

POVERTY AND WORK MIGRATION OF CHILDREN IN RURAL NEPAL

(A Study of Five Villages of Nuwakot District)

A DISSERTATION

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In POPULATION STUDIES**

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December 2006

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We hereby recommend that this dissertation entitled "**Poverty and Work Migration of Children in Rural Nepal : A Study of Five Villages of Nuwakot District**" prepared by Bhim Raj Suwal has been prepared under my guidance and supervision and to be accepted by the Research Committee in fulfillment for the requirement of final examination of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POPULATION STUDIES.

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December 2006

FOREWORD

This is to hereby certify that Mr. Bhim Raj Suwal has prepared this dissertation entitled **"Poverty and Work Migration of Children in Rural Nepal : A Study of Five Villages of Nuwakot District"** under my guidance and supervision.

I would like to ensure that this dissertation or any part of this has not been previously made the basis for award of any degree of Tribhuvan University or any other universities in the world.

I strongly recommend this dissertation for final acceptance.

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November 2006

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The phenomenon of work migration among children is recognized as a social evil as it causes separation of children from family and deprivation of parental love, care and education. Away from home, migrant child workers are highly vulnerable to different types of abuse and exploitation in their place of work. Therefore, there is a general consensus that work migration of children needs to be understood through research and stopped through action programme.

However, it is felt that the issue of child labour migration has not been investigated seriously. In this context, the present study on *Poverty and Work Migration of Children in Rural Nepal: A Study of Five Villages of Nuwakot* explores characteristics of work migration and examines the pervasiveness of poverty and deprivation among families of child labourers. It examines the variation in child labour migration by conditions of poverty/deprivation and explains interrelationships between child labour migration and poverty related factors by identifying the relative importance of poverty/deprivation variables in explaining child labour migration. Required information is obtained from primary (household survey) as well as secondary sources. Descriptive as well as advanced statistical analyses have been performed in order to arrive at valid conclusions.

The field was chosen on the basis of the author's previous research experience on child labour migration issues. In the initial stage of this study, the author was overwhelmed by the fact that completing a doctoral dissertation was very big undertaking in terms of its structure, style and content with the required depth. Even though the topic was finalized, the author faced the dearth of relevant theoretical literature at the very beginning of conceptualizing the study. In course of literature review, it was realized that the theoretical foundation of research on child labour migration is still not concretized. Hence, this study has become more empirical than theoretical.

This study would not have been completed without the valuable support, guidance and supervision of my immediate supervisor Prof. Dr. Bal Kumar KC in every stage of this study. He provided me with timely comments and suggestions for improving the text and devoted his valuable time for months to help me reorganize, edit and finalize this dissertation. I express my sincere gratitude to him for providing me with a rare opportunity to learn various stages of research.

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I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the residents of the study areas who responded my questionnaire sincerely and patiently. This study would not have been possible without their cooperation for responses. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to all those who helped me during data collection in the field as well as arranged my accommodation during my stay in the study areas.

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Any error in this study, however, remains my own.

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ABSTRACT

Theoretical Ground

The incidence of child labour migration was deeply embedded with the process of industrial revolution of today's developed countries as many children moved on their own or with families to cities to work in the factories, mines and textile mills. Structuralists argue that child labour migration prevails most in the pre-capitalist societies mainly because, in these societies, role of schooling of children is minimal. The advocates of survival strategy, on the other hand, claim that children in the poorest families are family assets and are sent to work to the cities to add family income when the other members of the households fail to find jobs. Most of the today's developing societies including Nepal are passing through pre-capitalist mode of production and in these societies, incidence of household poverty and deprivation, weak schooling system and incidence of child labour migration continues to be a widespread phenomenon.

Poverty argument appears to be most powerful argument for child labour migration as household poverty pushes many children out of home for work. Historically unequal distribution pattern of resources/opportunities, ethnic and gender based discriminatory practices and inequality born by the recent development efforts are the major causes of poverty/deprivation of rural families in Nepal.

The Context

Past studies reveal that 1.6 per of total children aged 5-17 years were child labourers in 1997 and it is about 1.7 per cent in the five villages of Nuwakot district in 1998. Migrant children go on their own or brought to the cities mostly by their parents, relatives, or neighbours. Migrant children are deprived of parental love, care and education, and are highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse in the place of work.

The issue of child labour migration has not got serious attention in Nepal in terms of both research and policy agenda. Most studies conducted so far focus on the child labour situation in the destination and are not sufficient to understand interplay of the poverty and deprivation related factors at the place of origin. The present study focuses on the dynamics of child labour migration in the origin with a view to examine characteristics of household poverty/deprivation, child labour migration and differentials of child labour

migration according to poverty/deprivation related factors. It also examines the relative importance of poverty/deprivation factors in explaining child labour migration.

Five villages of Nuwakot district are chosen as study areas where, with the evidence of high incidence of child labour migration, ABC/Nepal, Kathmandu implemented action programme to prevent child migration during the late 90s. Required information was obtained from primary as well as secondary sources. Primary data were collected through survey of 479 households without child labour migration in the year 2000. The present study has also used data generated by ABC/Nepal exclusively for households with child labour migration. Descriptive as well as advanced statistical methods such as zero-order correlation analysis and logistic regression analysis have been applied to analyze data. Altogether 22 hypotheses have been formulated to examine the effect of selected predictor variables on household poverty and deprivation on child labour migration. The predictor variables represented economic and quality of life related variables, social variables, child deprivation variables and demographic variables. The general hypothesis of this study is that the incidence of child labour migration is higher among more deprived groups than among less deprived groups of households.

Characteristics of Child Labour Migration

Altogether six per cent of households have child labour migration in the study area. Of the total children aged 5-17 years, 1.7 per cent migrated for work, 2.4 per cent among male and 1 per cent among female children. Female children migrate mostly for domestic work at an early age by twice the magnitude for male children. Most of the migrant child labourers (87%) migrate to Kathmandu valley in unskilled work like dish/washing in hotel/restaurants, cleaning and domestic chores. About 33 per cent of the children have migrated with the influence of their relatives and many of them with false promises. The hill ethnic group constituted 38.1 per cent of the total migrant child labourers.

Some families do not know the whereabouts of some of the children. Poor economic condition of the family, repayment of debt, economic insufficiency, hope for future improvement of economic condition of family, and hope of supplementing family income are the most frequently cited reasons for work migration of children.

Characteristics of Poverty and Deprivation among Families of Child Labourers

Households with child labour migration are generally poor with limited assets and income, high level of illiteracy (59%) and child deprivation. Poverty and deprivation in the study areas is mainly associated with low agricultural productivity, lack of alternative

sources of income, lack of utilization of development potentials, and lack/failure of poverty-focused programme.

Differentials in Child Labour Migration

The condition of poverty and deprivation brings significant variation in the incidence of child labour migration according to economic, social and child deprivation conditions of children. The incidence of child labour migration for most of the less deprived group of children is around 2 per cent or less as compared to 5-9 per cent for the more deprived groups and even 12 per cent for Dalit children and 22 per cent for the children who belong to landless households. The incidence of child labour migration is very high among Dalit children who have work participation at home (20.0%) as compared to just 5 per cent among those who belong to Brahmin/Chhetri households. Migrant child labourers constituted 10-16 per cent among the most deprived group.

Determining the Role of Predictor Variables: Hypothesis and Model Testing

The zero order correlation analysis between child labour migration and selected economic and quality of life, social, child deprivation and demographic variables shows that incidence of child labour migration is negatively correlated with the conditions of less deprivation: sufficiency of the household, medium/large size of landholding, nonagricultural sources of income, ownership of radio, possession of television electricity and literacy of household heads. Logistic regression analysis further shows that the incidence of child labour migration significantly increases with increase in the condition of deprivation.

Stepwise regression analysis demonstrated that work participation is the most important factor for explaining child labour migration and captures effects of other economic, social and child deprivation variables. Other important variables explaining child labour migration are ownership of radio, landownership, gender, age, and indebtedness. Joint effect of economic sufficiency and indebtedness has much higher effect than the effect of work participation on child labour migration. Work participation appears the second most important variable affecting child labour migration when joint effects are also considered.

Conclusions

The incidence of child labour migration is deeply embedded with the process of socioeconomic transformation. It generally high in pre-capitalist societies in which poverty and deprivation is a widespread phenomenon. It is also a survival strategy of the

poor families. The incidence of child labour migration is strongly associated with household's condition of poverty and deprivation. However, it is more strongly associated with economic poverty and deprivation factors than the social factors. Families of migrant child labourers in Nepal are economically marginalized and most deprived groups of society. Therefore, economic poverty is the strongest indicator of child labour migration in rural Nepal.

Poverty and deprivation is a general argument, and the present study more specifically reveals that an interaction between economic deficiency and indebtedness (due to economic deficiency) is the most important indicator of economic poverty and deprivation in explaining children labour migration. This study further suggests that child deprivation factor specifically "children's work participation at home", as a single determinant is another important factor in explaining child labour migration in rural Nepal. This implies that "working children" more likely to migrate for work than the others.

The present study reveals a special mechanism that household poverty and deprivation determines work participation of children, and, in turn, work participation determines incidence of child labour migration. The estimate of net effect shows that the effect of other poverty and deprivation variables decreases with increase in the effect of work participation variable. With this, it is concluded that work participation of children captures effect of most of the poverty and deprivation related factors in affecting child labour migration. The effect of school attendance of children is not significant for the prevention of child labour migration mainly because of weak educational system and household poverty. School attendance of children, however, is effective if incidence of work is not associated with school attendance of children.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABC/Nepal	=	Agro-forestry, Basic Health and Cooperatives/Nepal
AIDS	=	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrom
CBS	=	Central Bureau of Statistics
CERA-CYPRUS	=	Centre Européen de Recherche et d'Action sur le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme - Cyprus
CWIN	=	Child Workers in Nepal: Concern Centre
Fig.	=	Figure
GDP	=	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	=	Gross National Product
ha.	=	Hectare
HH	=	Household
HPI	=	Human Poverty Index
IFAD	=	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFM-SEI	=	International Falcon Movement/Socialist Education International
ILO-IPEC	=	International Labour Organization/International Programme for Elimination of Child Labour
INSEC	=	Informal Service Sector
JIT	=	Joint Initiative Against Trafficking
KDS	=	Kami, Damai, Sarki
LL	=	Log Likelihood
N	=	Number of Cases
n.d.	=	No Date
NGOs	=	Non-governmental Organizations
NLSS	=	Nepal Living Standard Survey
No.	=	Number
NPC	=	National Planning Commission
<i>p</i>	=	Probability
SPSS/PC+	=	Statistical Package for Social Sciences/Personal Computer
Sq. km.	=	Square Kilometer
UNDP	=	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	=	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
US	=	United States
VDCs	=	Village Development Committee