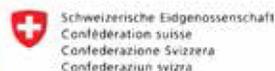


# USE OF ACQUIRED SKILLS BY RETURNEE LABOR MIGRANTS IN THE HOME COUNTRY: A SURVEY IN NEPAL

Sunila Baniya

Kathmandu University  
School of Education  
2021

LELAM-TVET4INCOME



Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

# **Use of Acquired Skills by Returnee Labor Migrants in the Home Country: A Survey in Nepal**

**Sunila Baniya**

*A Publication*  
*of*  
Kathmandu University  
School of Education, 2021  
Nepal

© Copyright Kathmandu University School of Education, Kathmandu, 2021  
Hattiban, Lalitpur  
Post Box – General Post Office 6250  
Phone: +97715250524  
<https://kusoede.edu.np>  
[admin@kusoed.edu.np](mailto:admin@kusoed.edu.np)

All rights reserved.

**Editors:**

Mahesh Nath Parajuli, PhD  
Tikaram Poudel, PhD

**Design & Printed at:**

**MILESTONE PRINTERS**

Swoyambhu, Kathmandu

Contact : 015388520, 9851069520

Email: [printersmilestone@gmail.com](mailto:printersmilestone@gmail.com)

ISBN: 978-9937-0-9552-5

---

Publication of this book is financially supported by the project Linking Education and Labor Market (LELAM), funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is the revised version of my dissertation submitted for the degree of Masters in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (MTVET) at the School of Education Kathmandu University 2021. I am grateful to the School of Education at Kathmandu University for providing me an opportunity to study for Masters in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (MTVET). I am also indebted to the entire faculty members and other staff at the School of Education Kathmandu University for helping me to complete my course work and this research. This work would not have completed without the financial support from the Linking Education and Labor Markets (LELAM) project at the School of Education Kathmandu University and National Vocational Qualification Systems (NVQS) Project, Swiss contact.

My sincere gratitude goes to Jiwak Raj Bajracharya, PhD, my dissertation supervisor. I also express my deep gratitude to all the respondents, who provided valuable information for this research. Further, I express my deep gratitude to my mother Subarna Baniya and son Pragun R. Tuladhar who have always been a pillar of strength. Finally, my thanks go to the entire team of the editorial board at the School of Education Kathmandu University for selecting my work for publication and making it readable for the general public.

**Sunila Baniya**

## ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
COVID 19	Corona Virus Disease 19
CP	Colombo Process
CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
DoFE	Department of Foreign Employment
EU	European Union
FEB	Foreign Employment Board
FY	Fiscal Year
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCM	Global Compact on Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GoN	Government of Nepal
ICWRM	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoLE	Ministry of Labor and Employment
MoLESS	Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Services
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTVET	Master in Technical and Vocational Education and Training
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NLFS	Nepal Labor Force Survey
NSTB	National Skill Testing Board
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAARC	South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations

## ABSTRACT

Labor migrants, whether skilled or unskilled, learn new skills, acquire knowledge and attributes in the process of migration. Affluent host countries with sophisticated technologies and equipment create opportunities for labor migrants to acquire advanced skills. A majority of labor migrants learn skills informally in the real world of work. However, when they return home, it is difficult for them to find work and reintegrate into society.

This research explored the extent of the use of acquired skills at work in Nepal by returnee migrant workers. More specifically, the study focused on understanding the differences in the use of acquired skills by male/female and waged/self-employed; and the barriers these returnees face in the process of reintegration. A quantitative analysis was performed with a sample size of 400 returnees. Inferential statistics were analyzed to describe the sample and then generalized the analysis to the total population.

The findings of the study showed that only one-third of the returnees worked in similar occupations that they were engaged in overseas. They used acquired generic skills more than the specific skills at work in the home country. This indicated that two-thirds of the returnees could not use the acquired skills productively, and they thus became deskilled. Over one-thirds of returnees were self-employed, and this showed that the returnees preferred to have their business.

The difference in the use of generic and specific hard skills was statistically insignificant in both genders i.e., both male and female returnees used the acquired skills similarly. However, the difference was statistically significant in terms of wage-employed and self-employed returnees. Acquired soft skills were highly used by both male and female returnees.

The study found that economic, political and administrative, and technical barriers prevented the returnees from reintegrating into society. Also, the difference in economic, political, and educational barriers is statistically significant among the male and female returnees.

The study found that human capital acquired in the host country adds value to their work provided that the returnees work in a similar occupation in the home country. But a majority of the returnees could not utilize their acquired skills because they did not get similar jobs when they returned. The policymakers require to develop appropriate policies and programs to prevent the de-skilling of returnees so that they would contribute to the economic development of the nation.

Keywords: Acquired Skills Use, Return migration, Reintegration, Generic and Specific Hard Skills, Soft Skills, Barriers in Reintegration.

**Sunila Baniya**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>CHAPTER I</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	3
The Hypotheses of the Study.....	3
Rationale and Significance of the Study .....	4
Delimitation and Limitation of the Study.....	4
Chapter Reflection.....	5
<b>CHAPTER II</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>6</b>
The Labor Migration Context.....	6
Global Context .....	6
Nepali Context .....	7
Skills, Knowledge, and Attributes Transfer .....	8
Labor Migration and Human Capital Gain.....	9
Return Migration and Reintegration.....	10
Reintegration Policies and Practices.....	11
International Policies.....	11
Policies and Practices in Nepal .....	12
Theoretical Background .....	13
Conceptual Framework.....	14
Chapter Reflection.....	17
<b>CHAPTER III</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Research Paradigm: Post Positivism.....	18
Research Design: Quantitative .....	19
Methods of Data Collection.....	19
Study Area .....	19
Study Population .....	19

Sampling Technique: Random Sampling.....	20
Study Instruments: Questionnaire.....	20
Statistical Tools .....	21
Pilot Study.....	21
Reliability and Validity.....	22
Data Collection Procedure.....	22
Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	23
Ethical Considerations .....	23
Chapter Reflection.....	24
<b>CHAPTER IV .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Demographic Information of Returnees.....	25
Age, Gender, and Ethnicity of the Respondents .....	25
Level of General Education Received .....	26
Level of Technical Education Received.....	27
Internal Migration Status of Families .....	28
Use of Remittance in Enterprise Development by the Families.....	28
Pre-migration and Foreign Employment Information .....	28
Labour Migration Destination .....	28
Years Spent in Foreign Employment.....	28
Use of Skill Training Received in Nepal at Work Abroad.....	29
Use of Work Experience Gained in Nepal at Work Abroad .....	29
Occupational Engagement Abroad.....	29
Skill Acquisition at Work Abroad.....	30
Preparation of Work Plan before Returning Home.....	30
Employment Status in Nepal after Returning from labor Migration.....	31
Waged Employment, Self-employment, and Unemployed .....	32
Occupation wise Returnees Working in Similar Occupations in Nepal .....	33
Reasons for Being Unemployed after Returning Home .....	33
The extent of the Use of the Acquired Skills by the Returnees in Nepal.....	34
Easiness to Find Work in Nepal after Returning from Foreign Employment .....	34
The Extent of Use of Acquired Generic Hard Skills to Work in Nepal.....	35
iii. Skill of using occupational safety .....	36
iv. Skill of workplace cleaning /housekeeping .....	36
The Extent of Use of Specific Hard Skill to Work in Nepal .....	38
i. Technical Skill.....	39

ii. Skill of interpreting the drawings and symbols .....	39
iii. Skill to use the different metric system .....	39
The Extent of Use of Soft Skill Acquired Abroad to Work in Nepal.....	41
Factors Affecting the Returnees to Use their Acquired Skills in Nepal .....	43
Technical Barriers.....	44
Economic Barriers.....	49
Educational Barriers.....	51
Political and Administrative Barriers .....	53
Personal Barriers.....	55
Satisfaction Working in Nepal and Opinion on Retention .....	58
Chapter Reflection.....	59
<b>CHAPTER V .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>DISCUSSIONS ON FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>61</b>
Higher Percentage of Female Returnees were Illiterate .....	61
Low Education and Lack of Skill among the Migrants .....	62
Negligible Use of Remittance to Start Business .....	62
Re-migration a Common Trend among the Nepali Labor Migrants .....	62
Skills Learned in the Home Country Moderately Used at Work Abroad .....	63
Migrant Workers Learned the Skills Informally Abroad.....	63
Planning before Returning Increased the Employability .....	63
One-third of the Returnees Worked in Similar Occupations .....	64
Preference of Self-employment to Wage Employment .....	64
More Returnee Male Worked in Same Occupations.....	65
High Unemployment among Women Returnees.....	65
Generic Hard Skills More Useful to Work.....	65
Limited Use of Specific Hard Skills in Nepal.....	66
More Soft Skills Used at Work in Nepal.....	66
Barriers Faced while Using the Acquired Skills .....	67
Skill Mismatch and Unavailability of Tools and Equipment: Key Technical Barrier.....	68
Socio-Cultural Barriers Prevalent among Women Returnees .....	68
Lack of Market Information: Major Barrier to Reintegrate in the Domestic Market.....	68
Low Level of Education not Considered a Challenge by the Returnees .....	69
Political Instability and Unfavorable Policies Hamper Establishing Business .....	69
Personal Barriers not Considered a Barrier .....	70
Possible Strategies to Address the Barriers Faced by the Returnees .....	70
Holistic Reintegration Guideline.....	70

Minimizing Technical Skill Barriers .....	70
Recognition of Acquired Skills in the Home Country .....	71
Market-led Development Policy .....	71
Investment in Human Capital.....	71
Centralized Returnee Database .....	72
One-Stop Support Service Center .....	72
Easy Access to Finance .....	72
National and Local Level Market and Resource Study.....	73
Political Stability and Pro-business Policy.....	73
Chapter Reflection.....	73
<b>CHAPTER VI .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>74</b>
The Implication of the Study .....	75
The Implication to Research Professionals .....	75
Implication to Policymakers .....	75
REFERENCES.....	76

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 :	Respondents' Gender & General Education .....	26
Table 2 :	Respondents' Gender & Technical Education .....	27
Table 3 :	Work Plans Made Abroad and Employment Start after Return .....	30
Table 4 :	Respondents' Employment Status in Nepal after Return.....	32
Table 5 :	Returnees' Working in Similar Occupation.....	33
Table 6 :	Easiness to Find Work in Nepal .....	34
Table 7 :	Use of Acquired Generic Hard Skills to Work in Nepal .....	36
Table 8 :	Use of Acquired Specific Hard Skills to Work in Nepal.....	39
Table 9 :	Use of Acquired Soft Skills to Work in Nepal.....	41
Table 10 :	Technical Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills .....	44
Table 11 :	Socio-Cultural Barriers in Using the Acquired Skills .....	47
Table 12 :	Economic Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills .....	49
Table 13 :	Educational Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills .....	52
Table 14 :	Political and Administrative Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills .....	53
Table 15 :	Personal Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills .....	56

## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig 1 :	Theoretical Linkages .....	14
Fig 2 :	Conceptual Framework .....	16



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The study explores how returnee labor migrants use their acquired skills after they return home and the barriers they encounter while they try to work in the related occupation. It specifically highlights the nature of skills brought by the returnees and why they find it difficult to reintegrate into the home country.

Across the globe, people have been moving from one place to another permanently or temporarily looking for opportunities for survival. According to migration theory, people migrate because of pull and push factors. Better employment opportunities, improved social-economic and political condition in the host country are the “pull” factors, while “push” factors include the difficulties and obstacles such as poverty, lack of employment opportunities, natural calamities, and internal conflicts in the home country (Chobanyan, 2013; King, 2000, pp. 13-18). Besides, existing inter-country networks centered on family, culture, and history also trigger migration (Bhattarai, 2005). Migration allows humans to learn new things in a new environment and the ability to adapt to the changes.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated that 164 million migrants, out of approximately 258 million international migrants, were labor migrants (ILO, 2017). Nepal, too, is no exception to the phenomenon of global migration. High unemployment, poverty, and political instability forced millions of Nepali youths to choose foreign employment as an alternative.

At present, around 1,000 Nepali youths leave for labor migration every day. Nepal Labor Migration Status Report (2020) showed that 5,508,593 labor permits were issued between 1994/95 and 2018/19 i.e. 86% for employment in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and Malaysia. The data of the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) 2017/18 data showed that 64% of Nepali youths migrated as low-skilled or unskilled workers (Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Service [MoLESS], 2020). This portrays the vulnerability of the Nepali migrant workers landing precarious jobs abroad in the absence of skills and work experience.

The studies conducted by Safer Migration Project in Nepal, too, highlighted the importance of skills and knowledge of the occupation before going abroad. It emphasized that skills learned in the home country enhance the learning of occupational skills and knowledge at workplaces in the destination. At the same time, it also assures trade-related jobs, better wages, and satisfactory working conditions.

While at work abroad, even the unskilled migrants were found to be exposed to advanced technologies and, thus, bring home new skills and innovations. Cassarino (2004) explained that both skilled and unskilled labor migrants bring home tangible (financial capital) and intangible resources (skills, norms, culture, relationships, and connections) which they learn in the new work environment. Thus, migration and return migration have mutual benefits for both the sending and receiving countries (Segal, 2016; Vertovec, 2007; Wickramasekara, 2003) in terms of human capital, economic capital, and social capital acquisition.

It was observed that returnees in the countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka could not use their acquired skills in the context of home countries because of the difficulties in reintegration. Poorer home countries view labor migration as a key source of remittance for the country's development, whereas, the governments of the home countries often overlook the improved human capital.

ILO (2018) revealed that the returnees, after spending some time with their families, tend to re-migrate mostly due to a lack of employment opportunities and failed entrepreneurial attempts in the home country. The researcher's experience in working with potential migrants as well as the returnees ascertained that the returnees, with bitter migration experience, ultimately decide to migrate when they cannot make their ends meet.

During the research period, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a large number of labor migrants to return home due to a global recession leading to job loss and fear of the pandemic. The COVID-19 Crisis Management Centre (CCMC) estimated, including from India, 1.3 million Nepalese returned home (ILO, 2020). Concerns were raised by migration think tanks and several media outlets like the Kantipur National Daily and the Himalayan TV about the staggering number of youths returning home and its implication on the development process. Amid the dilemma of how to integrate the returnees, the think tanks highlighted the return as an opportunity for the country's economic progress which the Government of Nepal (GoN) needs to manage systematically soon.

These issues directed the researcher's interest in analyzing the nature of skills brought by the returnees for reintegration and the reason behind not being able to find appropriate jobs in the home country despite having new skills, knowledge, and attributes at their disposal. The researcher wanted to understand the dynamics of the skills used by the male and female returnees in wage and self-employment, and the barriers that play a key role in economic reintegration causing re-migration.

With regards to the above, this study set the objectives to explore the kind of skills brought back by the returnees and contribute to knowledge generation to retain the skilled workforce. Hypotheses were developed to test the significance of both hard and soft skills, and barriers among the gender and nature of employment. Literature review, theoretical and conceptual framework were developed to guide the researcher in the study. A quantitative study with close and open-ended questions was developed to derive the outcome. An inferential statistic was used to generalize the findings in the population.

## **Statement of the Problem**

According to the ILO, 400,000 youths enter the Nepali labor market every year, depicting the youth bulge leading to a demographic dividend for the country. However, only around one hundred thousand jobs are created in the country annually. This leaves no option for the remaining youths seeking employment abroad as labor migrants. A Nepal Labor Migration Report (2020) showed that 236,208 youths got labor approval in 2018/19 for foreign employment. With few exceptions, most of the labor migrants return home after completing their labor contracts. Thus, it is important to reintegrate skilled returnees to prevent re-migration.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 has addressed the reintegration issue by stating the need to promote

the use of economic capital, skills, technologies, and experiences received from foreign employment in the productive sectors. Also, the Fifteenth National Plan (2076/77-2080/81) indicated skills recognition of the returnees and use the acquired skills and knowledge in enterprise development (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2019). Despite having plans and policies in place, skilled returnees were found to be re-migrating in large numbers.

This raised concerns about why skilled returnees cannot be retained. Some of these concerns are: Why are their acquired skills not being put to best use? Why is effective reintegration not happening? Is it policy, strategy, or something else that is creating hurdles in the successful reintegration of returnees? A research gap was found on the skills dimension that motivated the researcher to carry out the research work.

More specifically, this research focuses on investigating the relationship between skill attainment and skill use in self or wage employment in the home country, and the barriers they faced while trying to implement it. This research has become more relevant in the present context when more migrant workers are returning because of the global recession induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of acquired skills by the returnees in the home country.

## **Research Questions**

To carry out the research, the following research questions were formulated:

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

## **The Hypotheses of the Study**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a significant difference between gender and the extent of acquired generic, specific, and soft skill use;

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a significant difference between gender and barriers faced by returnees while using acquired skills;

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a significant difference between the nature of employment and the extent of acquired skill use;

**Hypothesis 4:** There is a significant difference between the nature of employment and barriers faced while using acquired skills;

## **Rationale and Significance of the Study**

In the present context of the COVID-19 pandemic, when a global recession is shrinking the job market, labor migrants are forced to leave their jobs and sent back, putting pressure on the home countries. The CCMC estimated 1.3 million Nepali migrants from the host countries including India wanted to return home (ILO, 2020). Nepal already is experiencing a high unemployment rate of 11.4% (Nepal Labor Force Survey [NLFS], 2017/18). Although employing a large number of returnees is a challenge for the GoN, it can also be considered as an opportunity to retain skilful youths for the economic growth of the nation.

For successful reintegration into the domestic labor market, it is important to understand the skills and labor market dynamics of the country of origin as well as the host countries. Few studies like Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers in Home Community by Mr P. Poudel in 2017; Returning Home: Challenges and Opportunities for Women Migrant Workers in the Nepali Labor Market by UN Women in 2018 were conducted on reintegration with the social and economic perspectives. But no studies have been conducted on how the returnees make use of the acquired skills to integrate into the home country and what sort of barriers they face in the process of reintegration.

Thus, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to new knowledge to the relevant stakeholders. Such as at the federal and provincial levels, TVET policymakers can develop relevant skill strategies and funding mechanisms to retain the returnees. The provincial and local governments can explore strategies to engage the youth in the development of their hometown and conduct market studies. The policymakers in labor migration can adopt pertinent approaches to prevent the de-skilling of the returnees.

Studies can also be carried out further to assess the sector-wise skill acquisition and the application that contributes to developing sectoral TVET strategies. Additionally, qualitative studies on the use of acquired skills in each occupation would also be valuable for reintegration purposes.

## **Delimitation and Limitation of the Study**

The delimitations of the study were:

- a) This study was conducted incorporating an overall skill perspective regardless of occupations and does not consider skills specific to the occupation.
- b) The study concentrated on GCC and Malaysia returnees.
- c) Although human capital incorporates skills, knowledge, and attributes, the researcher did not segregate between skills and knowledge in her research considering that without having knowledge, skills acquisition and implementation are not possible. Hence, skills in the study incorporate both skills and knowledge aspects.

The limitations of this study were:

- a) Unavailability of official data on the returnee migrants created difficulty in generating sample size for the study. Hence, the sample size was taken from the total number of migrant

workers that took labor permits between 1994/95 to 2016/17 (MoLESS, 2020). Some of these may not have gone to foreign employment, few may not have returned even after the expiry of the labor permit and few may have re-migrated.

- b) While preparing the proposal, it was planned to collect the data for the study by visiting the respondents of 10 districts. However, the COVID-19 pandemic forced Nepal to lockdown for months that compelled the researcher to modify the data collection modality to the phone survey.
- c) Collecting the data over the phone was a challenge. The researcher and the enumerators did not have time to build rapport to bring the respondents into confidence to get in-depth information.
- d) The data collection at the time of the COVID 19 pandemic was difficult. Returnees were discriminated against as the "carriers of the infection" and were reluctant to identify themselves as returnees, though they returned before the pandemic.

## **Chapter Reflection**

Labor migrants whether skilled or unskilled, gain new skills, knowledge, and attributes while working abroad. However, when they return home, they struggle to find a relevant job that forces them to re-migrate in search of better opportunities. A huge number of labor migrants returned home due to the COVID 19 pandemic and it compelled the government to develop appropriate strategies to provide them employment.

It is, therefore, imperative to understand the skills returnees bring home, their area of interest, and the use of their newly acquired skill in their work to develop reintegration strategies. This study expects to be useful in developing new knowledge in the skills sector to develop strategies to mitigate the barriers that returnees face while applying their newly acquired skills at work and successfully reintegrate them into the domestic labor market to stop re-migration.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the labor migration dynamics of both host and home countries, the relevant literature was reviewed. More specifically, the literature review focused on the areas such as the global and national perspective of labor migration and return migration, different aspects of skills such as skills acquired in the home country before going to foreign employment, skills acquired at work in the host countries, use of acquired skills for their livelihood purpose after their return to the home country, and challenges returnees face when they try to use their acquired skills at work. Exploration was made on theoretical perspectives to assess the link between migration, skills acquired at the host country, and its effect on the socio-economic context of the home country.

The review of literature related to reintegration policies in Nepal and empirical evidence have also been covered in this chapter to identify the policy gap. After receiving reviews and the researcher's understanding, the theoretical and conceptual framework was developed that guided the research work.

#### **The Labor Migration Context**

Human beings are said to have migrated across the globe after their origin in the African continent, implying migration as an integral part of human history (ILO, 2013). Kariyil et al. (2020) explain migration as the mobility of a group or an individual, from one place to another for fulfilling social and economic needs. Markley (2011) elaborates on different types of migrants such as refugees, asylum seekers, sojourners, expatriates, laborers, and diasporic migrants. Wahba (2015) states that migrants who leave their home country for a temporary period and go to affluent host countries to accumulate wealth and acquire skills and knowledge are considered economic migration or labor migration.

This shows that the nature of migration is influenced by diverse factors like natural, economic, educational, political, social, and personal decisions. Although both rich and poor people migrate, the key cause of labor migration as mentioned in different literature is poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunity in the home country. Having no option in the home country, people migrate with the hope to earn better and bigger to overcome poverty and save enough to start some work in the home country when they return. Although international labor migration is economically gainful for poor countries, in a sociological aspect, it is often perceived as a loss due to physical, cultural, and psychological problems related to it.

#### **Global Context**

The United Nations, during the assessment of the countries of origin of international migrants in 2016, observed that Asia has the highest number of labor migrants reaching 104 million, accounting for 43% of the total international migrant population in 2015; Europe was in second place having 62 million migrants, while Latin America and the Caribbean were in the third-place having 37 million migrants in 2015; India alone accounted for the largest diaspora in the world amounting to 16

million, and Mexico accounted for 12 million migrants (Wickramasinghe & Wilmaratana, 2016; UN, 2016b).

The above data shows the extent of the mobility of people across the world. South Asia comprising highly populated countries has a large population of labor migrants due to poverty in the region. The oil boom in GCC in the 1970s accelerated the infrastructure development works that demanded a huge labor force from abroad (Ministry of Labor and Employment [MoLE], 2016). Although recent political disturbances and the sharp decline in oil prices decreased the demand for labor migrants, South Asia still relies on the GCC labor markets with fixed-term contracts and sees a circular migration system (Trifan, 2015; King, 2000). Thus, people migrate with different purposes to match the demand and supply of the nations.

Many people migrate several times to meet their needs. Segal (2016) observed that circular migration is beneficial for both the sending and the receiving countries — for the host countries, circular migration prevents labor migrants from permanently residing in their country which would have posed a socio-cultural threat for them and, for the countries of origin, they continuously receive remittance that is sent to support the families and skilled labor in terms of human capital gain. Hence, labor migration is considered a global phenomenon regardless of one's situation whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated, skilled or unskilled. It is often temporary. Once the migrants earn enough, they return home to be with their families and settle down with the money they earned in the affluent host countries.

## **Nepali Context**

Nepal's lack of access to the seaport is a significant barrier to the economic development of the nation. The country's political and economic activities are heavily influenced by the large neighbouring countries — India and China — forcing Nepali people to migrate. In the period from late 1800 to early 1900, Nepali people from the hills migrated to Lahore, then the northern region of the Punjab, India to join the British army and later, the Indian army (Gurung, 2001; Gurung, 2010). India has been the most popular destination for international labor migration for Nepali people due to an open border and the absence of formal labor approval processes for employment. Mobility associated with the trans-Himalayan trade was a part of the lifestyle of the people who lived in high mountains and among the Newar community living in the Kathmandu Valley (Furer-Haimendorf, 1975; Gurung, 2010; Tulachan, 2001).

Since the early 1990s, other destinations such as GCC countries and Malaysia gained popularity, receiving 86.42% of labor migrants (MoLE, 2018). The DoFE has issued 5,308,593 labor permits since it started providing labor permits in 1994/95. Of these, only 4% were women. On the other hand, men represented 95.72% with a low level of education and skills qualifications (MoLESS, 2020). A large number of illegal migrants are not recorded because they go without labor permits via India. The above data also does not include the seasonal migrants who go to India due to the unavailability of a formal recording system in both nations.

Similarly, Japan and Korea are also popular destinations. However, owing to stringent labor migration policies, many are not able to go. The latest trend in labor migration is shifting towards Eastern

European countries like Poland, Turkey, Portugal, and Romania. These countries are entry points for permanently migrating to affluent countries like France, Germany, and Spain, which not only provide better work opportunities but are also highly ranked in the human development index.

Remittance sent by the labor migrants is the key source of foreign exchange earning in Nepal. Nepal received a total of NPR 879.3 billion (USD 7.8 billion) remittance in 2018/19, which contributed to 25.4% to the national GDP and scored 5th highest rank among the remittance-receiving countries in the world with 55.8% of total households in the country receiving remittance (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2019). The remittances are mostly spent on consumption, paying off debts, and the purchase of gold and fixed assets by the migrants' families.

Nepal is known as an unskilled labor-sending country. A majority of Nepali migrant workers are unskilled, the remittance they sent home is quite minimal because of their low level of skills. The Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) data shows that 64% of the Nepali labor migrants went as unskilled or low-skilled workers in 2017/18. Men go to work in the construction and hospitality sectors, while women tend to prefer domestic and care work. Unskilled workers are often forced to work in appalling working conditions and are exploited by employers.

Thus, there is a need for skilling the labor migrants according to the destination labor market needs before going for foreign employment as well as send more skilled workers. Implementing these steps would increase their earnings and prevent exploitation at the workplace.

### **Skills, Knowledge, and Attributes Transfer**

Since this research focused on the use of acquired skills by labor migrants, it is important to understand the concepts of both skills and migration. Human beings learn different kinds of skills, gain knowledge, and attributes continuously. Skills, knowledge, and attributes were used interchangeably wherever labor was concerned. These were considered essential factors when working in a real workplace.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research ([NCVER], 2013) defined skills as the ability to perform a particular mental or physical activity that may be developed through vocational training or practice. The European Union Commission ([EU Commission], 2015) categorizes skills into hard and soft skills; hard skills refer to technical ones that are generic (can be used in the related job) and specific (only useful in a particular work) skills. On the other hand, soft skills are more of cross-cutting skills like language, workplace etiquette, communication, etc. that help the workers to perform better in the workplace.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO], 2015) explains attributes like behaviors, learning abilities, and communications are formed based on beliefs, feelings, and thoughts. From the definitions, it can be deduced that skill, knowledge, and attributes are inseparable. To perform a work successfully, the worker requires respective skills, knowledge about that work.

Often the knowledge and skills gained in an educational institute cannot be easily transferred to the workplace. EU Commission (2015) explains this variation as a skill mismatch (over-skilling, under-skilling) between the demand in the labor market and the skills workers have at their disposal.

The skill mismatch can be both vertical — level of skills is either more or less — and horizontal — education or skills acquired are not appropriate for the job.

Knowledge, skills, and attributes can be gained and transferred in educational institutions, or at the workplace through practical work experience. In the context of labor migration, the workers acquire and transfer the skills, knowledge, and attributes through peers and supervisors. Thus, when the migrants return home with newly acquired skills, they have to transfer the acquired skills to different settings.

In Albania, returnees were found to have more skilled workers than the local workers because they acquired new skills and experiences working abroad (Kule et al., 2002). In Tunisia and Pakistan, the duration of employment abroad affected skill acquisition and transferability (Ilahi, 1999; Mesnard & Ravallion, 2006; Ndreka, 2019). This shows that skills and experiences are transferable depending on their working context. In the context of Nepal, the types of skills, knowledge, and attributes that the workers acquire abroad and the way they transfer to the local context are not explicitly understood. The skills and knowledge acquired in the host countries, equipped with sophisticated technologies, are often questioned because of the different contexts in the home country.

### **Labor Migration and Human Capital Gain**

When people migrate, they take the skills and knowledge they have acquired in the home country with them. At the same time, they also acquire new skills in the host country. The acquisition of human capital or the learning process of people is dynamic depending on the environment they are exposed to.

Duleep and Regets (2002) highlight the importance of having certain skills before leaving the home country enabling them to learn new skills in the host country (Hagan & Wassink, 2020). A study on Mexican migrants working in the US claimed that the workers found 70% of their skills acquired were useful while 30% of the skills they acquired in the workplace. However, some of their skills acquired in the home country were redundant and experienced deskilling (Wassink & Hagan, 2017; Hagan et al., 2011).

A study conducted by the Safer Migration Project in Nepal in 2018 revealed that, with a month-long basic occupational skill, labor migrants can work efficiently in the host country and helps them to learn more intricate technical skills in the long run. Although skill differences were experienced between the skills learned in the home country and actual skills practiced at work in the host country, generic and specific skills learned before migrating adds value in performing their job satisfactorily. The poor economic status of the home country and their obsolete technology may not be very useful in the workplace but that makes them easy to acquire new skills in the workplace.

A literature review conducted by Friedberg (2007) showed that staying a longer period in the host countries enables the workers to acquire more advanced technology as well as social skills and it helps them earn better wages. Wahba (2011) observed that labor migrants are offered lower wages in their initial stages and gradually the wages are increased (Wahba, 2014). This shows that the employers undermine the human capital obtained in the home country. With time, migrants bargain with their employers for better wages, benefits, and improved working conditions after acquiring the expertise

(Wahba, 2015). Also, exposure to different cultures, social norms, and political ideologies helped expand the knowledge of the migrants.

Contradicting the above, a study conducted in Nepal by World Bank (2013) explained that education and skills acquired in the home country do not necessarily help migrant workers secure good jobs overseas as the migrants with high school degrees were found to be working as semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Skilled Nepali migrants in GCC and Malaysia are often undermined as low-skilled workers and are offered low wages. Nevertheless, after a cycle of migration, they are considered as skilled and semi-skilled workers depending on their level of education (general and technical) and work experience gained abroad helps them bargain for better wages and respectable work.

Dustmann and Glitz (2011) reflect that from a sociological perspective, labor migration leads to brain drain since it loses capable youth force and may not be able to use their capacities when the nation requires. However, the Migration Policy Institute points out that international migration is increasingly perceived as brain circulation rather than brain drain for the home country or brain gain for the host country (World Bank, 2013). What needs to be considered is, host countries along with the skilled workers also receive low-skilled or unskilled workers to do the menial jobs. Employers discourage investment in skilling the unskilled workers as it incurs investment. Instead, the migrants are expected to learn the skill at their workplace from their peers and supervisors to perform efficiently to secure wages.

Although learning at the workplace is the most relevant knowledge gain, most of the time it is not recognized as a human capital gain because economists rely on institute-based learning, cost, and general education more than the actual process of learning and skill use (Iskander & Lowe, 2010). Wassink and Hagan (2017) argue that rather than considering institution-based learning and formal education as human capital gain, on-the-job learning is more interactive exchanging knowledge, experiences and involves extensive observation.

Thus, human capital gain during labor migration needs to be valued more as it is directly associated with the labor market needs. But most of the time, skills brought by labor migrants are not recognized by both countries undermining their expertise in the absence of formal certification.

## **Return Migration and Reintegration**

Return migration has been an integral part of the labor migration process (Maya, 2017; Zhao, 2002). Dustmann and Weiss (2007) describe return migration as a situation where the migrants return to their home countries, by their own will after a significant period abroad. Return migration refers to the labor migrants who go abroad for some sort of employment and return home when their contract expires or their economic needs are fulfilled after a specific period. The acquisition of advanced skills and knowledge makes the migrant workers expect better opportunities when they return home.

Hence, with return migration also comes the challenge of successful reintegration of the returnees. Gill (2005) mentions the need for reintegrating returnees for the home country's stable growth and development. Wickramasekara (2019) explains that successful reintegration of returnees into their families and communities is important to retain the skilful youth. Home countries often overlook the

issues of the returning populations.

In Zimbabwe, return migration provides several advantages like the transfer of new skills learned by returnees to other workers in the home country (Riley, 2015). The returnees drive innovation and entrepreneurship as they are more serious and are keen to start innovative work. However, in Nepal, returnees were largely interested in finding a job rather than becoming entrepreneurs, with entrepreneurship seen as a necessity than an opportunity to make use of skills acquired overseas (World Bank Group, 2013).

Successful reintegration of returnees into the home labor market is difficult. Compared to female workers, male workers found it relatively easy to utilize the resources and skills acquired in the host country, adjust to life with their families and reintegrate effectively into the homeland (Segal, 2016; Segal & Heck, 2012).

Having been away from the home country for a long time, the returnees face several barriers in reintegrating with their family and friends. The ILO (2018) listed several challenges for reintegration such as lack of proper laws, policies, and institutions regarding return and reintegration, lack of coordination among the ministries and key stakeholders, inadequate and ineffective employment services, lack of information on available services and programs, absence of provisions for skills certification and skills recognition, stigmatization, resource constraint, and stagnant home economic situations.

Thus, the reintegration of returnees poses challenges as labor migration. Returnees' dreams are often shattered when they discover the difficulties to find work and integrate into their society. Thus, proper plans, policies, and implementation strategies are needed to successfully reintegrate the returnees and retain the skilled youth for the development of the nation.

## **Reintegration Policies and Practices**

Policies for successful reintegration is important due to the varied need of the returnee labor migrants. Different international conventions, regional frameworks, and international forums tried to address these needs at different levels.

### **International Policies**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for “underlying the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship and recall that States must ensure that their returning nationals are duly received” (United Nations, 2015, p. 8; Wickaramasekara, 2019).

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers (ICRMW) and Members of Their Families calls in Article 67(2) for inter-state cooperation as a means of promoting adequate economic conditions for resettlement and facilitating their durable social and cultural reintegration in the State of origin (Wickaramasekara, 2019). Objective 21 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration encourages States to “cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration” (UN General Assembly, 2018 p. 6).

ILO Migration for Employment Recommendation (Revised), 1949 (No. 86) Section VII states that when migrants for employment or their family members who have retained the nationality of their State of origin return there, that country should admit such persons to the benefit of any measures in force for the granting of poor relief and unemployment relief, and for promoting the re-employment of the unemployed by exempting them from the obligation to comply with any condition as to previous residence or employment in the country or place.

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families Article 67 mentions that "States parties concerned shall co-operate as appropriate in the adoption of measures regarding the orderly return of migrant workers and members of their families to the State of origin when they decide to return or their authorization of residence or employment expires or when they are in the State of employment in an irregular situation. Concerning migrant workers and members of their families in a regular situation, States Parties concerned shall cooperate as appropriate, on terms agreed upon by those States, to promote adequate economic conditions for their resettlement and to facilitating their durable social and cultural reintegration in the State of origin" (Wickaramasekara, 2019, p.36).

ILO Multilateral Framework on labor Migration (ILO, 2005), Principle 12 mentions that an orderly and equitable process of labor migration should be promoted in both origin and destination countries to guide male and female migrant workers through all stages of migration, in particular, planning and preparing for labor migration, transit, arrival and reception, return, and reintegration; guideline 12.2. indicates wherever possible facilitate migrant workers' return by providing information, training, and assistance before their departure and on arrival in their home country concerning the return process, the journey, and reintegration.

Hence, we conclude that at the international level, migration and reintegration policies have been developed. Though countries have agreed to follow and include strategies, it is not effectively implemented, especially in South Asian countries due to stringent policies. Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries are implementing the reintegration policies effectively by addressing the returnees' needs and barriers properly.

## **Policies and Practices in Nepal**

The Constitution of Nepal promotes the use of economic capital, skills, technologies, and experiences received from foreign employment to be used in the productive sectors. Constitutional mandate related to labor and employment has been given to all three tiers of the government. Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Security is responsible for migration and reintegration programs. Other ministries also hold responsibilities in the reintegration of the returnees in some way or the other. Fifteenth National Plan (2076/77-2080/81) has also clearly specified the skills recognition of the returnees and using the acquired skills and knowledge in enterprise development.

Foreign Employment Policy, Section 9.3.3 addresses the reintegration of the migrant workers in eight key areas: 1. Recognition of returnees as development partners; 2. Socio-economic reintegration package; 3. Development of a database of returnees; 4. Establish psychosocial counselling and rehabilitation centers; 5. Promotion of training institutes for optimization and skill recognition; 6.

Promotion of public-private partnership for economic development; 7. Remittance transfer through formal channels; 8. Operation of family support system. Other Policies, Acts, and Regulations also mention the reintegration of the returnees.

Though reintegration of the returnees is included in different acts and policies in the context of Nepal, reintegration guidelines, strategies and programs are yet to be developed. In the absence of a reintegration guideline, addressing the needs of the returnees is difficult. Also, the lack of returnees' data has created a gap in making strategic decisions. It was observed most recently when an overwhelming number of returnees re-migrated to India despite a high prevalence of the COVID-19 infection there when they could not find work for months in Nepal forcing them to re-migrate. No effective measures of the GoN were seen to support the returnees in the reintegration process.

## **Theoretical Background**

This study considered human capital in context to labor migration theories in the theoretical background. The term human capital was first coined by Theodore W. Schultz in the 1960s. In 1981 he redefined human capital as ‘...all human abilities to be either innate or acquired; Attributes ... which are valuable and can be augmented by appropriate investment will be human capital’ (Wall, 2017; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2017; Schultz 1981). Human capital is the strong relationship between early ability and skills acquired through formal education or training on the job (Blundell et al., 1999; Fleischhauer, 2007).

Hagan and Wassink (2016) mentioned that the transfer of human capital, in terms of social and technological skills gained at work, forms the career pathway of returnees. Thus, different types of human capital like knowledge, skills, and attributes are acquired in different situations while working abroad. The returnees transferring these capitals to the home country is a benefit for the nation. Numerous theories on labor migration consider human capital gain as one of the important aspects. This study has considered Cassarino's classification of migration theories in terms of human capital.

Cassarino (2004) theorized human capital brought by the returnees with labor migration perspectives. The author described that from the neoclassical economics perspective the skills acquired abroad do not match the local need, and thus cannot be transferred to the home countries; structuralism perspective sees human capital as the skills acquired abroad could not be used due to lack of structural limitations such as the various political, economic, social and cultural factors limiting individual decision-making abilities that are inherent in the countries of origin and do not change the social status of the returnees. Consequently, human capital brought by the returnees can be wasted due to different factors according to both neoclassical economic and structural theories.

Alternatively, Cassarino (2004) further explained that new economics of labor migration considers the human capital brought by the returnees as an acquisition of skills that varies with the prospect of return; transnationalism theories consider human capital gain as skills and education acquired abroad helps in upward mobility in the career ladder; cross-border social network theory sees it as skill attained abroad, as well as knowledge, experiences, and values that are contributory factors for securing successful return. Labor migration theories also consider the human capital acquired by the labor migrants in the host country as vital for the socio-economic development of the home country.

However, the relevance of the acquired human capital in the home country determines the returnee's decision to whether to stay back or to remigrate.

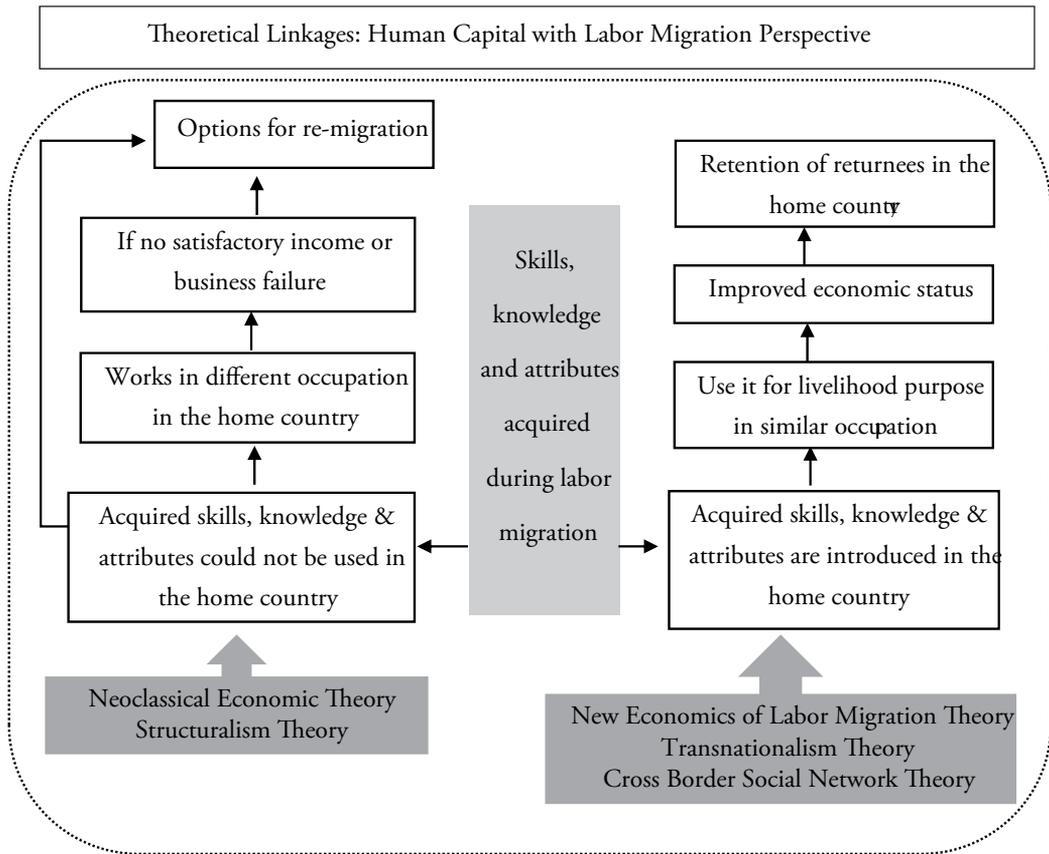


Fig 1 : Theoretical Linkages

Source: Cassarino, 2004; De Haas, 2007; Sjaastad, 1962

The theoretical linkages figure above shows that labor migrants bring home human capital in the form of skills, knowledge, and attributes that they acquired during their employment in the host country. The returnees can use the acquired human capital in the domestic labor market. With enhanced skills and knowledge, they can introduce new technologies, methods, and new skills leading to a high level of earnings to motivate them to stay back in the home country. On the other hand, many returnees cannot utilize their skills in their home country due to various reasons. In such cases, they go to occupations that they do not have the expertise or opt to re-migrate.

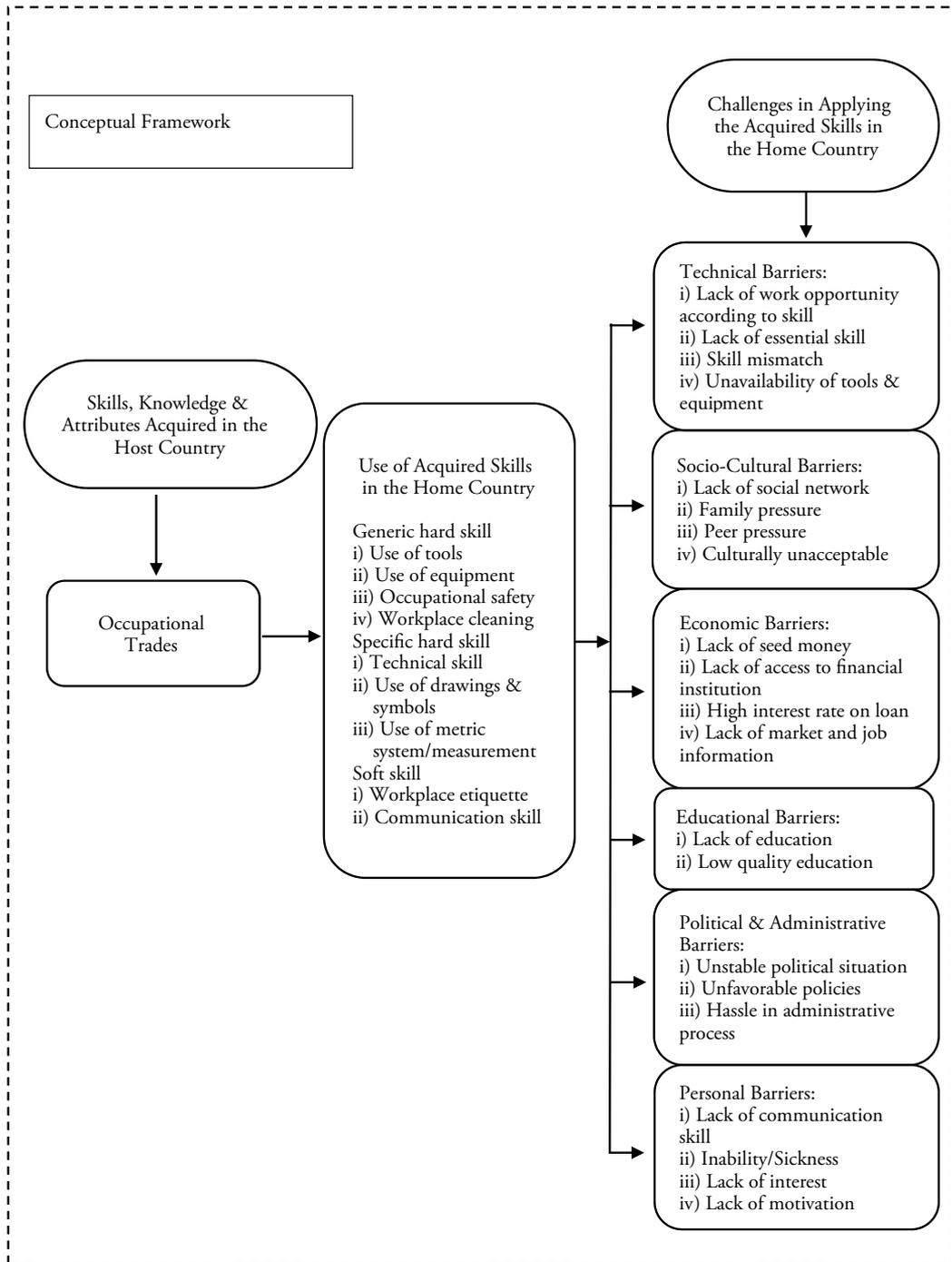
### Conceptual Framework

Labor migration is associated with poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunity in the home country. Labor migrants after a few cycles of migration prefer to stay in the home country and establish their enterprise by using their acquired skills, knowledge, and attributes. The skills acquired in the host country largely depend on their education and skills they have before the migration. The more

educated and skilled the migrant workers are, the more chances they have to be successful in the work front abroad. Some authors observed that the low-skilled migrants remit more skill and economic capital due to obligations at home. However, returnees often find reintegration into the home country challenging due to higher expectations from their government, community, and family.

Considering all these aspects and the theoretical framework, the acquired skills are considered human capital gain and the transfer of skills in the home country depends on the individual's capacity. Also, based on the different reviews on the theme, history, theories, and policies, the researcher developed a conceptual framework. This framework guided the researcher and provided a road map for the whole research process. It supported the researcher to conceptualize and track the overall study process in a correct way. Moreover, this frame guided the researcher to be consistent with the concept throughout the study.

In the study, the use of acquired skills was considered as a dependent variable. Various factors such as technical, economic, socio-cultural, educational, political, and personal barriers that influence the returnees in using their acquired skill and knowledge at work were considered as independent variables. The extent of the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable was tested. The hypothesis was developed and tested against the research questions.



*Fig 2 : Conceptual Framework*

In the conceptual framework above, the boxes on the left show the skills, knowledge, and attributes acquired in the host country in different occupations. The skills may have been acquired through

formal training or informally at the work setting. Box in the middle shows the use of acquired hard and soft skills at work in Nepal by those working in a similar occupation as abroad. The boxes on the right explain different barriers that have affected the skills use when they tried to use the acquired skills. These barriers were further segregated into sub-barriers to understand precisely the key reasons that affected the respondents while trying to use the acquired skills. Thus, this framework helped the researcher to conceptualize and guide the research process in a methodological way.

## **Chapter Reflection**

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed the relevant literature on labor migration, skills gained in the host country, the use of acquired skills in the home country, and the factors that affected the use of skills. The practices of returnee labor migrants in different countries, theoretical aspects, and the reintegrating policies were reviewed.

Literature shows that labor migrants acquire new skills, knowledge, and attributes when they go to a new destination which is considered as a human capital gain. They are capable of transferring the acquired skills in the home country to set up their own business for a better living. But often the returnees experience skills mismatch between the labor market demand in the home country and the skills they acquired abroad. This forces them to either work in different occupations or remigrates in the absence of job opportunities in a similar occupation.

Different migration theories such as cross-border social network theories show that acquired skills can be transferred to the home country when they return. At the same time, structuralism theories discuss skills acquired in one country that may not be suitable in other countries. They face numerous barriers that prevent them from initiating income-generating activities that lead to circular migration or remigration. Policy review of different countries shows the importance of adopting appropriate reintegration policies to stop remigration. Although Nepal's Foreign Employment Policy mentions the importance of reintegration of the returnees, the actual implementation is yet to be started. Thus, there is a gap between the policies and the implementation of the reintegration process.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research methodology applied to address the research problems. The content includes the research paradigms philosophical views, research design, the field of the study, population and sample determination procedure, data collection techniques, data analysis and interpretation, reliability, validity as well as ethical considerations.

#### **Research Paradigm: Post Positivism**

The research paradigm is a key principle and hypothetical structure that guides one's understanding of the reality of the world and learning it (Rehman & Alharthi 2016). This study follows a post-positivist paradigm that assumes the researcher is independent of the research and accepts that social reality is measurable and knowable although it is difficult to assess. It advocates the objective reality by recognizing the possible effects of biases generated from prior knowledge and values; and believes in the idea of the single truth, and emphasizes the importance of multiple measures, observations, and errors (Creswell, 2012).

It is guided by a theoretical framework, beliefs, and underlying assumptions about the phenomena of skills brought home by the labor migrants and its effective use for the livelihood purpose to successfully reintegrate the returnees in the home country. The researcher relied on primary data collection that was validated with different literature and inferential statistics. The post positivists accept that one's experiences, knowledge, ethics, and existing theories of different scholars can influence what is observed (Creswell, 2012).

The researcher believed that the returnee migrant workers use the acquired skills in Nepal although different variables affect the way these skills are used and we considered them to be barriers based on the subjective perceptions of individuals. For exploring reality, the researcher took the position that the knowledge exists and can be measured objectively (Pandit, 2017; Creswell, 2012). Following a quantitative research method, this research explores the objective knowledge about the uses of acquired skills and barriers while using them in the local context. To quantify the collected data, the researcher used the survey method. The researcher identified and assessed different causes to get the research outcome.

The migrant returnees were the survey respondents and the use of the acquired knowledge and skills were tangible realities in the domestic market. The evidence of the use of skills was an objective reality that the respondents validated as truth. In this research, all the returnees were supposed to be working in the same occupation either wage or self-employment. However, those working in other occupations and those searching for work were also considered in a few questions to understand their perspectives. Though the use of skills largely depended on the availability of the job in their hometown, various other factors influenced the use of skills that were tested with gender and nature of employment perspective.

## **Research Design: Quantitative**

The purpose of the study was to analyze the extent of the use of skills and examine the barriers that affect the use of skills in the local context. A survey research design procedure was used while describing trends of the use of the acquired skills by the returnee workers. The survey method guided the researcher to prepare a detailed account of the rationale (Pandit, 2017; Flick, 2011). It helped to question and get responses from the respondents. The researcher envisioned to describe aspects of the extent of the use of the acquired skills and the barriers measured in the sample returnees and the hypotheses were tested about the nature of the relationship.

The study also made use of some open-ended questions to collect information relevant to certain research questions. A survey questionnaire was designed to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and characteristics in the sample population and later administered to the larger population (Creswell, 2009).

## **Methods of Data Collection**

The data collection method is important in research as it guides to achieve the research question. Creswell (2012) mentions the requirement of the set of questionnaires to address all the research questions that contained the closed-ended and open-ended questions to obtain measurable data. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed with 80% close-ended questions that would cover the quantitative data and 20% open-ended questions to understand and incorporate the views of the respondents. The researcher designed a sample survey method through a field visit to collect the data from a large group comprising the returnee migrants who returned before October 2019. The researcher also planned for a focus group discussion to verify the quantitative data.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a nationwide lockdown, forcing the researcher to change the methodology to phone surveys. Through an organization Rooster Logic Pvt. Ltd., seven enumerators with prior experience in data collection were hired to fulfil the requirement of collecting data from 400 returnees. The researcher properly oriented the enumerators with three days of mock interview practice via virtual meetings to prepare them with possible adversities.

## **Study Area**

The study was conducted with the returnees in ten districts keeping in mind the diversity of migration. Three high migrating districts in the Terai (Dhanusha, Mahottari, and Sunsari), three hill districts (Khotang, Dhading, and Ramechhap), three high female migrating districts (Sindhupalchowk, Nuwakot, and Jhapa), and Kathmandu were selected. Kathmandu has migrants coming from all over Nepal since it has the country's only international airport and is conducive to start an enterprise from their earnings abroad. The returnee migrants from these districts represented the migrant workers from the Hill, Terai, both male and female, and different caste groups, representing a population with diverse perspectives.

## **Study Population**

According to Creswell (2012), a population was considered a homogeneous group having one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher. The study population here incorporated

all the labor migrants who received labor permits. In the absence of the actual data of the returnees in Nepal, the researcher considered the population who acquired labor permits to work abroad between 1994/95 to 2016/17, with an assumption that they returned home before October 2019 after the expiry of their labor permits. However, some of those who received labor permits did not go abroad, while some did not return, and some re-migrated.

The contact list of the returnee labor migrants was received from the Foreign Employment Board (FEB), a government body established under the chairmanship of MoLESS for the welfare of the migrant workers.

### **Sampling Technique: Random Sampling**

The researcher used a random sampling method from the returnee data received from the FEB. The researcher divided the population based on gender, and from the Hills, and Terai and then used random sampling from each subgroup of the population (Creswell, 2012). According to national data, out of the total migrating population, only about 5% were females. The researcher took 30% female and 70% male in her sample based on the number of male and female returnee data received from the FEB. Taking a fair percentage of females helped to analyze the perspective of female returnees towards the use of skills and employment opportunities.

The sample number was determined by applying the sample size determination formula of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The total population that took labor permits from 1994/95 to 2016/17 was 4,718,287 (MoLESS, 2020). From the theoretical population of 4,718,287, the sample population generated using the population determining the formula of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) is 384. Thus, 400 samples were selected for collecting the primary data, generated with a 95% confidence level.

Krejcie and Morgan determination formula:

$$s = \frac{\chi^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2 (N-1) + \chi^2 P(1-P)}$$

Where,

s = required sample size

$\chi^2$  = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841)

N = the population size

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size)

d = degree of accuracy expressed as a population (.05)

### **Study Instruments: Questionnaire**

In this study, the researcher applied the survey questionnaires as a technique and a questionnaire sheet as the tools of data collection. The questionnaires comprised 80% close-ended questions for quantitative data collection and 20% open-ended questions. Based on the literature review, relevant theories, and consultation with experts, the researcher prepared the structured questionnaire to meet the purpose of the study and for addressing the research questions. Most of the questionnaire has been designed with a five-point Likert Scale (Not useful at all – 1; Not useful – 2; Neutral – 3; Useful – 4; Very Useful – 5) to seek the extent of the use of the skills, and the extent of the barriers that prevented

the returnees from using their skills. The data obtained from the respondents were managed according to the degree of agreement with the given statements.

The researcher considered major aspects like the research purpose, research questions, level of understanding of the returnee migrants, data collection procedures, and time, and language while formulating the questionnaire. After preparing the draft, the questionnaire was piloted. Few revisions were made to the questionnaire and some scales were added based on the feedback from the pilot study. The final draft of the questionnaire was prepared after several consultations.

## **Statistical Tools**

The researcher collected data in "REMO" software that converted the data into a statistical tool Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS version 25) automatically. The researcher analyzed the collected data in SPSS, ensured all the fields were filled up and cleaned the data carefully. Since the researcher opted for the quantitative design, the data analysis was expected to give meaning to the derived statistics through reasoning. The SPSS software was useful in managing and statistical interpretation of the data.

Likert scale was generated on each item comprising the preference rating on each question related to the use of the acquired skills and barriers faced while using them in the local contexts. The ordinal scale measured the levels of agreement or disagreement with the stated questions with the value of mean scores, Standard Deviation, and Cross Tabulations were also applied in the responses.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize the sample data in a meaningful way, but it does not allow to make conclusions beyond the data. Thus, the inferential statistic was used to generalize the findings to the larger population. Two sample T-tests were used to determine if the difference between the means is statistically significant.

## **Pilot Study**

The pilot study was important to understand the usability of the instrument and to know the possible obstacles while interviewing the respondents. It helped to improvise the questionnaire by removing the redundant questions and adding the relevant ones to get the required information easily. The researcher, upon consulting with the thesis supervisor, collected the data through the phone survey with the returnees. Contacting an equal number of returnees in all the ten identified districts was not possible due to the limited data of the returnees.

The pilot testing started on April 20, 2020, with a 40 sample size. After calling five returnees it was realized that the 5 "Likelihood" Likert-scale (not useful, less useful, moderately useful, useful, very useful) used in question no 28.2 was not relevant as it was found that not all the migrants came home with skills and not all the skills could be applied. Many went as laborers who just did load and unload work and did not attain any skills overseas. Therefore, the scale needed to be changed to a five "Agreement" Likert scale with neutral in the middle - Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree. This helped the respondents to select the neutral if the question was not relevant.

After revising the Likert scale in question 28.2, a further test was conducted. The pilot test was

completed on May 16, 2020. The researcher experienced that there was a need to formulate the questionnaire to address the answers of the respondents. It was also essential to add an option in question 26 - unemployed and not looking for work because some of the returnee respondents were neither employed nor searching for work and thus could not provide the answers related to the skills. Asking about the skills-related question to them was not useful as they were not working in Nepal.

In the case of the returnees who were employed in other occupations and unemployed but were looking for work, they were unable to answer the questions in no. 28.2 group as they did not use the acquired skills. Some redundant questions were improved in Questions 28.2 and 28.3. The researcher also found that 12 respondents worked as laborers and did not bring home technical skills that they addressed neutral, largely understood as not applicable.

When asking the qualitative question 34, opinion on the retaining the returnee migrant workers in Nepal, 21 respondents explained the new dimension "lack of information on the job market, potential business areas, and resources available at the local level" that needed to address for retention. Therefore, in section 28.3.3, the researcher included one more dimension in the economic barriers. The data collection software "REMO", which automatically converted the entered data into SPSS was also prepared and piloted.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The researcher considered reliability and validity during the study. While considering the reliability of this quantitative research, internal consistency in the questionnaires was considered. The researcher conducted pilot testing with a similar target group to check the internal consistency and dependability of the questionnaires.

The Cronbach alpha was used as it provided a coefficient of inter-item correlations that measured the internal consistency among the items (Cohen, 2007). The researcher calculated the  $\alpha$  value from 10% of the samples that showed 0.776 for internal consistency, implying the meaning that the developed tools were consistent and acceptable. The value of Cronbach alpha ranging from 0.70 to 0.79 signifies the questionnaire is statistically supposed to be reliable following rules of thumb: " $\alpha > .9$  – Excellent,  $\alpha > .8$  – Good,  $\alpha > .7$  – Acceptable,  $\alpha > .6$  – Questionable,  $\alpha > .5$  – Poor, and  $\alpha < .5$  – Unacceptable" (George & Mallery, 2003). When the alpha value has weaker internal consistency or less than 0.7, then the tools need revision before collecting final data.

The researcher maintained validity through a careful sampling process, applying appropriate tools and techniques according to research questions for data collection and appropriate statistical analysis of the collected data (Cohen, 2007). Content validity was maintained by covering all the aspects that needs to be measured; Construct validity was ensured by validating its findings with the existing theories and knowledge; Criterion validity was ensured with other valid measures of the same concept (Creswell, 2012).

### **Data Collection Procedure**

For the data collection, seven enumerators were oriented through a virtual meeting on the questionnaire and the essence of data collection. Enumerators were made to practice the interview

procedure maintaining ethical considerations and filling out online and offline forms. When actual data collection started, a weekly meeting was held with the enumerators to discuss the difficulties they faced during data collection. Regular meetings helped the researcher to understand the problems of the returnees additionally. The data collection was carried in June and July 2020.

The collected information included several aspects like demographic composition, skills training received in the home country, remittance use, migration to the city in the home country, occupational sectors, current employment status, acquired skill at the host countries, the extent of the use of acquired skills, and the barriers that affected the efficient use of skills.

The total number of returnees for some variables was fewer than the total sample size. For example, the extent of the use of hard skills was answered by 139 respondents who were working in the same occupation out of a total population of 400. The extent of the use of the soft skills and questions related to barriers was asked for 295 respondents that included those working in the same occupation (N=139), working in different occupations (N=115), and unemployed but searching for work (N=31). Almost 105 respondents were unemployed and not interested in working and these were not included because they were not relevant for our purpose. The researcher received the final data in SPSS software within the stipulated time.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The data was collected from the selected representative sample and analyzed with the support of the SPSS software. The ordinal scale measured the levels of agreement or disagreement with the stated questions. It assumed that the strength of preference or experience of the returnee migrants could be measured from the continuum of strongly agree to strongly disagree. Open-ended questions were quantified for the analysis. This showed that preferences and attitudes can be measured.

The descriptive statistics encompassing the mean scores, standard deviation, cross-tabulation, and frequency distribution of each response were applied for data analysis. The mean value generated the average value of the responses. For analyzing the mean value, Best and Kahn's (2006) values were followed. It rated the scores Low: 1-2.33; Moderate: 2.34-3.67; High: 3.68-5.00. Standard deviation measured dispersion in the responses. A value closer to the mean denoted similarity of the responses of the sample population and vice-versa. Cross tabulation analyzed the relationship between different variables. It also showed how correlations vary from one variable to another.

To generalize the findings of the sample in the total population, inferential statistics were applied. Two sample T-tests were used to analyze the significant mean difference between two groups in the population. Hence, the findings of this research can be generalized to the returnee population who returned home with improved skills after working abroad.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Before starting the interview, privacy was ensured, and consent was taken to use the data received from them for the research. Along with that, reflecting upon the ideas of Kvale (1996), the researcher was guided mainly by two ethical aspects: (i) responsibility to commit the researcher's academic

as well as professional career so that her study could contribute to a body of knowledge and, (ii) independence of research that it was conducted more autonomously to ensure the quality of the study (Pandit, 2017). The researcher tried to acknowledge all kinds of support received from the experts and supervisors. One of the issues in the survey questions is that, because of its content, some participants might take offence. Others may show a lack of trust in the provision of correct data.

### **Chapter Reflection**

The researcher adopted a quantitative survey method with a study population of 4,718,287. The sampling size was 400 with a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. A set of semi-structured questionnaires was prepared to address the research questions. A random sampling technique was used to select the returnees from the data received. Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination formula was used. The pilot study was conducted with 40 participants with a Cronbach alfa value of 0.776 for the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to describe the sample and then to generalize the total population. A five-point Likert Scale was applied to measure the extent of acquired skill use and the barriers to using the skills. REMO and SPSS tool was used for the data collection and data analysis. Best and Kahn's (2006) mean values were followed. Ethical considerations were followed during the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter includes the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the collected data. The data was collected to justify the following research questions:

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

The primary data was analyzed and interpreted under four different sections:

- i. Demographic information
- ii. Pre-migration and foreign employment information
- iii. The extent of the use of the acquired skill by the returnees in Nepal
- iv. Factors affecting the returnees to use their acquired skill in Nepal

To understand the transition of acquired skills transfer, it is important to examine the migration process, beginning from the skill acquired before migration, skills acquired during foreign employment, and the use of acquired skill in wage and self-employment after they return home from foreign employment.

Hagan and Wassink (2016) found skills transfer to be gendered, reflecting the occupational concentrations of males and females in the United States. Thus, the researcher has taken gender as an independent variable considering the difference in the use of skills and difficulties they faced in their workplace. With regards to the use of skills-related questions, an in-depth analysis was made with the returnee respondents employed in the same occupation (both wage and self-employed) to understand the use of the skills they acquired while using it at work and business in Nepal.

#### **Demographic Information of Returnees**

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

#### **Age, Gender, and Ethnicity of the Respondents**

The data with their corresponding percentage about the age group, ethnicity, and gender were analyzed. The data represents 30% (n=119) female and 70% (n=281) male. According to the Nepal migration status report 2020, female migration accounts for a little over 5%. To make the data more

representative and the findings to be more concrete in terms of gender, the researcher took 30% female returnee respondents in proportion to the returnee data received from the FEB.

The age of the returnees shows the migration trend during the economically productive age. 77% (n=308) of the respondents were from the age group of 25 to 39 which shows that most of the labor migrants opt for foreign employment when they were young considering 2-3 cycles of migration. The age group of 20-24 were 4% (n=14) respondents and 20% (n=78) were over 40 years. The mean age of the male was 34 years and the female was 30. The migration of youth during their productive age denotes the inability of the government to generate adequate employment triggering a high unemployment rate.

In total, 66% (n=264) of the respondents were Janajatis or ethnic groups followed by 28% (n=113) Brahmin/Chettris and only 6% (n=23) were Dalits. About 63% (n=176) of males were the Janajatis; 32% (n=90) were from Brahmin/Chettri and 5% were Dalits (n=15). Regarding females, 74% (n=88) of them were Janajatis; 19% (n=23) were Brahmin/Chettris and 7% (n=8) from Dalits. This shows that high labor migration was prevalent in the Janajati communities in both males and females followed by Brahmin/Chettris and Dalits. The Janajati females have more freedom and authority in the family compared to other caste groups as Janajati males migrated to India to join the British army for centuries, leaving women behind to lead the household (Bhadra, 2007).

Out of total respondents, 26% (n=104) returned a year back; 34% (n=136) returned two years back and 31% (n=124) returned three years back. 9% (n=36) of respondents returned eight months to 11 months back. The mean return duration of the respondents was 2.1 years.

## Level of General Education Received

*Table 1 : Respondents' Gender & General Education*

General Education	Gender	Total	Percent	Comparison among population
Illiterate	Men	3	1%	1%
	Women	17	4%	14%
	Total	20	5%	
Basic Education (1-8 grade)	Men	71	18%	25%
	Women	30	7%	25%
	Total	101	25%	
Higher School (9-12 grade)	Men	177	44%	63%
	Women	58	15%	49%
	Total	235	59%	

General Education	Gender	Total	Percent	Comparison among population
Bachelors	Men	30	7%	11%
	Women	14	4%	12%
	Total	44	11%	

Table 1 depicts that a total of 5% (n=20) respondents were illiterate, 25% (n=101) of them had basic education, the majority of the respondents 59% (n=235) were educated up to Higher Secondary and only 11% (n=44) of the respondents were educated up to Bachelor's level and above. Among the female respondents, 14% (n=17) of them were illiterate; 25% (n=30) had basic education; 49% (n=58) had higher secondary; 12% (n=14) of them were educated up to Bachelor level and above. The high migration of illiterate women explains the risk of exploitation in the host country as many are lured to go as domestic workers. Among the male respondents, 1% (n=3) of them were illiterate; 25% (n=71) had basic education; 63% (n=177) had higher secondary; 11% (n=30) of them were educated up to Bachelor level and above. Among the males, 99% of respondents were literate, but the majority of them only had up to a high school level education.

The data further reveals that 89% (n=356) of the respondents opted for foreign employment when they were unable to study beyond grade 10 due to lack of studying environment in the villages, poverty forcing them to earn rather than study, and/or family pressure to join the workforce, all of which discouraged them from continuing their education further.

### Level of Technical Education Received

Table 2 : Respondents' Gender & Technical Education

Technical Education	Gender		Total	Percentage
	Male	Female		
Diploma	0	1	1	.25%
NSTB Level 1	4	2	6	1.50%
Short courses without national certification (NSTB)	94 (34%)	21 (18%)	115	29%
Did not take any training	183 (65%)	95 (80%)	278	69%
Total	281	119	400	100%

Table 2 explains that 69% (n=278) of the respondents did not take any kind of training before going abroad. Of the respondents, 28% (n=115) took short courses without any national certification and only 1.75% (n=7) had received formal vocational education. This shows the lack of interest in learning skills among the youth, lack of awareness on the importance of having skills before migration, and lack of access to information on the availability of the skills training. Similarly, 80% (n=95) females

did not participate in any skill training compared to 65% (n=183) males.

The respondents who took short courses, the most common were in driving 36% (n=41) followed by hospitality 25% (n=29), security guard 10% (n=12), electrical 9.5% (n=11) and mechanical sectors were analyzed. The data explains that female respondents lacked both general and technical education opportunities compared to males increasing their vulnerability at work abroad.

Considering 89% of returnees had education below the high-school level and 70% did not have any training, the vulnerability, and likelihood of the Nepali workers landing in foreign employment as laborers become apparent. The research data also complement the DoFE 2018/19 data describing 64% of migrant workers went as unskilled laborers. Unskilled, or low-skilled workers are often paid low wages, given precarious tasks, and exploited by their employers (MoLE, 2018).

### **Internal Migration Status of Families**

The study found 27% (n=107) of the respondents' families migrated to the cities after they started sending remittances. The families of the migrants shifted to urban centers for better education of their children and livelihood opportunities.

### **Use of Remittance in Enterprise Development by the Families**

It was found that 88% (n=352) of families spent the remittance sent by the respondents on consumption, education, buying property, and paying off the family debt. Only 12% (n=48) of respondents' families invested the money received through remittances sent on setting up enterprises like agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry farming, hotel business, and retail shop. The data indicated that familial awareness of using remittance for productive work is low indicating that they do not have any long-term vision on how to utilize the money and are only focused on daily living.

### **Pre-migration and Foreign Employment Information**

In the second section, returnees' migration status, number of times migrated, countries of migration, occupations they have been employed in the destination, the use of the skills learned in the training and acquired at work in the home country before migration were analyzed.

### **Labour Migration Destination**

The respondents were returnees from United Arab Emirates (22%, n=89), followed by Malaysia (21%, n=84), Qatar (20%, n=80), Saudi Arabia (16%, n=66) and Kuwait (5.5%, n=22) the major labor migration destinations. Oil-rich countries in the GCC attracted more workers from poor countries to carry out development works. Malaysia is also a preferred destination for Nepali migrants due to favourable weather conditions. It has many manufacturing and agricultural industries which require labor in large numbers.

### **Years Spent in Foreign Employment**

The mean duration that respondents spent abroad is 4.6 years, with the minimum time spent by the respondents in foreign employment being eight months and the maximum being 18 years with

a standard deviation of 3.1. This shows that the data is widely dispersed and there are outliers or extreme differences. Of the respondents, 74% (n=296) of the migrants spent between 2-7 years abroad indicating 1-3 cycles of migration to earn enough to do some business when they returned home.

The study presents that 18% (n=72) of the respondents spent between 8 to 18 years abroad for work. It was found that the respondents stayed in Nepal until they spent all their savings, after that, they opted for foreign employment again. The respondents were less likely to remigrate if their family set up a business and that earned a good amount of money.

### **Use of Skill Training Received in Nepal at Work Abroad**

It has been reiterated by many researchers that the skills and knowledge acquired before migration enable migrants' acquisition and transfer of new skills while working abroad. The respondents felt the skill training they received before going to foreign employment was moderately helpful (Mean = 3.25) at work abroad. A standard deviation of 0.93 shows the similarity in the answers of the respondents.

For 26% (n=105) of the respondents, the training did not help them to work abroad. Of the 400 respondents, 27% (n=110) were neutral in having received training in unrelated skills, and 46% (n=182) said the skills acquired in Nepal were helpful at work abroad. Out of the 46%, only 8% (n=30) said the training they received was very helpful and 38% (n=152) said it was moderately helpful. The data shows that majority of the respondents who received training in the related occupation were not relevant at work in the destination due to skill mismatch. Also, the respondents did not get the job that required similar skills.

### **Use of Work Experience Gained in Nepal at Work Abroad**

The experience that the respondents gained in Nepal was moderately helpful (Mean = 3.4) at the work in a destination but the high standard deviation at 1.03 shows that there were extreme opinions amongst the respondents regarding the helpfulness of the work experience gained. 25% (n=100) respondents felt the skills were not useful, but 43% (n=172) found the work experience more beneficial, and 15% (n=60) said it was very helpful.

The high relevancy of the work experience maybe because it incorporates both the soft skills and technical skills relevant to the actual world of work. This may have helped the migrants to adjust to working abroad and brought quality performance. The data also reveals the employers' preferences for experienced workers over trained workers without work experience since what is taught in the institute is different from the actual skills required at work. Besides, those who found it not useful maybe because the work experience they had in Nepal did not match the work they performed abroad.

### **Occupational Engagement Abroad**

The female respondents were mostly engaged as beauticians, cleaners, domestic workers, hospitality, garment, manufacturing, and service industry. Male respondents worked in construction sites, driving, hospitality, manufacturing, mechanical, security, labor, and service sectors abroad.

## Skill Acquisition at Work Abroad

It was observed that 62% (n=249) of the respondents did not receive any kind of training and orientation before they began their work, but that they learned gradually by observing how their peers work and learning by doing. About 17% (n=67) said they did not receive any formal training but were guided by their supervisors. Their coworkers guided the 4% (n=15) of respondents without any formal training. Only 17% (n=69) received training and of which 10% (n=40) received work-related technical training and 7% (n=29) received only occupational health and safety and orientation at work.

This shows that the majority of the migrants learned skills informally. The employers were not keen to provide training on the skills they would be performing. The vulnerability of the migrants increases when they are neither well educated nor received proper skill training both in the home country and at work abroad. A majority of respondents accounting for 70% reported causes of injury and disability and 10% of death of Nepali workers in foreign employment from 2008 to 2016 contributed to workplace accidents (MoLE, 2018).

## Preparation of Work Plan before Returning Home

*Table 3 : Work Plans Made Abroad and Employment Start after Return*

Scale	Made Plans Abroad	Started Working			Total Working
	Total Respondents	Within 3 Months	Within 6 Months	6 months to 1 year	
Strongly disagree	7% (28)	11% (3)	32% (9)	11% (3)	54% (15)
Disagree	39% (154)	30% (46)	10% (16)	10% (16)	50% (78)
Neutral	6% (26)	30% (7)	12% (3)	8% (2)	50% (12)
Agree	35% (141)	46% (65)	18% (25)	16% (23)	80% (113)
Strongly agree	13% (51)	47% (24)	25% (13)	12% (6)	84% (43)
Total	100% (400)	36% (145)	17% (66)	12% (50)	65%(261)

Mean = 3.08 ; SD=1.23

Table 3 shows that the respondents moderately prepared for their return before coming home with a mean value of 3.08. The standard deviation at 1.23 shows that the differences in opinion of the respondents as the data are scattered.

Overall, 48% (n=192) of the respondents made plans regarding what they would do when they returned home, and the rest did not have any plans. Only 13% (n=51) of the respondents said they had a well-prepared work plan. They even started groundwork consulting their family and friends

while they were still working abroad. Of them, 35% (n=141) agreed that they made plans but did not initiate them when they were abroad. The respondents with some generic plans but were not confident about them accounted for 6% (n=26). The respondents who disagreed to have made any plans but they did think about what they would do after they return accounted for 39% (n=154). Only 7% (n=28) of the respondents did not even think about what they would do when they returned. The unpreparedness of what they would do when they returned often led them to re-migration as the money they brought would be spent.

However, when they reached home, they tend to worry about how to earn, and what occupation to choose. They became conscious of the ways of making their living. Although the respondents started searching for jobs before they returned home, only 36% (n=145) of them were successful to reintegrate into the work within three months of their return. On the other hand, 17% (n=66) of them started working after six months and 12% (n=50) of them took more than six months to find work.

While scrutinizing the relationship between the work plan made abroad before coming home and their working status, out of 13% (n=51) who strongly agreed on making plans, 72% (n=37) started working within six months of their return and in total, 84% (n=43) of them were working within a year. Out of 35% (n=141) who agreed to make plans, 64% (n=90) started working within six months and in total, 80% of them were working within a year. Out of 6% who were neutral, only 42% (n=10) started working within six months and in total 50% of them were working within a year.

Similarly, out of 39% (154) of the respondents who disagreed to have made any plans, only 40% (n=62) of them were found to be working within six months and in total only 50% (n=78) of them were working within a year. Out of 7% (n=28) who strongly disagreed with even having thought of any plans, 43% (n=12) of them started working within six months of return and in total 54% (n=15) of them were working within a year. This explained that those who prepared well and planned economic reintegration abroad were 30% more likely to be employed than those who did not have any plans. The majority of them were employed within six months of return.

### **Employment Status in Nepal after Returning from labor Migration**

The labor migrants after returning home were found to be engaged in wage employment, self-employment, unemployed but searching for work, and unemployed not searching for work. The categorization was also classified into wage and self-employment in the same occupation that they worked abroad and in different occupations than they were engaged when in foreign employment.

## Waged Employment, Self-employment, and Unemployed

Table 4 : Respondents' Employment Status in Nepal after Return

Respondents' Employment Status in Nepal	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female		N	P
	N	P	N	P		
Waged Employment in Same Occupation	66	23%	9	8%	75	19%
Self-employed in Same Occupation	55	20%	9	8%	64	16%
Waged Employment in Different Occupation	39	14%	10	8%	49	12%
Self-employed in Different Occupations	51	18%	25	21%	76	19%
Unemployed, Searching for Work	25	9%	6	5%	31	8%
Unemployed, Not Searching for Work	45	16%	60	50%	105	26%
Total	281	100%	119	100%	400	100%

The employment status data in Table 4 above shows only 66% (n=264) of the respondents were working. Out of these, 31% (n=124) were in wage employment and 35% (n=140) were self-employed. The respondents accounting for 26% (n=136) were not interested in working and were not searching for Only jobs. 8% (n=31) of respondents reported they were unemployed but were searching for jobs. The data explains that more returnees preferred their self business to wage employment when they returned home because they had financial capital for investment. Self-employed migrant workers worked in sectors such as agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry, retail shop, construction, hotel business, grocery, and vegetable shops.

The respondents accounting for 35% (n=139) worked in the same occupations they worked abroad. Of them, 19% (n=75) were in wage employment and 16% (n=64) were self-employed. On the other hand, 31% (n=125) of the respondents reported they worked in different occupations, i.e., 12% (n=49) reported in wage employment, and 19% (n=75) were self-employed. This shows that those who worked in other occupations were mostly engaged in business.

Concerning female respondents, 55% (n=66) were not employed and only 45% (n=53) were working. Among these working women, 29% (n=34) were self-employed and only 16% (n=19) of them were in wage employment. Compared to females, only 25% (n=70) of the male respondents were unemployed. Out of 75% (n=211) working males, 38% (n=106) were self-employed and 37% (n=105) were engaged in wage employment. This explains that after returning, women preferred to be self-employed because they did not find a similar occupation they worked abroad in the proximity of their residence and women had family obligations that restricted them from wage employment. For males, interest in wage and self-employment are similar.

The data also reveals that 43% (n=121) males were working in similar occupations compared to just 16% (n=18) females. This indicates that the work males were engaged in abroad is more suitable in Nepal than for females. The majority of female returnees worked as cleaners and domestic helpers. These vocations are stigmatized in society and are not yet established as industries.

### **Occupation wise Returnees Working in Similar Occupations in Nepal**

*Table 5 : Returnees' Working in Similar Occupation*

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Working in a similar occupation in Nepal (N)</b>	<b>Working in a similar occupation in Nepal (P)</b>
Beautician	0	7	7	5	71
Caregiver	0	8	8	0	0
Cleaner	5	19	24	2	8
Construction	23	0	23	14	61
Domestic work	0	15	15	0	0
Driving	62	0	62	41	66
Garment	2	5	7	0	0
Hospitality	39	17	56	33	59
Labour	74	29	103	6	6
Manufacturing	5	3	8	1	12
Mechanical	14	0	14	8	57
Security guard	28	0	28	5	18
Service	29	16	45	24	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>35</b>

Table 5 above explains the returnees working in similar occupations after returning to Nepal. The data revealed that 71% (n=5) beauticians, 61% (n=14) construction workers, 66% (n=66) drivers, 59% (n=33) hospitality service givers, 57% (n=8) mechanics and 53% (n=24) service sectors were engaged in wage and self-employment. This explains that these sectors have high employability in Nepal for migrant workers and they can appropriately utilize their acquired skills. Regarding domestic work and caregivers, returnee women have the least prospect in the Nepali labor markets (UN Women, 2018). Many women workers working in garment industries did not find jobs because of the family obligations and unavailability of such jobs in their proximity.

### **Reasons for Being Unemployed after Returning Home**

The respondents who were unemployed and not searching for jobs, females represented 57% (n=60) and males represented 43% (n=45). Those trying to re-migrate represented 25% (n=26). Of these, 13% (n=14) tried to find a job earlier but they could not find a suitable job based on their experience, they decided to re-immigrate. The respondents getting married and taking care of the family accounted

for 24% (n=25). Of these, 23% (n=24) thought of initiating certain business but not realized yet, on the other hand, 15% (n=16) were not doing anything because of health issues, whereas, a few of them wanted to take a break after toiling hard abroad and others had some personal issues.

### The extent of the Use of the Acquired Skills by the Returnees in Nepal

To address the first research question, the respondents were asked about the use of generic hard-skill (skills of using tools, equipment, occupational safety, cleaning, and housekeeping), specific hard skill (technical skills, drawings and symbols, a different metric system,) and soft skill (workplace etiquette, mannerism, and communication skill) that they learned abroad.

The researcher asked generic and specific hard skills questions to 139 respondents who were working in the same occupation to compare the skills they acquired abroad and the way they used them in Nepal. Since soft skills were common for all the occupations, 295 respondents working in the same or different occupations and who were unemployed but were actively searching for work were asked soft skill-related questions. The number of unemployed respondents was 105 and they were not seeking any sort of employment. We consider them drop-outs from the economically active population and hence were excluded. The questions were asked with a five-point Likert Scale to assess the extent of the use of the skills. For generic and specific hard skill questions, "neutral" represented not applicable in Nepal, denoting that the respondents did not get the opportunity to use the acquired skills. In the case of soft skills like workplace etiquette and communication skill, neutral denotes moderate or average use. This research question was analyzed in three dimensions – the overall skills used in the domestic employment market for those working in the same occupation, aspects of wage and self-employment, and the use of gender-wise skills at work.

### Easiness to Find Work in Nepal after Returning from Foreign Employment

Table 6 : Easiness to Find Work in Nepal

Easiness to find work in Nepal	N	Very hard	Hard	Moderate	Easy	Very Easy
Male (Mean=2.28; SD=.962)	236	22% (52)	41% (96)	26% (61)	10% (24)	1% (3)
Female (Mean=2.63; SD.807)	59	8% (5)	32% (19)	47% (28)	12% (7)	0
Total (Mean = 2.35; SD=.942)	295	19% (57)	39% (115)	30% (89)	11% (31)	1% (3)
Employed in same occupation (Mean=2.56; SD=.919)	139	8% (11)	54% (75)	24% (33)	14% (19)	1% (1)
Employed in different occupation (Mean=2.33; SD=.757)	125	18% (22)	29% (36)	42% (53)	10% (12)	2% (2)
Unemployed searching for work (Mean=2.12; SD=.652)	31	77% (24)	13% (4)	10% (3)	0	0

Table 6 above explains that out of 295 employed and unemployed respondents, for 58% (n=172), it was difficult to get a suitable job or to start a business but 12% (n=7) claimed it was easy for them to get a job. On the other hand, 30% (n=89) found it moderate to find the work. Among those working in the same occupation, only 15% (n=20) thought it was easier to find a job, 24% (n=33) said it was moderately easy and 62% (n=86) found it hard to find a job appropriate to the skills they acquired abroad. Among those working in different occupations, 12% (n=14) said that it was easy for them to find a job, for 42% (n=53), it was moderately easy and 47% (n=58) found it hard to find a job similar to the skill they attained abroad. Among those who were still employed and were searching for jobs, for 90% (n=28), it was hard to find a job, 10% (n=2) said that it was moderately hard, and no one said it was easy to find a job in Nepal after they returned.

While analyzing the data between males and females, the analysis revealed only 40% (n=24) of females found it difficult to find a job compared to 63% (n=148) of males. Males' opinions varied more than females'. This shows that men found searching for jobs more difficult than women.

The reason for males to get a job was difficult because 57% (n=121) of the working males chose to work in the same occupation they worked abroad. Only 43% (n=90) of the males worked in different occupations. The study found only 34% (n=18) of women worked in the same occupations that they had experience abroad. Women were forced to get jobs in different occupations because they did not find the related work in their hometowns.

The data also demonstrated the easiness to find a job. The mean value of males was 2.28 showing it very difficult to find a job and, for females, it was 2.68, a low to moderate difficulty. This indicates that getting a job for men was more difficult than for women. The standard deviation within below one showed all the respondents agreed without much variance in the answer. Those employed in the same occupation found it a bit easier with the mean value at 2.56 than those employed in other occupations with the mean value at 2.33 showed a very difficult situation. The unemployed said it was extremely difficult to find a job with the mean value at 2.12 and the standard deviation at .652 showing everyone having similar thoughts.

### **The Extent of Use of Acquired Generic Hard Skills to Work in Nepal**

The generic skills (use of tools, equipment, occupational safety, and workplace cleanliness) and specific hard skills (use of technical skills, interpretation of drawings and symbols, metric system) below were assessed from 139 returnee respondents who were working in the same occupation as they worked abroad for analysis. Table 7 below explains the extent of the use of hard skills acquired abroad at work in Nepal.

Table 7 : Use of Acquired Generic Hard Skills to Work in Nepal

<b>Generic Hard Skill</b>						
<b>i. Skill of using tools</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>No Use</b>	<b>Less Use</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Moderate Use</b>	<b>High Use</b>
Male (Mean=3.94; SD=.711)	121	0	0	34 (28%)	60(50%)	27(22%)
Female (Mean=4.06; SD=.938)	18	0	1 (6%)	4 (22%)	6 (33%)	7 (39%)
Total (Mean = 3.96; SD=.741)	139	0	1 (1%)	38 (27%)	66(48%)	34(24%)
Waged employment (Mean=4.16; SD=.594)	75	0	1 (1%)	5 (7%)	50(67%)	19(25%)
Self-employment (Mean=3.72; SD=.874)	64	0	0	33 (52%)	16(25%)	15(23%)
<b>ii. Skill of using equipment</b>						
Male (Mean=3.96; SD=.757)	121	1(1%)	0	31 (27%)	60(50%)	29(24%)
Female (Mean=3.94; SD=.938)	18	0	1(5%)	5 (28%)	6 (33%)	6 (33%)
Total (Mean = 3.96; SD=.779)	139	1(1%)	1(1%)	36 (26%)	66(47%)	35(25%)
Waged employment (Mean=4.20; SD=.593)	75	0	1(1%)	4 (5%)	49(65%)	21(28%)
Self-employment (Mean=3.72; SD=.826)	64	1(1%)	0	32 (50%)	17(27%)	14(22%)
<b>iii. Skill of using occupational safety</b>						
Male (Mean=3.72; SD=.609)	121	1(1%)	0	38 (31%)	75(62%)	7 (6%)
Female (Mean=3.67; SD=.686)	18	0	0	8 (44%)	8 (44%)	2 (11%)
Total (Mean=3.71; SD=.617)	139	1(1%)	0	46 (33%)	83(60%)	9 (6%)
Waged employment (Mean=3.96; SD=.478)	75	0	0	10 (13%)	58(77%)	7 (9%)
Self-employment (Mean=3.42; SD=.638)	64	1(2%)	0	36 (56%)	25(39%)	2 (3%)
<b>iv. Skill of workplace cleaning /housekeeping</b>						
Male (Mean=3.67; SD=.638)	121	1(1%)	6(5%)	58(47%)	48(40%)	8(6%)
Female (Mean=3.67; SD=.767)	18	0	0	7(37%)	7(40%)	4(23%)
Total (Mean=3.53; SD=.768)	139	1(1%)	6(4%)	65(46%)	55(40%)	12(9%)
Waged employment (Mean=3.81; SD=.608)	75	1(1%)	4(5%)	36 (48%)	25(33%)	9 (12%)
Self-employment (Mean=3.50; SD=.667)	64	0	2(3%)	29 (45%)	30(47%)	3(5%)

**Use of Tool Application Skill:** Hand tools were used in all the occupations related to technical and non-technical occupations. Tools are small apparatus that are manually used and do not use motor and electricity to operate, for example, screwdrivers, knives, wrenches, hammers, etc.

Table 7 depicts the overall mean value of the skills of using tools is 3.96 with a standard deviation of .741. The mean value of 121 males and 18 females shows that the skill of using tools was of high use and the majority of the returnees had a similar opinion. The mean value among the males was 3.94 and the value among females was 4.06 that shows that women were more skilful in handling tools than men. However, the standard deviation for males stands at .711 and for females at .938 that shows the opinions of women were scattered than the more consistent opinions of men. The respondents employed on the wage basis were found better in the handling of tools with the mean value at 4.16 than self-employment at 3.72 in the same occupation.

It was observed that the tools that were available in Nepal are similar to that available abroad. Thus, the workers could easily apply the tools at their workplaces in wage employment and self-employment. However, if the tools were not available in Nepal, the workers found them difficult to use leading to deskilling.

**Use of Equipment Application Skill:** Equipment machines, bigger or smaller than tools that require a motor and electricity to operate. The smaller equipment is portable and the bigger ones are fixed on the ground. Industries abroad used an exhaustive range of equipment to work efficiently.

Table 7 illustrates that the overall mean value at 3.96 and the standard deviation at .779. This explains that the skills of using equipment were applied and the majority of the respondents agreed. For males, the mean value was 3.96, and for females 3.94. This shows that this skill was moderately used at the work for both the gender, however, higher standard deviation among the females shows the differences in opinions compared to males. The mean value among the waged employment workers was 4.20 and that shows the skill of using the equipment was highly applicable. On the other hand, the mean value at 3.67 of the self-employed was moderate indicating the self-employed workers did not invest much in the equipment as abroad or as entrepreneurs they did not perform the work themselves.

**Use of Occupational Safety Skill:** Occupational safety is given utmost priority in all the industries abroad and every worker has to strictly follow the safety measures to protect themselves from workplace hazards. The workers strictly use helmets, jackets, gloves, protective goggles, earplugs, safety boots, etc. while working.

Table 7 above shows that the overall mean value at 3.71 with the standard deviation at .617 shows that the use of occupational safety skills is highly used with the majority of the respondents having similar views. The mean value of males is 3.72 which shows high use with the standard deviation at .609 showing that the data is not scattered. However, the mean value of females is 3.67, a moderate use with the standard deviation of .686 showing similar opinions of the female respondents. This may be because the profession females are involved in may require less use of occupational safety compared to male respondents due to the nature of their jobs.

The mean value of the wage employed stands at 3.96 showing high use of the occupational safety skills with the standard deviation at .478 showing all male respondents had a similar view, whereas self-employed respondents' mean value stands at 3.42 which shows the moderate use of occupational safety skill with the standard deviation .638 having a little difference of opinion as compared to those

respondents in wage employment.

Hence, the data explains that the industries in which the returnees were working in Nepal use occupational skills as they used abroad, and hence the skills were useful. But the self-employed found it to be not useful which needs to be explored further. Thus, the use of occupational skills was found to be used in Nepal.

**Use of Workplace Cleaning/housekeeping Skills:** Housekeeping during and after completing the work is considered important while working abroad to minimize waste, accidents and increase work efficiency. The workers have to keep all the tools and equipment in place and keep the work area clean as a preparation for the next day.

Table 7 above depicts that the overall mean value at 3.53 shows the moderate use of the skills of workplace cleaning and the standard deviation .768 explains that the majority of the respondents responded in the same line. The same mean value of 3.67 for both males and females shows the moderate use of this skill with the standard deviation at .638 for males and .767 for females shows having similar opinions of the respondents. The mean value of 3.81 for the wage employed shows the high moderate use of this skill at work compared to the mean value of self-employed at 3.50 which shows only moderate use. The reason may be because being entrepreneurs do not have to perform housekeeping jobs themselves.

Hence, among all the generic skills, workplace cleaning skills were the least used at work in Nepal. The reason for the least use, as stated by the respondents, was because the workers do not have to perform this task. They had separate housekeeping/cleaning staff and also housekeeping at work was given the least priority and the compliance is not met as done abroad.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 1<sub>a</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between male and female returnees in the use of acquired generic hard skills in Nepal. Despite the sample result showed the difference in generic hard skills used by males and females, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference statistically insignificant ( $t=-.076$ ,  $df=137$ ,  $p=0.940>0.05$ ). As the result is found insignificant, we cannot argue that there is a difference in the use of acquired generic hard skills between male and female returnees in the population.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 3<sub>a</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between wage-employed and self-employed returnees in the use of acquired generic hard skills in Nepal. As the sample result showed the difference in the use of generic hard skills by wage employed and self-employed returnees, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference is statistically significant ( $t=-4.89$ ,  $df=104$ ,  $p=0.000<0.05$ ). As the result was found statistically significant, we argue that there is a difference in the use of acquired generic hard skills between wage employed and self-employed returnees.

### **The Extent of Use of Specific Hard Skill to Work in Nepal**

Three questions on specific hard skills on technical skills, interpreting drawings, and measurements were asked to understand the usability of those specific hard skills related to the occupation. Table 8 below explains the use of specific hard skills in detail:

Table 8: Use of Acquired Specific Hard Skills to Work in Nepal

Specific Hard Skills	N	No Use	Less Use	Neutral	Moderate Use	High Use
<b>i. Technical Skill</b>						
Male Mean=3.79; SD=.741	121	0	2 (2%)	42 (35%)	56 (46%)	21 (17%)
Female Mean=3.72; SD=.752	18	0	0	8 (44%)	7 (39%)	3 (17%)
Total Mean=3.78; SD=.740	139	0	2 (1%)	50 (36%)	63 (45%)	24 (17%)
Waged employment Mean=4.01; SD=.668	75	0	1 (1%)	13 (17%)	45 (60%)	16 (21%)
Self-employment Mean=3.52; SD=.734	64	0	1 (2%)	37 (58%)	18 (28%)	8 (13%)
<b>ii. Skill of interpreting the drawings and symbols</b>						
Male Mean=3.70; SD=.666	121	0	4 (3%)	38 (31%)	69 (58%)	10 (8%)
Female Mean=3.78; SD=.647	18	0	0	6 (33%)	10 (56%)	2 (11%)
Total Mean=3.71; SD=.662	139	0	4 (3%)	44 (32%)	79 (57%)	12 (9%)
Waged employment Mean=3.88; SD=.592	75	0	3 (4%)	9 (12%)	57 (76%)	6 (8%)
Self-employment Mean=3.52; SD=.690	64	0	1 (2%)	35 (55%)	22 (34%)	6 (9%)
<b>iii. Skill to use the different metric system</b>						
Male Mean=3.56; SD=.631	121	0	4 (3%)	50 (41%)	62 (51%)	5 (4%)
Female Mean=3.28; SD=.461	18	0	0	13 (72%)	5 (28%)	0
Total Mean=3.53; SD=.618	139	0	4 (3%)	63 (45%)	67 (48%)	5 (4%)
Wage employment Mean=3.68; SD=.661	75	0	4 (5%)	20 (27%)	47 (63%)	4 (5%)
Self-employment Mean=3.34; SD=.511	64	0	0	43 (67%)	20 (27%)	1 (2%)

**The Use of Technical Skills:** Technical skills refer to the technology-based expertise in the form of hard skills and knowledge required to accomplish complex actions, tasks, and procedures.

Table 8 shows the mean value at 3.78 and the standard deviation at .740 concerning the use of technical skills, in the context of Nepal, the workers learned abroad, denote that the data is not scattered and the absence of outliers indicates a similar opinion of respondents. The mean value of 3.79 for males and 3.72 for females showed high use among males compared to females. The standard deviation shows that the respondents had a similar opinion. The mean value of 4.01 for waged employment shows high use of technical skill as compared to the mean value of 3.52 for the self-employed shows moderate use. The standard deviation shows that the data is not scattered.

This could mean that either the self-employed returnees did not use advanced technologies acquired abroad compared to already existing enterprises or being an entrepreneur, they do not have to use that skill. Hence, this needs to be explored further.

**Use of Interpreting Drawings and Symbols Skill:** Drawings, layouts, and symbols are mostly used in technical works. In the non-technical field, symbols are used for easy understanding of work or things, but drawings are not common. The respondents working in the technical field felt that the drawing was useful, whereas other respondents working in hospitality, security, and domestic help did not have to use drawings at their work.

Table 8 presents the overall mean value of the use of drawings and symbols at 3.71 that shows the lower side of high use and a standard deviation of .662 explains the similar views of respondents. The mean value for males stands at 3.78 indicating high use for males and at 3.70 slightly low for females showing not many discrepancies in the opinion. The mean value of the wage employment is 3.88 that shows high use compared to just 3.52 for self-employed that explains the moderate use indicating the similarity of opinions with self-employed.

This explains that males used the acquired skills of interpreting the drawing and symbols more than females and the nature of the job determines. Most of the males were employed in the construction occupation whereas a majority of women worked in the hospitality or service sectors where symbols and drawings were not used.

**Use of Different Metric System Skills:** Knowledge of different kinds of metric systems for measurement is essential, especially in the technical field. Broadly, three types of metric systems are used worldwide - the International System of Units (SI), the modern form of the metric system - the imperial system, and the United States customary units. There are variations in the metric system used in Nepal and in the countries of destination where the respondents worked.

Table 8 above demonstrates that the overall mean stands at 3.53 which signifies moderate use of acquired metric system skill with the standard deviation of .618 signifying that the data is closer to the mean value with the respondents having similar views. The mean value of males and females is 3.56 and 3.28 respectively, and it shows that the use is moderate, but males used it more than the females. The standard deviation shows the similarity of the opinion of the respondents from both genders. The mean value for wage employment is 3.68 and it shows the lower side of high use. The mean value of self-employed at 3.34 showed the lower side of moderate use. This explained the skill to use different metric systems is used less compared to the other two specific hard skills that could be either because of the difference in the metric system used abroad and in Nepal or it is not used much in their current employment.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 1<sub>b</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between male and female returnees in the use of acquired specific hard skills in Nepal. Despite the sample results showing the difference in the use of the specific hard skills by males and females, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference to be statistically insignificant ( $t=-.654$ ,  $df=137$ ,  $p=0.514>0.05$ ). As the result is found insignificant, we do not argue that there is a difference in the use of acquired specific hard skills between male and female returnees among the respondents.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 3<sub>b</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between wage-employed and self-employed returnees in the use of acquired specific hard skills in Nepal. As the sample result showed the difference in the use of the specific hard skills by wage-employed and self-employed returnees, the independent sample *t*-test also revealed the difference to be statistically significant ( $t=-4.43$ ,  $df=137$ ,  $p=0.000<0.05$ ). As the result is found to be statistically significant, we argue that there is a difference in the use of acquired specific hard skills between wage employed and self-employed returnees among the respondents.

### The Extent of Use of Soft Skill Acquired Abroad to Work in Nepal

Two questions related to soft skills were asked to the respondents who were working and searching for jobs to measure the attributes they brought home from abroad. Since soft skill is applicable in any occupation the workers choose to work, questions were asked to all 295 respondents who were employed or not but looking for jobs if not employed. Soft skills play an important role at work building positive relationships with the supervisors and co-workers encouraging them to learn new skills to be adopted in the new workplace. The neutral in soft skills denotes moderate. Table 9 below explains the use of soft skills in detail.

Table 9 : Use of Acquired Soft Skills to Work in Nepal

<b>i. Workplace Etiquette Skill</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Less Use</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Moderate Use</b>	<b>High Use</b>
Male (Mean=3.91; SD=.524)	236	10(4%)	105 (44%)	101 (43%)	20 (9%)
Female (Mean=3.63; SD=.678)	59	1 (2%)	22 (37%)	24 (41%)	12 (20%)
Total (Mean=3.72; SD=.617)	295	11(4%)	125 (42%)	125 (42%)	34 (12%)
Wage employment (Mean=3.59; SD=.759)	124	3 (2%)	37 (30%)	72 (58%)	12 (10%)
Self employed (Mean=3.72; SD.826)	140	5 (4%)	66 (47%)	51 (36%)	18 (13%)
Unemployed but searching for work (Mean=3.42; SD=.835)	31	3 (9%)	22 (71%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%3.)

<b>ii. Communication Skill</b>					
Male (Mean=4.13; SD=.528)	236	2 (1%)	97 (41%)	96 (41%)	41 (17%)
Female (Mean=3.72; SD=.845)	59	0	15 (25%)	24 (41%)	20 (34%)
Total(Mean=3.80; SD=.776)	295	2 (1%)	112 (38%)	120 (41%)	61 (20%)
Wage employment (Mean=3.80; SD=.776)	124	1 (1%)	31 (25%)	69 (56%)	23 (19%)
Self employed (Mean=3.67; SD=.874)	140	1	60 (43%)	43 (31%)	36 (26%)
Unemployed but searching for work (Mean=3.67; SD=.805)	31	0	21 (68%)	8 (26%)	2 (6%)

**Use of Workplace Etiquette Skill:** Workplace etiquettes like politeness, mannerism, time management, performance, maintaining work ethics and relation, are important attributes for the destination employers and are enforced on the workers. All the workers must oblige with them for better performance in the workplace. Some examples of workplace etiquette are respecting the supervisors, not using a mobile phone when at work, working carefully, coming to work on time, etc. Many Nepali workers found it difficult to follow in the initial stages because such etiquettes are not strictly followed in Nepal and do not form part of work culture. The workers who returned home from abroad observed the work culture etiquettes more strictly than the workers who never went abroad.

Table 9 above demonstrated the overall mean value at 3.72 which shows that acquired workplace etiquette skill is highly used and the standard deviation of .617 explains the similar thoughts of the respondents. In the case of males, the mean value is 3.91 indicating the high use of the skills at their work in Nepal but females with the mean value of 3.63 represented moderate use. The standard deviation of both genders represents the similar thoughts of the respondents. The mean value of 3.59 among the wage employment represents moderate use, whereas the mean value of self-employed stands at 3.72 indicating high use of the skills. This indicates that respondents with their business value this skill because they require to maintain relationships with their workers, partners, suppliers, etc., and, hence, crucial for them.

**Use of Communication Skill:** Communication skill is important to succeed at the workplace i.e., to communicate successfully help the workers to get information and implement the instruction effectively. For this research, communication also refers to sign language and other signals used to transfer information. The skills of right communication and networking enable the workers to work efficiently. The respondents found the communication skills they learned abroad most useful of all the skills.

As represented in Table 9, the overall mean value of 3.80 shows acquired communication skill is

highly used to work in Nepal with the standard deviation of .776 explains the similar thoughts of the respondents. The mean value of males of 4.13 refers that males regard communication as very important and the standard deviation of .528 explains the similar thoughts of the majority of the male respondents. The mean value of females of 3.72 refers to the high regard by female workers and the standard deviation of .845 shows less scattered opinions of the respondents. When comparing males and females, males found it more useful.

The mean value of those in wage employment is 3.80 referring to the high level of the use of communication skills compared to just 3.67 for those in self-employment which shows moderate use. The standard deviation value of both is closer to the mean value and that indicates similar opinions of both groups. Hence, in soft skills, the respondents felt that communication skill is more useful than workplace etiquette. Overall, both working in the same and different occupations found it highly used at work and this shows the scope of the soft skill goes beyond the borders of occupation including the daily activities of a person.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 1 :** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between male and female returnees in the use of acquired soft skills in Nepal. As the sample result showed the difference in the use of soft skills by males and females, the independent sample *t*-test also revealed the difference is statistically significant. ( $t=-.076$ ,  $df=137$ ,  $p=0.003<0.05$ ). As the result is found to be statistically significant, we argue that there is a difference in the use of acquired soft skills between male and female returnees in the population.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 3 :** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between wage-employed and self-employed returnees in the use of acquired soft skills in Nepal. Despite the sample result showing a difference in the use of soft skills by wage employed and self-employed returnees, the independent sample *t*-test revealed that the difference is statistically insignificant ( $t=1.651$ ,  $df=261.81$ ,  $p=0.97>0.05$ ). As the result is found insignificant, we cannot argue that there is a difference in the use of acquired soft skills between wage employment and self-employed returnees in the population.

### **Factors Affecting the Returnees to Use their Acquired Skills in Nepal**

Many returnee migrants struggle to reintegrate into domestic labor markets. Especially females were found to be facing challenges while using their skills such as gender, cultural differences, family obligation, access to finance, and linkage to work. While some skills were easily transferable (e.g. construction, mechanical, electrical, and communication), others, such as specific techniques used abroad were not applicable to work in the home country. In some cases, some migrant workers, who intended to utilize new skills by opening their businesses, lacked the necessary financial capital to realize their goals. But for many returnee migrants, the acquired new skills abroad facilitated a unique mobility pathway upon return (Hagan & Wassink, 2016).

A study of returnees in Bangladesh also identified many problems like lack of information on current business trends, lack of advisory services, lack of job opportunity, peer pressure, cultural issues as a barrier to work, and use their acquired skill (Sheed, 2017). This section answers the second research question on the barriers that affect the returnees to effectively use their skills in their home

country. The data show that, of 295 respondents who were employed and searching for jobs, 58% of the respondents experienced difficulties while searching for jobs.

Based on the literature review, the researcher identified six major barriers that mostly influenced employment search. These barriers were further segregated into twenty-one sub barriers to scrutinize and analyze each factor in detail. These must be addressed for the successful economic reintegration of the migrant workers when they return home. In this section, neutral signifies neither agree nor disagree.

### Technical Barriers

For an in-depth analysis, the researcher segregated technical barriers into four specific barriers, such as lack of job opportunity according to their skills, lack of skills to work in Nepal, skill differences that a returnee faces when trying to work in Nepal, and unavailability of tools and equipment to help find the job.

*Table 10 : Technical Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills*

Gender		Lack of Work Opportunity According to Skill	Lack of Essential Skills	Skill Mismatch	Unavailability of Tools & Equipment
Male	N	236	236	236	236
	Mean	3.11	3.00	3.22	3.27
	SD	0.914	0.909	0.924	0.909
Female	N	59	59	59	59
	Mean	3.07	2.86	3.14	3.19
	SD	1.081	1.042	1.137	1.042
Total	N	295	295	295	295
	Mean	3.10	2.97	3.20	3.25
	SD	0.948	0.936	0.969	0.936

**Lack of Work Opportunity According to Skills:** Table 10 shows the mean value of 3.10 that explains a moderate level of lack of job opportunities matching their skills to the use of the acquired skills with the standard deviation of .948 indicates a slight variation in the opinions of the respondents. With the mean value of 3.11, male respondents agree on the lack of work opportunities according to the skills they acquired abroad with the standard deviation of .914 indicates a slight variation in the opinions of the respondents. On the other hand, the mean value of female respondents stands at 3.07 indicates a lower level of moderate agreement on the lack of available work based on their acquired skills abroad with the standard deviation of 1.08 explains a high level of deviation in the answers of female respondents with the strong agreement and some other with strong disagreement.

It describes that 29% (n=85) of the respondents disagreed with the idea of a lack of job opportunities; 35% (n=103) remained neutral because their current jobs were not related to the skills they acquired abroad; 36% (n=107) agreed that they experienced a lack of job opportunities based on the skill they acquired in Nepal. On the other hand, 37% (n=22) women and 27% (n=63) men denied that there

is a lack of opportunity. Similarly, 37% (n=22) females and 36% (n=85) males agreed that they could not find suitable jobs because of a lack of opportunity in similar occupations.

To conclude, the data indicate a shortage of job opportunities in the related fields the returnees worked abroad. This created barriers to use their skills and forced them to work in unrelated skills leading to deskilling.

**Lack of Essential Skills:** Table 10 explains the overall mean value as 2.97 which shows low moderate agreement on not having essential skills as a barrier to work with the standard deviation of .936 indicating some outliers in the answers. The mean value of males stands at 3.00, a moderate agreement with the standard deviation of .909 leading to scattered opinions. The mean value of females stands at 2.86 showing a low moderate agreement with the standard deviation of 1.042 showing large differences of opinions. Hence, a majority of the respondents felt they knew the essential skills required to perform similar kinds of work. They were confident that the skills they acquired were useful and they were equipped with the skills and that would not be barriers to work in the related occupations.

It shows that 43% (n=25) females and 29% (n=68) males disagreed that they lacked essential skills to work in similar occupations. On the other hand, 30% (n=18) females and 32% (n=75) males agreed that they lacked the essential skills and took it to be a barrier to perform in similar occupations. Similarly, 27% (n=16) females and 39% (n=93) males remained neutral concerning the acquired skills and their relations to performance in the workplace.

In all, 31% (n=93) respondents disagreed that they lacked essential skills, 37% (n=109) were neutral because they did not acquire any skills abroad or they worked in other occupations, and 32% (n=93) agreed that lack of essential skills was one of the barriers for not being able to work in a related occupation when they returned to Nepal.

**Skill Mismatch:** Table 10 shows that the mean value of 3.20 and is a moderate level of skill mismatch. In the meantime, the standard deviation of .969 indicates differences in opinions. The mean value of males at 3.22 and females at 3.14 indicates a moderate level of skill mismatch to work in Nepal but females experienced more skill mismatch than males. The standard deviation of 1.137 of females shows the scattered data and differences in opinions of the respondents. The standard deviation of males at .925 shows more similarity of opinion among the males as it is closer to the mean value.

It illustrates 39% (n=23) females and 44% (n=103) males agreed that skill mismatch caused difficulty in using skills they acquired abroad to work in Nepal. On the other hand, 28% (n=17) females and 23% (n=55) males did not agree with the issue of skill mismatch whereas 32% (n=19) females and 33% (n=78) males remained neutral because they were working in occupations in which the skills they acquired abroad were not relevant.

Of all, 43% (n=126) agreed that they experienced a skill mismatch at work, 33% (n=97) were neutral and 24% (n=72) disagreed that skill mismatch was a barrier in using the skills they acquired. This shows that the majority of the respondents working in the same occupations felt the skill mismatch hampered the use of their skills.

Hence, the respondents working in a similar occupation identified skill mismatch as the barrier that

prevented them from using their skills at work in Nepal. The skill mismatch may be because many industries in Nepal still rely on manual work instead of using high-tech equipment and technologies. This may have created challenges in using the updated skills and knowledge at work in Nepal.

**Unavailability of Tools and Equipment:** Table 10 shows the overall mean value of 3.25 which explains a moderate level of agreement on the unavailability of tools and equipment in Nepal and the respondents took it as a barrier when working similar occupations. The standard deviation of .948 explains that the respondents felt similarly.

This elucidates that the majority of the respondents felt that there were not enough essential tools and equipment available in the industries and workplaces in Nepal. The mean value of males 3.27 and females 3.19 shows a moderate level of agreement, however, males felt a higher level of barriers than female respondents. The standard deviation of females at 1.042 shows the difference in opinions compared to males who had the similarity of opinions with the standard deviation of .909.

It demonstrates that only 25% (n=15) females and 22% (n=50) males disagreed that the unavailability of required tools and equipment at work hampered their use of the skills at work compared to 39% (n=23) females and 45% (n=107) males who agreed the unavailability of advanced tools and equipment was a barrier in the use of the acquired skills. This could be because males worked in occupations that required sophisticated tools and equipment that were not available in Nepal. Of all, 36% (n=21) females and 33% (n=79) males remained neutral because they worked in occupations in which they did not use tools and equipment. Overall, only 22% (n=65) disagreed on the unavailability of tools and equipment hampering the use of skills and 44% (n=130) of the respondents agreed that the unavailability of necessary tools and equipment created barriers to use the skills. On the other hand, 34% (n=100) remained neutral because they worked in different occupations.

Thus, in technical barriers, most of the respondents agreed that there was a skill mismatch in the skills that they acquired abroad and the requirement in Nepal. The majority of the respondents agreed that tools and equipment used in destination countries were not available in Nepal. More male respondents agreed to have technical barriers in terms of skills, work opportunity, skills mismatch, and unavailability of tools and equipment than female workers. The data explain that male-oriented occupations face more technical barriers.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 2<sub>a</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between male and female returnees in facing technical barriers in Nepal. Despite the sample result showed the difference in technical barriers faced by males and females, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference to be statistically insignificant ( $t=.729$ ,  $df=239$ ,  $p=0.467>0.05$ ). As the result is found insignificant, we argued that there was a difference in the technical barriers faced by the male and female returnees in the population.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 4<sub>a</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between wage-employed and self-employed returnees in facing the technical barriers in Nepal. Despite the sample result showed the difference in technical barriers faced by wage employed and self-employed returnees, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference to be statistically insignificant ( $t=1.063$ ,  $df=262$ ,  $p=0.289>0.05$ ). So, we did not argue that there was a difference

in the technical barriers faced by the wage employed and self-employed returnees in the population.

### Social and Cultural Barriers

The social and cultural barriers were segregated into four more barriers, such as lack of social network, family pressure, peer influence, and culturally not acceptable to work in a similar occupation.

*Table 11 : Socio-Cultural Barriers in Using the Acquired Skills*

Gender		Lack of social Network	Family Pressure	Peer influence	Culturally not Acceptable
	N	236	236	236	236
Male	Mean	2.95	2.38	2.33	2.33
	SD	0.905	0.731	0.626	0.568
	N	59	59	59	59
Female	Mean	2.59	2.58	2.29	2.07
	SD	0.985	1.086	0.767	0.487
	N	295	295	295	295
Total	Mean	2.88	2.42	2.32	2.27
	SD	0.931	0.816	0.656	0.562

**Lack of Social Network:** Table 11 shows the overall mean value at 2.88 depicting a low moderate level of agreement that lack of social network prevented them from using the skills and the standard deviation of .931 explains more or less similarity in opinions. The mean value of males stands at 2.95 and females at 2.59 indicates a low moderate level of agreement with males agreeing more to having a lack of social network compared to females. The standard deviation of males at .905 and females at .985 indicates not much deviation in the answers.

It elucidates that 59% (n=35) females and 37% (n=86) males disagreed, 14% (n=8) females and 31% (n=73) males were neutral and 27% (n=16) females and 33% (n=77) males agreed the lack of social network was a barrier to use the acquired skills. at work. Overall, 41% (n=121) of the respondents disagreed because they did not have a social network to find related work to use the skills, 27% (n=81) of the respondents were neutral and 31% (n=93) agreed that they could not use the acquired skills because the lack of social network prevented them from getting the related job and starting their enterprise. Those that agreed were working in other occupations.

Hence, males respondents felt the need for social networks more than females to enable them to use their acquired skills to work.

**Family Pressure:** Table 11 shows the overall mean value at 2.42 indicating a very low moderate level of agreement to family pressure and the standard deviation of .816 explains the answers were close to the mean value and the similarity in opinions. The mean value of males stands at 2.38 and that of females at 2.58 shows that males found a low moderate level of agreement that family pressure

created any barrier to use their skills or to find a job in a similar occupation compared to females who moderately agreed that there was some sort of family pressure. The standard deviation for males stands at .731 showing a similarity in opinions compared to females at 1.086 indicating differences in opinions concerning family pressure.

It demonstrates 64% (n=38) females and 68% (n=160) males disagreed to facing family pressure, 12% (n=7) females and 24% (n=56) males were neutral, 24% (n=14) females and 8% (n=20) males agreed that there was family pressure. Overall, 67% (n=198) disagreed with having any family pressure while searching for work, 21% (n=63) were neutral and 11% (n=34) said that they faced family pressure when trying to find work in a similar occupation and use their skills. Although the females engaged at work did not face much family pressure, 55% of the female respondents, who were not economically active, could not work because of familial obligations and pressures. Hence, we can conclude that female returnees face family pressure when they tried to work in Nepal.

**Peer Influence:** Table 11 demonstrates the overall mean value of 2.32 representing a very low level of agreement on the peer pressure making it a barrier and standard deviation at .656 explains that the answers were similar. The mean value of males was at 2.33 and females at 2.29 shows the lowest level of agreement on the peer pressure creating a problem to work. The standard deviation of males at .626 and females at .767 shows that all the respondents had similar opinions.

It shows that 72% (n=43) females and 69% (n=163) males disagreed, 17% (n=10) females and 26% (n=62) males were neutral and 10% (n=6) females and 4% (n=11) males agreed that their friends influenced them when they were trying to work. Overall, 70% (n=206) disagreed that peer influence created a barrier when they worked in a similar occupation, 24% (n=72) were neutral and only 5% (n=16) agreed that peer did not influence. Hence, peer pressure is the lowest barrier that hampered the returnees' work front.

**Culturally not Acceptable Work:** Table 11 shows the overall mean value at 2.27 which explains the very low level of agreement on the influence of culture in their work or the work they did was culturally unacceptable with the standard deviation of .562 explaining that the respondents' answers were similar. The mean value of males stands at 2.33 and females at 2.07 shows that women had the lowest level of agreement on culture concerning their work compared to males. The standard deviation for males at .568 and females at .487 shows that the respondents had similar thoughts about culture creating a barrier at work.

It illustrates that 84% (n=50) females and 67% (n=157) males denied that culture influenced their performance at work and the use of acquired skills, 15% (n=9) females and 31% (n=74) males were neutral. Only 2% (n=5) males and none of the females agreed that their culture created barriers to work in a similar occupation and the use of acquired skills. Overall, 70% (n=207) of respondents disagreed that the skills they acquired and the work they did was culturally unacceptable whereas 28% of the respondents were neutral.

Overall, the data revealed that there were not many social and cultural barriers that the respondents faced while working in a similar occupation or while using similar skills. However, females faced family pressure more than males do when they searched for a job. Compared to the returnees in Bangladesh

where they were forced to overspend by their peers and society and faced negative attitudes of society based on cultural views on the menial jobs that they did abroad. Nepali returnees did not face these kinds of barriers owing to open society and free culture as compared to Muslim communities in Bangladesh.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 2<sub>b</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between male and female returnees in facing socio-cultural barriers in Nepal. Despite the sample result showing differences in facing socio-cultural barriers by male and female respondents, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference to be statistically insignificant ( $t=1.567, df=293, p=0.133>0.05$ ). As the difference was insignificant, we could not argue that there was a difference in the socio-cultural barriers faced by the male and female returnees in the population.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 4<sub>b</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between wage-employed and self-employed returnees in facing socio-cultural barriers in Nepal. As the sample result showed differences in socio-cultural barriers faced by wage employed and self-employed returnees, the independent sample *t*-test also revealed the difference to be statistically significant ( $t=2.036, df=262, p=0.042<0.05$ ). So, we argued that there was a difference in the socio-cultural barriers faced by the wage employed and self-employed returnees in the population.

### Economic Barriers

The economic barriers are further classified into four categories, namely lack of seed money, lack of access to the financial institution, a high rate of interest on the bank loan, and lack of market, job, and resource information.

*Table 12 : Economic Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills*

Gender		Lack of Seed Money	Lack of Access to Financial Institution	High Rate of Interest on Loan	Lack of Mkt & Job Info
Male	N	236	236	236	236
	Mean	3.90	3.86	3.96	4.11
	SD	0.824	0.829	0.867	0.885
Female	N	59	59	59	59
	Mean	3.49	3.24	3.39	4.07
	SD	1.180	1.150	1.175	0.807
Total	N	295	295	295	295
	Mean	3.82	3.74	3.85	4.11
	SD	0.919	0.935	0.962	0.868

**Lack of Seed Money:** Table 12 shows the overall mean value at 3.82 indicating a high level of agreement on lack of money to start the work with the standard deviation at .919 explaining the little difference in opinions. The mean value of males stands at 3.90 showing high agreement on the lack

of seed money creating a barrier to work as they aspired with the standard deviation at .824 showing similarity in thoughts. The mean value of females at 3.49 shows moderate agreement on lack of seed money with the standard deviation at 1.180 showing the extreme differences in opinions.

It represents 29% females (n=17) and 9% (n=22) males disagreed, 5% (n=3) females and 5% (n=12) males were neutral, and 66% females (n=39) and 86% (n=202) males agreed that they had a scarcity of seed money to start work. Overall, 14% (n=39) disagreed that there was a lack of seed money to work, 5% (n=15) of them were neutral and 82% (241) of the respondents agreed they experienced a shortage of seed money to start the work based on their experience abroad. Males considered seed money more of a barrier than females because males wanted to work in similar occupations at a larger scale while females tend to start whatever work came in their way on a smaller scale that was affordable.

**Lack of Access to Financial Institution:** Table 12 above illustrates the overall mean value at 3.74 that there was a high agreement to the cause with a standard deviation of .935 indicating the answers closer to the mean value having similar opinions. The mean value of males 3.86 shows a high level of agreement on the access to financial existence being the barrier with the standard deviation of .829 showing likeness of thoughts. The mean value of females 3.24 shows moderate agreement on not having access to financial institutions.

It shows 36% (n=21) females and 10% (n=25) males disagreed that lack of financial institution created barrier; 10% (n=6) females and 6% (n=15) males were neutral; 54% (n=32) females and 83% (n=196) males agreed that it was difficult to access to financial institutions for a loan due to the requirement of collateral and extensive documentation. Overall, 16% (n=46) of respondents disagreed, 7% (n=21) of the respondents were neutral and 77% (n=228) agreed that there was a lack of access to financial institutions. Hence, males found that lack of access to a financial institution created more barriers than the female. It strongly points out the difficulties in getting financial services from banks and finance companies to start their work.

**High Rate of Interest on Loan:** Table 12 illustrates the overall mean value at 3.85 explaining the high agreement among the respondents that interest rate affects the work they want to do. The standard deviation at .962 shows the similarity in the answers from most of the respondents. The mean value of males stands at 3.96 showing agreement on high interest on loan creating a barrier to pursue the work related to the experience they gained abroad with the standard deviation of .867 showing similarity in opinions. The mean value of females at 3.39 shows moderate agreement with the standard deviation of 1.175 depicting high differences in opinions.

It shows 30% (n=18) females and 10% (n=24) males disagreed; 10% (n=6) females and 5% (n=12) males were neutral; 59% (n=35) females and 85% (n=200) males agreed to this cause. Overall, only 14% (n=42) of them disagreed that a high rate of interest on loans created a barrier to work compared to 79% (235) agreeing that a high rate of interest in the financial institutions caused difficulty for them to work. Hence, this is an important barrier that hampered the performance of the skills acquired abroad.

**Lack of Markets, Jobs, and Resource Information:** Table 12 demonstrates the overall mean value at 4.11 depicting the high agreement on the issue and the standard deviation of .868 shows less scattered data closer to the mean value. The mean value of males at 4.11 shows a high level of agreement on the barriers and the standard deviation of .885 indicates the similarity in opinions. The mean value of females at 4.07 shows a high level of agreement on the barriers but a significant difference is indicated by the standard deviation of .807 showing closer to the mean value. The data shows that lack of job market and available resource information was the highest-ranking cause of difficulties for the respondents to start the work after returning home.

It shows only 2% (n=1) females and 6% (n=14) males disagreed; 24% (n=14) females and 16% (n=38) males were neutral; 75% (n=44) females and 78% (n=184) males agreed that there was a lack of availability of job market and resource information. Overall, only 5% (n=15) disagreed that there was a lack of information on the job market and available resources; 18% (n=52) of the respondents were neutral and 77% (n=228) agreed on the cause.

Thus, the data shows the respondents who wanted to start a business faced more economic barriers and opted for wage employment instead. Economic barriers demotivated the returnees to establish a business of the area of their expertise that they acquire abroad. A lack of information on the job market was the key barrier among all the other barriers that the researcher identified. A close examination of the literature reveals that, when the migrants return home after few years, the workers find themselves in a different context at home and they were not familiar with the domestic market. This creates difficulty in the economic reintegration of the returnees and they are forced to remigrate.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 2<sub>c</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between male and female returnees in facing economic barriers in Nepal. The independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference to be statistically significant ( $t=3.390$ ,  $df=74.7$ ,  $p=0.001<0.05$ ). As the result was found to be statistically significant, we argued that the male and female returnees faced economic barriers.

The female returnees could receive support from their husbands who were already working in Nepal and they felt economic barriers less. On the other hand, male migrants had to start the work from the beginning because they were the bread earners for the family.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 4<sub>c</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between wage-employed and self-employed returnees in facing economic barriers in Nepal. Despite the sample result showed the difference in economic barriers faced by wage employed and self-employed returnees, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference to be statistically insignificant ( $t=.238$ ,  $df=262$ ,  $p=0.812>0.05$ ). As the difference was found to be insignificant, we did not argue that there was a difference in the economic barriers faced by the wage employed and self-employed returnees in the population.

## **Educational Barriers**

The educational barriers are further classified into two parts: lack of education and low quality of education that could have caused difficulties while searching for work or using the skills at work.

Table 13 : Educational Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills

Gender		Lack of Education	Low-Quality education
Male	N	236	236
	Mean	2.81	2.83
	SD	0.940	1.017
Female	N	59	59
	Mean	2.47	2.47
	SD	1.006	0.971
Total	N	295	295
	Mean	2.75	2.76
	SD	0.962	1.017

**Lack of Education:** Table 13 shows the overall mean value of 2.75 depicting a low moderate level of agreement to the reason with the standard deviation of .962 explaining little difference in opinions. The mean value for males stands at 2.81 and for females at 2.47 depicting a low level of moderate agreement and the data explain that education played a more important role in using the acquired skills in the local market for males than for females. The standard deviation of .940 for males stands at .940 shows a little variation in opinions but for females standing at 1.006 indicates wide differences in opinions.

It illustrates 68% (n=40) females and 49% (n=115) males disagreed; 8% (n=5) females and 20% (n=47) males were neutral; 24% (n=14) females and 31% (n=74) males agreed that educational level hampered the respondents to use their acquired skills. Overall, 52% (n=155) denied that a lack of education created any problems while searching and finding a job. Of all, 18% (n=52) of the respondents were neutral and 29% (n=88) agreed that lack of education was a barrier.

It is quite surprising that although a majority of the respondents were educated only up to higher secondary level, they disagreed that their lack of education created barriers to start the business.

**Low-Quality Education:** Table 13 denotes the overall mean value at 2.76 that explains a low moderate level of acceptance that the respondents had low-quality education and it was a barrier to work with the standard deviation of 1.017 indicating highly scattered answers. The mean value of males at 2.83 and females at 2.47 show a low moderate level of agreement explains that a low-quality of education that males got was a barrier to work but women did not feel it. The standard deviation of 1.017 for males shows extreme opinions, whereas the standard deviation of .971 for females shows a slight deviation in opinions.

It explains that 66% (n=39) females and 49% (n=115) males disagreed; 10% (n=6) females and 14% (n=34) males were neutral; 24% (n=14) females and 37% (n=87) males agreed that low-quality education hampered in finding or working in the relevant occupations in Nepal. Overall, 52% (n=154) disagreed with low-quality education affecting the job search and performance. Of all, 14% (n=40) of the respondents were neutral and 35% (n=101) agreed that low-quality education caused difficulties in the world of work in the long run.

Though female respondents were less educated than males, they denied that lack of education created barriers to start work. The possible reason could be females chose occupations that do not require much education compared to males. The respondents only moderately (at the lowest side) agreed that the lack of education and quality of education they received in their hometown influenced their work. This area needs further exploration to understand this finding. The common belief that education is vital for a person to successfully implement the job or business is questionable.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 2<sub>d</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between male and female returnees in facing educational barriers in Nepal. As the sample result showed the difference in educational barriers faced by males and females, the independent sample *t*-test also revealed the difference to be statistically significant ( $t=2.52, df=88.7, p=0.014<0.05$ ). As the result was found statistically significant, we argued that there was a difference in the educational barriers faced by the male and female returnees in the population.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 4<sub>d</sub>:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between wage-employed and self-employed returnees in facing educational barriers in Nepal. Despite the sample result showed the difference in educational barriers faced by wage employment and self-employed returnees, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference to be statistically insignificant ( $t=.345, df=262, p=0.731>0.05$ ). As the result is found insignificant, we argued that there was a difference in the educational barriers faced by the wage employed and self-employed returnees in the population.

### Political and Administrative Barriers

Political and administrative barriers are segregated into three sections – unstable political situation, unfavourable government policies to start the business, and hurdles in the government administration processes like registering firms, tax issues, etc.

*Table 14 : Political and Administrative Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills*

Gender		Unstable Political Situation	Unfavourable Policies	Hurdles in Administrative Procedure
Male	N	236	236	236
	Mean	3.61	3.65	3.64
	SD	0.985	0.985	0.994
Female	N	59	59	59
	Mean	2.66	2.69	2.63
	SD	1.212	1.263	1.173
Total	N	295	295	295
	Mean	3.42	3.46	3.44
	SD	1.100	1.112	1.108

**Unstable Political Situation:** Table 14 shows the overall mean value at 3.42 that explains a moderate level of agreement on the influence of the unstable political situation in business and work. The

standard deviation of 1.1 shows high dispersion from the mean value indicating the big difference in respondent's opinions. The mean value of males was found to be 3.61 that explains a moderate level of agreement of the problem caused by a political situation to start work while the mean value of females at 2.66 shows a low moderate level of acceptance. This explains that females found this problem less problematic than males because of the nature of work they were engaged in. The standard deviation of .985 for males and 1.212 for females shows that females' opinions were more dispersed than that of males.

It illustrates that 60% (n=35) females and 18% (n=44) males disagreed, 10% (n=6) females and 9% (n=22) males were neutral, 30% (n=18) females and 72% (n=170) males agreed that an unstable political situation created a barrier to work after they returned home. The males experienced that the unstable political situations created challenges to start business but women did not experience.

Overall, 26% (n=79) respondents disagreed; 9% (n=28) were neutral and 64% (n=188) agreed unstable political situation was a barrier to initiate work. This shows that the unstable political situation in the home country creates difficulty for the returnees to start work after they return home. In such a case, the returnees opt for remigrating. Literature also showed that during the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, many youths migrated abroad as they could not work in their hometown.

**Unfavourable Business Policies:** Table 14 shows the overall mean value at 3.46 and explains a moderate level of agreement on the unfavourable policies creating barriers while trying to work. The standard deviation of 1.11 explains the high dispersion in the opinions from the mean value. The mean value of 3.65 for males shows a high moderate level of agreement with a standard deviation of .985 showing a similar opinion of the respondents. The mean value of 2.69 for females shows a low moderate level of agreement with the standard deviation of 1.26 showing scattered and dispersed answers.

It represents that 60% (n=35) females and 17% (n=40) males disagreed that unfavorable business policies hampered their work in the occupations based on their abroad experience, 10% (n=6) female and 11% (n=26) male respondents were neutral, 31% (n=18) female and 72% (n=170) male respondents agreed on the cause. The response of the males and females were in parallel. Overall, 25% (n=75) of the respondents disagreed, 11% (n=32) of them were neutral and 64% (n=188) agreed that unfavourable business policies affected the respondents when they tried to work.

The data shows that males felt that unfavourable policies hampered the use of skills and work initiation more than the female respondents, but female respondents had extreme opinions. This could be because females were more likely to be engaged in the informal sectors and thus their work and business are not much influenced by the policy changes.

**Hurdles in Administrative Procedures:** Table 14 shows the overall mean value of 3.44 depicting a moderate level of agreement explains the complex administrative procedure of the government creates a hurdle to work and the use of the skills. The standard deviation of 1.108 explains a high level of dispersion in the answers of the respondents. The mean value of 3.64 of males shows a moderate level of agreement compared to 2.63 of females a low moderate level of agreement to the reason. The standard deviation of .994 for males and 1.17 for females shows the opinions of females more

dispersed than that of male respondents.

It demonstrates 60% (n=35) female and 17% (n=40) male respondents disagreed that there were many hurdles in the government administrative procedures, 12% (n=7) female and 12% (n=29) male were neutral, 29% (n=17) female and 71% (n=167) male respondents agreed that the complex administrative procedures of the government create barriers while searching for and starting work. Overall, 25% (n=75) of the respondents disagreed; 12% (n=36) were neutral and 63% (n=184) of them experienced difficulties in the administrative procedures to start the work.

The respondents moderately agreed on the higher side that unstable political situation, unfavourable business policies, and difficulties in government administrative processes like company registration, taxation, tax rebate, etc. affected in starting a business. However, female respondents felt less political barrier than their male counterparts. This could be because the majority of the female respondents were engaged in the informal sectors that the political situation, government policy, and rigorous administrative process were less likely to influence.

Business growth depends largely on the stability of the government. Due to the unstable political situation in Nepal, many people do not invest in any business. Many multinational companies were closed during the Maoist insurgency two decades ago and were not interested in investing again due to unfavourable business policies. Therefore, the respondents considered political barriers as the second strongest barrier that influenced their working status.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 2:** An independent sample  $t$ -test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between male and female returnees in facing political barriers in Nepal. As the sample result showed the difference in political barriers faced by males and females, the independent sample  $t$ -test revealed the difference to be statistically significant ( $t=5.78$ ,  $df=77.32$ ,  $p=0.000<0.05$ ). As the result is found to be statistically significant, we argue that there is a difference in the political barriers faced by the male and female returnees in the population.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 4:** An independent sample  $t$ -test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between wage-employed and self-employed returnees in facing political barriers in Nepal. Despite the sample result showed the difference in political barriers faced by wage employment and self-employed returnees, the independent sample  $t$ -test revealed the difference to be statistically insignificant ( $t=.743$ ,  $df=22$ ,  $p=0.458>0.05$ ). As the difference is found to be insignificant, we do not argue that there is a difference in the political barriers faced by those in wage employment and self-employed returnees in the population.

## **Personal Barriers**

Personal barriers according to the researcher were mostly related to inability because of poor health, lack of interest, motivational factors, and communication skills.

Table 15 : Personal Barriers to Use the Acquired Skills

Gender		Lack of Communication Skills	Inability / sickness	Lack of Interest	Lack of Motivation
Male	N	236	1.88	1.99	2.07
	Mean	3.02	236	236	236
	SD	0.863	0.541	0.665	0.760
Female	N	59	1.80	2.08	2.14
	Mean	2.83	59	59	59
	SD	1.036	0.738	0.988	1.025
Total	N	295	1.86	2.01	2.08
	Mean	2.98	295	295	295
	SD	0.901	0.585	0.740	0.818

**Lack of Communication Skills:** Table 15 presents the overall mean value of 2.98 that shows a low moderate level of agreement on lack of communication skills as a barrier. The standard deviation of .901 shows that the answers were closer to the mean value and less dispersed. The mean value of 3.02 for males and 2.83 for females shows a moderate level of agreement to the communication being the barrier. The standard deviation of .863 for males shows that males had similar views, whereas the standard deviation of 1.036 for females shows extreme differences in opinions on this issue.

It illustrates that 42% (n=25) females and 27% (n=65) males disagreed that lack of skill among themselves posed a barrier to work on the occupation that they gained experience abroad, 27% (n=16) females and 41% (n=97) males were neutral; 30% (n=18) females and 32% (n=74) males agreed to the cause. Overall, 30% (n=90) disagreed that the lack of communication skills created any barriers when searching for work, 38% (n=113) were neutral and 31% (n=92) agreed on lack of communication as a barrier to work in the same occupation.

**Inability and Sickness:** Table 15 describes the overall mean value of 1.86 that shows a very low level of agreement on the health condition as a barrier in searching for a job and performing it. The standard deviation of .585 shows the uniformity of the answers that are closer to the mean value. The mean values of 1.88 for males and 1.80 for females show an extremely low level of agreement among the respondents. The standard deviations of .541 for males and .738 for females show the opinion of the respondents were similar.

It shows 34% (n=20) female and 38% (n=91) male respondents disagreed that inability and sickness had anything to do with work and it did not create any barrier in their work, 58% (n=34) female and 56% (n=131) male were neutral, 8% (n=5) female and 6% (n=14) male agreed that health reasons created barriers in their work. Overall, 38% (n=111) disagreed, 56% (n=165) of the respondents were neutral and only 6% (n=19) agreed that health issues as a barrier for them while working.

**Lack of Interest:** Table 15 shows that the overall mean value of 2.01 depicts a low level of agreement on the respondents having a lack of interest in work after they returned. The standard deviation of .74 shows the answers closer to the mean value and less dispersed. The mean values of 1.99 for males and 2.08 for females show a low level of agreement that lack of interest at work posed any barrier. The standard deviations of .665 for males and .988 for females show that there is more variation in answers among females than males.

It illustrates 85% (n=50) female and 88% (n=209) male respondents disagreed that lack of interest was a barrier to use their acquired skills at work, 6% (n=15) males were neutral, 15% (n=9) female and 5% (n=12) males agreed that lack of interest was a barrier. Overall, 88% (n=259) of the respondents disagreed that there was a lack of interest to work. Of all, 5% (n=15) of the respondents were neutral and 7% (n=21) of them agreed that there was a lack of interest in work.

**Lack of Motivation:** Table 15 shows the overall mean value of 2.08 indicating a low level of agreement on lack of motivation to work. The standard deviation of .818 shows the answers closer to the mean value. The mean values of 2.07 for males and 2.14 for females present that there was a very low level of agreement on the lack of motivation with females agreeing a little more than the males which may be due to family obligations. The standard deviation of .760 for males shows similarities in opinions and the standard deviation of 1.02 for females explains the extreme level of differences in opinions.

It illustrates that 79% (n=47) females and 84% (n=197) males disagreed that lack of motivation created a barrier to work. Returnees preferred to work immediately after they returned home. Of all, 10% (n=6) females and 8% (n=19) males were neutral, 10% (n=6) females and 8% (n=20) males agreed that lack of motivation was a barrier when they tried to find work. Overall, 83% (n=244) of the respondents disagreed that there was a lack of motivation, 8% (n=25) of them were neutral and 9% (n=26) agreed that a lack of motivation was a barrier to work.

Except for the few respondents, the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed on the personal issues being a barrier to work. The respondents felt that they had strong interest, good communication skills and motivation to work, and no health-related issues.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 2:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between male and female returnees in facing personal barriers in Nepal. Despite the sample result showed the difference in personal barriers faced by males and females, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference to be statistically insignificant ( $t=.305$ ,  $df=73.06$ ,  $p=0.762>0.05$ ). As the difference is insignificant, we do not argue that there is a difference in the personal barriers faced by the male and female returnees.

**Significance Test of Hypothesis 4:** An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between wage-employed and self-employed returnees in facing personal barriers in Nepal. Despite the sample result showed the difference in personal barriers faced by wage employed and self-employed returnees, the independent sample *t*-test revealed the difference to be statistically insignificant ( $t=1.899$ ,  $df=262$ ,  $p=0.059>0.05$ ). As the result is found insignificant, we cannot argue that there is a difference in the personal barriers faced by those in wage employment and self-employed returnees.

Thus, among all the barriers, the respondents found the economic situation as the strongest barrier in which the lack of market information and high bank interest rates on loans created challenges to the use of the skills and start the work after they returned. Political barriers were the strongest barriers felt by the returnees that refrained them from reintegrating into the domestic labor market. The third strongest challenge was the technical challenge that unavailability of tools and equipment and skill mismatch prominently hampered the respondents to use the skills. Educational barriers, social and cultural barriers, and personal barriers scored the least which shows the minimum effect on the use of acquired skills.

### **Satisfaction Working in Nepal and Opinion on Retention**

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

**Satisfaction in Working in Nepal:** Out of 264 respondents who were working, 78% (n=206) said that they were satisfied working in Nepal and this shows a high level of satisfaction in their work and being together with the family. The mean value of 3.69 shows high job satisfaction working in Nepal with a standard deviation of .913 depicting the majority of the working respondents having the similarity in opinions on working in the home country.

**Proactiveness in Taking Training to Enhance their Existing Skills and Certification:** Out of 295 respondents, only six respondents took training to boost up their careers. This explains that either the respondents were not interested in training or they did not have access to information about the suitable training to reskill and upskill their existing skills to work in Nepal.

Only 3% (n=13) of respondents were found to have taken NSTB skill certification after they returned. Of all, 29% (n=117) respondents did not know about the skill tests conducted by NSTB. Although 40% (n=159) of them heard of the NSTB skill test, they did not know how to proceed. Out of 69% (n=276) respondents who did not take any skill test, 65% showed interest in undertaking a skill test and receive a national certification if they were given the opportunity.

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

**Support Required to Improve the Work:** Out of 400 respondents, 7% (n=26) of the respondents expressed that they did not require any kind of support as they were self-sufficient. Of all, 61% (n=245) of the respondents felt that they needed supports like easy and low-interest loans to expand their work and business. On the other hand, 36% (n=145) of the respondents felt that they needed to study further to increase their educational qualifications required for business expansion.

Of all, 45% (n=178) of the respondents said that they needed technical education to enhance their

existing skills. Most of the respondents worked in the construction, hospitality, and care sectors that required continued skill updates to meet the growing competition in the free market. About 29% (n=116) of the respondents were seeking to get engaged with a business network to expand their production and 43% (n=171) of them were seeking information on market linkage to sell their products and overcome market competition. The respondents said that for a business to survive, extensive market surveys and expansion are required. Only 4% (n=26) of them considered that they needed support to search for jobs relevant to their skills.

**Interest to Re-migrate:** Only 18% (n=71) of the respondents wanted to re-migrate if they got better opportunities with a high salary. This explains that returnees did not want to re-migrate as long as they found satisfactory work in their hometown so that they could be together with their family. Only in extreme cases when they did not find work do they opted for labor migration.

**Factors that would Help Retain the Returnees:** The respondents were asked what would help them to retain in Nepal. Most of the respondents considered the government should provide support such as funding, resources, technologies, and training. About 11% (n=43) of them said that the government must make provisions to provide loans without collateral at a low-interest rate bank loan to promote self-employment for the returnees. About 7% (n=27) of the respondents thought the government should encourage and revise the policy to set up a business and establish industries. About 10% (n=41) of them expressed that personal traits like hard work, motivation, and family support would help the returnees to establish themselves in Nepal and discourage circular migration.

About 10% (n=41) of them felt that promoting agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry, and fish farming for the returnees would retain them. About 9% (n=37) of them said that the government should provide free training complementing their existing skills and encourage them to work in occupations that require the same skill. About 46% (n=182) of them considered job opportunities and market information would help the returnees to stay back. About 7% (n=29) of them were not aware of it.

A recent study carried out by International Fund for Agricultural Development (2020) on the returnees coming back to Nepal due to the COVID 19 showed that 60% of the returnees were not willing to re-migrate. They showed interest in engaging in agriculture for livelihood opportunities in Nepal. Less than 30% of them were looking for a job with the skills they have or got trained to enhance their existing skills. Skill training, access to finance, technology, and market linkages were respondents' top priorities required to set up enterprises.

## Chapter Reflection

This chapter analyzed the data collected through the questionnaire. Each of the variables was assessed and compared from the gender and employment perspectives. The findings were that most of the returnees had less education and negligible skills training before migration. Most of them learned new skills in their work informally. Only 45% of females were found to be working and many worked in occupations that were not related to the skills they acquired abroad. Only 35% of the returnees worked similar occupations such as construction, mechanical, driving, beautician, hospitality, etc.

The respondents found generic skills more useful in the home country than the specific ones because the technologies adopted by the destination countries and Nepal varied. Soft skills were found to be useful on the work front. The independent t-test was conducted to assess the significance between gender and the use of acquired skills; and the nature of employment and the use of acquired skills. The test showed a significant difference in generic and specific hard skills used by male and female respondents; whereas in terms of occupation, wage employed were found to be using more of both skills than self-employed. In the case of soft skills used by males and females, the difference was found to be statistically significant. Females used more soft skills than males did. In terms of wage-employed and self-employed workers, soft skills were found to be used equally.

In terms of barriers, the difference in economic, political, and educational barriers was statistically significant among males and females. Male returnees felt these barriers stronger than the female ones. As for those in wage and self-employed only socio-cultural barriers showed statistically significant differences.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSIONS ON FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the findings concentrating the discussions on the relation between the use of acquired skills, knowledge, attributes, and the barriers to the use of the acquired skills in the home country. It also discusses the diversity of the returnee respondents, the employment status of the returnees, the extent of the use of the acquired skills, and the relationship between the use of the acquired skills and the barriers. Based on the data analysis and literature review, the major findings were generated.

High Labor Migration among the *Janajatis* and Low among the *Dalits*

The study shows that the majority (63%) of the respondents who migrated to GCC and Malaysia belonged to the *Janajati*. The *Janajatis* are indigenous ethnic groups in Nepal. Among the females, 74% were found to be from the Janajati group from the hill districts. According to Bhadra (2007), migration for hill Janajati households is common since their males have migrated to be recruited in the Indian Army for many generations, and thus, migration of women is also not restricted. Sapkota (2020) argues that poverty and inequality in the living standard of the people in Nepal prompted females to migrate seeking better prospects of life.

Migration among the *Dalits* in GCC and Malaysia was 6%. Since foreign employment in affluent destinations can be costly, the inability to pay the high recruitment cost restricted *Dalits* to migrate to these countries. The low educational levels of the *Dalits* and poverty restricted them from migration (Sunar, Bishokarma, Poudel, Nepali, Sushil, & Manabi, 2015). However, they tend to migrate to India for menial jobs as Nepal shares an open border with India. In the absence of an administrative process, it is easy to migrate to India for employment.

#### **Higher Percentage of Female Returnees were Illiterate**

Compared to one per cent of illiterate males, 14% of female respondents were illiterate. Although Nepal's National Education Policy 2076 mentions, "Education for all" with the provision of the right to basic education, compulsory, and free education up to the basic level to all, and free education up to the secondary level, many girls are still left out from accessing it.

An empirical study carried out by Williams (2009) in Nepal showed that since males were the bread earners, they were given more opportunities to study than the females who were generally engaged in household chores. Sapkota (2020) in his study on female returnees in the district of Tanahun, found that among the female migrants, almost 38% had no formal education. Lack of education increases the likelihood of low-level and precarious work in Nepal and abroad. Illiterate women are easily lured and cheated by agents. They are forced to take up unsafe jobs abroad.

## **Low Education and Lack of Skill among the Migrants**

The study showed that the majority of the returnees (84%) did not complete their high school and 5% of them were illiterate. Only 30% (2% formal vocational education and 28% short-term skills training) had received some skills training. This shows the susceptibility of Nepali migrants landing in foreign employment without any kind of skills and knowledge that forces them to carry out dangerous work and to be paid low than expected.

The MoLESS (2020) reported that 59% of migrant workers did not get any skill training and this study complements this finding. In the case of Bangladeshi labor migrants, 80% had education below grade 10 and only 10% had vocational training courses (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). A study conducted in the UAE, a prominent labor receiving country showed the analysis of skills distribution of 3.8 million foreign workers which explained that 50% of migrant laborers were unskilled and a further 29% of them were low-skilled (Alshamsi, 2019; Ministry of Labor, 2011).

Thus, the studies of both, the labor-sending and receiving countries verify the researcher's claim that the majority of the labor migrants go without any skills and education leading them to do precarious jobs and to be paid low. Although the Foreign Employment Policy-2012 internalized that skills would maximize benefits in foreign employment, the implementation part is weak. This resulted in a large number of migration of unskilled and less-educated workers in precarious jobs abroad.

## **Negligible Use of Remittance to Start Business**

The study depicted that only 12% of respondents' families invested the remittances in establishing enterprises. A larger part of the remittance was spent on consumption. A study on the remittance uses by the Bangladeshi Migrant workers showed that investment in a business by the migrants' families was only around 5% (Arifuzzaman et al., 2015; Chowdhury & Dewri, 2015; Murshidet et al., 2002; Siddiqui & Abrar, 2001). The study conducted by the ILO on remittance use in Nepal showed only 2% used in business establishment and expansion (ILO, 2016).

The remittances, if used in productive investments, will contribute to poverty reduction and minimize inequality in households as well as in the community (Dhakal & Phuyal, 2014). In the absence of investment in a business by the family, the returnees face a dilemma to initiate business after they return home. The knowledge gap in the domestic labor market makes it harder for the returnees to take decisions on the work they choose to do. One of the respondents said, *"With the time passing by the money we brought started to deplete and after few months we have no option but to re-migrate. We are left with no money for investment to start work"*. Thus, investing the remittance in business by the families is important to retain the returnees.

## **Re-migration a Common Trend among the Nepali Labor Migrants**

The research showed that 74% of the migrants spent 4.6 years abroad on average. This indicated that a majority of workers re-migrate more than twice before settling down in the home country. About 3.58 million work permits were issued from 2011-2019 and 50% of Nepali migrants renewed their work permits (MoLESS, 2020). The average duration of stay of Bangladeshi migrants in GCC was 6.27 years (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Kuschminder (2017) argued that the returnees staying for a

longer duration abroad had a high preparedness for return and possess skills and wealth.

Returnees opted to re-migrate because they were paid higher and had job assurance for the contract period. On return, they could start a small business with the money earned abroad. Besides, the migrant workers were found unable to perform financially well in the local market.

### **Skills Learned in the Home Country Moderately Used at Work Abroad**

The study found the mean value of the use of the skills training and work experience before leaving for foreign employment was at 3.2 and 3.4 respectively. This shows only the modest use and transfer of skill abroad. The data also explains that work experiences are valued more than training alone since the workers get to practice their skills in the real world of work. When at work, one also acquires additional skills that are essential for building a good work environment. On the other hand, only 46% of the returnees found training received in the home country useful in the destination. This explains the need for quality training with relevant competencies that meet the requirements of both origin and host countries.

A qualitative study conducted on Mexican labor migrants in the US showed that the migrants transferred up to 70% of skills acquired in Mexico (Hagan & Wassink, 2016; Hagan, Lowe & Quingla, 2011). Skills learned in the home country were found to be important for learning new skills abroad although technologies differed (Duleep & Regets, 2002; Hagan & Wassink, 2020). Hence, learning skills and gaining knowledge before migration in the occupation that the migrant worker plans to work is essential for better job placement and to learn new skills in the host country.

### **Migrant Workers Learned the Skills Informally Abroad**

A majority (62%) of the respondents learned skills informally at the workplace abroad. The employers do not invest in training the new workers when they join the company. According to Wickramasekara (2010), the low-skilled migrant workers from South Asia learned the technical know-how from their supervisors and peers. Similarly, Hagan and Wassink (2016) stated that Mexican migrants acquire most of the skills in the U.S. labor market through observation, imitation, practice, trial, and error, and informal instruction from co-workers and supervisors.

The employers did not invest in the human capital formation of the workers by providing formal training. But the migrants learned the skills informally at the workplace by observing their peers and practical experience rather than formal training. Thus, the labor migrants must acquire the necessary skills before migration.

### **Planning before Returning Increased the Employability**

The study showed that planning before returning increased the employability of the returnees by 30%. About half (48%) of the returnees agreed to have prepared a work plan before returning, with a majority (68%) of them starting the plan within six months. An ILO (2013) study on Sri Lankan migrants showed that out of 21% who planned on what they would do and how they would be economically active upon return, 70% were found to be employed within the first six months after returning. Ndreka (2019) mentions the importance of pre-preparation before returning to the home

country for reducing difficulties in finding work on their arrival (Ndreka, 2019; Van Meeteren, 2014).

Groundworks such as getting acquainted with economic and political situations in the home country, sharing work plans with family, exploring the potential areas of investment, discussion with peers, exploring the market and financing mechanisms while still in the destination country were found to be crucial in successful reintegration. Thus, preparedness before returning home is important to increase employability.

### **One-third of the Returnees Worked in Similar Occupations**

The study found that only 35% of the respondents were working in similar occupations as they worked abroad. Occupations like beautician, construction, driving, hospitality, mechanical, and service sectors were found to have satisfactory employability in Nepal. Hence, the returnees coming with enhanced skills in these sectors could facilitate to adapt their existing skills in the domestic market.

On the other hand, the data also revealed the difficult scenario of finding a related job or similar entrepreneurial activities, as two-third (65%) of returnees were either working in a different occupation or unemployed. The acquired skills of these returnees were deskilled since they could not use them in their home country. An ILO (2013) study in Sri Lanka showed that only 14% used skills they acquired in overseas employment in their current jobs. According to Cassarino (2004), the neoclassical theory in human capital highlights that skills acquired abroad can hardly be transferred to the origin countries because they do not match the local needs and the acquired human capital is wasted.

Hence, a relatively low number of returnees get engaged in a similar occupation after they return home due to the lack of opportunity in a similar field. This has resulted in the de-skilling of the acquired human capital causing remigration.

### **Preference of Self-employment to Wage Employment**

The study explained that among the employed, 35% of them were self-employed compared to 31% engaged in wage employment after returning to Nepal. This showed the increased interest of returnees in starting their business compared to going for wage employment. A study on returnees to Egypt also concluded that most of the returnees engage in entrepreneurial activities as they earned enough (Dustmann & Kirchkamp, 2002; Maya, 2017). Also, Germeji and Milo (2009) studied the reintegration of returnees into the Albanian labor market and observed a high rate of self-employment among the returnees in comparison to those who did not migrate.

The labor migration theory concerning human capital supports the fact that improved skills and educational background gained abroad allow upward mobility (Cassarino, 2004). Thus, with the skills, money, and confidence gained abroad, returnees were more likely to be motivated to start their own business than working as wage employees as it would not fetch them enough money they used to earn abroad.

## **More Returnee Male Worked in Same Occupations**

The study revealed that 43% of employed males worked in the same occupation compared to just 16% of employed females. The study of ILO (2013) on Sri Lankan returnees showed that 23 % of males and 7% of females used skills they acquired during overseas employment in their current jobs. Segal (2016) found that compared to females, males found it relatively easy to utilize the resources and skills acquired in the host country, adjust to life with their families and reintegrate effectively into the homeland.

This shows that the occupations of males during their stay abroad were more feasible to work in Nepal compared to females. Therefore, a conducive work environment, availability of related work, and access to resources made it easier for men to work in similar occupations than for women. Thus, men could use their existing skills more.

## **High Unemployment among Women Returnees**

The study discovered that 55% of the women returnees were absent from the workforce compared to just 25% of males. This showed that even after acquiring skills at work abroad, women found it difficult to be employed. The key reasons expressed by the returnees for inability to work were family obligations, unavailability of relevant work nearby their home, and lack of availability of money to start a business.

A study conducted by UN Women (2018) on Nepali returnee women found the employment rate at 34% and nearly half of the unemployed returnees said that household responsibilities did not allow them to work. This explains the prevalence of socio-culture barriers the women returnees face if they want to work despite having relevant skills.

## **Generic Hard Skills More Useful to Work**

Regarding returnee migrant workers working in similar occupations in terms of the use of generic hard skills, 72% of the returnees found them useful at their work in Nepal. Hence, the prospect of respondents to work in a similar occupation in Nepal is feasible if the work is available in the domestic market. For both males and females working in similar occupations, the use of tools and equipment was found useful, though the tools abroad were more sophisticated.

About one-third i.e., 66% found occupational safety skills useful and 49% found housekeeping skills useful. This reflects that workplace hazard and personal safety during the work is not considered seriously in Nepal as 34% seemed not to use it. Housekeeping skill is least useful in Nepal because it is not much of a concern at work and most of the time there was separate housekeeping staff available for this work. Among the male and female respondents, the difference in generic hard skills use is statistically insignificant. But the difference is statistically significant in terms of employment status. The wage-employed respondents seemed to use acquired generic hard skills more than the self-employed ones because the self-employed were owners and they did not have to work.

In the study of Argentinian returnees, 63% of them indicated that acquired skills abroad have been useful at home, whereas only 50% of Romanian returnees found them useful (Obucina et al., 2018).

Though there is no study found specific to the use of generic skills, the generic skills learned abroad are useful. Basic tools and equipment used abroad are also found in Nepal to some extent making the use of skill possible for those opting to work in a similar occupation. This finding can also be translated as with little effort on re-skilling and up-skilling the existing skills, migrants can start similar work in Nepal and make maximum use of the acquired skills.

### **Limited Use of Specific Hard Skills in Nepal**

The use of specific hard skills like technical skills, interpretation of drawings and symbols, and use of the metric systems was less useful than the generic hard skills because sophisticated technologies of host countries were not available in Nepal. Being a poor nation, Nepal still relies on traditional labor-intensive technologies.

Overall, 62% of the respondents found the technology they used abroad was applicable in Nepal though men found it more useful than women. Also, the wage-employed respondents used specific skills more than the self-employed ones. This could be because the self-employed respondents were unable to expand their enterprise with new technologies because of financial constraints. The use of technical skills shows a skill mismatch. These workers could not use the acquired skills to work at home resulting in de-skilling. The use of metric systems was useful to only 52%, and drawings/symbols were useful to 66% and a majority of them were males.

Among the male and female respondents, the difference in the use of specific hard skills was statistically insignificant. However, in terms of employment types, the difference was significant. The wage employed workers used more specific technical skills than the self-employed ones.

A study on Mexican migrants to the US illustrated that 41% of male returnees applied at least one new technical skill acquired abroad at their work in Mexico (Wassink & Hagan, 2017). In Sri Lanka there was a difference between the skill requirement in the Sri Lankan job market and the skills that the returnee migrant workers possess; only 14% were found to have used the skills they have acquired (ILO, 2013). It was reflected that although technologies between source and destination places may differ, the materials and aims of the skills were comparable (Duleep & Regets, 2002; Hagan & Wassink, 2020).

Hence, specific skill transfer to the home country differs because the destination countries use advanced technologies which are not available in host countries. In many cases, the acquired skills abroad become useless in the countries of origin.

### **More Soft Skills Used at Work in Nepal**

The study found that those working in the same occupation experienced workplace etiquette skills to be 28% more useful than those working in other occupations. In the case of communication skills, those working in similar occupations found such skills to be 31% more useful than those working in other occupations. Almost 85% of the female respondents found communication skills useful and were using at their work. The *t*-test also explained that, among the male and female respondents, the difference in the use of soft skills was statistically significant. Women used it more than men

do. However, the difference was insignificant in terms of employment status. Both wage and self-employed workers seemed to use it equally.

Wassink and Hagan (2017) found interpersonal skills, communication, and language were ranked highly among transfers of female return migrants, who acquired these interpersonal competencies at their work. Hagan and Wassink (2016) also found that labor migrants developed multiple soft skills during migration and that helped them to advance their careers when they returned. Hence, there was a similarity in the findings where soft skills were transferred more than technical skills. The majority of the returnees found soft skills more useful and applicable to any occupation they chose to work.

Overall, if the returnees worked in the same occupations, all three skills (generic and specific hard and soft skills) were useful. Generic hard skills were found to be more useful for the returnees. For those working in other occupations, the acquired hard skills became obsolete. Moreover, the extent of skill applied by the returnees working in the same occupation in Nepal looks promising. The migration theories in terms of human capital like new economics of labor migration, transnationalism, and cross-border social network theories too support the fact that the human capital brought by the returnees along with educational qualifications, social network, and values, support the returnees to progress in their career path.

Further, as mentioned by neoclassical economics theory that skills acquired abroad were wasted in the home country since the skills did not match the local need held for those unemployed returnees as well as those working in other occupations in Nepal. Returnees working in other occupations were not able to use their acquired skills resulting in de-skilling.

### **Barriers Faced while Using the Acquired Skills**

Although it is important to reintegrate the returnees into the labor market to earn and make their living, the barriers they faced were numerous. Economic, political, and technical barriers were addressed as the key barriers to work in Nepal by the returnees. Reintegration in different aspects becomes crucial when addressing the returnees. Many migrants struggled to reintegrate into domestic labor markets (Mezger et al., 2012; Wahba, 2014).

The inability to earn after return affects the returnees socially and psychologically. If returnees earn better after returning, it increases their social status and gains respect in the community. However, reintegration into the home country is not easy as it seems to be. A study of returnees in Bangladesh identified many problems like economic, lack of information on current business trends, lack of advisory services, lack of job opportunity, peer pressure, cultural issues as a barrier to work and use their acquired skills (Sheed, 2017).

Many respondents, especially the female returnees, reported having encountered challenges such as discrimination, difficulty in adapting, limited job networks upon return, and differences in work culture. In some cases, migrants who intended to utilize new skill sets by opening their businesses lacked the financial capital necessary to realize their goals. However, while exploring the employment opportunity, the returnees found skills in some occupations were easily transferable e.g., in construction, mechanical, electrical, and communication sectors.

## **Skill Mismatch and Unavailability of Tools and Equipment: Key Technical Barrier**

Although many returnees did not agree that they lacked essential skills to work in Nepal, the majority accepted that there was a skill mismatch and unavailability of essential tools and equipment. A few respondents also expressed a lack of work opportunities to utilize their acquired skills.

According to OECD (2017), skills mismatch or over-qualification hinders the participation of returnees in the labor market. Abarcar (2016) discovered that in the Filipino labor market the employers did not favour returnees when workers with the same set of skills and educational background were available. Vietnamese migrants were found to have returned to unskilled work or did similar jobs they did before migration in the absence of the availability of jobs (Wickramasekara, 2019).

Like in the literature, more males agreed to have technical barriers in terms of work opportunity, skills mismatch, and unavailability of tools and equipment. The returnees had to rely mostly on traditional technologies and tools in their home countries because they could afford advanced technologies. This reduced their efficiency and productivity and impacted their earnings.

## **Socio-Cultural Barriers Prevalent among Women Returnees**

While a majority of the returnees disagreed that there were some socio-cultural barriers such as lack of social network, family pressure, peer influence, and cultural issues while working in Nepal. However, the key reason behind 55% of women was the family obligation that obstructed them to work. Most of the women said their families wanted them to get married and have a family rather than searching for a job because of social stigma.

In Sri Lanka, only 2% of returnees acknowledged that they encountered social problems as the females mentioned strong family and peer support (ILO, 2013). According to Akesson and Eriksson-Baaz (2015), the returnees encountered difficulties when they tried to build a social relationship with their community people for economic reintegration after they returned.

Hence, we conclude that women returnees in Nepal faced socio-cultural barriers more than their male counterparts while looking for employment opportunities owing to socio-cultural restrictions for women.

## **Lack of Market Information: Major Barrier to Reintegrate in the Domestic Market**

A majority of returnees found a market information gap creating big hurdles to find work in similar occupations and to use their acquired skills. When the migrants returned home after few years, they experienced a changed labor market context. Most of the respondents said they got all their earnings abroad thinking of starting a job or starting a business because the context of the market was completely changed. Another respondent expressed, "*In Nepal, we do not get the salary and work according to our skills. It is not enough to survive in the city.*"

Van Houte and de Koning (2008) observed that when workers returned to their home country, they found changes in social relations, political structures, and economic conditions and they felt they arrived in a new place. This creates difficulty in starting up a new job. On the other hand, Sheed

(2017) found that having remitted much of their earnings when they were abroad, the returnees were left with a nominal amount which is not enough to start the business.

Migrants, having spent years abroad, had a knowledge gap on the feasible business opportunities back home. Returnees found it easier to go abroad and work for a fixed term as they got a better salary than in Nepal. They found it difficult to explore the business opportunities in the home country and did not want to risk their hard-earned money in new areas.

### **Low Level of Education not Considered a Challenge by the Returnees**

Even though many of the respondents did not complete secondary education, they did not find a low level of education as a barrier to use their skills and find work. But the standard deviation was quite high stating that some felt the education barrier was one of the reasons while some denied it. Though women were less educated than men, they denied a low level of education to be a problem in starting the work. The reason could be that females chose the informal sectors that did not require a high level of educational qualifications.

But one of the male respondents expressed, *"Unless a migrant has completed a minimum of 1.5yrs Technical Certificate Level course, the government should not allow the youth to migrate. At the same time, it is important to place them in on-the-job training so that the youth learn real workplace requirements like communication skills, mannerisms, behavior apart from technical skills. Nepali migrants lack soft skills essential for better work performance. These experiences will help them get good jobs and higher salaries as technicians."*

Reardon (1997) addressed the importance of education that even for entrepreneurial non-farm activities at the beginning may require a certain level of schooling. With Tunisian and Moroccan returnees, less educated returnees started an enterprise and the educated joined formal jobs (Gurbert & Nordman, 2008). The finding is complementary to some literature on the impacts of education on finding relevant employment. Thus, it is important to analyze why the returnees do not feel the importance of education for securing the related job.

### **Political Instability and Unfavorable Policies Hamper Establishing Business**

Political and bureaucratic administrative barriers were the second most influential barriers, as highlighted by returnees, that hampered the use of the acquired skills and setting up an enterprise. An unstable political situation, unfavourable business policies, and difficulties in government administrative processes like company registration, taxation, tax rebate, etc. affected their businesses.

A significant difference in opinions among the female and male respondents was found. Female respondents did not consider political barriers as important to affect their business or work. They were engaged in mostly informal work or business and the political situation and the government's policy did not affect their work or business. The informal sector did not require legal registration, so they were not aware of the bureaucratic hurdles.

In Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, administrative constraints ranked first among the difficulties faced by the returnee investors, followed by excessive competition and lack of capital (Gubert & Nordman,

2008). The Ghanaian returnees found the paperwork and the bureaucracy difficult to set up a business, obtain a permit for a task, or get an appointment with the officials (Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Hence, the literature supports the findings that returnees found this as a crucial barrier for business growth as it depends largely on the stability of the government.

### **Personal Barriers not Considered a Barrier**

Personal barriers were least agreed by the respondents that created hurdles to use the acquired skills. The returnees viewed that they had a zeal for work, motivation, and better communication skills that enabled them to work efficiently. But few respondents said, *"Nepali youth must develop work culture and efficiency in their performance. Most of them procrastinate their responsibilities and do not like to work hard. They do not respect time."*

Considering the lack of literature on the personal barriers, it is important to study the personal traits of returnees that might have created hurdles to find work when they returned.

### **Possible Strategies to Address the Barriers Faced by the Returnees**

The responses received from the open-ended questions elucidated a few areas of improvement that could address to improve the skill gap. It is important to address the key barriers that hampered the use of acquired skills be addressed to avoid de-skilling and re-migration. Different studies validated these strategies.

### **Holistic Reintegration Guideline**

The respondents felt it necessary for the government to have a holistic reintegration guideline to address the need of the returnees and their families to overcome the barriers. Apart from the building capacity of the returnees and providing monetary facilities, the inclusion of financial literacy for the families of the migrants on productive use of remittance by setting up a business and social acceptance is important. This would increase the employability of the returnees, minimize circular migration and social stigma towards the returnee women.

Although Nepal's policies and acts mention the need for the reintegration of the returnees and recognizing them, there are no reintegration guidelines in place yet. Countries like South Korea, Sri Lanka, Ecuador, the Philippines, and Singapore have good reintegration guidelines that have positively impacted the returnees and hence, can be adapted to the Nepali context.

### **Minimizing Technical Skill Barriers**

The returnees felt that there are a lot of technical differences in the skills they acquired abroad and that is applicable in Nepal. Sri Lanka identified the following solutions with regards to technical skills (a) provision of short-term skills training, and (b) organizing the association of skilled and unskilled workers to facilitate employment in the private sector near their locality (ILO, 2013).

The market is dynamic, and it keeps on changing to meet the demand of the consumers. Likewise, the demand for different types of skills and competencies also changes. With the change in the market,

migrants find skills mismatch when they are abroad and return home after few years.

Therefore, to minimize this gap there is a need to promote training on relevant skills. Strategies, like strengthening the existing generic and specific hard skills of the returnees and providing training to re-skill and up-skill their existing skill, would help the returnees to work efficiently in the local context.

### **Recognition of Acquired Skills in the Home Country**

The respondents felt that their acquired skills had no value in Nepal. Because of this, they were forced to re-migrate. As a measure, the government of Nepal needs an effective and efficient strategy to recognize the acquired skills of the returnees when they return home by certifying the skills. This will not only increase the use of the acquired skills in the country as the employers tend to believe in the national certification but also prevents de-skilling.

At the same time, 65% of the returnees were interested in skill tests and acquiring national certification. Professions like beautician, construction, driving, hospitality, mechanical, etc. have high employability in Nepal and, if certified, the skills acquired abroad will stop workers from re-migration.

Wickramasekara (2019) in the study of return migration in the ASEAN countries recognized that the absence of provisions for skills certification and skills recognition deskills the skills acquired abroad. The Philippines Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) provides TESDA/government-issued certification to recognize returnees' technical skills and knowledge to retain and improve their livelihood and careers.

Hence, timely recognition and certification of returnees' skills would help the returnees to integrate into the job market immediately as employers generally seek work evidence.

### **Market-led Development Policy**

National data and this research show that a majority of the returnees worked in the construction, hospitality, and care sectors. Returnees felt the government should prioritize creating more jobs in these sectors with satisfactory wage payments. Few returnees accepted that they were able to find jobs according to their skill, but the wages were extremely low. They also expressed that they wanted to invest in agriculture, poultry, and animal husbandry but they lacked knowledge in large-scale production.

Thus, the government of Nepal needs to promote more national projects like road construction, hydropower, bridges, agriculture, etc. with the latest technologies that would not only generate mass employment opportunities but also returnees' skills could be efficiently exploited. Similarly, it is important to develop the tourism and care sector in Nepal since many returnees like caregivers, cooks, waiters, etc. are from these sectors.

### **Investment in Human Capital**

As a long-term strategy, the government needs to invest in human capital in both general and technical education. Efficient human capital contributes to nation-building. The data showed that the majority

of the migrants left school for labor migration after being influenced by their peers, family, and poverty.

Compulsory higher secondary education for the labor migrants prepares the youths to understand the complication related to labor migration. Provisions of mandatory skills training in the occupations they choose to work in not only minimizes workplace accidents and health hazards but also increases remittance flow. Quality of competency standards in technical education needs to be maintained at the local level to cater better services to aspiring migrants for better job performance.

Subsidized rates for up-skilling and re-skilling training for the returnees generate interest in fulfilling the skill gap contributing to lifelong learning for career growth. Also, the inclusion of soft skills and work-related ethics would add value to the real-world of work.

### **Centralized Returnee Database**

For supporting the returnees in different aspects, it is important to have a returnees' database that would help analyze the skills brought by the returnees for strategic planning. Wahba (2015) observed that the biggest hurdle was the lack of data on return migration and the unavailability of relevant data affects the assessment of challenges that they face. Wickramasekara (2019) states that a lack of data on returnees poses difficulty in providing required services.

Nepal too lacks the data of returnees, creating difficulty in designing an effective reintegration program. Hence, there is a need for a centralized database system connecting to 753 local governments to tap their expertise to strengthen the local level.

### **One-Stop Support Service Center**

The returnees felt the need for a one-stop service support center at the local level to enable them to attain all the required information such as information related to skills training, financial support and loan, entrepreneurial development, market information, available natural resources, employment opportunity, psychosocial counselling support, etc.

The Philippines has also introduced a good practice of National Reintegration Center for the returnees that have counselling; wage employment referral assistance, enterprise development, skills training, and capability enhancement, and assistance to distressed returnees (ILO, 2013). Thus, the introduction of these types of services will help the returnees prepare for the changing labor market context at home and identify their interest.

### **Easy Access to Finance**

Financial problems are observed during the survey as only 12% of remittance sent by the returnees was used in business by their families. The returnees too felt that when they returned, they were left with little money that was insufficient to start an enterprise. They expressed that if their family members could be educated in using the remittance productively, they would not have to re-migrate.

Few returnees expressed that although they did not prefer their female family members working, they

agreed that, if they could join the business set up by their families immediately after their return, they would put aside the thought of migrating again. They expressed the difficulty in accessing bank loans through formal channels and the interest rates were very high if they went to money lenders.

Chobanyan (2013) found that, in Armenia, the returnees had easy access to bank loans, tax exclusions, and a business-friendly atmosphere and helped the workers reintegrate successfully. Therefore, reintegration programs need to reform policies related to these areas.

### **National and Local Level Market and Resource Study**

The major setback felt by the returnees was a lack of information on the job market, availability of resources, identification of potential areas of investment, market linkages, networks, and the idea of feasible business. The study found that most of them spend all their money searching for the appropriate area of investment forcing them to re-migrate. The study conducted by ILO on ASEAN countries in 2019 highlighted the limited assessment of labor market needs or job matching systems available for returnees in some countries.

Therefore, local governments need to have updated market information, resource information, human resource gap and plans to develop pocket areas so that when the migrants return and come for information, they could be provided with updated information to decide the business they like to invest in. This would not only stop international migration but also help retain the citizens within their community.

### **Political Stability and Pro-business Policy**

Business growth mostly depends on political stability and the government's pro-business policies. In the last 2.5 decades, Nepal experienced civil war, natural disasters, and political blockades. Nepal survived the economic crisis largely due to the remittances sent by Nepali youths. However, this was considered a short-term solution by economists.

The Philippines too faced similar circumstances when the youth started migrating in large numbers. There were no youths left who could contribute to development works when the natural disaster occurred. Realizing this, the Philippines developed a policy framework for the reintegration of migrant workers. Hence, for a country's economic growth, it is crucial to minimize youth migration. This is possible only if there is political and business stability.

### **Chapter Reflection**

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the data extracted and elaborated on the findings. The findings were discussed in line with the existing theories and research conclusions of the studies conducted in different countries to validate the research findings. The study concluded that, if a favourable environment was provided, labor migrants could transfer acquired skills.

A home country government needs to develop strategies to tap the acquired skills brought by the returnees and minimize the barriers that trigger remigration. Different mechanisms were identified from the literature and experiences of the returnees for successful reintegration that would prevent the migration of skilled youth and contribute to the development of the home country.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

This chapter incorporates the conclusion of the study. The research scrutinized how the returnees used their acquired skills, knowledge, and attributes at their work in Nepal. Gender and the nature of employment were considered while analyzing different aspects of the use of the skills. Different reintegration strategies were identified by analyzing the barriers encountered by the returnees while working in similar occupations. Interpretations were derived from the quantitative data analysis and generalized to a larger population. Absence of returnees' data at the national level impeded in generating sample size.

Planning with family and friends before returning home helped the returnees to get updated job market information of the home country. Re-migration largely depended on how migrant families utilized the remittance they received. If the remittance was used in establishing enterprises, the migrants engaged in economic activities immediately after their return stopping the chances of remigration. Thus, enabling the environment at home was vital to retain the returnees.

Two-third of the returnees could not utilize their acquired skills either they worked in a different occupation or did not work. This also shows that returnees could not transfer their acquired skills to work in their home country. Their skills became unproductive and obsolete. However, the extent of skill applied by the returnees working in the same occupation in Nepal looks promising as the acquired hard and soft skills were found to be highly useful. Both genders were found to be using the acquired hard skill equally in their work. Those engaged in wage employment seemed to use more of the acquired skill compared to the self-employed. This indicates the potentiality of job prospects in Nepal if the relevant industries absorb them.

A holistic reintegration strategy is required to identify the skills brought by the returnees and support them in finding similar work or promote them to establish a business in a similar field. Also, business-friendly policies are required to motivate the private and public sectors to absorb the skilled returnees. Likewise, recognizing the returnees' acquired skills, providing them with the opportunity to upgrade their existing skill is equally important to motivate them.

Hindrances like lack of market information, political disturbances, and unavailability of required tools and equipment create barriers in job search and in establishing the enterprise. The quality of education particularly hampered the male returnees in establishing and expanding the business. For the female returnees, family obligations were the key cause to stop them from being economically active. Hence, to overcome these obstacles, appropriate policies and strategies addressing the barriers would play an imperative role in using their acquired skill. This will help in retaining the returnees and reduce cyclic migration.

The findings of the study have many possible implications for different stakeholders – policymakers, development organizations, training institutes, and researchers to take effective steps in utilizing the acquired skills of the returnees in the right direction and to develop programs based on the recommendations of the returnees.

## **The Implication of the Study**

### **The Implication to Research Professionals**

1. This research can be considered as a baseline study to understand the type of skills brought by the returnees and their use in Nepal. Hence, a study on sector skill acquisition and use can be carried further to contribute to developing sectoral TVET strategies.
2. A qualitative study can be conducted to validate the findings of acquired skills transfer in Nepal.
3. The research found hard skills were used more by the male returnees in comparison to the female in Nepal although they worked in similar occupations. Further studies could identify the reasons behind it.
4. The finding of the study shows that prior preparation helps the returnees to engage in employment within six months of their return. Hence, supplementary research can be carried out to analyze what kind of prior preparations are required for successful economic reintegration.
5. The study shows a lack of investment in a business by the families of the migrants. Hence, the research could be conducted to observe the role of migrants' families in utilizing the remittance in business before the migrant returns.
6. Additionally, a study on social and cultural remittances to understand the impacts on the transfer of acquired skills would also be valuable.

### **Implication to Policymakers**

1. This study shows that skills training in the home country only moderately helps at work abroad. TVET policymakers may explore to develop standards that meet the requirement of the destination labor market and make an effort to the recognition of Nepal's skills certification in the destination. It will prevent exploitation by the employers in attaining a skilled job, better wage, and recognition.
2. Based on the findings, a holistic reintegration strategy can be developed considering all the barriers that the returnees face so that they can initiate an enterprise related to their acquired skill to prevent de-skilling.
3. Local governments can explore the strategies mentioned in the study to retain youths in their hometown for the development of their community.

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

## REFERENCES

- Abarcar, P. M. F. (2016). *Essays on the economics of international migration and return* (Doctoral dissertation). <http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/133521>.
- Akesson, L., & Baaz, M. E. (Eds.). (2015). *Africa's return migrants: The new developers?* Zed Books Ltd.
- Alshamsi, R. (2019). *Migration governance: Between skills needs and social constraints*. Sage.
- Best, J. W., & Kahn, J. V. (2006). *Research in education* (10th ed.). Sage.
- Bhadra, C. (2007). *International labor migration of Nepalese women: Impact of their remittances on poverty reduction* (No. 44). ARTNeT Working Paper Series.
- Bhattarai, P. (2005). *Migration of Nepalese youth for foreign employment: Problems and prospects (A review of existing government policies and programmes)*. Youth Action Nepal.
- Blundell, R., Dearden, L., Meghir, C., & Sianesi, B. (1999). *Human capital investment: The returns from education and training to the individual, the firm and the economy*. *Fiscal Studies*, 20(1), 1-23.
- Cassarino, J. P. (2004). Theorizing return migration: The conceptual approach to return migrants revisited. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* (IJMS), 6(2), 253-279.
- Chobanyan, H. (2013). *Return migration and reintegration issues*. Armenia.
- Chowdhury, N. H., & Dewri, L. V. (2015). *How the remittances from Bangladeshi migrant workers are being utilized by their Families at home?* Springer & IOM.
- Cohen, L. M. (2007). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mix-methods approaches* (3rd Ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating*. Springer.
- de Haas, H. M. (2007). *Development: A theoretical perspective*. COMCAD.
- Dhakal, R. C., & Phuyal, R. K. (2014). *Impact of remittance on poverty and inequality: Evidence using data on labor migration in Nepal*. Research Gate
- Dustmann, C., & A. Glitz. (2011). Migration and education. In Hanushek, E. A., S. Machin, & L. Woessmann (Eds), *Handbook of the economics of education* (Vol. 4, pp. 327-439). North-Holland.
- Dustmann, C., & Weiss, Y. (2007). *Return migration: Theory and empirical evidence from the UK*. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 45(2), 236-256.
- European Union Commission (2015). *TVET glossary*. <https://www.unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary>
- Fleischhauer, K. J. (2007). *A review of human capital theory: Microeconomics*. The University of St. Gallen, Department of Economics Discussion Paper.

- Friedberg, R. (2007). The economic impact of knowledge workers from India and China. In *Movement of global talent: The impact of high skill labor flows from India and China* (pp. 35-53). Sage.
- George, D., & Mallery, P. (2003). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference*. 11.0 update (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Germenji, E., & Milo, L. (2009). *Return and labor status at home: Evidence from returnees in Albania*. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 9(4), 497-517.
- Gill, B. (2005). *Homeward bound? The experience of return mobility for Italian scientists*. *Innovation*, 18(3), 319-341.
- Gubert, F., & Nordman C. J. (2008). *Return migration and small enterprise development in the Maghreb*. International Rural Development, DIAL, Paris.
- Gurung, G. (2010). New Lahure in Nepal: Foreign labor migration. *Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development Journal*, 29.
- Hagan, J. M., & Wassink, J. T. (2016). *New skills, new jobs: Return migration, skill transfers, and business formation in Mexico*. *Social Problems*, 63(4), 513-533.
- Hagan, J. M., & Wassink, J. T. (2020). Return migration around the World: An integrated agenda for future research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46.
- International Labor Organisation (ILO). (2005). *ILO multilateral framework on labor migration: Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labor migration*. Authors.
- International Labor Organisation (ILO). (2013). *Reintegration with the home community: Perspectives of returnee migrant workers in Sri Lanka*. Authors.
- International Labor Organisation (ILO). (2016). *Promoting informed policy dialogue on migration, remittance, and development in Nepal*. Authors.
- International Labor Organisation (ILO). (2017). *General practical guidance on promoting coherence among employment, education/training, and labor migration policies*. Authors.
- International Labor Organisation (ILO). (2020). *COVID-19 and Nepali labor migrants - impact and responses: Research Paper X*. Authors
- International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2019). *World Economic Outlook Database*.
- Iskander, N., & Lowe, N. (2010). Hidden talent: Tacit skill formation and labor market incorporation of Latino immigrants in the United States. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 30(2), 132-146.
- Kariyil, R., Sanitha, K. K., & Mathew, R. V. (2020). A study on labor migration and work-life balance. *Studies in Indian Place Names*, 40(18), 2533-2540.
- Kule, D., Mançellari, A., Papapanagos, H., Qirici, S., & Sanfey, P. (2002). The causes and consequences of Albanian emigration during transition: Evidence from microdata. *International Migration Review*, 36(1), 229-239.
- Kuschminder, K. (2017). *Reintegration strategies*. In *Reintegration strategies* (pp. 29-56). Palgrave

Macmillan, Cham.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.

Markley, E. (2011). Social remittances and social capital: Values and practices of transnational social space. *Calitatea Vieții*, 22(4), 365-378.

Maya, K. (2017). *Return migration and choice of entrepreneurship: Evidence from Kerala*. Sage.

Mesnard, A., & Ravallion, M. (2006). The wealth effect on new business startups in a developing economy. *Economica*, 73(291), 367-392.

Ministry of Labor and Employment. (2016). *Labor migration for employment, a status report for Nepal: 2014/15*. Government of Nepal: Authors.

Ministry of Labor and Employment. (2018). *Labor migration for employment, a status report for Nepal: 2015/16 – 2016/17*. Government of Nepal: Authors.

Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Services. (2020). *Nepal labor migration status report*. Government of Nepal: Authors.

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and psychological measurement*, 30(3), 607-610.

National Planning Commission, Central Bureau of Statistics. (2019). *Report on the Nepal labor force survey 2017/18*. Central Bureau of Statistics. Government of Nepal.

National Planning Commission, (2019). *Fifteenth Plan, 2020/21- 2025/26*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission Secretariat, Government of Nepal.

Ndreka, A. (2019). Return migrants' impact on the economic development of the origin country. *European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4(2), 20-27.

Obucina, O., Beauchemin, C., Cerrutti, D., M. A., & Havryliuk, O. (2018). *Report on the economic integration of return migrants*. Sage.

OECD, S. M. C. (2017). *Interrelations between public policies, migration, and development in the Philippines*. Sage.

Pandit, B. (2017). *Contribution of skill test in employment among short-term vocational training graduates* (M.Phil. Dissertation). Kathmandu University, Nepal.

Reardon, T. (1997). Using evidence of household income diversification to inform the study of the rural nonfarm labor market in Africa. *World Development*, 25(5), 735-748.

Rehman, A. A., & Alharthi, K. (2016). An introduction to research paradigms. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(8), 51-59.

Riley, C. (2015). *Study note-push and pull factors behind migration*. Sage.

Sapkota, K. (2020). Women in foreign employment: Its impact on the left behind family members in Tanahun district, Nepal. *The Geographical Journal of Nepal*, 13, 69-90.

Segal, U. A. (2016). *Opportunities and challenges of return migration*. Sage.

- Setrana, M. B., & Tonah, S. (2014). Return migrants and the challenge of reintegration: The case of returnees to Kumasi, Ghana. *Ìrinkèrindò*, 116-142.
- Sheed, T. S. (2017). *Promoting sustainable economic and social reintegration of returnee migrants: Bangladesh perspective*. AIJS. <https://amity.edu/UserFiles/aibs/68dfThamina%20Shanzida%20Sheed.pdf>
- Sunar, M. S., Bishokarma, K. B., Poudel, S., Nepali, P., Sushil, B. K., & Manabi, A. (2015). *Human rights situation of Dalit community in Nepal*. Sage.
- Trifan, R. (2015). *The contribution of circular migration to economic growth in developing countries*. In *Proceedings of FIKUSZ Symposium for Young Researchers* (p. 241). Óbuda University Keleti Károly Faculty of Economics.
- UN General Assembly. (2018). *Global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration - intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed outcome*. [https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713\\_agreed\\_outcome\\_global\\_c\\_ompact\\_for\\_migration.pdf](https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_c_ompact_for_migration.pdf)
- UN Women. (2018). *Returning home: Challenges and opportunities for women migrant workers in the Nepali labor market*. Authors
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2015). <https://www.unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary>
- Vocational Education Research, (2013). Australia.  
<https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary>.
- Van Houte, M., & De Koning, M. (2008). *Towards better embeddedness: Monitoring assistance to involuntary returning migrants from Western countries*. Centre for International Development Issues, Nijmegen.
- Wahba, J. (2014). *Return migration and economic development*. In *International handbook on migration and economic development*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Wahba, J. (2015). *Who benefits from return migration to developing countries?* IZA World of Labor.
- Wall, T. (2017). A manifesto for higher education, skills, and work-based learning. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*. Sage.
- Wassink, J. T., & Hagan, J. M. (2017). *Rethinking return migration: Divergent trajectories of self-employment, social mobility, and development in Mexico*. In PAA 2017 Annual Meeting. PAA.
- Wickramasekara, P. (2010). *Labor migration in South Asia: A review of issues policies and practices*. International Labor Office, International Migration Programme.
- Wickramasinghe, A.A.I.N. & Wimalaratana, W. (2016). *International migration and migration theories*. Social Affairs Journal.
- Wickramasekara, P. (2019). *Effective return and reintegration of migrant workers with special focus on ASEAN member states*. ILO ASEAN Triangle Project, International labor Organization, Bangkok.

Williams, N. (2009). *Education, gender, and migration in the context of social change*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3418604/>

World Bank. (2013). *The Philippine development report: Creating more and better jobs (Report No. ACS5842)*. World Bank Philippine Office.

World Bank. (2013). *Migration and Entrepreneurship in Nepal*. World Bank Nepal Office.



## About the Author

Sunila Baniya is the skills development coordinator for the Safer Migration Project at Helvetas Nepal. She has been involved in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector for 14 years. Ms. Baniya has technically assisted in developing training curricula for more than a dozen occupations for foreign employment and has conducted quality skills training for over 12,000 aspiring migrant workers. This publication highlights the skills dimension in the labor migration cycle which is often overlooked. It illustrates the hard and soft skills acquired by the labor migrants abroad and analyzes the interest of the returnees in using those skills along with the barriers they face for successful reintegration. The findings of the study may be of interest to those working in TVET and migration sector. Sunila holds master's degrees in TVET and Sociology and lives in Lalitpur, Nepal.

## Linking Education with Labor Markets (LELAM) Project 2021

Linking Education and Labour Markets: Under what conditions can Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) improve the income of the youth? (LELAM-TVET4INCOME) a six-year project (2017-2022) implemented in Nepal, Benin, Chile and Costa Rica. The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) is the leading partner of the project. The LELAM project is financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) under their joint "Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development" (r4d program). The project aims to understand how policymakers in low- and middle-income countries can improve the youth labor-market situation by strengthening social institutions and their interdependence with formal, non-formal and informal TVET. It also aims to analyze the conditions under which TVET improves gainful employment and job quality and thereby improves the income of youth.

