

Factors Influencing of College Students' Choice to Abroad: A Survey Study

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KEYWORDS

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Push factors

Quality Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the factors of college students' choices to migrate abroad. The independent variables are push and pull factors and the dependent variable is the socio-economic motive for going abroad. Push factors consist of unemployment, poverty, family conflict, an inferior education system, political disturbance, and poor development activities, and pull factors consist of the desire to study, fashion, earn and learn, be rich, relative invite, and friends' suggestions. The study is carried out using a survey research design. The nature of the study is descriptive. For this study, data were collected from primary sources. The researchers obtained data about the sample using answers to structural questionnaires from the sampled 110 bachelor-level students of the Gaurishankar Multiple Campus, Charikot Multiple Campus, and Hanumanteshwor Multiple campus of Dolkahal district. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied for the data analysis using SPSS software version 23. According to respondents from the descriptive analysis, most college students were unsatisfied with Nepal's current political system and government intervention for socio-economic development. This research found that push and pull factors were significant determinants but push factors are more important than pull factors to motivate migration. Thus, three-tier governments should increase the budget for higher education for quality education and productive sectors with research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modernization and various social and cultural movements have broadly changed perspectives and understanding of the world. Conventionally, migration is "the

relatively permanent movement of persons over a significant distance" (Shaw, 1975). A major part of human history is migration, which is moving for various reasons like travel, employment, education, or refuge.

People move in search of greater social and economic opportunities. Thet (2014) highlighted two categories of migration contributing elements or causes: push and pull factors. Global migration is a phenomenon influenced by social, political, cultural, environmental, health, educational, and transportation considerations in addition to economic ones. It frequently occurs due to push factors from developed locations and push factors, such as unemployment, substandard living circumstances, unstable political environments, unfavorable weather patterns, natural catastrophes, epidemics, and socioeconomic regression, might make one's place of birth appear less appealing. Pull factors, such as improved living and employment prospects, peace and stability, property and life security, and a good climate, make the destination seem more desirable than the countries of origin. Globally, the trend of international student migration is comparatively higher than that of migration (King et al., 2010). With around five million students crossing their borders seeking higher education abroad, international student migration has increased over the years (Bista et al., 2018). Developed countries have an inherent upper hand in attracting talent which is evident with the United States (U.S.), United Kingdom (U.K.), and Australia being the key players in hosting international students (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019).

Adhikari et al. (2023) claimed that migration was driven by British colonial interests and political conditions set by the national government in the past. Moreover, he highlighted that high levels of migration for long-term contract work in Malaysia and Gulf countries are currently linked to factors such as conflict, climate change, disasters, and global forces that make local livelihood opportunities dangerous.

Mishra (2022) found that the migration of students is a complicated phenomenon that is impacted by several variables, such as political, social, economic, and academic concerns. It has a big impact on how international collaboration and understanding are promoted and the

advancement of global education systems. Mishra (2022) highlighted that in Nepal young students who have just pursued their 10 +2, are lured to go abroad, particularly in developed countries such as Australia, America, Japan, and Canada for their further study and permanent income resources. Therefore, migration for higher education has been increasing, though students face various challenges during their educational journey.

In recent years, there has been a significant influx of Nepalese students to Western countries in search of higher education and better career opportunities. Studying abroad is considered the most common way for students to obtain a top-notch education and develop skills typically unavailable in their home country (King & Sondhi, 2018). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics (n.d.), Australia, Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom are the most popular study-abroad destinations. These students are forced to flee unfavorable conditions back home, they are compelled to migrate.

Acharya (2012) stated that student migration from Nepal to pursue higher education abroad has been increasing in recent years. The recent data on migration also displays that there are unexpected migration trends of Nepalese students to developed countries for their sustainable career development. The research revealed that high expectations, aspirations, and motivation prompted students to go abroad (Acharya, 2012). Similarly, Tamang and Shrestha (2021) jointly found that the motivation behind this trend includes the desire for practical skills, knowledge, valuable experiences, and the expectation of higher earning potential and foreign degrees. Another reason is the rise in student migration is facilitated by the commoditized international education market, which has made education abroad accessible to segments of Nepali society that previously had limited opportunities. Kharel (2022) found that the migration of Nepali students to Japan has significantly

increased, with Nepal students becoming Japan's third-largest foreign student community. The motivation factors that play an important role in students' decision to migrate abroad and the degree of mobility when a student migrates abroad to complete an entire degree course (King et al., 2010).

Alsharari (2018) found that the internationalization of the UAE has rapidly grown in the last decade and has sought to establish itself as an "education hub" in the Middle East. Özoğlu et al. (2015) suggested that geographical proximity and cultural, historical, religious, and ethnic affinities seem to be very prominent in international students' decisions to study in Turkey as an emerging regional hub. Furthermore, they said many other factors including comparable quality of education, affordability of living, scholarship opportunities, and recommendations by family or friends are also found to influence their choice of Turkey (Ozoglu et al., 2015). (Brown et al., 2016) concluded that the factors that support decisions to study overseas include having sufficient information about study abroad programs, especially early in an academic program, having an interest in other cultures/countries, and having academic staff and family as positive role models who motivate them to study abroad. Phang (2013) highlighted the communication factor which has an important influence on international students' decision of study destination. Nepalese students have a variety of influence factors that assist them in going abroad. Personal motivation, demographic factors, academic factors, parental influences, career goals, and post-study abroad experiences are some factors that directly acknowledge and encourage them to immigrate abroad for their study (Acharya, 2012). Kim and Zhang (2022) suggested that despite differing educational focuses short-term and long-term mobility motivating factors are closely linked. While preferences for English-speaking countries short-term and long-term, destinations are driven by the importance attached to English skills and degrees and dislike of the

domestic education system. In their research, Brooks and Goldin - Meadow (2016) found that pull factors to students seeking practical skills, knowledge, and valuable experiences to enhance their future careers, motivating them to fly abroad for higher education. (Tamang & Shrestha, 2021) highlighted that despite facing financial, social, cultural, and personal challenges during their educational journey. Silwal & Baral (2021) claim that migration is the lack of diverse academic programs, providing quality education, appointing qualified faculties, and contributing to social support, student employability, and higher education enrollment positions in Nepal. Ghimire & Hillman (2022) found that the desire for pull factors, such as practical skills, knowledge, valuable experiences, and aspirations for higher earnings and foreign degrees motivate students to pursue higher education in developed countries. Language proficiency also matters in Nepalese students who want to internalize the use the English language competently. To achieve competence, they prefer to go abroad for their study. Additionally, claim in their research that the plea of an international curriculum, having opportunities for English language learning environments, and the potential for global competitiveness in jobs contribute to the attraction to abroad. Moreover, Gurung et al. (2022) claimed that in research the push factors of migration are shortage availability of employment opportunities, sound livelihood prospects in urban areas, and the impact of conflicts are significant factors for international migration, among Nepalese individuals. Upadhyay-Dhungel and Lamichhane (2011) found that Australia has become a top destination due to its appeal to Nepalese students, with many part-time jobs, salaries, and learning and earning. Government policies related to education, scholarship opportunities, and internationalization efforts also impact students' choices to study abroad. (De Wit & Altbach, 2021) said that Internationalization as a concept and strategic agenda is a relatively new, broad,

and varied phenomenon in tertiary education.

In conclusion, the decision to study abroad is induced by complex factors ranging from individual motivations and academic considerations to career aspirations and cultural influences.

There are various causes of college students' dropout: academic integrity, social integrity, career identity, college education satisfaction, educational service satisfaction, economic stability, and family emotional support (Kim, 2022). Recently, alongside Tribhuvan University, other universities have been struggling to get student enrollment applications. Due to the significant decline in the youth population choosing to leave their home country, Nepal's poor socio-economic conditions, political instability, inadequate healthcare, and educational facilities are often stated as driving forces (Bhatta, 2024).

For instance, Subedi (2022) found that three factors influence student's dropout: student-related, campus-related, and family-related. During the fiscal year 2022-23, over 750000 youth left the country for foreign employment and each day over 200 youth left the country through legal channels (Subedi, 2022). As per the estimate of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the employment rate among Nepalese youth between the ages of 15 and 19 years is as high as 19.2 percent (Jha, 2023). There is limited research to investigate the influencing factors of college students for migration.

This study adds to the limited research in Nepal by using a quantitative approach, in a survey questionnaire, which allows a deeper perception of the topic from a student perspective. Thus, this study

aims to unpack the factors that influence students' choices of migration.

1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study's general objective is to assess the factors that influence students' choice to migrate abroad. Specifically, the study tries to answer the following two objectives.

1. To assess the motives of college students' migration abroad.
2. To identify the significant difference between push factors and pull factors of migration.

1.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out from the cross-sectional of Dolakha district only. Students in urban areas may have different perceptions regarding the motivation factors of migration abroad. The study has few participants. A large sample size may help derive more accurate results. Therefore, further study can be more robust for new research and support to the three-tier government of Nepal.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework explains variables and how the research problem would be explored (Adom et al., 2018). The conceptual framework describes the relationship between the main concepts of the study. This framework is represented in a visual format and illustrates the cause-and-effect relationship between various variables. The basis of the literature review and discourse, the study on influencing factors (push and pull factors) of college students towards abroad is mentioned in the following conceptual framework.

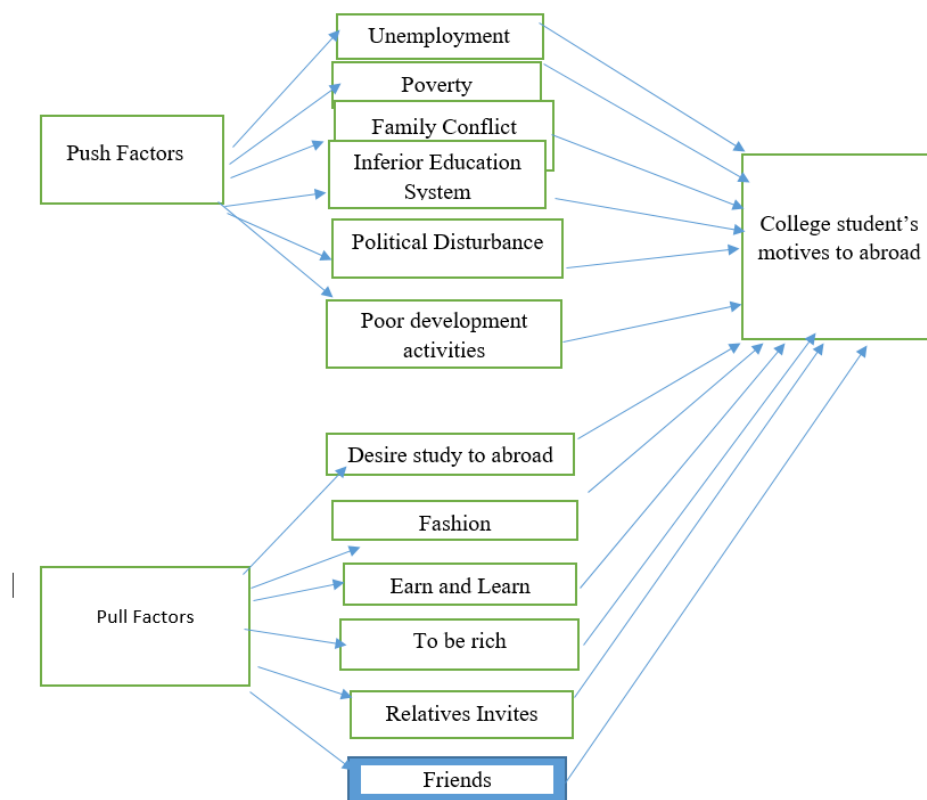


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Figure 1 explains students' motives and factors for migrating abroad. The independent variables are push and pull factors. The dependent variable is the motive factors for going abroad. Push factors include unemployment, poverty, family conflict, an inferior education system, political disturbance, and poor development activities, and pull factors include the desire to study, fashion, earn and learn, be rich, relative invite, and friends. This framework provides the study in assessing the influencing socio-economic factors and college students; migration abroad in Nepal.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

2.1 STUDY AREA

Dolakha is a hilly district in the Bagmati province of Nepal, spread over 2191 square kilometers and located at - 00' North and 50'-32' east. From the lowest elevation point of 762 meters above sea level to 7134 meters up to the peak of Mt Gaurishankar, one can find a culmination of

diverse natural heritage, culture, and traditions. The district is divided into two Municipalities and seven Rural Municipalities. The headquarters of this district is Charikot, which lies 133 kilometers east of Kathmandu. Under Tribhuvan University, there are nine community colleges in the district, and four colleges conduct bachelor-level classes regularly. According to college records (June 10, 2024), 1150 students were enrolled at the bachelor's -level in these colleges. Out of them, 20 percent of students dropped out yearly. Similarly, according to the district administrative office of Dolakha (July 19, 2024), a total number of 7357 passports was distributed in FY2023/24 from the district. Out of them, 4375 were male and 2982 were female.

The researcher selected three colleges out of nine using purposive sampling viz; Gaurishankar Multiple Campus, Charikot Multiple Campus, and Hanumanteshwor Campus. According to the college's record, 793 students enrolled,

20 percent dropped out, and 65 percent attended classes regularly in Gaurishankar Multiple Campus. Similarly, 103 students enrolled, 20 percent dropped out and 50 percent attended regular classes in Charikot Campus, and 90 students enrolled, 20 percent dropped out and 50 percent attended regular classes in Hanumanteshwor Campus. For the study, the researchers selected 112 students from the bachelor's degrees through random sampling.

The study was carried out using a quantitative survey research method. The nature of the study is descriptive. For this study, data were collected from primary sources and the researchers obtained data about the sample using answers of questionnaires from the bachelor-level students in the Dolakha district. This study allowed researchers to get information about the personal, family, and migration-

related closed-ended questionnaire push and pull factors of personal behavior, and answers to events of the Likert Scale questionnaire. The population of students was collected from the college's administrative records. There were two outcome measures and motives factors towards abroad such as descriptive and inferential statistics.

2.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools with the help of SPSS software. The descriptive statistics summarize the ethnicity, family migration, motives for migration, and suggestions for migration, and cover the area to measure the frequencies of the result. For the test difference between push factors and pull factors of migration, the paired sample t-test method is used in inferential statistics.

3. RESULT

Table 1: Caste/Ethnicity Distribution of Respondents

Caste/ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Chhetri	31	27.7
Brahmin	14	12.5
Tamang	18	16.1
Thaami	28	25
Newar	8	7.1
Dalit	6	5.4
Others	7	6.2
Total	112	100.0

The ethnicity distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1. There were 27.7 percent Chhetri, 12.5 percent Brahmin, 16.1 percent Tamang, 25 percent Thami,

7.1 percent Newar, 5.4 percent Dalit, and 6.2 percent another caste in the study area. Most of the students were from Thami communities in the study area.

Table 2: Municipality/Rural Municipality Covered by Respondents

Municipality/Rural Municipality	Frequency	Percent
Bhimeshwor	46	41.8
Jiri	1	0.9
Gaurishankar	11	9.8
Kalinchok	15	13.4
Baitershwor	12	14.3
Sailung	7	6.3
Melung	3	2.7
Bigu	6	5.4
Tamkoshi	4	3.6
Other (beyond Dolakha)	2	1.8

Table 2 shows that all local governments covered the sampled students. Out of them, 41.8 percent of students were from Bhimeshwar Municipality and at least 0.9 percent of students from Jiri Municipality. Similarly, 14.3 percent from Baitheshwar, 13.4 percent

from Kalinchok, 9.8 percent from Gaushankar, 6.3 percent from Sailung, 5.4 percent from Bigu, 3.6 percent from Tamakoshi, 2.7 percent from Melung Rural Municipalities and 1.8 from beyond Dolakha district.

Table 3: Suggestion Factors for Respondents to Go Abroad

Suggestion by	Frequency	Percent
Parents	27	24.1
Myself	60	53.6
Friends	13	11.6
Relatives	7	6.3
Other	8	4.4

Table 3 shows that 53.6 percent of sample students were self-motivated abroad. Similarly, 27 percent of students

were suggested by parents, 13 percent by friends, 7 percent by relatives, and 8 percent by other factors respectively.

Table 4: Motives of Current Political System and Migration

Variables	Valid	Frequency	Percent
Current political system	Yes	19	17.0
	No	93	83.0
Total 112			100.0
Family migration	Yes	57	50.9
	No	55	49.1
Total 112			100.0
Leave present study	Yes	35	31.5
	No	77	68.5
Total 112			100
Student migration	Yes	79	70.5
	No	33	29.5
Total		112	100.0

Table 4 shows that 83 percent of sampled students were not satisfied and 17 percent were satisfied with the current political system of Nepal. 50.9 percent of sampled students' families migrated and 49.9 percent of students' families did not migrate abroad. 35 percent of sample

students wanted to leave their present studies and 77 percent of sampled students did not want to leave their present studies in Nepal. Similarly, 79 percent of sampled students wanted to migrate and 33 percent of sampled students did not want to migrate abroad.

Table 5: Paired Samples Statistics

Influencing Factors	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair	3.6592	111	.42187	.04004
Push@factors 1 Pull@factors	3.3664	111	.53881	.05114

Table 6: Samples t-test (Paired Difference)

factors	Mean	Std.Devi ation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig(2- tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair push factors 1 pull factors	.29279	.63969	.06072	.17247	.41312	4.822	110	.000

Table 5 shows that the average value of push factors was 3.7 and the average value of pull factors was 3.4. Similarly, Table 6 shows that the t- statistics

is 4.8 and the p-value is 0.000, the results were statistically significant. The difference value was 0.24.

4. DISCUSSION

International migration is a complex phenomenon of personal motivations economic prospects, geopolitical factors, and cultural transitions, and foreign student migration with it impact both on the host and home country as well as on the individual lives of migrants (Gill, 2013). Migration trends from Nepal to other countries have been influenced by a combination of global and national political economies and have been considered a serious problem. The study found that those young people who were not willing to leave often considered to have no great future in Nepalese society and the sense of culture of migration stimulates younger people/students to think about out-migration and earnings and learning opportunities were the main factors of student out-migration (Shrestha, 2021). The expectation of upgrading the economic status through 'earning and learning', getting motivated from one's society, searching for applicable education abroad, students' mindset and global experience, a social network with the migrated friends, hopelessness and frustration, and lack of good conditional improvements was in the

home country (Upadhyay-Dhungel et al. 2013).

This study adds to the limited research in the Nepali context. A survey questionnaire allows a deeper perception of the topic from a student's perspective. Therefore, the researcher set the objective of this research to assess the motives of college students abroad and the significant difference between push factors and pull factors of migration. Push factors include unemployment, poverty, family conflict, an inferior education system, political disturbance, and poor development activities in the home country, and pull factors include the desire to study, fashion, earn and learn, be rich, relative invite, and friends to attract abroad. In this study, the researcher also observed the pair sample t-test between push and pull factors to explore the difference between the two factors.

Three of nine colleges were selected for purposive sampling viz; Gaurishankar Multiple Campus, Charikot Multiple Campus, and Hanumanteshwor Campus. According to the college's record, 793 students enrolled, 20 percent dropped out, and 65 percent attended classes regularly in

Gaurishankar Multiple Campus. Similarly, 103 students enrolled, 20 percent dropped out and 50 percent attended regular classes in Charikot Campus, and 90 students enrolled, 20 percent dropped out and 50 percent attended regular classes in Hanumanteshwor Campus. The researchers selected 112 students with bachelor's degrees for the study.

In this research, data were collected from primary sources and the researchers obtained data about the sample using answers to structural questionnaires from the sampled bachelor-level students. This study allowed researchers to get information about the personal, family, and migration-related closed-ended questionnaire push and pull factors of behavior, and answers to events of the Likert scale questionnaire.

The respondents of Chhetri were 27.7 percent, Brahmin were 12.5 percent, Tamangs were 16.1 percent, Thamis were 25 percent Newars were 7.1 percent, Dalits were 5.4 percent and others were 6.2 percent in the study area. Most of the students are from Thami communities. Students' responses covered all of Dolakha's local governments. About 53.6 percent of sample students were self-motivated for migration. Similarly, parents suggested 27 percent of students, 13 percent by friends, 7 percent by relatives, and 8 percent by others respectively. The results show that 83 percent of sample students were not satisfied and 17 percent were satisfied with the current political system of Nepal. From the data, 50.9 percent of sample students' families have migrated to the study area. Data analysis revealed that 33 percent of sample students wanted to leave their present studies and 77 percent of sample students did not want to leave their present studies in Nepal. Similarly, 79 percent of sample students want to migrate and 33 percent do not want to relocate abroad for employment.

The inferential statistics show the average value of push factors was 3.7 and the average value of pull factors was 3.4. Since the p-value is 0.000, the results were

statistically significant. From the paired sample t-test, the t-statistics is 4.8, and the difference value was 0.24. The output shows that the average value of push factors is more than that of pull factors and there was a significant difference between push factors and pull factors.

5. CONCLUSION

This article is based on the quantitative data collection and analysis approach. The information was obtained from the students with bachelor's degrees from public colleges in the Dolakha district. Student migration has become the most contributing concern for the country's socio-economic development due to quality education and employment opportunities. According to respondents from the data analysis, most college students are not satisfied with Nepal's current political system and intervention for socio-economic development. As a literature review, Push-pull factors were found to be determinants, but push factors are more significant than pull factors in motivating migration. Recently, a lack of budget is the constraint to implementing the policies to improve the education system has been emerging in discourse. Thus, federal and provincial governments should increase the budget for higher education to provide quality education with research. The local governments also should increase the budget to the secondary level. With coordination, cooperation, and collaboration, the three-tier government focused on education sectors for human capital formation and employment creation. In particular, this study will be relevant to policymakers to derive insight and stimulate researchers to add new research in this field.

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