio-economic transformation, occupational shift, social mobility

INTRODUCTION

Nepali society is undergoing changes in several socio-economic and demographic aspects. The level of education and income of people in general have gone up with associated changes in their life standards. The gender parity in the major socio-economic variables like education, occupation, health status and overall quality of life has improved. There is expansion of infrastructures and services like road, water and electricity with associated changes in demographic features. There is reduction in family

size, low birth and death rate, size along with the changes in occupation and employment status of people (CBS, 2021). More people are taking a non-farm kind of occupations, who have entered into the formal sector jobs, including the gradual blurring of gender and caste lines in employments and other sectors.

As a result of socio-economic transformations, often there occurs occupational shift in the successive generations. Here, occupational shift refers to change in occupation that occurs between two generations that is of father and son, or family members of one generation and the next. It shows the change in occupation of a person, or persons which is different than the parental generation. Occupations along with income, education, gender, race, environment and culture are some of the determinants for potential social mobility. Among these, occupation plays a vital role in determining social mobility (Chakravarty, 2013; Reddy, 2015). There are many studies, both in the context of developed and less-developed countries that have documented the persistence of economic and social inequalities across the generations based on outcome indicators such as income, earnings, occupation and level of education. Occupation might be related to the social and economic changes; hence, it is also considered a good indicator of social status, incomes and living standards (Reddy & Swaminathan, n.d.). A low degree of intergenerational occupational changes implies that the advantages and disadvantages inherent in the occupational status of one generation are transmitted to the next generation. Hence, occupation of the father and son is one of the important areas of investigation while dealing with socio-economic changes in between the generations.

In the less developed world, there is a very few studies on intergenerational occupational mobility. Socio-economic analysis of intergenerational relations in developing countries, however, remains a relatively unexplored terrain (Emran & Shilpi, 2010), even though the importance of such analysis has been duly recognized in the recent literatures (Beller & Hout, 2006; Bjorklund & Jantti, 2000; Black & Devereux, 2011; Blanden & Stephen, 2005). Some studies findings are also reported from the South Asian context including India, Bangladesh and China (Asadullah, 2011; Reddy & Swaminathan, n.d.; Gong, et al. 2010). Against this backdrop, this study was undertaken to investigate important socio-economic variables that could be potentially related to occupational changes between the father and son in a rural setting. Furthermore, the study intends to explore the association of those variables with occupational shifts considering socio-economic features and occupations of father and son.

RESEARCH METHODS

Gajuri Rural Municipality of Dhading District was purposively selected for this study. The study site lies along the Prithvi Highway uphill the Mugling Kathmandu segment of it. This area is one of the drastically changing places/sites in the context of Nepal, which is inserted in between two highly urbanized city centers: Kathmandu, and Narayangarh. The in-route to the highway and the hinterlands are highly influenced by the effects of the physical connectivity, communication, media, trade, commerce, education, migration and the whole gamut of modernization at par with the national development (CBS, 2011; Parajuli et al. 2015). This study was done by collecting the primary data with the use of a semi-structured questionnaire. Face to face interview was employed with the purposively selected father and/or son as the main respondent. Information was collected during June to September 2018. According to the information obtained from the executive officer of Gajuri Rural Municipality, there are a total of 2,721 households in Ward Numbers 4, 5 and 6 (formerly, Pida Village Development Committee) (Mitratal Sapkota, Personal Communication, 6 May, 2018) of the rural municipality. It is assumed that each household has a potentially one respondent (father-

son pair). For instance, there would be 2,721 father son pairs, representing the required population size for this study. Hence, the households, which fulfilled the criteria of having the married eldest son along with his father residing in Ward Numbers 4, 5 and 6 of Gajuri Rural Municipality were considered the population for this study. In the case of the population which is not well defined, or well known for precision, a formula for the sample size of proportions has been applied (Cochran 1963; Israel 1992). In this way, 385 father son pairs were the required sample size. Based on the four occupational category, such as salary based job, business trades, agriculture and wage labour; the continuity and change in between the occupations of father and son were identified; while other socio-economic variables were clustered around the characteristics related to father, son and household.

The analysis of the data is based on the descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, while Chi-square test and ANOVA were performed as bivariate association wherever applicable. The attributes, which characterize the father, son and household were clustered around the father's characteristics, son's characteristics and household characteristics respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study intends to describe the variables related to the father-son occupational change and associated changes in their socio-economic features. The descriptive statistics like frequency, mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of the variables.

Socio-Economic Characteristics

The father's characteristics include the occupation of father, level of education, monthly income, social network, number of sons and father-son age differences. Likewise, the son's characteristics include occupation, level of education and migration of the son. The caste/ethnicities, residential location and land holding size were put under the household characteristics.

Table 1

Father's and Son's Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents in Gajuri Rural Municipality, Dhading District

Variables	Descriptive statistics			
	Mean/ Percent	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Outcome measure				
Father-son occupation				
Same occupation (Ref)	40	-	0.00	1.00
Different occupation	60	-	0.00	1.00
Explanatory measure				
Occupation of a father				
Agriculture (Ref)	65	-	0.00	1.00
Salaried job/business and trade	12	-	0.00	1.00
Wage labor	23	-	0.00	1.00
Controls				
Father's characteristics				
Level of education				
Illiterate (Ref)	54	-	0.00	1.00

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Variables	Descriptive statistics			
	Mean/ Percent	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Literate only	30	-	0.00	1.00
Educated	16	-	0.00	1.00
Monthly income				
No earning (Ref)	22	-	0.00	1.00
NRs. 1-5000	35	-	0.00	1.00
NRs. 5001-15000	22	-	0.00	1.00
NRs. 15001 and more	21	-	0.00	1.00
Social network				
No (Ref)	71	-	0.00	1.00
Yes	29	-	0.00	1.00
Number of sons of the father	2.77	1.43	1.00	9.00
Father-son age difference	27.97	7.34	14.00	60.00
Son's characteristics				
Level of education				
Illiterate or literate only (Ref)	29	-	0.00	1.00
School level	54	-	0.00	1.00
Plus two and above	17	-	0.00	1.00
Migration				
No (Ref)	43	-	0.00	1.00
Yes	57	-	0.00	1.00
Household characteristics				
Caste/ethnicity				
Brahmin, Chhetri, Newar (BCN) (Ref)	37	-	0.00	1.00
Janajatis	53	-	0.00	1.00
Dalits	10	-	0.00	1.00
Residential location				
Near to highway (Ref)	34	-	0.00	1.00
Places in between highway and remote locations	37	-	0.00	1.00
Remote locations	29	-	0.00	1.00
Land holding size				
0-10 ropani	40	-	0.00	1.00
11-20 ropani	37	-	0.00	1.00
21 ropani and above	23	-	0.00	1.00

Source: Field survey, 2018; 1 ropani of land = 0.0508 hectares

The highest proportion of fathers which comprised of more than two thirds of the total sample size are still in agriculture and allied sectors (Table 1). Next to agriculture, about one fourth of the fathers were involved in the wage labour works of skilled or unskilled type; farm based or non-farm activities which were mostly of informal type. Less than one tenths of the total fathers were in the business trades and salaried jobs, which were considered as more privileged sectors in the Nepali labour market. In contrast to that of the case of fathers, one fifths of sons were involved in the agriculture and allied sectors, and almost two fifths of them in the wage labour works. The proportion of total sons in salary based jobs and business trades were roughly around one fifths of the total, which meant there was a tendency of leaving the agriculture sector in order to catch other non-farm employments by the sons. Similar results have been

reported by the other researchers based on their studies in Nepal (Bhandari, 2006; Bhandari, 2013, Gautam & Anderson, 2016) that the Nepali households and young people prefer to catch non-farm related jobs.

The level of education was considerably varied over the generations (Table 1). More than half of the fathers were illiterate while about one third of them were simply literate and less than one fifth of them were well educated. The level of education was mostly limited to those with high school level who could read and write in Nepali language well. Regarding monthly income of fathers, the proportion of earning NRs. 1-5000 was the highest while one fourth of them did not have any earning round the year. The proportion of fathers who earned more than NRs. 5000 to 15,000 or more, per month was about two fifths of the total (Table 1). The findings further revealed that about one third of the fathers had the good social networks taken as the proxy for power, prestige and social status at the local level. Two of the continuous variables used in the study were a number of sons per father and father-son age differences in years. Each father had on an average of three sons (2.7), while there were on an average age differences between the father and son 28 years (27.9 years). There was a remarkable improvement in the educational status of son suggesting that most of them had at least a high school level of education, while one third of the sons still remained illiterate or were simply literate (if not illiterate). In this study, migration of sons was considered as those who had left home for leaving Dhading district for at least for six consecutive months in order to find employment, business, or other purposes.

The caste/ethnic composition of the respondents in the father-son pair was roughly equal to the national representation of these groups considered in this study (Table 1; CBS, 2012). Moreover, the Chepang communities fall within the broader categories of Janajatis which were highly marginalized people with low human development and high food insecurity especially during the lean season (Aryal, 2016), represented around one fourth of the total respondents in this study.

The geographical representation of the respondents categorized based on the distances of places from the Prithvi Highway was nearly equal, representing one third of the total respondents in each of the three locational categories (Table 1). On the other hand, the land holding size per household was such that about two fifths of the respondents hold up to 10 ropanis of land per household. The distribution of the land holding size was such that the larger the land holding size, the lesser would be the proportion of the respondents, meaning the dominance of small holder subsistence farmers in the study area. This fact was corroborated with the national land entitlement scenario that of the total farmers, about 5 percent were landless with no land ownership and about 53 percent were small holders, operating less than 0.5 hectare of land (CBS, 2011).

Changing Scenario of Father-Son Occupations with Respect to Socio-Economic Features

The following sections provide information about the changing scenario of father and son occupation and their socio-economic characteristics (Table 2). The similarities and differences in between the occupation of father and son were important to develop the occupational change variables (Table 2), and narrate their roles in establishing such relations with respect to the change in occupations.

Table 2

Cross-Tabulation Between Socio-Economic Variables and Father-Son Occupational Shift

Variables	(n=385)		
	Father-son same	or different occupation	Total
Father's characteristics			
Level of Education			
Illiterate	92(60.5)	116(49.7)	208(54.0)
Literate only	36(23.7)	81(34.8)	117(30.4)
Educated	24(15.8)	36(15.5)	60(15.6)
Chi-square value: 5.687 , DF: 2, p-value: 0.056			
Monthly income			
No earning	25(16.4)	62(26.6)	87(22.6)
NRs. 1-5000	39(25.7)	97(41.6)	136(35.3)
NRs. 5001-15000	45(29.6)	36(15.5)	81(21.0)
NRs. 15001 and more	43(28.3)	38(16.3)	81(21.0)
Chi-square value: 25.884 , DF: 3, p-value: 0.056			
Social Network, Yes	39(25.7)	76(32.6)	115(29.9)
No			
Chi-square value: 2.127 , DF:1 , p-value: 0.145			
Number of sons of the father	152(2.8)	233(2.7)	385(2.7)
One-way ANOVA, p-value=0.549			
Father-son age difference	152(27.9)	233(27.9)	385(27.9)
One-way ANOVA, p-value=0.182			
Son's characteristics			
Level of Education			
Illiterate or literate only	61(40.1)	50(21.5)	111(28.8)
School level	80(52.6)	127(54.5)	207(53.8)
Plus two and above	11(7.2)	56(24.0)	67(17.4)
Chi-square value: 26.099 , DF:2 , p-value:0.000			
Migration , Yes	70(46.1)	152(65.2)	222(57.7)
No	82(53.9)	81(34.8)	163(42.3)
Chi-square value: 13.867 , DF:1 , p-value:0.000			
Household characteristics			
Caste/ethnicity			
Brahmin/Chhetri/Newar (BCN)	39(25.7)	103(44.2)	142(36.9)
Janajatis	98(64.5)	108(46.4)	206(53.5)
Dalits	15(9.9)	22(9.4)	37(9.6)
Chi-square value: 14.244, DF: 2, P value: 0.001			
Residential location			
Near to highway	41(27.0)	88(37.8)	129(33.5)
Places in between highway and remote locations	57(37.5)	87(37.3)	144(37.4)
Remote locations	54(35.5)	58(24.9)	112(29.1)
Chi-square value: 6.775 DF: 2 P value: 0.034			
Land holding size			
0-10 ropani	58(38.2)	96(41.2)	154(40.0)
11-20 ropani	59(38.8)	83(35.6)	142(36.9)
21 ropani and above	35(23.0)	54(23.2)	89(23.1)
Chi-square value:0.468 DF: 2 P value: 0.791			

Note: 1 ropani of land= 0.0508 hectares; Figures in the parenthesis indicate percent/mean

The findings reveal that about three fifths of the fathers whose sons adopted the same occupation were illiterate while other two fifths of them whose son doing the same occupation were educated. On the other side, about half of the fathers if sons were adopting different occupations were illiterate whereas the other half of them were literate if the sons were adopting different occupations than their fathers ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). This finding thus revealed that more number of fathers whose sons were following different occupations who were illiterate, meaning that there were the high chances for an illiterate father whose son would adopt different occupations than that of the father. The role of education of parents and their income in shaping the kind of occupation of their offspring have also been reported by several other researchers (Becker & Tomes, 1979; Solon, 2002; Narayan et al. 2018; Azam & Bhatt, 2012, Blanden et al. 2011) in the global context. The potential reasons for the illiterate fathers to adopt different occupations by their sons in the Nepali context would be that the illiterate fathers were limited in the farm based activities, which their sons attempted to take a shift from. The average monthly income of father would influence in deciding whether the son adopts the same or different kinds of occupations with the father. This finding was helpful in the situation analysis as postulated in the Human Capital Theory (Becker & Tomes, 1979; Becker & Tomes, 1986; Solon, 2002; Solon, 2004). The Human Capital Theory explained the important reason about the social and family investment that most of the parents in the societies invested to the career development of their offspring by giving a priority to the education, skill oriented training and other similar areas with an expectation of future returns from their offspring at the old age. In this sense, the higher earning parent's children were abler to catch an economically competitive job. On the other hand, contrary to our expectations, the social networks of father, an average number of son per father and father-son age differences did not have a statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) relationship in the occupation change between the father and son.

The son's characteristics were primarily responsible in shaping one's occupation thereby creating a variation of occupation with the father. A son himself might be responsible to set his own occupation through better education and competency development as well as by best utilizing the available human, economic and social capital. The son's characteristics were more valued for the level of education and migration, which either created differences, or maintained similarity in the kind of occupation with their father. The findings also revealed that among the sons, who adopted the same occupation with their fathers, two fifths of them were illiterate, or simply literate; a half of them had attained only school level of education. On the other hand, for those sons not adopting their father's occupation, about half of them had attended the high school level of education. This clearly reflected the association between education of son and occupational shift than of the father ($p < 0.001$) (Table 2). Likewise, it was also learned that the more a son is migrating from the parental home, the higher the chances for him in adopting different occupations than the father. Some other scholars have also argued in the same line that migration to the urban areas is the way out for the rural households to improve their social and economic wellbeing (Kapur, et al. 2010) which has also been evidenced in this study.

There were several factors contributing to the father and son occupation like caste/ethnicity, residential location and household wealth in terms of the land holding size. On the caste/ethnicity basis, about one fourths of the Brahmin Chhetri and Newar, about three fifths of Janajtis and one tenths of Dalits were adopting the same occupations between the father and son whereas nearly half of the Brahmin Chhetri and Newar, and Janajtis were having different occupations to those from their fathers ($p < 0.001$). This finding was different than what Bhandari (2013) had reported about a family study in the

Chitwan valley as the author did not see the relation of caste/ethnicity variable in the farm exit decisions of farming households. The empirical finding in this study reveal that about one thirds of the respondents were related to the father-son pair having the same occupations residing to the proximity to the highway side whereas about two fifths of them represented the sites in between the highway and remote locations ($p < 0.05$; Table 2). It was evidenced that the small-holders were more numbers in the case of the same and different occupations of sons (Table 2) indicating that there was no evidence of the farm size with the farm exit decisions of the sons. However, this finding was in contrary to some other studies findings (Kimhi & Bollman, 1999; Bhandari, 2013; Bhandari, 2006) where the small-holders were more likely to exit from agriculture in most circumstances. Hence, the relationships being established by this study needs to be corroborated by the study covering a wider areas and further statistical analysis of the information is needed.

CONCLUSION

This study is based on the quantitative analysis of the data collected from the rural mid-hill location of Nepal, in understanding the nature of father-son occupational relationships. This paper established the relations of certain socio-economic variables with the occupational change variables between the father and son. The study suggests that among the socio-economic variables the level of education and monthly income of father (father's characteristics), level of education and migration of son (son's characteristics) and caste/ethnicities and residential locations (household characteristics) are important in deciding the father-son occupational relations. In the nutshell, it can be inferred that the occupational shift across the successive generation (father and son) is connected to their socio-economic variables. Hence, the Nepali rural societies are undergoing through the changes on several socio-economic variables along with occupational shifts between the generations.

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