



*International Journal of Current Research
and Academic Review*

ISSN: 2347-3215 Volume 3 Number 8 (August-2015) pp. 367-373

www.ijcrar.com



Psychological perspective on migration: Facts and perception

Sanu Lal Maharjan¹, Shishir Subba², Khemraj Bhatta^{2*} and Premnath Bhattarai²

¹Save the Children International as a Programme Manager- Youth and Livelihood, Nepal

²Central Department of Psychology, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

**Corresponding author*

KEYWORDS

Migration,
Psychological
perspective,
Nepal

A B S T R A C T

Migration is a common phenomenon and a large portion of population is migrating for some reason. Migration, defined as movement of people or a group either across and international boarder or within the state, has contributed a lot in economy of developing countries like Nepal. One of the important forms of migration is labor migration which can be conceptualized as a movement of people for employment purpose. A significant portion of population of Nepal is migrating each year abroad with most luring destination for labor being gulf countries and Malaysia. Present study explored facts about migration and possible role of perception and identity development in migration of youth. Two studies related to perception of youth toward migrating behavior were compiled (the one conducted by Maharjan and another by Subba, Bhatta and Bhattarai) with core sample of the study being 50 migrating person chosen from Saptari, Siraha and Kathmandu districts and 14 young experts and leaders of Nepal. Sample was chosen through purposive and snowball sampling method. Information was collected through focused group discussion, actor interview, key informant interview and in-depth interview. Secondary sources were also used in the study. The result of the study revealed that majority of migrating people were youth (84%) with most of them represented lower caste groups. Most of the participants had education up to 10th grade (40%). Various perceptual factors seemed to influence migrating behavior including perceived power hunger and unfulfillment of it, perception that migration can secure their future, and protect sense of masculinity and social status. Identity development was one of the crucial factors to determine migration of youth. From present study it can be concluded that perception and process of identity development are of the important factors contributing for migration.

Introduction

Migration is a common phenomena among people of all part of globe with nearly 1 out of 7 persons in the world being either an international or an internal migrant (Migration & Remitanace, 2014). According to a recently published report of global commission on international migration (2005), today there are nearly 200 million migrants internationally, around 60 % of which are in developed countries and the other 40% in developing countries. Migration has become so diverse pattern in recent years that study of migration has become one of the popular areas.

Migration is a process of social change where an individual, alone or accompanied by others, because of one or more reasons of economic betterment, political upheaval, education or other purposes, leaves one geographical area for prolonged stay or permanent settlement in another geographical area (Bhugra, 2004). It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes. Migration includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification.

Labor migration is one of the common forms of migration. Labor migration is movement of person from their home to new place for the purpose of employment. Labor migrants thus are the persons who are engaged in remunerating activities in place other than their state of citizen. Though labor migration may be internal or external, external or international labor migration is drawing attention today because it outnumbered internal labor migration. Across the world, millions of people are on the move - doing jobs ranging from menial labor such as harvesting to computer

programming. Combined, their numbers would equal the fifth most populous country on the planet (Karadogan, 2011). International labor mobility has become a key feature of globalization and the global economy with migrant workers earning US\$ 440 billion in 2011, and the World Bank estimating that more than \$350 billion of that total was transferred to developing countries in the form of remittances (Labor Migration, n.d.). Nepal, which has population of less than 300 million and a per capita income of \$ 750, is one of the developing countries in which labor migration has become an organized industry. Even though international migration started around 200 years ago charm of it increased after national structure on migration developed in 1947 and intensified after establishment of democracy in 1981. Especially in the recent decades, it has greatly increased and diversified in pattern (NIDS, 2004, as cited in Bhattarai, 2005). Migration pattern has now become so common in Nepal that over 2 million Nepalese men and women work in countries other than India, with the help of recruitment agencies, brokers and in some cases on their own capacity to work as domestic workers, construction workers, or in other low-skill labor jobs. According to estimate of Central intelligence agency (2015) net migration rate is estimated to be 3.86 migrants/1000 populations. Also, remittances sent by the migrant workers contribute 29 percent of GDP of Nepal and has been a backbone to support the national economy (The World Bank, n.d.).

Nepalese labors are migrating in many different countries with highest rate of migration being gulf and East Asian countries. Nepal migration survey conducted by World Bank in 2009 indicated that 50% of Nepalese labor migrants are working in Gulf and East Asian countries.

Labor migration is common in all age groups. However, statistics revealed that migration is most common among people of younger age. It is estimated that one in eight migrants are between the ages of 15 and 24 (International migration in a globalizing world, 2011). Increase in labor migration among young people is accompanied by various problems including human trafficking, high amount of fee paid to recruitment agency, abusive, exploiting work environment, nonpayment of work and death. Even after such issues, migration rate has not decreased. To migrate even in face of such adversities people know is a tough decision and economic reason alone cannot justify it. Perception of community toward migrated labor, perception of youth regarding present social and political situation of Nepal and adoption of migration as a tool of identity development might be some critical factors that are luring youth migrate in East Asian countries and Gulf.

Even though these factors might be important in understanding labor migration, no documented researches were found exploring migration in relationship to these variables among youth of Nepal. This research thus focused on demographic facts and other relevant variables in order to explore whether perception of youths toward migrants or their search of identity is contributing some role in it. Present study investigated whether perception of youth toward those involved in violent activities and peace building was contributing for migration. This study also explored possible psychological explanation about labor migration. This study might be crucial in finding out perceptual dimension of migration. Exploration of role perception in migration might be a milestone in understanding migration phenomena. This study might give insight in developing strategies to change perception of youth

toward migration and train them to not take decision blindfolded. This study might also be significant in explaining whether or not migration was working as a tool of identity development among youth.

Materials and Methods

This work is compilation of two qualitative studies encompassing the theme of non-economic factors related to migration with special emphasis on contribution of perception and identity search in it. A study conducted by Maharjan (2014) used theoretical underpinnings and epistemological and ontological approach to study whether perception of youth toward those involved in violent activities and peace building was contributing for migration. Primary source of information in the study was in depth interview. Fourteen young experts and leaders were identified from various fields related to the research objectives such as peace building activities, youth-led organizations, political leaders, academic sectors, development works and marginalized communities to represent the cross-thematic and multi-disciplinary sectors. The study covered events that took place between November 2006 and November 2013.

Another study conducted by Subba, Bhatta and Bhattarai (2014) was descriptive and explanatory in data collection approach. The design was qualitative that was focused on obtaining information on perception and motivation of the respondents who are directly or indirectly involved or concerned with migrating behavior. Non probability purposive sampling procedure was adopted because study was undertaken in predetermined group of persons as samples. Snow ball sampling technique was used to draw the sample from Kathmandu district. The study was carried out in two districts of

Terai (Siraha and Saptari) and one hilly district (Kathmandu). Altogether 50 migrating respondents participated in study. For the sake of data collection questionnaire was developed by research team after thorough review of theories and investigation in the area. Thirty semi structured questions were prepared & after pilot review questions were reduced to 14. After the development of questionnaire research assistants were then sent for data collection. Three focused group discussion (Each focused group consisting 8 members), 10 Key informant interviews and 25 actor interview was done in districts of Terai while 15 Actor interview were done in Kathmandu district. The taped interview were transcribed and coded for interpretation.

Results and Discussion

Several results were revealed from this study. Demographic data showed that most of the respondents were of Kamati (30 percent), Mandal (22 percent) and Thakur (20 percent) caste. During FGD, some indicated that there is no difference in migration with regard to caste even though almost all the sample who was migrating was non-touchable caste group. Higher rate of respondents from lower caste group, if not a coincident, might be the result of identity search. The age level of sample migrating to Gulf and Malaysia found to range from 19 to 40 with majority of sample population (84 percent) in 19-28 age groups. Interview and FGD showed that many under age people manipulate their age so that they can work abroad.

The educational level of the majority of the sample was 10 class (40 percent) and a large portion of sample had 10+2 education (26 percent). Very few people (6 percent) had completed their bachelor degree and nobody completed masters' degree. Thus, labor

migration was most common among people who have not achieved University level education.

Many participants believed that manipulation of young people by political leaders was leading them to violent actions, organized through the youth wings of political parties and embedded in a culture of political and social violence and those who did not have culture of violence in their mind perceived that fleeing for opportunity could be better to option. Result also revealed that those who wanted to become peace builders might be frustrated because of the limited role of youth in peace building. They perceived social structure as an obstacle in this process and perceived it better to move abroad so that so that they can demonstrate their presence as an important citizen. Many participants perceived that youths have hunger for power and they would involve in power exhibition through various means including violence. Unfulfillment of their power need in any form is compelling them interpret political and social scenario as unjust and perceived migration as a vehicle to get out of injustice and regain sense of power.

Most of the people irrespective of their social status, caste, education, and economic background have perceived that migration has provided them a common ground and unique opportunity to bring change in their preexisting situation to new situation. Migration was also perceived as a short cut way to come out from abject poverty to economic security. Many respondents perceived migration as a vehicle to bring a hope in their life. They believed that migrating behavior helps to bring social acceptance, status, and a stable future with hope. It seems that community has new way of perceiving and understanding to those community members who have lived for certain period in the foreign countries. Many

participants believed that migrated people earn respect among non-migrating community members probably because of their economic achievement, regained masculinity, ability to become protector and provider to family, or even maintaining the lost glory of the family. Migrated people are understood and dealt differently in the community as one of the participant reported "They respect people who have migrated to work in foreign countries. They are good now, help us, and respect us." Many participants thus believed that role of perception of community was crucial in determining migrating behavior.

Perception towards migrating behavior seemed to differ according to socio economic status. It was noted that the well-off group have different perception on migration. For them, migrating for work was perceived as source of travel, visit of new places, and maintaining social status.

Unconsciously they need to compete with migrated community members to protect their status and identity. For those who have low social status, migration helped them in two ways, at the beginning to escape from discrimination and self-humiliation and later to gain some form of social status. Participants claimed that migrated people exhibit some change in their personality and behavior. Beside financial strength they would be more skilled, experienced, and have new ideas and perspectives. They would get entirely new identity after migration and cease to be as they used to be prior to their migration. Thus, individuals' sense of identity formation was crucial factor in determining migration.

Some perceive migration process associated to family condition by stating 'family pressure', while some have their own perception related to future when they stated 'future business goal'. Yet, some gave the

reasons of 'luxurious life' in the migrated country. Similarly, some perceived the reason as poverty, lack of education and so on. Self focus perception such as 'to explore, travel, learning skill' were also found even though this was more prominent among people from high socio economic status.

Participants' perception that acceptance and respect can be gained through migration was one of the important factors in migration. On social and familial level, perception that future security such as buying lands and constructing house can be attained with migration have played role in migration of youths. But along with that a social need to provide education to the children is seen very important by many respondents. Thus, besides economic factors migration was primarily determined by community and individual perception toward migrating behavior and establishment of impressive identity.

Different phenomena attached with migration have been widely explored. However, there is scarcity of documented researches that can explore contribution of perception and identity exploration in migration process. The finding is in agreement with the previous researches (for example International migration in a globalizing world, 2011) that majority of labors migrant are youths. The reason might be that people have dreams about security of their future when they are young. Also, older people have not enough courage to go for harsh work that is expected in gulf countries. This has been reflected in one of the informant statement "We have to work when we have age. We can't work after the age of 40. So we work till 40, return back home and do small business here." Education level, economy & caste pattern of migrating youth supports the claim of Bhattarai (2005) that poor people migrate to India, the Gulf States and Malaysia. So,

poverty along with lack of higher education and perception that migration can bring change in their preexisting situation to new situation might be one crucial contributing factor in migration behavior. Migration was perceived as vehicle to bring a hope in individual's life.

Migration behavior helps to bring social acceptance, status, and a stable future and to some extent helpful in maintaining personal glory and reducing perceived social inequality and discrimination. The perception of community that those who have been migrated are masculine and protector one might also have lured youth to perceive migration behavior as important. This was highlighted by some of the participants by saying that, "even though money we earn there is not much high, we can earn status and social recognition by doing so". Thus, migration was a tool in identity development. High rate of migration among lower caste group and people with low education is also an indication that migration is more a process of identity development even though in surface economic upliftment seemed dominant. Youth is the age of identity development by testing various roles. Accomplishment in life makes strong sense of personal identity. This might be the reason why youths were searching jobs abroad that have some positive perceptual values among community people.

Perception of youth that they are being spoiled by political leaders and youth organization seem to contribute for migration. Youths are being frustrated by the fact that they are tools of political organization rather than themselves taking lead roles as per their own agenda and priorities. They thus think that they have a limited scope for adding value through their participation and experience. When they seemed social forces more powerful than

their will to contribute in peace building they seemed chose migration as option to bring some change in their sense of self. This phenomenon reflects the fact that youths are more aware of importance of free will in identity development and that migration is chosen as an option of identity development.

Perception of many youth that youths of Nepal have high power need but they feel powerless when they try to change social structure because their role is limited by the political leaders indicate that youths are aware of politics in Nepal and are frustrated due to existing political scenario.

This is supposed to be one crucial factors in labor movement as youth might find need of power satisfied when they do something i.e. migrate. Migration thus keeps their self respect intact and helps in developing masculine identity. There are those youth who are not interested in political lives or cannot afford to have their lives interrupted by politics (Snellinger, 2005). Such groups are either involved in study here and if economic and other variable not supporting are planning to migrate abroad. Thus, higher power need along with need for masculine identity and political scenario are factors that seem to motivate youth migrate.

Study also revealed that perception and motivation toward migration was different according to socio economic status of youths. For rich people migration was perceived as a source of exploration, travel and protection of status while for poor one migration was guided to escape from discrimination and self-humiliation and later to gain some form of social status. However, perception that migrated people are more skilled, experienced, has new ideas and perspectives was common among both groups. This might also be a contributing factor in migration.

Perception of family pressure was another variable that was found to contribute for migration. Family conflict and family pressure to youth to become provider might be contributing for their migration. Many youth might have migrated because they can flee from family pressure and conflict by doing so.

Conclusions

From above discussions several conclusions can be drawn. Youth who were migrating were mostly of low caste group and majority of them had not secured higher education. Various perceptual factors seemed to influence migrating behavior including perceived power hunger and unfulfillment of it, perception that migration can secure their future, protect sense of masculinity and social status they will gain. From present study it can be concluded that perception and development of identity are two core themes in migration of Nepalese youth.

References

Bhattarai, P. (2005). Migration of Nepalese Youth for Foreign Employment: Problem and Prospects. Youth Action Nepal (YOAN). Kathmandu

Bhugra, D. (2004). Migration, distress and cultural Identity. *British Medical Bulletin*. The British Council, 69, 129-141 DOI: 10.1093/bmb/ldh007

Central Intelligence Agency (2015). The World factbook. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-actbook/fields/2112.html>

Global commission on International Migration (2005). Migration in an interconnected world: New Directions for action. Geneva: Switzerland.

International Migration in a Globalizing World: The Role of Youth (2011)., United nations department of

Economics and Social Affairs. Population Division, New York. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/technicalpapers/TP2011-1.pdf>

Karadogan, S. (2011). Effects of Globalization on International Labor migration. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/5067214/effects_of_globalization_on_international_labor_migration

Labor Migration (n.d.). International Organization for Migration. Retrieved from <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/what-we-do/labour-migration.html>

Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook (April 11, 2014). *Migration and development brief Migration and Remittances team, development prospects group 22*. The World Bank. Retrieved from: <http://www.worldbank.org/>

Snellinger, A. (2005). A crisis in Nepali student politics? Analyzing the gap between politically active and non-active students. *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*.(1), 18-44.

The World Bank (n.d.). Personal remittances, received (% of GDP). Retrieved from: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/bx.trf.pwkr.dt.gd.zs>