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Migration Motivations and Adaptation Strategies of Nepali Student Migrants in the Global North

Master's thesis in Globalisation and Sustainable Development

Supervisor: Marko Valenta

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Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family for constantly encouraging me throughout this study.

Abbreviations

DoFE	Department of Foreign Employment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labour Organization
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NOC	No objection certificate
NOK	Norwegian Kroner
NPR	Nepali Rupees
NRN	Non-resident Nepali
NRNA	Non-resident Nepali Association
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
RQ	Research Question
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USD	United States Dollar
UIS	UNESCO in Statistics
WES	World Education Services
WMR	World Migration Report

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	i
Abbreviations	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures	v
List of Tables	v
Abstract	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: An overview of the Student Migration trend in Nepal	3
2.1 An overview of International Migration Pattern in Nepal	3
2.2 International Migration and Nepalese Students	5
2.3 Brief History and Evolution of Education in Nepal	7
2.4 Preferred Destinations and Cost of Migration for Nepali Students	8
2.5 Motivations/ Factors behind Student Migration	11
2.6 Long term migration patterns in Nepal	14
2.7 Chapter Summary.....	16
Chapter 3: Relevant Theories and Core Themes	18
3.1 Push-pull model on migration	18
3.2 Serial, Step-wise, and Circular Migration.....	20
3.3 Migration Network Theory	22
3.4 Social Integration and Networks of International Students	23
3.5 Culture Shock.....	24
3.6 Chapter Summary.....	26
Chapter 4: Research Methodology	28
4.1 Why Qualitative Research.....	28
4.2 Research Design, Sampling, and Choice of Informants.....	29
4.3 Data Collection Tools and Process.....	33
4.4 Data Analysis	36
4.5 Reflexivity, Positionality, and Ethical Issues.....	38
4.6 Chapter Summary.....	39
Findings and Discussion	40
Chapter 5: Factors affecting migration decisions of Nepali Students	40

5.1 Push factors behind the decision to Migrate	40
5.2 Pull factors of the Destination Countries	43
5.3 Expectations from their Life Abroad	46
5.4 Accumulation of Resources to Move Abroad	48
5.5 Chapter Summary.....	51
Chapter 6: Migration Experience of Nepali Students	53
6.1 Student’s Adaptation to a new Socio-cultural Environment.....	53
6.1.1 The Honeymoon Phase.....	54
6.1.2 Culture Shock	55
6.1.3 Adjustment.....	57
6.1.4 Adaptation	59
6.2 Experiences from the Gender Lens	60
6.3 Experiences of Ethnic Exclusion and Racism.....	62
6.4 Navigating Migration Policies in the Destination Country	64
6.5 Recurrent Multinational Migrations.....	66
6.6 Chapter Summary.....	68
Chapter 7: Social Integration in the Host Country	70
7.1 Ties with fellow Nepali People	70
7.2 Ties with the International Community	72
7.3 Role of Language in Interactions and Negotiations	74
7.4 Chapter Summary.....	76
Chapter 8: Future Plans and Expectations	78
8.1 Future plans for Aspiring Migrants and Migrants who recently moved	78
8.2 Plans of Long-term Migrants Settled Abroad	80
8.3 Chapter Summary.....	82
Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	84
Bibliography	89
Appendices.....	98
Appendix 1: Interview Guideline used to Interview Aspiring Migrants.....	98
Appendix 2: Interview Guideline used to Interview Aspiring Migrants and Long-Term Migrants.....	99

List of Figures

Figure 1: Number of International Degree-seeking students in Nepal (2006- 2017)	6
Figure 2: Preferred destinations for Nepalese Student Migrants	8
Figure 3: Students lined up outside MOE to collect their NOCs in the middle of the pandemic	9
Figure 4: Funds outflow due to student migration (NPR, in millions)	10
Figure 5: The core theories and themes used in this research to answer specific research questions	21
Figure 6: The four stages of culture shock.....	25
Figure 7: Breakdown of the informants	30
Figure 8: Analytic themes and core themes/theories used to explore those themes in this research	37

List of Tables

Table 1: Informants who are aspiring to move to a country in Global North for higher studies	31
Table 2: Informants who have recently moved and have been living in a country in Global North for less than five years	32
Table 3: Informants who have been living in a country in Global North for more than five years	32

Abstract

Nepali students today are spread worldwide due to globalization and an increasing migration trend in Nepal. They are always on the lookout for better opportunities, and the countries in Global North are their preferred destinations. This decision to migrate has various motivations and comes with certain costs. Students go through multiple experiences, pleasant and harsh while navigating a completely new life in a foreign land. This study is an exploratory study of the key motivations behind student migration in Nepal, the various experiences they have as migrants, and their integration into the new society.

I employed a qualitative methodology to conduct this study whereby I conducted semi-structured interviews with fourteen Nepali student migrants (and aspiring migrants) to gather information. Three were aspiring migrants, four were recent migrants, and seven were long-term migrants. Similarly, I reviewed secondary data through articles, journals, and research papers to get a deeper insight into the topic and to be able to interpret my primary data coherently.

With push-pull factors of migration, migrant networks, adaptation experiences, and social integration as some of my key themes, I interpreted and analyzed the motivations and experiences of the fourteen migrants as part of my empirical findings. The major push factors identified in this study were Nepal's lack of employment opportunities, lower wages, dissatisfaction with the political situation, and the willingness to follow the 'trend' of migration. Similarly, the primary pull factors were better earning opportunities and higher wages, possibilities of staying longer in the destination country, and scholarships and financial aid provided in the destination country. Options of settling abroad permanently were more significant motivators than the quality of education for migrant students.

However, their actual experiences were different and diverse. Most of them struggled to adapt to the new environment. Their experiences grew better as they integrated into contemporary society and adjusted to their new lives. For adaptation, they employed various strategies and built social networks to deal with the culture shock. They were able to adapt to their new lives by spending time in the new environment and with the help of fellow Nepali communities.

Furthermore, I explored the patterns of social integration followed by Nepali migrants. Most respondents depended on the Nepali community as their critical social network, whereas some were equally comfortable with the locals of the destination country too. I also attempted to understand the plans of Nepali migrant students and found that all of them were happy in their current destinations and were willing to stay longer. Hence, Nepali student migrants employed different strategies to navigate the migration policies of the host countries and extend their stay. They chose destinations with easier visa processing, took additional courses to keep their student visas valid even after graduating, and were keen on finding permanent jobs

Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent times, with advancements in technology and globalization, the world has become more connected, and the mobility of people is at an all-time high. The World Migration Report (2020) reports that about 281 million people live in a country they were not born in. Nepal also has a considerable migrant population spread worldwide, and it is reported that 25% of the country's GDP is accessed through remittances (ILO, 2019). A significant chunk of these migrants is student migrants who migrate to their preferred destinations to pursue higher education.

Many Nepali students tend to move abroad for higher education, and many of them decide to settle in the countries in the Global North. Some of the most common destinations for Nepali student migrants are Australia, the U.K, the U.S.A., and Japan. Developed countries usually offer better education and opportunities than Nepal, attracting many students. On the other hand, the Nepali education system fails to promote creativity, individual research, and a practical approach to learning (NepaliSansar, 2019), making it difficult for students to meet their academic needs.

This thesis will look into migration aspirations, motivations, and experiences of Nepali student migrants aspiring to migrate or residing in the Global North. When students decide to relocate, their journeys are filled with various motivations, experiences, and challenges. There can be multiple factors that drive the student's decision to migrate, and they go through different positive and negative experiences in the process. It is interesting to adapt to an entirely new environment and a new academic culture while trying to build social networks and navigate various migration policies. Hence, this thesis explores and overviews the motivations, experiences, social networks, and plans of student migrants in the Global North. This study will examine stories of Nepali student migrants and interpret them concerning specific migration theories and concepts.

This thesis will address the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the key motivations behind Nepali Students' decision to migrate abroad for higher studies?
- RQ2: What kind of experiences do these students have in a foreign country?
- RQ3: How do they navigate social interactions and integration in the host country?
- RQ4: What are their future plans in terms of migration?

This thesis is based on primary and secondary data about Nepali student migration collected from various sources. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with student migrants, whereas secondary data was collected through extensive desk study. The desk study included an analysis of scientific journals, research papers, web articles, etc. I also have an insight into the migration experiences of Nepali students as a student migrant myself, which helped me understand informants' experiences more insightfully.

Regarding the structure of the thesis, it is divided into nine chapters. The second chapter following this explores international migration and Nepali student migration in detail and reviews the existing literature surrounding it. The third chapter delves into relevant migration theories and concepts that will be used in this thesis to interpret the migration experiences of students. Similarly, the fourth chapter discusses the methodology deployed to collect and analyze data in this research. The chapter also explains the sampling technique, ethical issues, and the issues of positionality for the researcher. Following that, the next four chapters discuss and analyze the empirical findings of this study.

Chapter 5 presents the motivations behind students' decision to migrate, and I explore the various factors and aspects that lead them to move. Similarly, Chapter 6 delves into the experiences that students had in the journey, the elements of cultural shock, and their adaptation strategies. Chapter 7 builds on Chapter 6 and explores the social integration of migrants in the destination countries and how they have been able to develop new relationships in a foreign country. Similarly, Chapter 8 of the thesis presents the future plans of student migrants, and the last chapter concludes the study with a summary of all the significant findings.

Chapter 2: An overview of the Student Migration trend in Nepal

This chapter will focus on the overall idea of international migration and how it has integrated into the Nepali context. I will first give an overview of the global migration pattern in Nepal and how the concept of migration has evolved in Nepal through the years. I will also delve into the existing literature on general student migration patterns, specifically in Nepal, and identify the existing trends. After that, I will look at the brief history and evolution of education in Nepal and discuss the defining features of the current education system in Nepal. The chapter will also discuss the cost of migration for students, the risks and motivations behind migration decisions, and the factors that influence students (specifically Nepali students) to migrate.

2.1 An overview of International Migration Pattern in Nepal

International Migration has become a big part of today's world with increased interconnectedness and access. This decision to migrate is driven by various factors, including recreation, hopes of better job opportunities, and higher education. According to the World Migration Report (2020), about 281 million people live in a country not their place of birth. This number of migrants seems to be increasing as it has grown from 128 million in 1990 to 281 million in 2020 (WMR, 2020). Among these migrants, developing countries account for more than 70% of international migrants (Shrestha, 2017). Only 16 percent of migrants from the world's least developed countries make it to the global North (*ibid*). Migrants may be deterred from migrating to developed countries due to high migration expenses and limited demand for migrant labor (Shrestha, 2017).

In the context of Nepal specifically, according to the 2011 population and housing census, nearly half of Nepalese households have a member working or has returned from abroad (IOM, 2019). Factors like climate change, environmental degradation, and natural and artificial calamities result in displacement and dislocation from the land, forcing many Nepalis to move to survive (IOM, 2019). The pull-push factors behind their migration

decisions are not just limited to environmental/physical characteristics but also seem to be triggered by social, economic, and emotional factors.

Nepal has traditionally been an independent country, never colonized, without established migratory routes to the western world (Valentin, 2012). Before the restoration of democracy in 1990, the ordinary populace had difficulty getting passports and travel documents for locations other than India (Seddon et al., 2002). It limited the migration options for aspiring Nepali migrants. However, since the 1990s, globalization and democratic movements have come to the forefront along with political turmoil and instability (Thieme & Wyss, 2005). Because of globalization, ambitious migrants belonging to countries with high political turmoil like Nepal have had a diverse range of options for migration. Migration had become so prevalent in Nepal that, during the 1990s and subsequent decades of political turmoil, migration and remittance transfers were the only constant sources of Nepal's GDP (Neupane, 2019). The migration trend in Nepal is significantly high, so much so that the remittance inflows had reached 875 billion NPR (around 7 billion USD) in 2019/20, accounting for 23.23% of the country's GDP (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2020).

In the context of Nepal, the idea of migration seems to be closely linked with labor migration (migrant workers), as the trend of labor migration is exceptionally high in Nepal. Even as the country battled the Covid-19 outbreak, Nepal's Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) approved over 240,000 migrant labor licenses in 2021 (Karki, 2022). Earlier, Nepali migrant workers sought employment mainly in India. Still, Nepali people began to travel for work to the Gulf States and Malaysia in the 1980s, which resulted in an increase in migrant workers and a proliferation of labor recruiting agencies and brokers (IOM, 2019). Earlier, the passport office was centralized and anyone wanting to have a passport needed to travel to Kathmandu (the capital city of Nepal) to have their passport made. The migration cost thus was also very high, which further restricted people's access to migration. In recent times, many unskilled and semi-skilled Nepalis have been able to migrate more due to the decentralization of passport applications in Nepal (IOM, 2019).

According to the country profile developed by IOM (2019), in 2011, Nepal's emigration rate was predicted to be 10.77 per 1,000 people. Similarly, according to NPHC data from 2011, the immigration rate is 0.46 per 1,000 people, and when combined, these factors contribute to Nepal's gross migration rate being 11.23 per 1,000 people (IOM, 2019).

Hence, the idea of migration is well integrated into Nepali society, and people are constantly moving in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families. The migration trend was slower in the past due to a lack of access to resources. However, since the 1990s, migration rates in Nepal have been steadily increasing, and the remittances from these migrants comprise a significant chunk of the country's GDP. Based on these existing trends, I will look into the migration pattern of my respondents and how it has evolved.

2.2 International Migration and Nepalese Students

Among many worldwide migrants, a significant chunk is international students (2.1%) who move to and sometimes decide to settle in a new country (Sweileh et al., 2018 in WMR, 2020). According to Brezis & Soueri (2011), the number of students who acquired education outside their country of citizenship in 2006 was five times higher than that of 1975. The growth rate of student migration (52%) to OECD countries had doubled in comparison to migrants moving to find jobs (27%) between 1996 and 2006 (Brezis & Soueri, 2011).

The migration trend in Nepal has also been increasing significantly through the years, and student migrants are a vital part of it. In developing countries like Nepal, many students tend to move to other countries, most often to the countries of the Global North, to pursue their higher education (Ghimire, 2019; Sokout et al., 2020, as cited in Tamang & Shrestha, 2021).

It is estimated that about 25% of Nepali students leave Nepal for higher education every year (Khania 2007, as cited in Tamang & Shrestha, 2021). Many students consider international education to be more prestigious, practical, efficient, and valuable for them. According to the 2011 national census, 110,564 Nepalese students were studying abroad (IOM, 2019). The migration of Nepalese students to other countries is booming- the number of Nepali students enrolled in degree programs overseas increased by 835 percent between 2000 and 2016, reaching 44,255 students in 2017 (UIS in World Education Services, 2018). Even though these numbers look tiny compared to the likes of India and China, it needs to be noted that the outbound mobility ratio of Nepal is significantly higher (WES, 2018). The mobility ratio in Nepal was 12.3 percent in 2016, compared to 0.9 percent, 1.9 percent, and 3 percent in India, China, and Vietnam, respectively (UIS in WES, 2018).

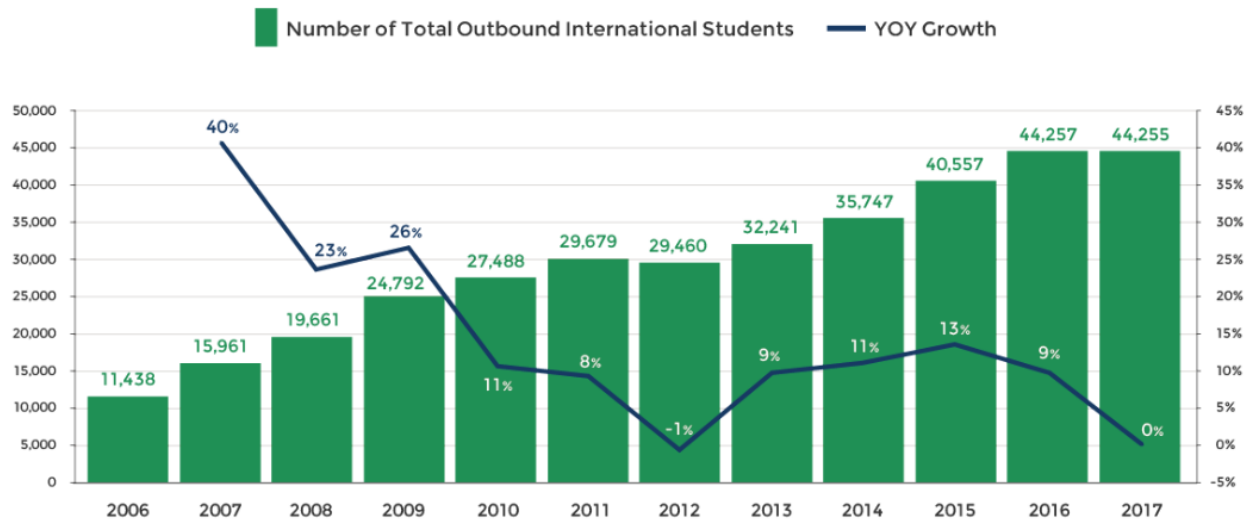


Figure 1: Number of International Degree-seeking students in Nepal (2006- 2017)

(Source: UNESCO Statistics 2017 in WES, 2018)

The chart above illustrates Nepal's international students from 2006 to 2017. It shows a constant increase in the number of students choosing to move abroad for higher education.

Many students aspire to move abroad for higher studies, and many hope to settle down abroad in the long term. Thus, International Student Migration is an integral part of the Nepali fabric, and a lot of economic and social resources are invested in student migration every year. Based on this information, I will further understand what has caused this increased trend in Nepali students migrating to the Global North. My study will delve deep into the motivations behind the various migration decisions of Nepali students and compare how it fits with the existing literature.

2.3 Brief History and Evolution of Education in Nepal

The history of 'modern' education in Nepal dates back to the 1850s when prime minister Junga Bahadur Rana started the 'Durbar High School' in Nepal (Sharma, 1990). This school was established for nobilities, and regular laypeople did not have access to it. The Ranas were autocratic rulers; hence, they were focused on restricting resources from people to ensure that people did not have the voice to retaliate or fight back for their rights. The World Education News and Review reports that Nepal's literacy rate was around 5% during the Rana regime (Zmarzly, 2019). This Rana Rule ended in 1959, and a new political system was put into place (Panchayat period- 1962-90) (Sharma, 1990). During this period, education was prioritized, and educational resources increased. Soon enough, Tribhuvan University, the first and largest university in Nepal, was established in 1959 (Sharma, 1990).

Currently, there are four medical schools and eleven universities in Nepal, according to the University Grant Commission (2020), with a total of 1,432 higher education institutions (including constituent colleges, affiliated private colleges, and linked community colleges). Even though the number of educational institutions has increased, the quality of these institutions is still questionable. According to Bista et al. (2019), issues of politicization of educational institutions, substandard research, prioritizing lectures as the only teaching method, and examinations as the only form of evaluation make Nepali education monotonous and less reliable among students.

An article on NepaliSansar (2019) explains that the education system in Nepal lacks a practical approach to learning and does not encourage students toward individual research, promoting creativity and learning from experiences. Zmarzly (2019) also talks about the centralization of education in Nepal, whereby most prestigious institutions are located in Kathmandu (the capital city) and are expensive to attend. The poor have difficulty affording these institutions and lack access to many educational resources. Many Nepali students opt to move abroad for higher education because of these and many other factors.

Exploring the history of education in Nepal gives me a better context and understanding of the topic. Looking at its evolution helps me correlate various migration decisions that migrants have made through the years and why they might have taken them.

2.4 Preferred Destinations and Cost of Migration for Nepali Students

Regarding the preferred destinations for these students, the Kathmandu Post, in 2016, reported that Japan, Australia, the United States, New Zealand, India, and Germany were the most sought-after destinations for Nepali Student Migrants. Furthermore, the country with the most Nepalese students currently is India (IOM, 2019). Since India and Nepal share an open border and the required documentation and processing time is minimal, students likely opt to move to India to seek better educational opportunities.

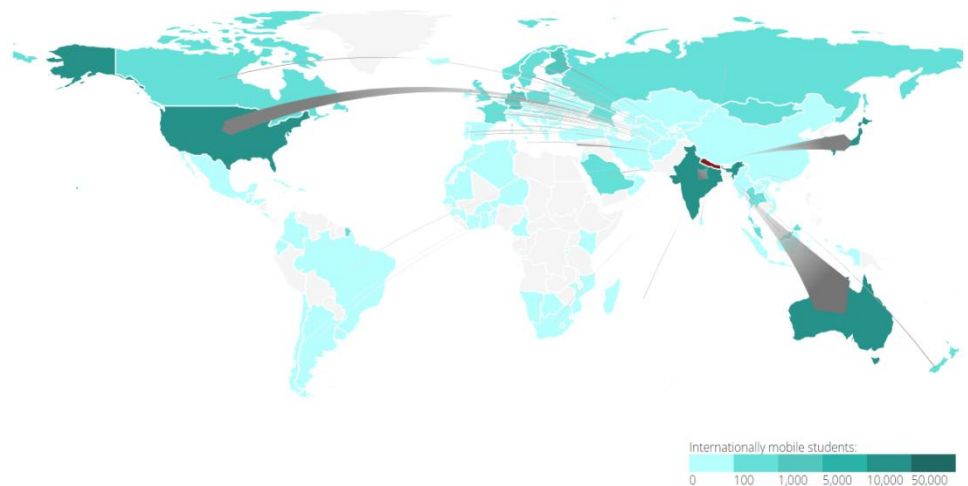


Figure 2: Preferred destinations for Nepalese Student Migrants
(Source: UNESCO, Institute of Statistics)

The image above illustrates the preferred destinations for Nepalese student migrants, and countries like Australia, the USA, India, and Japan seem to be at the top of the list. In 2018/2019, over half of the total student migrants moved to Australia (36,324), 8523 to Japan, and 2302 to Cyprus (IOM, 2019).

Based on the data from the 'Abroad Study Permission Section' at the Nepalese Education Ministry, the number of students applying for no-objection certificates (NOC) increased from 58,625 in 2017-2018 to 63,259 in 2018-2019 (Dhungana, 2021). The no-objection certificate is a document issued by the Education ministry stating that they have no objections to the

student's decision to move abroad. The actual number of students moving abroad is likely much higher than this, as students moving to India often do not require a NOC.

Nepali students grew from less than 1,000 in 2008 to more than 29,000 in 2019, making them Japan's third-largest international student community (Kharel, 2022). Nepali students were also the second fastest-growing population in Japan in 2013 and the third fastest-growing population in Australia in 2014 (ICEF Monitor, 2015 in Dhungel, 2019).



Figure 3: Students lined up outside MOE to collect their NOCs in the middle of the pandemic

Source: Routine of Nepal Banda, 2020 (Facebook page)

Similarly, the Nepali Times, in 2019, also reported that Nepali Students spent Rs 40.9 billion (333 million USD approx.) in 2018 to move abroad, and 60% of these students advanced to Australia. This expenditure on student migration seems to be increasing every year as the cost has gone from around 12 billion NPR (96 million USD) in 2009/10 to 20 billion NPR (161 million USD) in 2015/16 and 40 billion NPR (333 million USD) in 2018/19 (IOM, 2019). In the case of Japan, each student has to pay around 1.4 million Nepali rupees (USD 14,000) to

a Japanese language institute (JLI) in Japan via an international educational consultancy (IEC) in Nepal to enter Japan on a student visa (Kharel, 2022). For students migrating to the US, it is estimated that International students spend about USD 99,417 during their degree in the US (NepaliSansar, 2020).

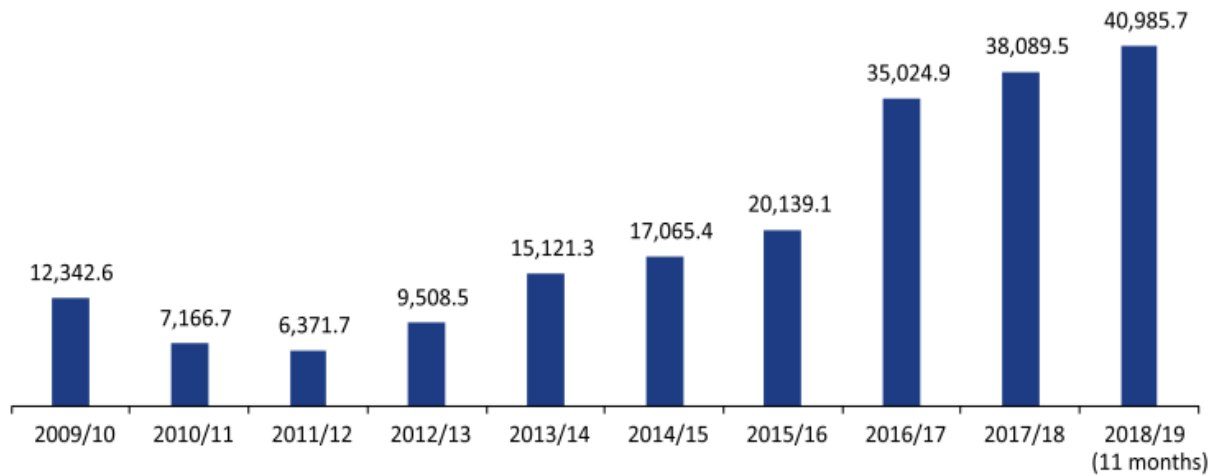


Figure 4: Funds outflow due to student migration (NPR, in millions)

Source: Nepal Rastra Bank (2019) in IOM Report (2019)

This trend of student migration has significant implications for Nepal and its economy. Students are moving out despite the high costs of migration and opting to settle abroad in many cases. While this migration trend is causing brain drain, it also opens up avenues for an increase in remittance in Nepal. Many nations are tightening their immigration regulations. In those cases, entering a country on a student visa and then applying for permanent residence after finishing their studies is a viable option for many students (IOM, 2019).

This increasing need for students to migrate abroad has given rise to several education consultants. These consultants help, support, and guide students in their attempt at student visas and charge money for it from the students. While education consultants are not inherently wrong, many consultants operate illegally to defraud students, and the students are cheated. The Himalayan Times (2019) reported that 23 education consultancies were raided within the Kathmandu Valley for illegal and fraudulent business practices. Similarly, in 2015, the Kathmandu Post reported the arrest of an education consultancy owner who had duped 15 Nepali students of millions of Nepali rupees. The students reached the US and found out that the college had closed down months ago, and they had been defrauded, and the students had

to return. Fraudulent practices like these can have a substantial financial and emotional impact on Nepali Students and discourage them.

Thus, for Nepali students, the decision to migrate has high costs and risks associated with it. However, many students still decide to go ahead with their migration decision, probably because they consider the benefits to be more significant than the costs.

Based on the findings of this section, I have a better understanding of where students prefer to migrate and have developed a curiosity to explore further why these destinations are so popular. By understanding the most preferred migration destinations for Nepali students, I could also identify the profile of migrants that best suit my study. Based on previous studies, I was inspired to incorporate multiple migrants currently residing in destinations most common for Nepali students to get a diverse and inclusive perspective of their motivations and experiences.

2.5 Motivations/ Factors behind Student Migration

Various reasons/factors motivate people to migrate. Since the dawn of human civilization, the primary motivating force driving people to migrate from one location to another has been the desire to live in relative peace with a secure and affluent social environment. (Haan, 2000; Upreti, 2002 as cited in Dhungel et al., 2013). Students migrate from low-wage to high-wage nations because they hope to find the opportunity to work where they received their education and thus, earn higher than in their home country (Rosenzweig, 2006 in Brezis & Soueri, 2011).

Similarly, the high percentage of unemployment among university graduates in their native countries and the precarious political climate may be essential motivators for students to migrate from developing countries to developed countries (Levi 2007, as cited in Tamang & Shrestha, 2021). International graduates' likelihood of staying in the host country is also raised by economic uncertainty in their home country, established plans to stay abroad, and adverse employment experiences in their home country (Tansel, 2014; Nghia, 2019). Dhungel et al. (2013), in their study, found that most Nepalese students wanted to stay in Nepal given that they could study the subject they wanted, and the government-supported their education process with student loans and part-time job opportunities.

Studying abroad benefits migrants' social and cultural growth, resulting in increased human capital (Papatisba, 2005, as cited in Brezis & Soueri, 2011). It can lead to increased access to opportunities and resources in various aspects. Student migration is considered an essential investment in students' future from developing nations such as Nepal and India (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012, as cited in Tamang & Shrestha, 2021). The possible factors behind this consideration are international competitiveness, the underpinning of efforts indicated in policy texts, and a desire to fully participate in a global higher education market (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012, as cited in Tamang & Shrestha, 2021).

In the Nepalese context, various push-pull factors motivate students to migrate for higher education. Most of these students hope to acquire better quality education and create better opportunities for themselves. India is one of the highly preferred destinations for Nepali students. The availability of better quality education at a comparatively affordable cost seems to be an essential factor in this case. According to the QS university rankings list (2022), 35 Indian universities have been listed globally in the top 1500 universities, while there are no Nepali universities. It indicates that Nepali students are motivated to move to India for higher education as they have access to world-renowned universities in India. At the same time, the documentation requirement is easy, and the cost of migration is not too high.

Along with their individual needs, the migration network is an important aspect that influences Nepali migrants' decision to migrate to specific destinations (Regmi et al., 2014). Since there is a strong network of non-resident Nepalese living abroad, the flow of information about life and experiences abroad is easily accessible to aspiring migrants in Nepal. It also increases their earning opportunities while learning (Bhattarai, 2009). Moreover, peer pressure can also be a pulling factor, and political instability is a major driving force behind Nepalese students' worldwide migration (Basnyat, 2010, as cited in Dhungel et al., 2013). When students see many of their colleagues and friends migrating to developed countries for higher studies, this motivates them to take this opportunity. On top of it, the political instability in Nepal can be disappointing and push students to move out.

Furthermore, migrating to developed nations on a student visa to earn money has become a trend in the current situation. It is done to increase the economic standard in Nepalese communities (Machamasi, N/A). Bhattarai (2009) calls it *'learning and earning while*

learning' and considers it one of the most significant factors influencing Nepali student migration. Most students studying abroad try to work as much as possible to bear partial/full expenses of their studies.

Dhungel (2019) focused specifically on the experiences of Nepalese women in their migration journey and found that women's willingness for social and physical movement had increased with the development of mass media and increased access to the internet access to foreign aid, and so on. The status report for Nepal by IOM (2013-2014) showed that 46,274 women had been abroad for work purposes until 2014. This number was just 161 until 2001 (Dhungel, 2019). According to IOM (2019), the DoFE Nepal issued 4,099,926 labor permits between 2008/2009 and 2018/2019, among which 211,891 were given to females. This number shows a stark increase in the rate of women labor migration in Nepal in and after the 2000s and hints at increased mobility for Nepalese women. For this research, the number of Nepalese student migrants who are female was not available, but this stark increase in women labor migrants hints at an increase in women student migrants as well. Dhungel (2019) also identified the search for an independent and free life as a motivating factor for Nepali women who decide to migrate. Since Nepal is still a patriarchal society, there are certain restrictions that women face, and they hope that, by emigrating to other countries, they will be able to live a free life.

In terms of the pull factors, many host nations have tried various techniques to recruit overseas students and graduates, including scholarship programs and permanent residency or work visa schemes (Hawthorne & To, 2014; Scott et al., 2015, as cited in Nghia, 2019). Higher education is considered an intellectual environment in which students develop or acquire information to meet their own and parents' expectations, establish industry relations, expand collaboration, and network (Hüfner, 2003 in Tamang & Shrestha, 2021). Similarly, a study conducted by Gorgoshidze (2010) on the migration motivations of students in Georgia concluded that 72% of the respondents wanted to have new life experiences in a new environment, which led them to migrate.

All these different push-pull factors influence the students' decision to migrate. In the Nepalese context, the political instability in the country and the lack of opportunities seem to have discouraged Nepali students from staying in Nepal and pushed them to other countries.

These countries, especially the ones in the global North, provide a sense of stability, safety, and better future opportunities for these migrating students.

Reviewing the literature on migration motivations of Nepalese students has provided me with a more robust baseline of why students tend to migrate. Based on this current information about migration motivation, my study will look further into the push-pull factors that influenced the informants of this research and how those factors correlated with the core migration concepts. Building on Dhungel's (2019) work about women migrants, my thesis will also further explore the experiences of my migrants from the gender lens and explore how the experiences differ for different genders.

2.6 Long term migration patterns in Nepal

Among all the student migrants who decide to stay abroad, some choose to remain overseas long term and potentially settle there. As discussed in chapter 2.3, many students decide to move in hopes of getting further opportunities in the host country and ultimately acquiring permanent residency. Such migrants opt to stay in another country long term and settle there. Dhungel (2019) shares that moving and settling in another country is considered prestigious in Nepal, and many Nepali parents appreciate their children living abroad (Acharya, 2012:402 as cited in Dhungel, 2019).

It is difficult to identify the exact number of Nepali students who have decided to settle abroad or even the number of students who return to Nepal because of a lack of proper documentation. IOM (2019) points out that Nepal is not tracking the returning student migrants, which means that Nepal does not have accurate data about potentially skilled labor. Thus, Nepal is falling behind in mobilizing the skills of these migrants to promote development activities (IOM, 2019).

There might not be exact data on long-term student migrants, but the evolution of Nepali migration patterns through the years does reflect upon the motivations and experiences of such migrants. Dhungel (1999) identified that during the 1980s, the only people who were able to migrate to the US were highly skilled and trained workers. There were very few Nepali people who had acquired US citizenship back then. It indicated that long-term

migration to the US for Nepali people was not a trend back then. It has changed as there is a significant increase in Nepali migrants in the US (and elsewhere) today.

The establishment of NRNA (Non-resident Nepali Association) supports the argument that there is a big chunk of Nepali migrants who may or may not have acquired citizenship in other countries and are settled their long term. According to the NRNA website-

'Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) was established to unite and bind the Nepali Diaspora under one umbrella on 11 October 2003. After completing 18 years of its existence, NRNA has developed into a global non-governmental organization and a network of Nepali origin by establishing National Coordination Council (NCC) in 85 countries to represent its interests, concerns, and commitments.'

NRNA is an active organization and has established the Nepal Policy Institute (NPI), a think-tank that works towards sustainable development in Nepal and provides input to the government policies to make them inclusive and well-informed (IOM, 2019). NRNA is trying to mitigate the impacts of brain drain by bringing non-resident Nepali people into the mainstream conversation and mobilizing their skills and resources to address the issues prevalent in Nepal.

Mainali (2019) reports that the number of Nepalese students in U.S universities increased by 14.3% in 2018 in comparison to 2017 (US Embassy, Nepal), and most of the students who moved to the U.S did not return after graduation, promoting brain drain (Katel and Sapkota, 2018 in Mainali, 2019). Brain Drain is *'the movement of highly skilled and qualified people towards a country where they can work in better conditions and earn more money* (Upadhyay, 2017). To tackle the issues of Brain Drain, a "Brain Gain Centre" has been established as a unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which aims to identify and nurture the inputs of Nepali experts all across the world and contribute to Nepal's social and economic progress (IOM, 2019). The government actively supports and promotes NRN and pushes them to contribute more to Nepal. The prime minister of Nepal urged NRNs to contribute their technical skills, knowledge, skills, and capital to Nepal's transformation at the 10th NRN Global conference (MyRepublica, 2022).

The existing brain drain in Nepal and the efforts being made by the Nepalese government to mobilize these resourceful people from all across the world to create and promote better practices in the country is an indicator of how prevalent long-term migration has become for Nepali migrants.

Since long-term migrants are a crucial aspect of my research, the literature helped me identify the patterns of long-term migration in Nepal and its issues. Based on this literature, I will delve further into the migrants' decision to settle abroad, their experiences as long-term migrants, and their approach to maintaining strong ties with the Nepalese culture and community.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter consisted of a detailed account of student migration trends and patterns. It was identified that international migration was a big part of the Nepali migration system and student migration is a very prevalent phenomenon in Nepal. The number of Nepali Student migrants seems to be steadily increasing, and Australia, Japan, the US, and India are some of the most preferred destinations to migrate to. Similarly, push factors like lack of employment opportunities, political instability, stagnant education system in the country of origin, and pull factors such as scholarship opportunities, higher wages, and better quality of life influenced the migration decisions of Nepali students. Long-term migration was also prevalent in the country, leading to brain drain. The Nepalese government has taken some initiatives to address this issue and mobilize the resourceful Nepali individuals residing abroad to participate in essential conversations about Nepal's growth and future.

Reviewing literature has helped me identify my study's crux and given me insights that will add value to my overall research. Having a deeper understanding of the preferred destinations for student migrants will help me identify the profile of migrants that best suit my study and thus, create a diverse data pool. I will include respondents who have resided in many of these popular destinations (U.S., Australia, U.K.) to understand why they decided to move there. Similarly, gathering in-depth information on migration motivations has provided me with a substantial baseline, and I will be able to build on it by looking into the specific push-pull factors that influence the informants. I will correlate my findings regarding migration motivations with existing literature and identify common patterns and discrepancies.

Dhungel's (2019) work on the experiences of Nepali women migrants provided me with a new perspective. Thus, I will also look into the experiences of my respondents from the gender lens and explore how the gender roles and dynamics shifted among them. Similarly, since long-term migrants are an essential part of my research, reviewing the literature and data on them helped me identify the patterns of long-term migration in Nepal and its issues. I will explore the experiences of long-term migrants in detail regarding their decision to settle abroad and their social integration into the new society. My research will also compare and contrast the experiences of recent migrants with long-term migrants.

Chapter 3: Relevant Theories and Core Themes

This chapter will include a brief description of the core themes and theories recurring throughout the research. The collected information will be analyzed against these themes to understand the motivations and experiences behind student migration and have a clear picture of the various aspects of student migration in Nepal. I will discuss the push-pull model on migration and the various potential factors influencing a student's decision to migrate. Similarly, I will also explore the themes of circular, serial, and step-wise migration and its implication in the context of student migration. After that, I will elaborate on the migration network theory and social integration in the destination countries as important elements for student migrants. Finally, I will also discuss the concept of culture shock and the various phases of shock that most migrants cope with.

3.1 Push-pull model on migration

Certain thought processes guide migration decisions made by migrants. This push-pull model on migration attempts to identify and categorize these 'thoughts' behind one's migration decision. The 'law of migration' by Ravenstein (1885) argued that migration was always guided by the push-pull process whereby the negative aspects of the current place 'push' one out and the positive aspects of another site 'pull' them in (Dhungel et al., 2013). Similarly, Lee (1996) states, *'push factors are things that are bad about the country that one lives in and pull factors are things that attract one to another area.'* According to Jenkins (1977), when civilizations in transitional modernization face population expansion but cannot create economic possibilities in rural or urban areas, residents are more likely to emigrate (Neupane, 2019).

In this research, I will try to identify the push factors that motivate Nepali students to move to other countries for higher education and, in some cases, settle abroad. The push factors will include aspects of Nepal that respondents do not appreciate and want to escape. Similarly, I will also focus on the pull factors of the receiving countries and why the respondents opted to move to these specific countries. The pull factors will focus on the positive aspects of the host countries, as experienced by the respondents.

According to Upadhyay (2017), the push factors for Nepali students primarily included political instability in Nepal, better career expectations, lack of job security in Nepal, and desire for higher qualifications. Similarly, according to Upadhyay (2017), pull factors included better opportunities for higher qualifications, relative political stability, and better quality of life in the host country. I plan to compare the respondents' motivations against these components (and more) and compare the push-pull factors.

In the case of long-term migrants who have possibly migrated multiple times, I will try to identify the pull-push factors that guided their migration decision each time and what attracted them to the new destinations compared to the previous ones. In such cases, it can be assumed that the push factors will exist in the country of origin and the primary destination country as the migrant decided to move to a third country based on particular pull-push dynamics. In other cases, if there are respondents who decided to return to Nepal after their stay in another country, the pull factors of Nepal and the push factors of the host country will be compared and analyzed.

In the empirical chapters, the migration decisions taken by respondents will be viewed from the lens of push-pull theory to identify the different factors that influence their decision. It will also be interesting to look at the push-pull factors of migration for recent migrants compared to migrants who moved a long time ago. I will explore these elements and see if there are any contrasts in the factors that influenced their migration decisions.

Castles et al. (2014), as cited in Neupane (2019), argue that this model looks attractive as it encapsulates the key motivations behind migration, but it can sometimes lack coherence since it does not account for the roles and interactions of other factors, as well as the incidence of emigration and immigration at the same time. In terms of understanding student migration, the shortcomings of this model will be balanced by various other theories and concepts that are explained further.

3.2 Serial, Step-wise, and Circular Migration

The migration decisions of student migrants will be compared with serial, step-wise, and circular migration patterns to identify the most common migration patterns among the respondents. Serial Migrants refer to migrants *'who have moved at least three times and profess to belong to more than two places'* (Wee & Yeoh, 2019). Ossman (2004) explains that serial migrants are often perceived as *eccentric explorers who often seem set on taking the promises of globalization a bit too seriously*.

Similarly, step-wise migration often has a hierarchical approach to migration whereby low-capital migrants migrate towards 'better' destination countries, accumulate capital and other resources, and ultimately enter their preferred destinations, usually in the Global North (Paul, 2011). Similarly, European Commission defines circular migration as the migration pattern in which the migrant repeats their movement between two or more countries. Circular migration suggests frequent back and forth between the destinations by the migrant.

Even though serial, step-wise, and circular migration patterns are commonly examined for labor migration (see Valenta, 2020), they seem to be also relevant to understanding the student migration patterns and trajectories. Step-wise, serial and circular migration patterns will be recurring themes throughout the empirical chapters. This thesis will identify the types of migration patterns respondents followed and explore why they made these decisions. The study will also compare the pull-push factors for the respondents with their migration patterns and attempt to identify the co-relationship between these two elements. In the empirical chapters, we will also look at how the capital gains of the migrants in the destination countries impacted their further plans and decisions. The figure below summarises the core theories and themes that I intend to use to explore my main research questions.

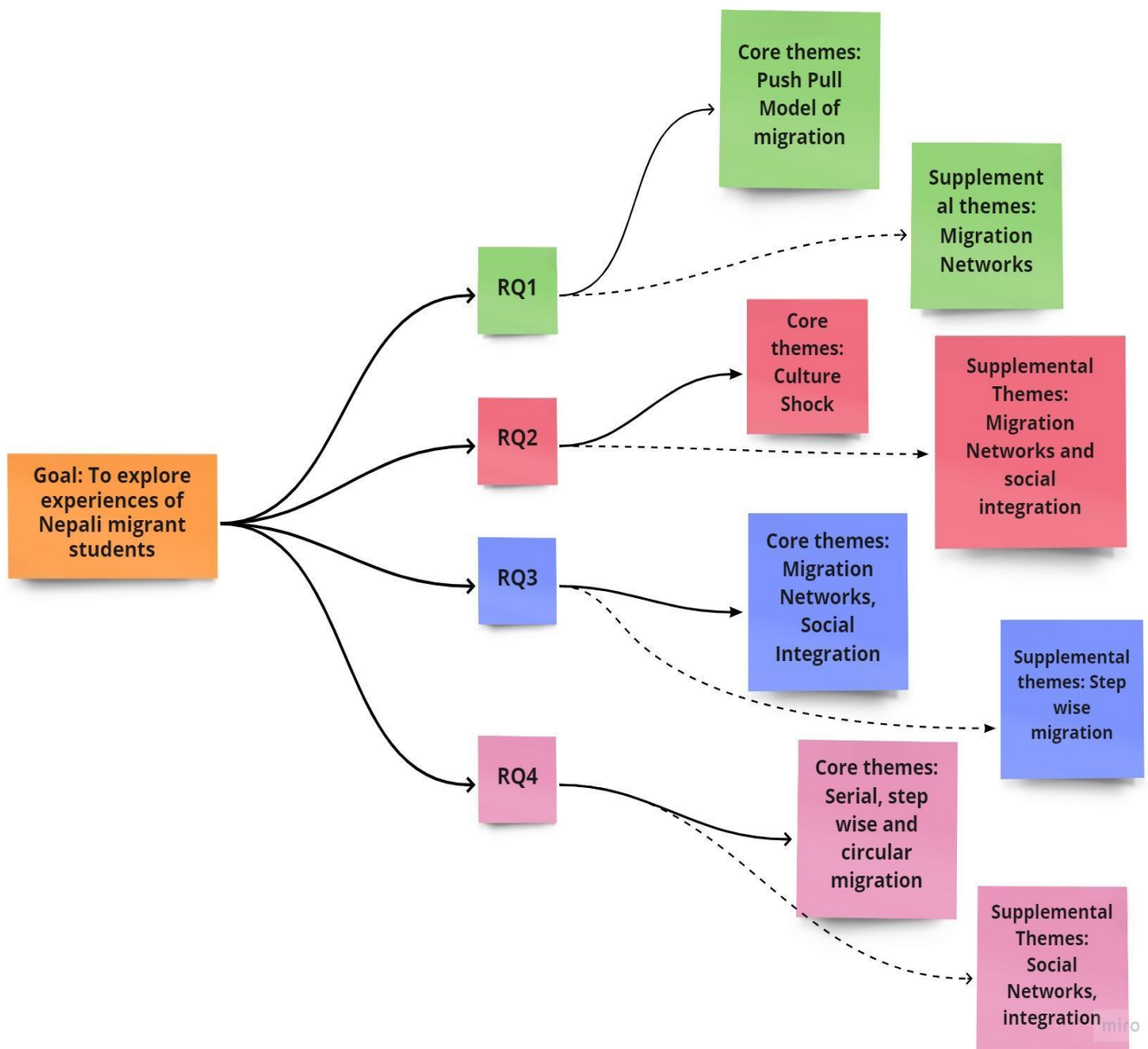


Figure 5: The core theories and themes used in this research to answer specific research questions¹

¹ Index

RQ1: What are the key motivations behind Nepali Students' decision to migrate abroad for higher studies?

RQ2: What kind of experiences do these students have during their time in a foreign country?

RQ3: How do they navigate social interactions and integration in the host country?

RQ4: What are their future plans in terms of migration?

3.3 Migration Network Theory

Massey et al. (1993:448) refer to '*migrant network assets of social ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin.*' These networks usually include people from the same country/geographical area who share a close bond. In this context, the migration network theory focuses on these social ties and their role in supporting, sustaining, and instigating migration flow (Massey et al., 1993).

According to Light et al. (date n.d.), this theory is a step up on the push and pull concepts which are too mechanical and economic. They further explain that migration theory brings a social dimension to the migration conversation and focuses on the migration decisions taken after the migrant has reduced economic, social and emotional costs.

The interactions between aspiring migrants and migrants already residing in the destination country can trigger chain migration (Banerjee, 1983 as cited in Neupane, 2019), whereby already existing migrants can be the 'bridgeheads' and support aspiring migrants (Böcker, 1994). These migrant networks also include elements of social capital pertaining to specific locations from which migrants can get support and resources (Massey et al., 1998, as cited in Sha, 2021). Massey et al. (1993) also talk about the risk minimization and diversification for migrants by virtue of migrant networks. If the migrant network is strong, the 'community' has increased access to better opportunities, making emigration reliable and secure. Migration is not the only outcome of individual actions or economic and political parameters but is a product of all these elements interacting together (Boyd, 1989, as cited in Neupane, 2019).

Sha (2021) also acknowledges that no matter how strong social network migrants might have, the first challenge for transnational mobility still lies in the migration policies of the sending and receiving countries and other formal legal restrictions around it.

This theory will be used in the empirical chapters to understand the social networks and social ties among respondents and their counterparts, both migrant and non-migrants. The thesis will also look into how the migration network of these respondents developed with their friends and family back home. Since a section of my respondents has been living abroad

for over 7-8 years, it will be particularly interesting to see how their networks and relationships developed over the years as they drastically changed countries and communities, and often multiple times. I also plan on comparing the ties of 'veteran' migrants in my research with the experiences and networks of recent student migrations. It will be interesting to also understand if and how the approach to migration networks changes with the recent advancements in technology and increasing globalization.

3.4 Social Integration and Networks of International Students

When students move to a new country, they must familiarize themselves with the new environment and integrate into contemporary society. According to IOM (2019a, p. 104), integration is defined as "*the two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the societies in which they live, whereby the migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural, and political life of the receiving community.*" According to Antoniuk (2020), 'change' is an inherent component of the integration process, which tries to transform a dysfunctional state, a system in which all actors are inactive. They say that it is not just about migrants being included, which will change their status, but a multidimensional and dynamic alteration in the system as a whole. Hence, it is essential to understand how integrated student migrants perceive themselves.

To understand the social networks maintained by students studying abroad, Coleman (2013) presented a model consisting of concentric circles. Coleman (2013) proposed that international students are most likely to interact with co-nationals living in the same country. After co-nationals, students were likely to interact with other 'outsiders' (for example- fellow international students). The interaction with locals of the destination country lies in the outermost circle of his model, as he argues that international students are least likely to interact with locals. Another study by Gomes' (2015) on Asian international students in Australia also found that the social networks of international students were primarily centered around their co-nationals while also including some other international students to some level.

With these aspects in mind, this thesis will explore the internal and external integration of Nepalese student migrants and assess their social networks, cultural assimilation, interactions, etc. Internal integration will refer to the involvement of student migrants with their ethnic communities, whereas external integration will refer to their involvement with international students/communities. Since many respondents for this thesis have spent considerable time in foreign countries, they will likely have diverse experiences in terms of integration and the kind of social networks they have formed in the migrating countries.

3.5 Culture Shock

Migrating to an entirely new environment must not always be easy for international students. International migrants have to bear psychological costs caused by their separation from family and friends (Sjaastad, 1962, as cited in Brezis & Soueri, 2011). With migrants feeling alone in a new environment, the conversation about one's identity (considered synonymous with culture in this context) also becomes prominent. The cost of leaving their own culture to settle in a new one can be difficult to bear for many (Akerlof & Cranton, 2010, as cited in Brezis & Soueri, 2011).

In the same context, the term 'culture shock' was used by anthropologist Cora DuBois in 1951 to explain the '*the disorienting experience that many anthropologists face when entering different cultures*' (Paige, 1993, as cited in Brack, N/A). The term 'shock' stems from stressful life changes, and one needs to be resilient and adapt to coping strategies to manage stress (Zhou, 2008).

Liu et al. (2018) explain the idea of culture shock and the various stages of managing it. Irritability, isolation, anxiety, depression, helplessness, etc., are some of such psychological stress symptoms.

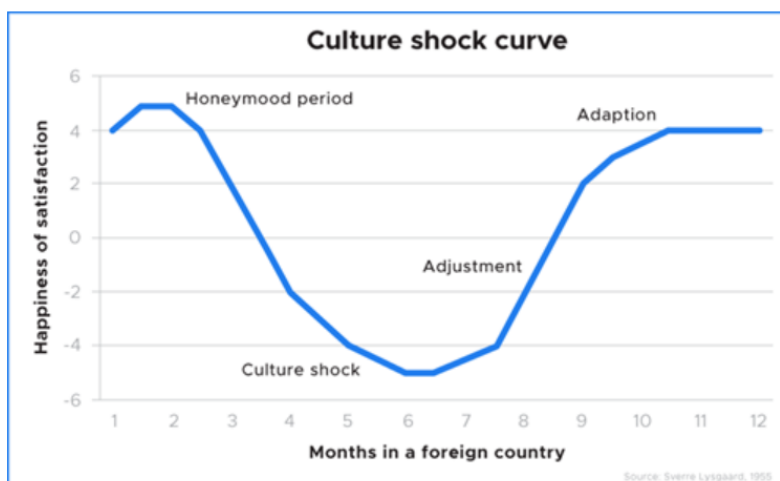


Figure 6: The four stages of culture shock

Source: Lysgaard, 1995 in McCluskey, 2020

Liu et al. (2018) further explain the U-curve model by Oberg (1960) and Lysgaard (1955), in which the first stage is called the 'honeymoon' period, where the migrant is excited and euphoric about being in a new cultural environment. According to Oberg (1960) and Lysgaard (1955), this stage is followed by 'disintegration' when the migrant gets stressed due to the new culture. The migrant realizes that they have to put extra effort into settling in this new environment, unlike their old environment, leading to fatigue, anger, and sadness. The third stage in the U-curve model is called 'reorientation,' in which, the migrant can function better in the new culture and achieve some psychological balance. According to Oberg (1960) and Lysgaard (1955) (as cited in Liu et al., (2018), the fourth stage is called the 'adaptation' stage, where the migrants are more comfortable with their surroundings and can engage actively in the new culture. The final stage of culture shock is called 'biculturalism,' in which people strike a balance between their old and new culture and lead a thoroughly social and functional life. This phase of fully adapting to a new culture is called acculturation (Brezis & Soueri, 2011). Interestingly, Liu et al. (2018) also talk about 'reverse culture shock' experienced by migrants who return to their home country after a long time.

I will be analyzing the experiences of student migrants through the lens of culture shock to identify the challenges they faced and how they were able to cope with them. I will also compare the experiences of some recent migrants with migrants who migrated in the 90s/early 2000s to compare their experiences and draw similarities and differences. The

thesis will look into any specific elements or instances of cultural shock they might have faced and how they decided to cope with it.

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter was focused on defining and explaining the core theories and recurring themes of this research. The chapter started with a detailed look at the push-pull factor of migration in which migrants are disappointed by specific aspects of the country of origin (push factors) and are attracted by some parts of the destination country (pull factors). These factors influence the migration decision of students. Similarly, the chapter defines serial, step-wise, and circular migration as three key migration patterns. The chapter also explains the migration network theory as a critical theory on how the connections among immigrants from the same backgrounds evolve in destination countries. To build up further on the networking aspect of student migration, the chapter also looks at the importance of the social integration of immigrants. It explores Coleman's model to understand integration among student migrants. The chapter concludes with a look at the culture shock theory, a phenomenon experienced by most migrants who struggle to adapt to the new culture and environment.

All the concepts and theories mentioned in this section will form a baseline for the empirical chapters that will follow, and the collected data will be analyzed through the lens of these diverse elements to get an overview of the entire migration experience of Nepali students. My first research question focuses on the migration motivations of Nepali students, which will be analyzed through the lens of the push-pull migration model. The push-pull migration model will be used as it helps identify the critical factors of the country of origin and the destination country that influence migration decisions. Similarly, the analysis of migration motivations will also be supplemented by migration network theories. The research will look into the networks migrants had built in the destination countries to facilitate their migration.

The second research question is focused on understanding the experiences of student migrants and will be looked at primarily through the lens of the culture shock model and social integration. I will identify how the migrants dealt with various culture shock stages and identify their adaptation strategies to integrate into a completely new society. Similarly, the third research question delves into the social integration of migrants in a new country, and the concepts of integration will be vital to answering it. Understanding the migration patterns

(step-wise migration) will provide me with a supplemental perspective on how migrants develop networks at various stages of their journeys. Furthermore, the fourth research question focuses on the future plans of migrants and will be viewed through the lens of step-wise, serial, and circular migration patterns. I will also try to compare their existing migration networks and social integration with their future plans to understand if there is a link between the factors.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter is divided into six sub-chapters and will include an in-depth explanation of the entire research design, the employed tools, and the justification behind choosing these specific methods. I will also give a detailed account of the planning behind the research, limitations faced in the process, the details of respondents, and the reasoning behind choosing them. The final sub-chapter of this chapter will discuss how the researcher positions themselves in the research since they are a student migrant themselves and their reflexivity.

4.1 Why Qualitative Research

This research work is carried out with Qualitative Methodology and focuses on the motivations and experiences of Nepali students who decide to migrate to the Global North for higher studies. The decision to employ qualitative methodology was taken as this thesis is primarily focused on human experiences and deserves a detailed account of the journey that Nepali students have had. The qualitative analysis captures the essence of this work and does justice to the diverse and exciting stories that the respondents have shared.

Qualitative methods tend to interpret, analyze, and understand people's choices and how it impacts their attitudes, emotions, and cognition (Winchester & Rofe, 2016). Since the respondents are in different stages of their migration journey, the research needs to provide enough context about them and the 'how' and 'why' of their decisions, experiences, and consequences. I, as a researcher, cannot make assumptions about the experiences of these students, and thus, employing qualitative methodology ensures that the entire story comes from the 'horse's mouth.'

The most prominent and justifiable reason for using qualitative methodology in this specific research is the researcher's goal to identify and have a deeper understanding of the migration motivations and patterns. It can be done best when a detailed account of student migration experiences are compared with the existing theoretical perspectives (Thagaard, 2009; Arboleya, 2017). Qualitative research becomes especially insightful when the study is not just

about the individual's characteristics but also the participants' political, social, and economic backgrounds (Cope & Hay, 2010). This is what my research aims to accomplish- look into the migration journey and the various external factors that influence it along the process. Since this study is focused on student migrants from Nepal, a country with significantly high migration rates among youth, I have tried to make the data collection and analysis as diverse, inclusive, insightful, and 'whole' as possible.

4.2 Research Design, Sampling, and Choice of Informants

A well-planned research design can be considered the backbone of any research. As Pultz (2018) notes, a good research design should ensure structure yet provide flexibility to the researcher. The research design has been an integral and dynamic part of the process during this specific research. Since this study uses a qualitative methodology, the research has been designed to facilitate the choice of methods and enrich the data collection and analysis process. The details of the data collection and analysis tools will be explained in detail in the upcoming chapters.

In terms of sampling, purposive sampling has been primarily used in this research while choosing the informants. This sampling technique is a non-probability sampling technique appropriate for information-rich qualitative research assignments to ensure efficient work within limited resources (Patton, 2002 as cited in Palinkas et al., 2015). Moreover, in purposive sampling, the researcher can identify informants who have particular knowledge or have gone through a specific experience that interests the researcher (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011, as cited in Palinkas et al., 2015). Because this research is focused on a particular set of individuals- Nepali Students who migrated to the countries of the Global North for higher studies, purposive sampling seemed to be an appropriate sampling technique for this thesis.

Within the larger umbrella of purposive sampling, this research further employs convenience sampling, snowballing, and criterion sampling. Convenience or opportunity sampling is a common technique whereby the informants are selected based on the researcher's convenience (Dörnyei, 2007, as cited in Mahmoudi, 2012). Since I am a student migrant myself, it was easier for me to access some of the informants from her social circle.

Snowballing technique was also used in this research to identify potential respondents. Oregon State University elaborates that snowballing is a sampling technique whereby the researcher attempts to find more potential informants by asking the informants (at hand) for their assistance. Since the informants were all student migrants, they had access to and information about more potential informants, and I attempted to use those connections to find appropriate informants. Besides convenience sampling and snowballing, criterion sampling was also used while choosing the respondents. Since this research required informants with specific experiences (more details in sub-chapter 5.3 and 5.4), a criterion was set beforehand, and respondents who fit the criteria were selected.

I acknowledge the limitations that come with non-probability sampling. There is always a possibility of bias from the researcher while selecting the respondents, lack of diversity and generalizability, and difficulty identifying the margin of error. However, as (Campbell et al., 2020) also note, sampling must ultimately be consistent with the objectives and aims of the overall research and enrich it. In this case, to answer the research questions posed and to get a deep insight into student experiences, it seemed apt to employ this sampling strategy.

Thus, the research is conducted with a qualitative approach. It employs various non-probability sampling techniques and attempts to create a practical yet flexible methodological framework. For this research, fourteen Nepalese student migrants in different phases of their migration journeys were interviewed.

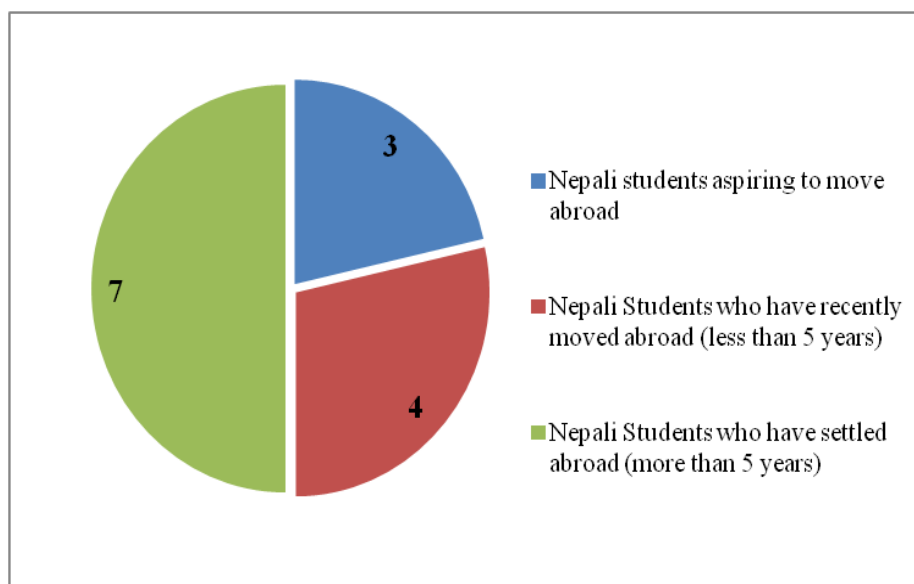


Figure 7: Breakdown of the informants

The first category included three students who wanted to move to Global North for higher studies. The aim of interviewing these respondents was to understand the motivation behind wanting to migrate, their future plans, and the push/pull factors associated with their decision. The second category included students who have recently moved (within the last five years) and are currently residing in a country in the Global North. The aim of interviewing these respondents was to understand their motivation behind moving, their experiences, the aspects of cultural shock (if any) that they have faced, and their future plans. The final category included seven respondents who moved over five years ago and are now settled in a country in the Global North. The aim of interviewing these informants was to understand their motivations, experiences, how they have assimilated into a new environment, their plans, and the expectations v/s reality they experienced. All the respondents in the second and third categories migrated with a student visa.

The table below includes the portfolio of all the informants:

Table 1: Informants who are aspiring to move to a country in Global North for higher studies

Informant No	Country aspiring to go to	Gender	Age	Completed Education level
1	United States	Female	26	Bachelors
2	Australia	Male	23	Bachelors
3	Australia	Male	19	High School

This table presents the basic demographic details of three aspiring migrants interviewed for this study. These respondents have never moved out of Nepal to pursue higher education, but they aspire to do so soon. All the respondents come from semi-urban and urban areas of Nepal and belong to middle-class backgrounds. They all desire to migrate to a country in the Global North to pursue higher education. The respondents belong to different genders and are pursuing various fields.

Table 2: Informants who have recently moved and have been living in a country in Global North for less than five years

Informant No	Currently residing	Gender	Age	Migration Trajectory
1	Norway	Male	29	Nepal - Norway (4 yrs and con.)
2	United States (US)	Female	40	Nepal- China (3 yrs)- Nepal (5yrs)- US (3.5 years and con.)
3	United States (US)	Female	26	Nepal- India (6 yrs)- Nepal (1yr)- US (4.5yrs and con.)
4	Norway	Male	27	Nepal - Norway (1.5 yrs and con.)

The list above includes recent migrants who migrated to a country in the Global North within the last five years. They were interviewed to understand the experiences of recent Nepali student migrants. They belong to different genders and pursue higher education in various fields. All of them come from middle-class backgrounds; one is married while the other three are unmarried. Two of the migrants are first-time migrants in the destination country, whereas the other two have lived outside Nepal earlier.

Table 3: Informants who have been living in a country in Global North for more than five years

Informant No	Currently Residing	Gender	Age	Migration Trajectory
1	United States (US)	Female	46	Nepal- India (2yrs)- Nepal (10yrs)- United Kingdom (UK) (2yrs)- US (18yrs and con.)
2	United Kingdom (UK)	Male	53	Nepal- India (3.5yrs)- Nepal (1yr)- Poland (13yrs)- UK (19yrs and con.)
3	United States (US)	Female	26	Nepal- United states (6 years and con.)
4	United States (US)	Male	27	Nepal- United States (6 years and con.)
5	Australia	Male	45	Nepal- Philippines (4yrs)- Nepal (2yrs)- Australia (15 yrs and con.)
6	United States	Female	42	Nepal- US (10 yrs and con.)
7	Canada	Male	48	Nepal - US (9 yrs) - Canada (5yrs) - US (2yrs) - Canada (3 yrs and con.)

Table 3 includes the list of long-term migrants interviewed for this study. This list includes students who have been in a Global North country for more than five years. The informants belong to different genders, and five out of the seven respondents are married. Five of them also have a permanent residency or citizenship of a Global North country. All the migrants migrated as students. While two of the respondents directly migrated to Global North, the other five migrants have had a step-wise migration experience. Most of the informants come from semi-urban or remote parts of the country and belong to middle-class families. Attempts were made to have the informant list as diverse as possible to capture diverse stories, opinions, and experiences.

4.3 Data Collection Tools and Process

To properly understand the nuances of the student migration phenomena in Nepal, the research has been carried out with both primary and secondary data sources. Data triangulation has been emphasized to ensure that multiple data sources are referenced, compared, and contrasted before drawing conclusions. Rugg (date n.d.) in the UNAIDS M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation) Fundamentals series explains that triangulation helps the researcher understand the 'phenomenon' better and helps them look at it from various lenses.

Hence, in-depth interviews were the main source for primary data collection in this research. Interviews become incredibly relevant when the study is trying to encapsulate the different aspects of people's social, cultural, and political lives (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 35). In addition, the main aim of research interviews is to seek the meanings of central themes in the life of the informants and how they connect with the research topic (Valenzuela & Shrivastava, 2002). Hence, the interviews conducted with student migrants in this research were as in-depth as possible. The informants were probed accordingly to fully understand their context and experiences.

There are three types of interviews within the interview umbrella- structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. As the names suggest, structured interviews have a set guideline and checklist that the researcher rigidly follows. In contrast, unstructured interviews are more free-flowing and do not have any specific guidelines. Semi-structured interviews lie somewhere between them, whereby there are clear guidelines and checklists prepared by the

researcher beforehand, but they also tend to go beyond those questions and probe the informant wherever required.

This research employed semi-structured interviews with informants as it provided the flexibility yet a framework for me to gather important information. I had a set of questions and themes that were decided beforehand, but I updated/changed/added the questions depending on the informant and the direction that the interview was heading. This interview method was used because it provided flexibility to go with the interview flow yet had a concrete framework that guided the researcher. In contrast, conducting structured interviews would have been too rigid, and employing unstructured interviews would have created chaos in the interview flow and confusing themes about what they wanted from the interview. Hence, as the research is descriptive and exploratory, semi-structured interviews were perfect to create a balance. The long-term migrants have had diverse experiences in their migration journeys through the years, and I wanted to capture multiple aspects of it. I had to make sure that I was not too rigid with my themes and created an open communication channel for the respondents. For example, I was not planning to look at navigation strategies for various migration policies employed by the informants. But, during an interview with a long-term migrant, he shared interesting insights on how he navigated different migration policies to extend his stay in the U.S. for nine years. It helped me realize how migration policies were an essential part of one's migration experience, and thus, I decided to explore it further.

Hence, especially while talking to long-term migrants, I had the opportunity to explore various aspects of their migration journeys that fascinated me. I adjusted my interview guidelines and research questions to make this study as exploratory, informative, and inclusive.

All of the interviews were conducted digitally via zoom, considering that the informants were spread all across the world during the research. An interview is a method that requires a high level of diplomacy while communicating with informants, and there is a spoken exchange of information among both parties (Hay, 2000). Hence, I tried to conduct most interviews on video rather than just audio. I felt that I could connect with the informants better and have their attention if they were interacting on video. It created a space for open communication and increased comfort for both parties. Almost all the informants agreed to be on a video call.

I encouraged the informants to speak in either English or Nepali or a mix of both, as I am fluent in both languages. Most respondents opted to speak in Nepali, while some mixed them both. I had the interview guide ready in both languages beforehand.

All the informants were approached through social media platforms- Facebook, messenger, and WhatsApp. I introduced myself to the informants and explained the purpose of the research and why they were approached. After having a conversation with them, I then proceeded to book a date for interviews. The informants were also sent a consent form to be signed beforehand and were requested to ask questions if they were confused about anything.

The interviews were conducted via zoom. Since all the informants were familiar with technology to some extent, getting on a zoom call was not difficult for them. The interviews were recorded for future reference, and the interviewer also took notes of critical points during the interview. After the interview, I looked at the collected data and contacted the informants again if any missing information was realized later.

Similarly, secondary data was also used to understand student migration in great detail and draw comparisons between pre-existing data and specific findings of this research. Secondary data is any data that we access as a researcher, that other institutions or people collect for research or anything else (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 596). Kothari (2004, p. 111) categorizes the sources of secondary data as published and unpublished data sources, whereby published sources include published research articles, data issued by the government, books, magazines, and newspapers, public records and statistics, etc. Similarly, unpublished sources include diaries, autobiographies, letters, etc. For this research, I used published sources of secondary data. Almost all the secondary data accessed and used during this research was obtained online. I reviewed various research papers, journals, and articles related to my research topic. Sources like Google scholar and publications like science direct and research gate were frequently visited to access secondary data. I also reviewed government statistics, credible reports, etc., to gather insight and information. This secondary data helped me clarify the topic and facilitated data analysis.

4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis includes the consolidation of data, examination of that data in great detail, and 'coding,' which includes identifying critical points for research and creating a systematic rhythm (Kothari, 2004 p 122- 128). Kothari also talks about 'classification,' which means creating homogenous groups out of the data, based on similar characteristics to build meaningful relationships and tabulate them logically. Similarly, Crang & Cook (2007) talk about data analysis as a process of bringing things together and giving a direction to the research based on the objectives of that specific research.

The paths chosen for data analysis are different for every researcher, but the ultimate intent is to create a systematic, consolidated, meaningful, and balanced picture from the available data. For this research, to understand the key motivations, experiences, and related factors of student migration, I noted the key points in the informant's journey, highlighted the specific experiences they have had, and tried to see how they relate to the overall migration theories. All the recorded interviews were transcribed, and important events were emphasized.

This data was then contrasted with the research questions at hand, and relevant pieces of information were separated. Furthermore, the overall themes were identified, and the data were compared and contrasted among themselves to identify similarities and disparities.

The discussion chapter contains a lot of straight quotations from the informants, which gives a clear understanding of what the informants experienced and how they interpreted their journeys. These experiences are compared with the migration theories and themes considered for this research to understand the similarities and discrepancies within them. I was open to going beyond the specific research questions if I found other recurring themes in the interviews relevant to the research topic.

The empirical chapters in this thesis include the key findings of the posed research questions. The results have been used to interpret the collected data. Since the researcher is analyzing the data, there is a possibility of bias that cannot be eliminated. However, I have tried my best to be as objective as possible. Using direct quotes is one way to ensure that the actual context and voice of informants are reflected throughout the research.

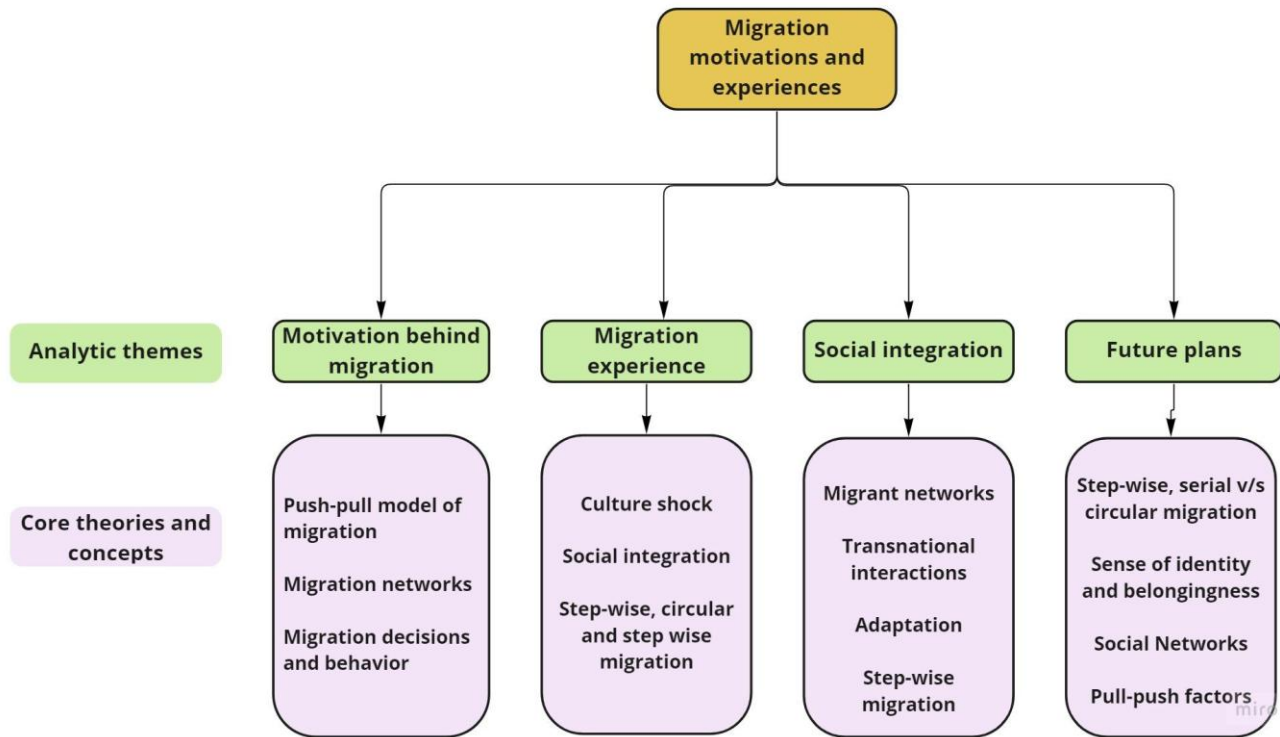


Figure 8: Analytic themes and core themes/theories used to explore those themes in this research

The analysis will be carried out based on four broad themes: what causes Nepali students to migrate, their experiences in this migration journey, their integration and adaptation to the new environment, and their future plans in terms of migration. Furthermore, several topics and analytical sub-categories emerged during my analysis, such as ‘migration decision,’ ‘transnational interaction,’ ‘sense of belonging,’ and ‘adaptation.’ I related these to concepts of ‘push and pull factors,’ ‘migrant networks’ and other themes identified in the figure above. They will be key concepts in exploring the motivations behind student migration.

Similarly, respondents' experiences during migration will be analyzed using the four stages of culture shock, their integration into the new society, and migration patterns. Another theme, social integration, will be further explored based on the transnational practices migrants have been following and their networks with fellow Nepali communities and locals of destination countries. We will also look into how integration has played out for step-wise migrants who have had to integrate into multiple new environments. Finally, the future plans of student migrants will be explored through the lens of their sense of identity and belongingness

(especially for long-term migrants), the social networks they have developed over the years, and the various push-pull factors that might determine their future decisions.

4.5 Reflexivity, Positionality, and Ethical Issues

According to Haynes (2012), reflexivity refers to the idea of the researcher being aware of their role in the research process and outcomes. As a Nepalese student migrant myself, I have the experience of this journey and can be considered an 'insider.' As Dwyer & Buckle (2009, p.55) point out, it is vital that a researcher clearly identifies their membership and their status as an 'insider' or 'outsider' in contrast to the topic of research as it impacts the data collection and analysis. In this case, I am an insider and share a similar culture, language, and experiences with that of the research participants. It was easier for me to access student migrants for data collection because of my social networks as a student. It helped my recruiting process be easier. As an insider, I could recognize the context and the depth of the research. I could make the informants more comfortable sharing information, which may not have been possible as an outsider in the study. I also speak the same language as the informants; hence, I could create a comfortable and free-flowing conversation during the interviews, which enriched the quality of the collected data. Similarly, during the data analysis, I could understand migration policy-related terminologies more easily than if I were an outsider. I also have a good understanding of Nepali culture and society, which helped me understand and interpret the data more effectively.

I, as an insider, had various advantages while carrying out this research, but I cannot discard the disadvantages. The first disadvantage is the inherent bias I might have as someone who has gone through a similar journey as the respondents. My preconceived notions and understanding of the subject might hamper my objectivity while conducting the research. To mitigate this, I tried my best to keep my personal bias aside and just focus on the data gathered from primary and secondary sources. I have also used a lot of direct quotes in my analysis to ensure that most of the information presented comes directly from the respondents.

Similarly, because I have a decent understanding of student migration, I might have presented this report in a manner that is not easily comprehensible for other readers. I could have used

complicated language and terminologies without enough explanation, which might confuse readers. To mitigate this risk, I had my Nepali and non-Nepali peers read and review it. Whenever they were confused about my explanations, I simplified them further.

Moreover, ethical issues are also critical in research, and I have tried my best to maintain all ethical guidelines throughout the study. Before starting the data collection, I notified the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) and only started primary data collection after receiving their approval. The informants were explained the purpose of the research in detail beforehand, and their consent was taken before the interviews. The confidentiality of the informants has been maintained with utmost priority, and all the raw data will be deleted after the completion of the research

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter included a detailed account of the research methodology employed in this research and attempted to give a clear picture of the entire data processing aspects. I hope that this chapter helped the readers understand how everything was done and they have received enough context to comprehend and understand the empirical findings in the upcoming chapters. I used in-depth interviews with student migrants as my primary data source and reviewed existing literature for secondary data. Similarly, I interviewed all the fourteen respondents online as they were spread worldwide. I transcribed the interviews, extracted relevant information, and used it for data analysis. I also used a lot of direct quotes in my analysis to ensure that the actual stories and experiences of migrants are highlighted. The recurring theories and themes used during the data analysis are the push-pull model of migration, culture shock, social integration, and migrant networks. I have tried my best to follow all the ethical guidelines and mitigate the impacts of my position as an insider in this research. The research is exploratory, descriptive, and focuses on the experiences of Nepali Student migrants.

Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5: Factors affecting migration decisions of Nepali Students

This chapter will specifically focus on the migration motivations of migrant students. I will begin by exploring the push factors that motivated students to make certain migration decisions. Similarly, I will also identify what attracted these student migrants to the destination countries (pull factors). After that, I will focus on their expectations from the destination countries before moving. Exploring this aspect will help us understand the gap between their expectations and the reality of their experiences. Similarly, I will also identify how migrants accumulated capital and other resources to migrate to the host country. Finally, I will summarize the entire chapter, note down the key findings, and discuss how these findings relate to existing research.

5.1 Push factors behind the decision to Migrate

Migrating to an entirely new environment is not always an easy decision for people, but they still make these choices based on certain factors. Push factors are the factors that push the migrants away from their home country. These factors compel people to leave (Roth & Hartnett, 2018); and could include elements like unemployment, poverty, political disputes, etc. In the case of the respondents in this research, different respondents mentioned multiple factors that pushed them to decide to migrate.

When asked what pushed them to leave Nepal, most respondents shared that they felt that they could not build a good life for themselves and their families by staying in Nepal. This reason was stated by most of my respondents, and they shared that they would not be able to do as well by staying in Nepal even if they tried their hardest. One of the respondents who moved to Poland in the 1990s and is currently settled abroad shared;

'Nepal has a very unfair system. It is impossible for a poor average man to survive. It is not like I planned all of this. I do not think I had ever heard of Poland before I decided to move there. I did not plan on going abroad beforehand, but once I came across this opportunity, I knew that I needed to grab it.'

In line with the argument that economic rewards and well-paying part-time jobs are essential factors for migrating students (Aguinis et al., 2013 in Tamang and Shrestha, 2021), one of the respondents who aspires to move abroad soon shared;

'I work in a senior position here in Nepal, but my friends abroad are making more money than me by doing part-time menial jobs. Why would I not want something like that for myself too? I am educated and skilled, and I think I deserve more than what I make here.'

Similarly, many respondents cited political instability and lack of accountability from the government as an added reason for them to leave Nepal. According to them, Nepal's bureaucratic system and politics are corrupt, hindering the country and its people from making any progress. One of the respondents shared;

'The prices for groceries are getting high every year, the unemployment rate is increasing, and my friends who are still back home are constantly complaining about the difficulties a middle-class family in Nepali goes through, but the government does not care. All they do is fight for power and corrupt the system. I keep telling my friends that they should move abroad too.'

It was observed that many respondents were unhappy with their lives in Nepal and felt stuck, which pushed them to decide to migrate. Low wages, lack of employment opportunities, and dissatisfaction with the government were the three push factors that frequently came up during the interviews.

Similarly, two migrants shared that they felt restricted in Nepal and hoped to live a 'free' life abroad. Dhungel (2019) also talked about the willingness of women to migrate specifically to lead an independent and free life, and, interestingly, both the respondents were women. When asked to elaborate further, one of them shared;

*'There are too many restrictions here, maybe also for men but more for us women. I do not feel safe when I am traveling; I have to follow the rules set by my mother and live my life for the convenience of others. I am fed up with this lifestyle and just want to live a free and independent life. Moving abroad will allow me to explore and not worry about the rules set by society.'*²

It was also observed that parents were supportive of the migration process of their children, and for many of the respondents, it was the parents who had actually pushed them to migrate. One of the respondents who is currently residing in the U.S. shared;

'My parents wanted me to move to another country as a student from a very early age. That is why, after I finished grade 10, they enrolled me in an A-level³ course for my high school. The hope was that this course would facilitate my migration process.'

Interestingly, in a communal and closely-knit society like Nepal, where one is expected to live with their parents and family all their lives, parents are happy to let their children move to another country. It may be because the parents also believe that the children will get better opportunities in another country and thus, are willing to make that sacrifice and invest resources for their children.

Similarly, several respondents shared that they wanted to migrate to a foreign country because it is a trend in the country right now. They shared that they did not have any specific thoughts in their mind and wanted to move because so many of their friends and acquaintances were moving too. In the Nepal census of 2011, it was found that almost half of the Nepali households had at least one person working abroad or had returned from abroad (IOM, 2019). Interestingly, all the respondents who talked about this aspect were either recent migrants or aspiring migrants. It also indicates that the 'trend' of migrating abroad is a more recent phenomenon in Nepal. This factor did not guide the migration decisions of migrants who moved in the 1990s or even 2000s.

² This respondent is an aspiring student migrant and plans to move abroad next year in 2023

³ A- levels is a high school course that is affiliated with Cambridge University. It is equivalent to any other high school course, but, since it is affiliated with a prestigious British university, many people in Nepal assume that studying this course instead of regular high school will make it easier for the student to get accepted into foreign universities later. The course is expensive, almost 3x the price of regular high school courses in Nepal).

Based on the information provided by the respondents, lack of employment opportunities in Nepal, lower wages in comparison to expenses (inflation), dissatisfaction with the government and overall political situation, and the willingness to follow the ‘*trend*’ of migration were the most common push factors behind their migration decisions.

The push factors identified in this research are similar to Upadhyay’s (2017) push factors for Nepali students- political instability, better career expectations abroad, and no job security in Nepal. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the migrants wanted to move because they felt that they could not have a fulfilling and happy life in Nepal. They fear that they will not be able to earn as much as they want and create a comfortable life for their family. The most common push factors were focused on the systemic problems in the country (corruption, political instability, etc.), whereas individuals also had personal reasons behind making these migration decisions.

5.2 Pull factors of the Destination Countries

Along with the push factors, I also tried to explore the pull factors that motivated the students to migrate to their preferred destinations for higher studies. Interestingly, finances and scholarships were a recurring theme in this conversation. Respondents shared that the most significant factor that affected their decision to migrate to a particular destination was scholarship opportunities and the place's affordability. They also shared that they were not rigid on going to specific destinations only and were just looking for the most affordable destination for them.

One of the respondents, who is an aspiring migrant, shared;

‘I do not have a specific country in mind that I want to go to. I just want to move to a developed country; Australia or the US, or somewhere in Europe. I am applying for scholarships and trying to figure out which option is the cheapest for me. I will move wherever it is cheaper for me to survive.’

Another respondent who is currently studying in Norway shared;

‘I received offers from two universities- one in Sweden and another in Norway. On one hand, the university in Sweden offered a 90% scholarship on tuition fees, but, on the other hand, education in Norway is almost completely free. So, even though the

university in Sweden was much higher rated than the one in Norway, I still decided to choose Norway because it would be a little more affordable for me.'

It was interesting that even though all the respondents were migrating students wanting to study abroad, the 'quality' or 'ranking' of the university was not very high on the list of push factors that influenced their decision.

Similarly, the majority of respondents shared that the possibility of staying long-term is another crucial factor for them when choosing their preferred destination. For many of the respondents, the goal was to stay in a Global North country for the long term and obtain a permanent residency, and thus, they chose the country based on the long-term possibilities.

One of the respondents who are currently in Norway shared,

'I did not really feel the need to do a Master's degree. I am a computer engineer, and you don't need a Master's degree to find a good job in my sector now. But I wanted to explore new countries and ultimately get a permanent residency (PR) in a developed country. And for that, migrating as a student was the most viable option for me. I chose to come to Norway as a student because, for me, it seemed like the easiest way to get a permanent residency (PR). I am about to finish my studies, and I already got a job here; and if all goes well, I will be eligible for a PR in a few years.'

My findings contradict the findings of Brezis & Soueri (2011), whereby they found that students were willing to pay higher tuition fees and migrated to countries with higher costs. They reported that this could be because of the signaling effect as students believed higher prices would equal better education. During my research, respondents put a great emphasis on scholarships and finding cheaper places to study instead.

Similarly, Katel & Sapkota (2018) reported that most Nepali students who migrated abroad for higher education did not return to Nepal after graduation (Mainali, 2019). My findings correspond with these findings as respondents did not want to return to Nepal. The people of developing countries are excited by the opportunities in the developed countries and decide to move, which may cause brain drain in developing countries like Nepal (Brooke and Water, 2011 in Tamang and Shrestha, 2021).

Along with the reasons above, many respondents shared that they chose the country/university based on existing friends/family in that country. One respondent

elaborated that he decided to move to Norway because his girlfriend was also moving, and he wanted to be closer to her. Another respondent who is in the US shared;

'My husband's entire family is here in the U.S. His brothers, sisters, everyone is well settled here. So, when we had to choose, we knew it had to be the U.S because we knew it would be much easier for us to settle here, and we would have the necessary support and guidance.'

The respondents felt that the migration process would be more manageable if they knew someone in the destination country. They expected to receive guidance during the visa processing, documentation, and during the first few weeks of migrating. Along those lines, another respondent, who is currently settled in Australia, shared that he decided to move to Australia because he met many Australians while pursuing his bachelor's degree in Philippines. As he spent time with them, he realized that Australia would be an excellent option for him and thus, decided to migrate.

Based on the information provided by the respondents, better-earning opportunities and higher wages abroad, possibilities of staying longer in the destination country, and scholarships and financial aid were the vital pull factors for Nepali student migrants.

The pull factors identified in this research align with the push factors as most respondents were searching for things they thought were missing in Nepal. It was interesting to see that even though these migrants were students, education quality and the universities for not very high up on the list of the pull factors. It indicates that student migrants in Nepal move, primarily hoping to explore a new country and live there long term.

The quality of education is not as important when they choose a destination for themselves. Thus, it can be concluded that most migrants were attracted to countries of the Global North and chose their preferred destination based on higher wages, the possibility of scholarships, and the possibility of resettling abroad permanently.

5.3 Expectations from their Life Abroad

The respondents were also asked what they expected from their life abroad. This question was asked to all three categories of respondents, and they were requested to answer what they expected before they migrated. They were asked to elaborate on what they hoped living in a foreign land would be like, and it was found that most respondents underestimated the challenges and overestimated the ‘joys’ of the migration process.

One of the respondents who moved to the U.S six years ago shared;

‘I thought life would be perfect once I came here. I knew I had to work part-time to earn my living, manage studies and work, and manage my life completely on my own, But I was thrilled with the idea of getting to live alone and live an independent life on my terms.’

Similarly, an aspiring migrant shared;

‘I can’t explain how excited I am thinking about going to Australia. I see pictures of my friends partying and having fun on social media all the time, and I can’t wait to live that life. I can’t wait to make new foreign friends, date people from across the world, and live that (cool) international student life.’

The respondents hoped that they would be able to socialize more, make new friends and explore a completely new part of the world. They were excited about the new prospects and hoped to travel a lot more and build an independent life.

Similarly, some respondents shared that they were also expecting an international degree to be a huge asset that would help them land their dream jobs. In their study, Tamang & Shrestha (2021) also found that Nepali students held an international degree in much higher regard than a degree obtained in Nepal. They hoped that the degree would carry a much higher value and create opportunities for the students.

In my study, one of the respondents shared,

‘I knew my university was not the top-ranked university or anything, but I did not care about that. I knew that having an international degree would, anyways, better my chances than a Nepali degree. If nothing else worked out and I had to return to Nepal, I

would still be more sellable and earn higher wages by virtue of my degree in the Nepali market.'

When I discussed this idea with other informants, it was interesting that most respondents trusted their international degrees to help them land better jobs in the Nepali market rather than a Nepali degree. It indicates a lack of trust in the Nepali education system among students, thus probing them to move out.

Furthermore, some of the respondents who have children and are settled abroad shared that, when they moved, they expected better lives for their children more than anything else. They explained how excited they were and hoped their children would have access to the best facilities (education, health, job opportunities) abroad.

Hence, regarding what they expected from their lives abroad, the following were the most frequent answers- a highly valuable degree, a more active social life- making friends and date more, and an independent and 'fun' day-to-day life.

It can be concluded that Nepali students migrated in search of better lives for themselves, beyond just quality education, and also hoped to live independently in the process. In terms of younger unmarried migrants, the expectations seem to lean toward having a fun life and earning an international degree in the process. For slightly older (sometimes married) migrants, their expectations seemed to be more long-term and family-oriented.

5.4 Accumulation of Resources to Move Abroad

The respondents were inquired about the different resources required to migrate to their destination countries. Most respondents shared that financial capital was the most prominent resource and was the most difficult to manage.

They had to employ various techniques and strategies to arrange for resources. Some respondents had taken loans from banks as well as relatives to be able to pay for the migration costs. They explained that they tried to get loans from their relatives and friends as much as possible as that usually meant low/no interest on the sum. Whereas in the case of banks, students had to bear interest rates of about 12%-15% per annum.

One of the recent migrant respondents shared;

'I needed about 15-20 lakhs NPR (120,000-150,000 USD) to migrate to the U.S. It included the fee for my first semester, travel costs, and accommodation costs for the first six months. My parents asked our relatives for help, and we could collect about half of the sum from them. I took a loan from the bank for the rest of the sum.'

It also must be noted that this accumulation of funds was not entirely the student's responsibility. The parents were fully involved in the process, and the family worked together to accumulate the funds. It was because Nepali parents considered it an investment for their children's future and hoped that they would be able to earn back the money in the destination country. Also, the respondents had planned on repaying the loans as soon as possible once they got a part-time job in the destination country, and many were able to do so.

Another respondent shared;

'To come to Norway for a Master's degree, we need to deposit a big amount in the Norwegian bank beforehand. Even though that money is given back to us for our everyday use when we reach here, it is a huge pressure to collect that sum of money and deposit it in the Norwegian bank. My parents sold a piece of our land to accumulate that money. I felt guilty about it and wanted to return it back as soon as possible. So, as soon as I found a part-time job in Norway, I sent most of that money back home.'

The respondents shared that managing finances was an enormous burden, but they were willing to take the risk because they felt the benefits would be much higher. On the other

hand, some migrants had received full scholarships and stipends, and they shared that their journey had been easier because of the financial support.

The respondents also informed that some educational consultancies in Nepal helped students with these funds in exchange for some money. Many universities abroad require students to submit their bank statements and property papers and prove they have the needed funds. Since many students do not have that big of a sum with them, these consultancies arrange for the sum to be transferred to the students' accounts for a short time just for documentation purposes. The consultancies charge extra for these services, but many students opt for them as it eases their process.

Along with financial capital, students also had to accumulate educational resources to travel abroad. Most of the recent migrant students had completed an English language test (TOEFL or IELTS), and some students had also cleared their SAT or GREs. Some respondents had taken a gap year to prepare for the exams and pass with good points. One of the respondents shared that it was essential for her to get excellent points in these exams as they affected her admission chances and scholarship chances a lot. She was able to get a 30% scholarship in the U.S because of her SAT scores.

It was observed that these tests were more relevant for recent migrants, and my respondents who moved abroad in the 90s and early 2000s did not remember giving any specific tests in Nepal. It indicates that the criteria and cost for migration are dynamic and change with time, and Nepali students adapt to the relevant expenses when they decide to migrate.

Social capital was another important resource they utilized while moving abroad, along with financial capital and educational resources. Many pieces of research have suggested that social relationships between new migrants and prior migrants help the new migrant reduce economic costs and social risks of migration and thus, encourage prospective migrants to move (Williams et al., 2019). The respondents were asked about the social capital they accumulated explicitly for the migration process. More than half of the respondents admitted to actively seeking links and building relationships with prior migrants in the destination country. They shared that they had used their online and offline networks to find fellow Nepali (in some cases Indians or the locals of the host country) already living in the city/country they were moving to. The respondents connected with these people on social media and discussed their living experiences, job prospects, average monthly budget,

accommodation options, etc. They shared that they did this to familiarize themselves with what they were getting into and ensure that someone is giving them reliable information personally.

One of the respondents shared;

'When I was deciding to move six years ago, I was still new to the internet and did not know how to make full use of it to gather information. Also, it just felt like I could trust fellow Nepali people more about such information because they understood my context and constraints in a much more personal manner. Hence, I connected with a few Nepali people from the city I was moving to (in the U.S) and asked them about everything and anything.'

Regarding social connection, another respondent of mine shared;

'One of my connections had assured me that he would help me find a part-time job when I got there. And he did. When I reached the U.S, his family came to pick me up from the airport, showed me around, helped me settle down, and even helped me find a job within just a few weeks. I will always be thankful to them.'

Some studies argue that social networks developed specifically during migration provide material and information support (Dolfin & Genicot, as cited in Williams et al., 2019). Material support includes financial support like living expenses etc. In contrast, informational support includes providing information on accommodation options, job options, and documentation-related information to facilitate a migration event (Dolfin & Genicot, as cited in Williams et al., 2019). In the case of the respondents in this research, many of them seem to have opted for this informational assistance more than material assistance. More often than not, the respondents initiated the conversation in these situations and made sure that they had at least a few connections before they moved. One of the respondents who moved to Poland in the 1990s and had no social links shared that he was extremely nervous while migrating, primarily because he had no one to 'lean back to' if he needed help and support.

Dolfin & Genicot (2010) also argue that people are more likely to receive material assistance from their family members than community members. They are also more likely to trust information assistance from family members than community members. This aspect turned out relevant in my research as three of my respondents had a close family member, and 2 of

my respondents had close friends in their destination country. All these respondents only referred to their friends and family for all their needed information.

One of the respondents shared;

'My uncle and his whole family have been well settled in the U.S for many years. So, when I decided to come here, I just spent a lot of time talking to them about all the information I needed. I felt a huge sense of security just knowing that they were there.'

Thus, it can be concluded that the respondents required different types of capital during their migration decisions based on their migration destination and other factors. They all devised their unique strategies and methods to accumulate this capital and tried to make the transition as smooth as possible. Financial capital was the most crucial for their migration process, followed by social capital and educational resources. For financial capital, most of them took loans from banks and their relatives to pay their tuition fees and other expenses. In terms of social capital, most respondents had developed social connections specific to their migration decision and had used this social connection to gather all the necessary information. Similarly, most respondents had actively prepared for and given language exams like TOEFL/IELTS and aptitude tests such as SATs and GREs to gather educational resources. Overall, accumulating resources was an essential part of the migration journey for these student migrants.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter delved deep into the migration motivations and other factors that affected their migration decisions. This chapter discussed all the aspects of student migration that occur before the student has made a move.

The first two chapters were focused on the push-pull migration model and aimed to identify factors that motivated students to migrate. The four recurring push factors identified through all the interviews were: lack of employment opportunities in Nepal, lower wages compared to expenses (inflation), dissatisfaction with the government and overall political situation, and the willingness to follow the '*trend*' of migration. Most respondents expressed that they believed they would not have the life they wanted in Nepal because of the socio-political and economic situation of the country and thus, wanted to migrate.

Similarly, the four recurring pull factors identified through all the interviews were: better earning opportunities and higher wages, possibilities of staying longer in the destination country, and scholarships and financial aid provided in the destination country. Interestingly, the university's ranking or the education quality was not very high on this list. After hearing all their stories, I feel that they were more focused on leaving Nepal and resettling in a Global north country than on acquiring a specific type of education. The respondents believed that moving to a country in the global north would make their lives infinitely better than in Nepal.

My findings on pull and push factors support previous research on Nepali student migration. One aspect where my findings contrast is regarding education being a crucial motivator. While other researchers (Kharel, 2011; Dhungel et al., 2013) identify higher education as one of the critical reasons behind student migration, I found that education was a secondary reason behind their migration motivation while the primary cause was to settle abroad permanently in many cases.

Furthermore, a highly valuable degree, a more active social life, and an independent and 'fun' day-to-day life were the foremost expectation of student migrants from their life abroad. In the case of a valuable degree, the respondents hoped that an international degree would open their doors to more opportunities. Many respondents did not particularly care about the university, but they did care about having an international degree.

Similarly, in terms of accumulation of resources, financial capital was found to be the most important, followed by social capital and educational resources to move abroad. Most of the respondents took loans to gather financial capital, whereas the two respondents who received a full scholarship with a stipend did not have to worry about it. Similarly, respondents actively opted to build migration-specific social networks to ease their migration process and took advice on aspects like expenses, job opportunities, everyday life, and so on from these networks. They also acquired the required educational resources by taking aptitude tests and scoring good points. IOM (2019) reported that Nepali students were paying excessive money to move abroad. It was observed that respondents in this research had also spent valuable financial and other resources to facilitate their migration journeys.

Chapter 6: Migration Experience of Nepali Students

This chapter specifically focuses on the migration experiences of migrant students. It must be noted that the data for this chapter is collected from eleven respondents who have already migrated abroad. I explore the experiences of these student migrants through the culture shock model, its various stages, and how they adapted to a new environment. This chapter will also look at their migration experiences from the gender lens. I explore if there were any gender-specific changes or challenges that migrants had to make. After that, I discuss if respondents have experienced any racism or ethnic exclusion in the destination country. Similarly, this chapter also delves into how the student migrants navigated various policies in the destination country and focuses on identifying the migration pattern of different respondents. I explore if the informants were step-wise, circular, or serial migrants and look into the why and how behind their decisions.

6.1 Student's Adaptation to a new Socio-cultural Environment

Migrating into a completely new country and a new environment cannot always be easy. In the case of my respondents, most of my respondents admitted to feeling overwhelmed, lost, and confused in the beginning phase of their move and said they were able to slowly integrate into their new surroundings. The culture shock model and its various stages can best explain this process of getting familiar with and adjusting to a new environment.

Pederson (1995, p.1) explains culture shock as the '*process of initial adjustment to a new environment.*' Pederson further elaborates that culture shock happens because the familiar cues are suddenly removed from the migrant's life and they are uncertain of what is expected from them.

According to this perspective, we may distinguish between four distinct stages of adaptation. First, when a migrant moves to a new country, there is a lot of excitement in the beginning. The migrant has just arrived at their destination after a long process lasting many months, they are hopeful, and there is a lot of excitement. This excitement is classified as the 'honeymoon period.' This phase slowly dies down with time, and the second stage, 'culture

shock,' sets in. In this stage, the migrant starts feeling overwhelmed; they might also feel symptoms of depression, anxiety, etc. (Liu et al., 2018) as they have to adjust to an entirely new environment. The third stage of this process is adjustment. As the name suggests, the migrant familiarizes themselves with the new situation and gets used to a new life in this phase. Finally, the fourth stage of the process is 'adaptation,' in which the migrant is able to fully adapt to the new environment and is thriving. It is the stage where they feel 'well-settled' and are calmer and happier with their new life. Inspired by the abovementioned perspectives, I look further into how my respondents experienced each of the phases mentioned above. I explored the different experiences my respondents had when they first moved to a new country and tried to look into how they navigated the entire process.

6.1.1 The Honeymoon Phase

When asked how the respondents felt when they first arrived at their destination country, most of them shared they were very excited about the prospect of starting a new life.

One of them shared;

'I moved to Norway in the middle of the COVID pandemic. We were directly put into a quarantined hotel for ten days as soon as we landed. They would provide me with three meals, I had a nice room, and I just had to 'chill' there. And, of course, the best thing was I did not even have to pay for any of it. So, I was very happy when I arrived.'

It was found that respondents who had a basic idea of what they would do once they arrived and had friends/family to help them were more excited. Some respondents had their friends/family pick them up from the airport and take them home. Many of them spent the first few days/weeks with these friends/family, and thus, they did not feel any confusion or loneliness until that point. However, some respondents also shared that although they were happy and excited, a sense of fear always loomed around in the back of their heads. They shared that they were scared of how things will be when they started doing everything on their own. Furthermore, when asked about how long the honeymoon phase lasted for them, the answers ranged between 2 days to 3 weeks.

On the other hand, respondents with no 'fail-safe' were scared from the get-go. Many respondents shared that they did not particularly have someone they knew well enough who would help them from the get-go. It must be noted that these were all migrants who migrated

in the 90s/2000s. The trend of going abroad was just starting back then, and the Nepali migrant networks were not as huge back then.

Similarly, another significant aspect of their fear was that, because the internet was not as accessible back then, they did not know what to expect when they got to a new country. Recent migrants share that they use the internet to gather as much information as possible beforehand, watch videos, talk to people, etc., so they are mentally prepared for what is coming.

A respondent who moved to Poland in the 1990s shared,

'In a passport where everything else was printed, they had to manually add Poland to the list of countries. That is how unheard of it was to go to Poland back then. When I took that flight to Poland, I had no idea what my next step would be. I did not know anyone, and neither did I know the language. And, on top of that, it was almost impossible to communicate with my parents back home if something happened. So, for me, there was no excitement, just fear.'

Hence, in the case of the respondents of this study, the honeymoon phase seems relevant for comparatively recent migrants. In contrast, old migrants had a lot more fear and uncertainty because they were unsure of what to expect. This difference seems to be there because of the increased accessibility to the internet for the recent migrants, whereas old migrants were setting foot in a completely new territory.

6.1.2 Culture Shock

The respondents were further asked if they felt overwhelmed or anxious after moving to a new country, and all agreed that they went through this stage. For many respondents, the overall lifestyle and the prices of groceries and clothes were a huge shock. They shared that they were used to lower prices and were scared to spend money even on necessities. Many also elaborated that they used to convert the price into Nepali rupees and get overwhelmed by the prices.

One of them shared;

'It was my first week at the university, and my classmates recommended we go to lunch together. I went along, and we went to chick-fil-A. It is a restaurant chain that mostly serves meat products, and I am a vegetarian. I could not find any option to eat and spent 16 dollars on a salad. It was a huge amount of money, more than 1000 Nepali rupees, and I remember panicking.'

In this respondent's case, she further added that finding vegetarian options was also a challenge for her initially. Since Nepal has a significant vegetarian population and the traditional Nepali (Hindu) culture also promotes vegetarianism, vegetarian food options are much more readily available in Nepal.

Similarly, respondents from different countries shared different experiences in terms of society. Respondents from Norway reported being confused by how introverted Norwegians were and felt confused about how to approach them. Nepal is a very communal society- it is normal for people to interact and have 'small talks' with strangers on a bus or at a shop. In Norway, the respondents felt it was completely different.

On the other hand, a respondent from the U.S shared that she was surprised by how random people would say 'hi' to her while walking down the street. She explained that she was used to people striking conversations in Nepal too, but she did not expect it to be the case in the U.S.

Furthermore, it was observed that the element of culture shock was even more prominent in migrants who migrated many years ago. Since they did not know what they were getting into and the 'gap' between the global west and Nepal was also bigger when they migrated, they were overwhelmed by seemingly little things. One of the migrants shared that he learned about Vodka for the first time after he moved abroad and was surprised by how common it was for people to drink. He further added that he was confused about things like 'how to use a western toilet, turn on central heating, etc.' because he had never seen this in Nepal.

When asked if they went through symptoms like anxiety, depression, loneliness, etc. (Liu et al., 2018) in this phase, more than half of the respondents shared that they felt low and lonely. None of the respondents had any medical diagnosis about a medical health issue, but they did share that they felt low at certain times. This loneliness was also driven by the feeling of

homesickness in many respondents. They shared that they missed their families and the constant support back home.

One of the respondents shared,

'I used to call my mom two-three times a day. I did not want to tell her I felt lonely because she would worry. But, I guess she knew. She picked up every time and talked to me for hours. I took everything for granted back home, but here, I had to cook, clean, and take care of myself all on my own. I was not used to this at all.'

Thus, culture shock and the overwhelming feeling of confusion were a part of the experience for all the migrants in some form or the other. While some felt overwhelmed by the prices, others felt lonely and homesick. The extent to which they felt this effect seemed proportionate to how long back they had decided to migrate. Recent migrants were aware of what to expect abroad because of the Internet and access to information. However, migrants who migrated a long time back had minimal idea about what to expect and were caught by surprise when they moved. Hence, older migrants felt the phenomena of 'culture shock' more distinctly and adversely than recent migrants.

6.1.3 Adjustment

Following the feelings and impacts of culture shock, the respondents were asked how they navigated these feelings and adjusted to a new setting. Respondents shared to have relied on various elements, and they also shared that, with time, they got used to the new life.

Also, many respondents relied on friends and family and spent time with them to not feel alone. They built relationships with fellow Nepali and Indian⁴ students and frequently engaged in interactions with them.

One of the respondents shared;

'I pursued many years of my life in India, so when I came to the U.S, it was easier for me to connect to the Indian community than a Nepali community. I met many Indian students

⁴ Since Nepal and India are neighbouring countries, they share a lot of common cultures and values and the language is also somewhat similar. This makes it easier for Nepali students to connect with the Indian community too.

at the university and started hanging out with them. It helped me feel less alone, and I had people I could just talk to any time.'

On the other hand, migrant students who migrated before the age of the internet shared that it was challenging for them to communicate with their families, which made it difficult for them to adjust to new changes. They also reported that it was difficult for them to find a Nepali community back then because the migrant networks were not as strong. Hence, they primarily relied on spending more time exploring the city and interacting with other international students with shared experiences for adjustment.

One of the respondents shared;

'I used to get homesick and wanted to talk to my family. But the communication infrastructures were so bad back then that it took two months for a letter to reach them. And, it was very likely that it would get lost along the way and never reach them. There were certain calling centers in Nepal, just one or two in an entire town. So, I used to call the calling center and ask them to tell my family to come to the center at a specific time next week, and I would call at that exact time. But, it was costly and not too feasible.'

All the student migrants went through culture shock followed by the adjustment stage and devised their own strategies and ways of dealing with their circumstances. While most relied on friends and family to feel better, just spending time in the new environment also helped them adjust. Lysgaard (1995) explains adjustment as the process that includes an amalgamation of characteristics of a person, the situation, and time. Like this, many respondents mentioned time as the biggest factor that helped them adjust. They shared that no matter how difficult things were initially, they started getting used to this new life with time.

6.1.4 Adaptation

The adaptation phase is the final stage of the culture shock curve, as identified by Lysgaard (1995). In this stage, the migrant becomes familiar with the new environment, starts enjoying this new life, and manages to strike a balance between their new life and the life back home (biculturalism) (see Liu et al., 2018).

In the case of the respondents in this study, most of the recent migrants shared that they started feeling 'adapted' recently and still feel out of place at times.

Talking about their experience with adaptation, one of the respondents shared,

'I sometimes feel like I am still adjusting to this new city and my new life. But, it has been over five years since I came here, so I guess I am also much familiar with everything and used to this lifestyle.'

Of students who migrated a long time back, some shared that they felt more at home in this new environment. They had spent so many years here that they identified with this society more than Nepali society. They also shared that they had no interest in going back to Nepal and were happy to spend the rest of their lives in the destination country.

One of them shared,

'It feels overwhelming at first, but when you spend many years in a country like the U.S., you realize it has so much more to offer than Nepal ever could. I have spent more than 15 years of my life here, my family is here, and I honestly feel that this is my home.'

All the respondents have adapted to the new environment in their ways. While the respondents who were recent migrants have recently entered this stage, old migrants seem to be in a much more evolved stage of adaptation whereby they relate to this new environment than they do with the atmosphere back home. For respondents, adaptation meant being familiar with the city they were in, having a solid network of friends, getting used to the lifestyle and the prices of the new environment, and striking a balance between their new life and their life and family back home. They have found a set of friends they are comfortable with and are used to the 'everyday' life of the process. Felski (2000) talks about everyday life as the constant truth that sets a baseline for other human behaviors. It is an essential aspect of adaptation to get used to everyday life as that sets a rhythm for the person's overall growth.

6.2 Experiences from the Gender Lens

In this section, I try to identify the specific experiences that respondents have had from the gender lens. To give context, this study interviewed six male and five female student migrants, and they were probed about how gender came into play in their migration journeys. In terms of just the opportunity to migrate, some women respondents shared that their decision to emigrate was questioned more than for fellow men.

One of the respondents who moved in the early 2000s shared;

'Nepal was very different back then. I was one of the few girls from my town that pursued higher education, so moving to a new country was not an easy task. But, I was married, so when I decided to move with my husband, it was easier for society to digest it.'

Another respondent who migrated a few years ago shared;

'I had only 15 days to go before my flight when one of my relatives visited us. She suggested I get married before moving and a woman staying alone was not safe and acceptable. She suggested she could find a partner for me and get me married so that I could move with my husband. It was hilarious but also reflected on how our society thinks.'

Dhungel (2019) also talked about women wanting to migrate to a more gender-equal country to lead an independent life. It seems relevant in case my respondents, too, as they also reported enjoying the feeling of being freer and less restricted in the new country.

Similarly, women also reported feeling much safer in the Global North countries. They shared that they did not feel 'watched' or 'judged' in the destination country, not as much as in Nepal. Female respondents also shared that eve-teasing and lewd comments were frequent in Nepal but are extremely rare (almost none) in the destination countries. Interestingly, married female respondents shared that they have also observed a behavioural shift in their husbands as their husbands have become more empathetic and participative in household chores.

A respondent shared;

'I moved with my husband to the U.S in the late 2000s. Back home, I was the one who took the lead in all the household chores, whereas he was only focused on his

professional commitments. Once we migrated, his pattern was the same initially, but I slowly noticed it change. We both had busy schedules, and maybe he saw other people here doing housework, so he also started doing it. Today, we share the load very well.'

On the other hand, the male respondents shared that they experienced a shift in their perspective on the traditional gender roles when they decided to move abroad. Nepal has a patriarchal society, and in many cases, the gender roles are traditional and rigid. Hence, many male respondents were not used to cooking, cleaning, and taking care of everything independently. Respondents shared that even though they did participate in household chores back home, the mothers or sisters in their house took the lead, and they just had to support them. But, when they migrated, the burden of doing everything shifted on them, which was reported to be challenging.

Similarly, for some female respondents, their parents took on the responsibility of looking after their children, which made it easy for women migrants to focus on their careers. They shared to have received backlash from society for not being 'caring mothers.' However, they had to make that decision to move forward in their careers. The parents took care of the children in Nepal, and the children moved to the U.S. when they were around 10-11 years of age.

Interestingly, in the case of two migrant respondents (one male and one female), they shared that the husband had taken a break from work to take care of the kids for a certain time as they did not want to put their kids in child-care. The female respondent shared that her husband took a break for a year to take care of their son while she was completing her medical traineeship program. She shared that her husband's approach to their relationship and his equal partnership in everything has improved her life, and she has been able to pursue whatever she wants.

The male respondent (whose wife is a native Australian) also shared;

'When our daughters were born, my wife had a higher paying job here in Australia. We wanted to give our full attention to the children, so I decided to stay home to take care of them. It felt like the most practical thing, so I was a stay-at-home dad for about three years.'

These experiences are unique in a Nepali society because of their patriarchal nature. Women are expected to take care of the children, and men are supposed to be the breadwinners.

Considering the backlash that one gets from their family, breaking the set gender stereotype can be challenging. Townsend & Jun Poh (2018) talked about Asian students in Australia who felt free to take independent decisions when they moved abroad. The respondents in this study seem to share a similar experience. Indeed, their experiences suggest that gender does play a distinct role in one's migration journey, and the experiences of men and women are vastly different. While women seem to have felt freer, men felt more challenged because of the added responsibilities. All in all, there was a significant shift in gender roles and how they perceived them.

6.3 Experiences of Ethnic Exclusion and Racism

When asked if they had faced any racism or ethnic exclusion incidents, all the respondents shared that they have never been a target of overt racism. But, several respondents agreed to have shared some uncomfortable situations during their interactions with people.

One of the respondents who studied at a Christian university in the US shared,

'As a Hindu, it was strange for me to see that everything in my university revolved around Jesus. Everyone in the university was a devoted Christian, and the few of us who were not were viewed as black sheep. We got this unwanted attention, and I found it discomfoting.'

She recalls someone saying to her, *'I feel sorry for you and all other people in your country because you will go to hell (because you do not follow Christianity).'*

She elaborated that it was an extremely uncomfortable incident whereby she felt attacked for belonging to a specific religion. She did not say anything at the moment but expressed that the incident was etched into her memory. This incident reflects on the idea presented by Valenta (2008) that immigrants are perceived by the locals based on an ethnic lens rather than through other aspects of their identity. The locals are often quick to relate the entire personality of immigrants to their ethnicities or religion.

Similarly, when another respondent was at the British embassy in Poland, applying for a skilled visa for the U.K, he recalls his interaction with the visa official. The visa official said, *'Do not claim social/security benefits in my country!'* and the respondent responded with, *'I*

earn more than you do now. So, don't you worry about me claiming benefits!' In this case, the respondent was able to respond immediately and shared that he was proud of it.

Along these lines, some other respondents had also felt like 'outsiders' at times. It was never overtly racist, but there were slight instances where they felt like people did not want them there. One of the respondents in the U.S shared that she wanted to spend more time with U.S friends, but she felt like she was not welcome every time she wanted to hang out with them. Migrants are usually open to conform to the majority's expectations and 'way of life,' but they lack the knowledge and cultural skills to do so, which obstructs this cultural assimilation Valenta (2008).

Some respondents also associated this feeling of exclusion with language barriers. Especially for students in Norway, since the language was completely new and different, they shared that it was challenging for them to build connections⁵.

Thus, some respondents had felt feelings of exclusion during their time in the destination countries but never faced overt racism. Valenta (2001) argued that inadequate familiarity with the language and culture of the host country alienated immigrants and stigmatized their ethnicity in the eyes of locals. Immigrants are already struggling to fit in a new society, and their ethnic identities can set them further apart from the majority crowd.

⁵ The correlations between language and the ability to build connections will be explored further in chapter 7.

6.4 Navigating Migration Policies in the Destination Country

As student migrants living abroad, all the respondents had to navigate different migration policies. The interviews explored how the respondents navigated these various migration policies and if it was explicitly challenging to them. For example, respondents studying in Norway shared that it was challenging to manage funds during visa renewal⁶. The students shared that they did not have the required money in their account during the renewal time and had to ask for loans and deploy various other measures to ensure the necessary financial requirements. One of the respondents expressed that it was impractical for Norway to expect a lump sum from students on such a tight budget.

In terms of migration policies, there were various other challenges that migrants faced based on their situations. A respondent who was trying to get a work permit in Poland shared:

'It felt like the system was designed to trouble immigrants. If you asked for a work permit, they asked you to bring a work contract first. And when you went to find jobs, employers wanted to see your work permit first. It felt like Poland just wanted us to go back home. But, I am a fighter, and I tried everything in my capacity to get a permit.'

The respondent shared that he asked two of his professors to write him a letter of recommendation. Because he was a dentist (highly skilled) and had a glowing recommendation, he managed to get a work permit in Poland.

Similarly, respondents who went as student migrants to the U.S shared that it was very challenging to extend their stay after finishing their studies. After completing their studies, students usually have three options to extend their stay- either take some more courses and extend their studies or apply for an OPT⁷ (Optional Practical Training). In the case of one of the respondents shared that she had to find a job that was willing to fund her visa within 60

⁶ As a student in Norway, one has to make sure that there is a certain amount of money (around 130,000 NOK) present in their bank account while renewing their yearly visa.

⁷ According to the U.S immigration service's website, '*Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion).*'

days of her graduation date. She could not do so; hence, she took some extra courses and extended her studies to extend her student visa. The respondent worked as a skilled employee at a company for over a year, but they were unwilling to fund her 'green card'; hence, she had to continue paying the tuition fees and taking courses because she wanted to stay longer. Later, she found a job at a multinational company willing to process a green card for her.

She shared;

'I have been paying tuition fees and taking random courses for two years just so my visa status remains valid. Many companies here have a company policy that does not fund employee green cards. It makes it very difficult for us to stay. But finally, I have found a company that has agreed to fund my green card⁸. Hopefully, I will have a work permit soon.'

The same respondent also shared about being interrogated by U.S immigration when she returned to the U.S after visiting her family in Nepal. She believed she was questioned because she had extended her student visa. After all, they had asked her about her student status and the reasons behind the extension. Luckily, she was let go after a few hours.

Another student who migrated to the U.S. in 1997, he shared to have spent about nine years taking random courses and extending his student visa status just to avoid getting deported. He shared that the immigration policies became strict in the U.S., specifically after 9/11⁹ (in 2001), and they had to be very cautious. Later in 2006, he decided to migrate to Canada because the migration policies in Canada were less restrictive, and he thought he would have better opportunities there.

One of the respondents in the U.K shared that he did not want to give up on his Nepali citizenship but traveling with a Nepali passport was troublesome. When he had to travel somewhere with his family, his family had British passports, and the visa and check-in process for them was much easier while he had to wait in long queues and needed a lot of documentation. Hence, he decided to give up his Nepali citizenship and is now a British citizen.

⁸ According to the U.S immigration services website '*having a Green Card (officially known as a Permanent Resident Card allows you to live and work permanently in the United States.*'

⁹ 9/11, also known as September 11 attacks, were a series of four coordinated suicide terrorist attacks against the U.S. carried out by the militant Islamic extremist network al-Qaeda

To summarise: student migrants had to navigate various migration policies to prolong their residence in the destination countries. The migration policies can be complicated and confusing for students. Still, they tend to deploy multiple methods to ensure their stay in the country, including paying a lot of extra money to the university to maintain student status. It can be said that students use many financial, social, and other resources to navigate all the migration policies.

6.5 Recurrent Multinational Migrations

The migration trajectories of migrant students were analyzed to understand their migration patterns and trends. It was found that several respondents had step-wise migration trajectories. Circular and serial migration patterns were not observed in their trajectories in this research. As the name suggests, step-wise migration is a migration pattern whereby the migrant takes smaller migration steps, accumulates resources along the way, and ultimately steps up and moves to their desired destination country (usually a country in the Global North). So, step-wise migration is identified when a migrant starts their journey by moving to a slightly 'developed' country than their native country and slowly goes up the hierarchy and continues moving to more developed countries.

In the case of the respondents in this study who had step-wise migration patterns, it was found that India was the first step in the migration journey for the majority of them. It seems to be the case because India is a neighboring country with open borders. Secondly, Nepal and India share similar cultures and values, so the transition process is much easier for the migrants. All respondents said to have accumulated 'education' as a resource in India that helped them in their migration journey ahead.

Similarly, one of the respondents moved to the U.S. first and then ultimately to Canada, whereas the other respondent studied in the Philippines and then moved to Australia. The respondent in the U.S. worked and studied during his time there and shared that he accumulated financial capital that he used when he decided to migrate to Canada. When asked the reasons behind his decision to relocate, he shared,

'My plan was to stay in the U.S long term, but the visa policies were too strict. After struggling for nine years in the U.S to get a work visa, I found out that Canada's visa

policies were easier to navigate. Hence, since I did not want to return to Nepal, I migrated to Canada.'

Similarly, climbing up the professional ladder was another important motivator for multinational migrations. One of the respondents studied in China and then moved to the U.S. She decided to migrate to the U.S. because her husband was offered a fellowship, and they agreed that it was the best decision for them to move. Now, she is a student herself, hoping to gather higher education leading to better job opportunities.

One of the respondents shared that she decided to move from the U.K. to the U.S. because she felt 'bored' in the U.K. She elaborated,

'I had a well-paying job in the U.K. but did not like it there. The weather, the people,.. I did not enjoy my time there. I also felt discriminated by the locals. It was just after the 9/11 attacks, and everyone was very sensitive. I was a doctor, so I knew I had access to better opportunities. So, I decided to move to the U.S. just after six months after landing in the U.K. The processing took over a year, but I knew I wanted to move, so I managed everything.'

Similarly, the respondent who migrated from Poland to the U.K. also cited professional growth as a major motivator for their migration decision. It corresponds to Beaverstock's (2005) arguments, as cited in Paul & Yeoh (2020), that multinational migration was more common among 'transnational elite' who kept moving to multiple countries and cities to grow professionally. The transnational elite was basically referred to high skilled migrants who were sure of getting opportunities in the new destinations.

When asked to elaborate on their migration trajectories, student migrants who moved to India shared that India seemed the best option to take that first step because it was affordable, close and the migration process was easy. They wanted to get a good quality education to set a strong base for them going forward. The respondents also shared that they did not have a set plan when they started this journey.

Hence, it can be concluded that the journeys of some of the respondents in this study had step-wise migration trajectories. Their journey was dynamic, and they made decisions based on their circumstances. Education and financial capital were essential resources that the respondents gathered in their step-wise migration journeys, which ultimately helped them

migrate to the Global North. This resource accumulation aspect of step-wise migration corresponds with Brown (1998) as cited in Thompson (2020). They discussed the use of temporary stays by migrants to accrue capital to reach their preferred final destination.

The motivations for recurring migrations are similar to that of one-time migration. The respondents decided to move in search of better opportunities and were attracted to countries that provided options for permanent resettlement. They accumulated resources and climbed up the social and professional ladder. It was also found that most of my respondents are high-skilled migrants, which facilitated their recurrent multinational migration. They had a better chance of finding jobs in the new destination because of their skills, and thus, the risk was reduced.

Similarly, even for the one-time migrants in this study, there was an openness to move if they were to get better opportunities. None of the one-time migrants were rigid about staying in one specific country.

6.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the various aspects of the migration experience that Nepali student migrants had in their migration journeys. The expectations and the actual reality of migration were starkly different for most migrants. While migrants had very high expectations from their move, actual migration experience included adapting to a new environment, starting their new lives from scratch, building new networks, etc. Here, the first sub-chapter explored various migration experiences through the lens of culture shock. I used the four stages of culture shock (Lysgaard, 1995) and compared how respondents fit into those stages. It was found that most of the respondents had experienced all four stages; honeymoon period, culture shock, adjustment, and adaptation.

In some cases, the respondents had a lot of challenges from the beginning and skipped the honeymoon phase completely. This element is common to Adhkari & Khadka's (2021) findings, whereby they found that some respondents skipped the honeymoon stage in their journeys due to various complications early on. The second stage, culture shock, is the most complicated stage to deal with as it can be exhausting, disorienting, and depressing to adapt to the new environment. Furnhan & Bochner (1986) discuss the role of social assistance in managing culture shock and helping migrants adjust (Adhikari & Khadka, 2021). The

respondents in this study also depended on their ties back home and with friends and family in the destination country to deal with the complications. Winkelman (1994) adds that such social support can be beneficial for students in dealing with stressful situations as it promotes acceptance and affirmation. Social connections were used as a comforting factor by various respondents in this study, as many respondents spent significant time with their friends and families.

Similarly, from the gender perspective, a shift in gender roles and attitudes was observed among respondents. While women felt freer and happier being abroad, men became more accepting of gender-equal practices and even took decisions that were not entirely acceptable in traditional Nepali society. Dhungel (2019) talks about the "feminization of migration" as a time when women became part of the migration discourse and were presented as dependent migrants. In this study, most women were independent migrants who took migration decisions on their own and had agency over their next steps.

Student migrants did not go through any overt racism in their experiences but had felt comfortable in some circumstances. At times, they had felt excluded by the locals and depended on their Nepali networks to build strong ties. As Garip & Asad (2015) talks about the positive role of migrant networks, these strong migrant networks had helped migrants in this study find jobs, receive higher wages through negotiation, and support adaptation and growth (Garip & Asad, 2015).

This chapter also delved deep into the migration experiences of Nepali student migrants, and it was found that migrants had diverse experiences based on their time of migration, destination country, and availability of migrant networks. Some of the respondents were multinational migrants who had spent time in multiple countries and accumulated capital in the process. Most of such respondents had started their journey in India as it was the most affordable and closest option for Nepali people. However, one respondent had migrated to the U.K and then to the U.S. Another had migrated from India to Poland to the U.K, and one of the other migrants had migrated from the Philippines and then to Australia. Better job opportunities and possibilities of long-term resettlement were the key motivations behind their migration decisions. It was observed that it was easier for high skilled migrants to go on these migration trajectories as they had the capital and the skills that helped reduce the risk and challenges associated with migration.

Chapter 7: Social Integration in the Host Country

Previous studies on social integration have interpreted this phenomenon with internal and external integration. They look at internal integration to understand the ties among co-ethnic migrants and external integration to understand the relationship between migrants and locals (Valenta, 2008; Page, 2016). Valenta (2008) also identified the role of language in these integration patterns. Within that context, this chapter focuses on the social interactions and integrations of Nepali student migrants in the destination country. This chapter will delve into Nepali migrants' relationships in their 'new home' with fellow Nepali people and the international community. Building on these integration aspects, I will then focus on the role of language in maintaining these interactions and the potential challenges that respondents might have faced in their experiences. Finally, I will summarize the entire chapter and analyze the findings of the various elements of social integration with relevant theories and themes. It must be noted that the data for this chapter is collected from eleven respondents who have already migrated abroad.

7.1 Ties with fellow Nepali People

My respondents shared that they had a strong relationship with the Nepali community in their area and spent time together with them. They shared that most of their close friends were Nepali, and they frequently met to spend time together. It corresponds with the findings of Coleman's concentric circle that represents that immigrants shared the closest bonds with their co-nationals, followed by other outsiders and the least with locals of the destination country (Gallego Balsà, 2018). It was observed with several respondents in this study as they shared to feel the most comfortable around fellow Nepali people.

One of the respondents shared;

It is always nice to meet fellow Nepali people. It just feels like 'home,' and it is just so easy to talk to each other about everything. We talk about everything ranging from Nepali politics, our daily lives, and our plans.'

Nepali migrants found it very comfortable interacting with fellow Nepali people as they shared the same culture and values, food, and even language. Inviting each other for dinner or

parties seems an essential aspect of the Nepali migrant networks. One of the respondents also shared that if he ever hears someone speaking Nepali on a bus or the street, he makes sure to strike up a conversation with them. He adds;

'Just hearing someone speak Nepali is calming to my ears. So, I always initiate a conversation and try to incorporate them in our group if I come across a new Nepali person anywhere.'

When asked about what kind of activities they liked doing with fellow Nepali people, respondents shared that cooking and eating together was a big aspect for them. Similarly, they also celebrate festivals together. They consider the Nepali community their family and tend to meet up during Nepali festivals and other religious celebrations. These findings correspond with Page's (2016) results on Chinese Students in Norway, as he found that students were most comfortable with fellow co-ethnic communities.

While there is a strong sense of community and connectedness among Nepali people for some respondents, other respondents share that they do not have that strong of a network. It was primarily because they were introverted or did not have the time to participate in co-ethnic activities that had created some distance. However, they still agreed that they were very comfortable around the Nepali community and spent time whenever they could.

Similarly, one of the respondents shared that it was their choice to avoid the Nepali community and not get too involved with them. When asked why he decided to do so, he shared that he felt restricted around Nepali people. He thought that when one is too involved with a Nepali community, it is restrictive to your growth and exploration as you are in a comfort zone all the time. So, he consciously tried to spend more time with the locals or other foreign nationals than with the Nepali community.

Other respondents did not share a specific reason behind not having a robust Nepali community. Some of them were married to non-Nepali people (Australian and Polish). It can be assumed that having a non-Nepali partner can change the dynamics of social integration and thus lead to more interaction with locals than with Nepali people.¹⁰

¹⁰ This potential correlation between intercultural marriage and social integration is explored further in the next chapter (chapter 7.2).

7.2 Ties with the International Community

The respondents had mixed opinions about their ties with the international community. The international community refers to the locals of the destination country and other international immigrants residing there. Some respondents shared a strong network with the international community, whereas most respondents were not as active in networking with this community.

It was also found that the majority of these respondents who had a strong network had been living abroad for over ten years, and two were married to non-Nepali people. They had spent such a long time abroad and had developed robust connections with people they had met across various stages of their migration journey. One of the respondents, who is currently in the U.K but lived in Poland for 5-6 years in the 1990s, shared that he still has strong ties with two of his professors from Poland, and they met whenever they could.

Moreover, he added,

'I have made a few Nepali friends here in the UK. I do not like being a part of the non-returning Nepali (NRN) organizations, but I do have a small set of friends that I meet often. I do not like being part of NRN because I feel it's too political at times. Also, some of my friends organize small charity events/dinners for Nepal where we invite a lot of our friends from the international community. We have been able to collect money and send it to Nepal for specific causes. It is always nice when non-Nepali people also come together to help Nepal.'

Similarly, respondents shared that they usually met these friends at their university or workplace. They agreed that the comfort level was not the same as being in the Nepalese community but shared that having an international group of friends had its perks. They shared that they learned about many new cultures and gathered new perspectives by connecting with the international community.

Hence, some respondents have developed strong ties with the international community by marriage, while some have developed strong friendships. A respondent who is married to a non-Nepali partner shared;

'I have no choice but to connect with the International community. My wife, in-laws, and her whole side of the family and friends and not Nepali, but we share a very strong bond.'

I do not have my side of the family here, and I miss them, so it is nice to have a family here who I am extremely comfortable with.'

For the respondents married to natives of the host countries, integration was more 'natural' and effortless. It can be analyzed by Collet's explanation of integration among mixed partnerships. Mixed partnerships also have an inherent social inequality because one partner culture is part of the majority of the country while the other's is a minority (Collet, 2012). Collet (2012) further discussed that mixed couples usually deploy three ways to navigate social integration- the minority adopts the majority's culture, the majority embraces the minority's culture, or they strike a balance between both cultures. In one of the mixed couples in this study, the Nepali migrant seems to have adopted his partner's culture. This idea is further cemented because the migrant had visited Nepal only three to four times over the past twenty years and admitted not having a solid Nepali migrant network. For another respondent, even though he has tried to maintain a cultural balance, it was found that the influence of the majority culture was much higher on him and their children than vice-versa. He shared;

'I have always wanted to make sure that my kids are connected to Nepal. That is why; we try to plan at least one visit a year to Nepal as a family. But, with COVID and other work commitments, we have not been able to visit for over three years now.'

Similarly, in the case of one respondent, she shares that she spent a lot of her teenage years in India and thus connects with Indian friends much more quickly than Nepali friends. Hence, she has a strong network of Indian friends, but she does not interact with Nepali people much. Valenta (2008) and Coleman's concentric circle of integration also interpret that immigrants were more comfortable communicating with fellow immigrants than the locals. It was because both of them were on neutral ground and making similar compromises to be able to communicate. Unlike the locals, they did not have a sense of majority and superiority.

Several respondents shared that they spent most of their time with Nepali people and did not particularly have any connections with the international community. They meet friends and colleagues professionally but have not developed a personal relationships beyond that. Language and cultural difference are the two big reasons why many are hesitant/unable to connect with the international community. One respondent shared that even though he tried to actively build friendships with the non-Nepali people, there was a certain level of discomfort that he just could not get rid of and thus, decided to stop putting too much effort into it.

Another respondent shared that she developed friendships with her classmates while at the university, but the friendship fizzled quickly when they graduated.

Some respondents have developed a strong network of international friends during their migration journey, whereas others have struggled to maintain those friendships and have found happiness in Nepali migrant communities.

7.3 Role of Language in Interactions and Negotiations

Building on sub-chapters 7.1 and 7.2, this chapter will discuss the role of language in facilitating interactions and promoting a more robust network of friends.

The respondents in this study shared that language had significantly impacted their migration journeys and how they interacted with people in the destination countries. A respondent who moved to Poland in the 90s shared,

'When I moved to Poland, I could speak a little English, but almost no one in Poland could speak it. They only spoke Polish, and it was impossible for me to communicate with anyone. Even buying groceries was a task because I had no idea about the product or the price.'

They further added that the first year of the study was just about learning the language because even the course content was entirely in Polish. It was tough for them to interact with anyone because of the distinct language barriers.

The language barrier issue seems to be prominent for many respondents as they share to have felt conscious of their language while interacting with people. Some felt that their English was not good enough to communicate with foreigners.

One of the respondents who are currently in the U.S. shared;

'I went to an English medium school, and I believe I have a decent hold over the language. But, when I first joined the university here, I was so overwhelmed by the accent. I was constantly conscious of my accent and often decided not to speak to anyone and not participate in class discussions.'

Even though the course of instruction at the university was English for most respondents, the respondents felt conscious about their language at some point in their experience. Berg (1990), as cited in Valenta (2008), discusses how this discomfort in communication can lead to migrants being considered boring and even 'stupid' by the locals leading to migrants feeling humiliated and further underconfident.

Since English is a common language in Nepal, people who migrate to English-speaking countries are at least familiar with the language, if not fluent. But still, it was found that the language barrier was a big factor behind respondents not being able to connect with the International community. There was a fear of being judged if they spoke 'wrong' English in front of native speakers. This self-consciousness can discourage interaction and alienate immigrants from the host communities (Goffman, 1967, as cited in Valenta, 2008).

But for the respondents residing in Norway specifically, language has been a distinct barrier in certain situations. Norwegian is the working language in Norway, so even though the course is taught in English, Norwegian still dominates the society. One of the respondents shared that google translate has become an integral part of his life now. Even though he is trying to learn the language, he is far from fluent and gets confused with basic words. He also shared that he had bought 'wrong' products from grocery stores many times by mistake because he could not understand the product description and was tired of using Google translate. Another big challenge for respondents in Norway has been finding a relevant job. Since most jobs require fluent (or a certain level of) Norwegian in Norway, it limits their professional growth and development options.

Language barriers can limit interaction opportunities for migrants and impact their chances of gathering information (Øverland, 2017). Hence, language is an essential factor in social interactions and negotiations as it is the best way to have clear communication. In the respondents' case, most of them shared having experiences language barriers at different stages of their journey.

7.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the social integration of Nepali migrants in the destination country and how they develop social networks.

Nepali migrants adapted to the culture/ways of the host communities and built social ties accordingly. Most respondents struggled to establish strong relations, especially when building networks with locals and other international students. They made connections but lost out on them very often. Only a few respondents in my study had built strong ties with locals.

Building ties with fellow Nepali communities was much easier for migrant students to develop. They often contacted fellow Nepali people in the host country before their migration, and these migrant networks turned into solid ties. It corresponds with Page's (2016) study on the experiences of Chinese students in NTNU, as he also suggested that International students were likely to have the most substantial ties with fellow immigrants of the same country. Similarly, some respondents actively avoided building links with many fellow Nepali people, but they all shared that it was much easier to develop relationships with fellow Nepali people than with the locals.

Language plays an essential role in one's ability to build networks as it is necessary to have clear and comfortable communication for any bond to develop. Respondents who were not fluent in the local language found it challenging to make friends outside of their communities.

Overall, it can be concluded that Nepali student migrants find it easier to develop bonds with the Nepali community than with the international community while staying abroad. Language acts as a barrier to the social integration of migrants in the host community, whereas their connections with fellow Nepali migrants help them in their social lives. Considering it was easier for some migrants to communicate with fellow Indian migrants¹¹, the findings also align with the work of Valenta (2008), who found that it was easier for migrants to communicate with fellow immigrants than with the host communities. Valenta (2008) found that immigrants felt less 'communicative inferiority' while talking to fellow immigrants than

¹¹ Some respondents had shared that they communicate with fellow Indian communities abroad.

the host community. It was because both the parties were on neutral ground and using a foreign language and adjusting to each other.

These findings correspond with Page's (2016) results about the integration of Chinese Students in Norway and Coleman's concentric circles of integration as they concluded that migrants were most comfortable with their co-nationals in the host country.

Chapter 8: Future Plans and Expectations

This is the final chapter of the analysis section and focuses on the future plans of Nepali student migrants. It must be noted that the data for this chapter is collected from all fourteen interviewed respondents. In this chapter, I will explore the future plans of aspiring migrants and recent migrants. I will look into their plans after they are done studying in the destination country (return home, settle abroad, etc.). Similarly, I will also explore the future plans of migrants who are already settled abroad. Finally, I will summarize the entire chapter and analyze the findings with relevant theories and themes.

8.1 Future plans for Aspiring Migrants and Migrants who recently moved

There was a lot of excitement in aspiring migrants and recent migrants about their lives and studies abroad. They were asked about their plan after they finished their studies and all of them expressed that they did not want to return to Nepal immediately. The aspiring migrants wanted to ideally find a job in the destination country or find another way to stay longer. They expressed that they wished for a permanent residency in that country to have access to almost all the facilities and rights in the destination country.

One of the respondents shared;

'I have seen a lot of friends go to the U.S and not come back. That is why I chose that country. I want to move to a country where I have the highest chances of staying long term.'

The aspiring migrants shared that being in the destination countries would make them the happiest, and they hoped to lead a good quality of life. All of them were excited about the prospect of being able to invite their parents abroad and share this part of the world with them. The respondents did not have a clear answer to where they wanted to reach academically and professionally, but they clearly wanted to settle abroad in the long term.

Similarly, recent Migrants (who migrated 1-5 years ago) who are currently studying or pursuing other commitments abroad were also asked about their future plans. None of the respondents had immediate plans of returning to Nepal permanently. The respondents said

they were currently focused on finishing their studies and finding a job. None of the respondents had specific plans of moving to another country either, but most of them shared they were open to doing it if the opportunity struck.

One of the respondents studying in the U.S. shared;

'I will be done with my Ph.D. in a few years. I am not sure what I want to do after that, but I am also fascinated by the idea of living in Europe. So, if opportunity strikes, I might settle down somewhere there.'

The motivation behind wanting to resettle permanently was almost the same as their motivation behind deciding to move abroad. Respondents believed that resettling would improve their quality of life by a long shot. They were hoping to earn more, spend more, and send more money back home so that their families could have better lives. They also were averse to going back to Nepal because of Nepal's political instability and lack of opportunities.

One of the respondents shared;

'I miss Nepal, but then, when I think more about it, I remember the pollution, the mismanagement, and the corruption. Then I feel like I have a great opportunity to build my life in this much better country, so I re-focus on this instead.'

Similarly, it was also found that respondents were open to migrating further to another country only if it was another country in the Global North and if they were being provided with a better opportunity than what they had. Since they were already in their desired country, they were focused on building their lives here.

Similarly, one of the respondents working in Norway hoped to get a permanent residency and a Norwegian passport. He shared;

'I wanted to have a Norwegian passport because that makes travel a lot easier and one's access to opportunities also increase exponentially. I also might return back to Nepal once I have enough money and a Norwegian passport and spend the rest of my time with his close friends and family.'

Bijwaard & Wang's (2016) findings that student migrants tend to return after accumulating some savings seem relevant for this respondent but contrast the plans of other respondents in this study.

Another respondent had almost all her family members in the U.S, so she felt very comfortable staying there long term and did not want to return. One of the other students in the U.S is eagerly awaiting her green card and hopes to remain long-term in the U.S.

There seems to be a correlation between the motivations of migrants before they moved and their future plans currently. Most respondents chose their preferred country based on the ease of settling abroad permanently, and it is in line with their goals right now. Plans for permanent resettlement abroad are primary for all aspiring and recent migrants.

The respondents seem to have 'any job,' 'better job,' and 'dream job' approach (Parutis, 2011). When they enter the country, they are open to doing any job (usually menial part-time jobs) to earn some money to bear their expenses. It is what aspiring migrants plan to do once they migrate. Similarly, recent migrants are always on the lookout for better job opportunities, and many recent migrants in this study have jumped into that phase already. Onwards from here, the recent migrants hope to find their 'dream jobs' and settle down.

8.2 Plans of Long-term Migrants Settled Abroad

Similarly, long-term migrants (who have been living abroad for over five years) were also asked about their future plans and none of them had plans of returning to Nepal anytime soon. The respondents were well settled with their families, jobs, and friends and had not felt the need to return to Nepal. They had developed strong migrant networks and were well-integrated into their societies which had helped them feel like they 'belonged' there.

One of the respondents from the U.K elaborated that he planned to work in the U.K until his retirement and then might move to cheaper countries like Spain or Portugal. He wanted to stay in the U.K. but was not happy with the retirement benefits. He believed it would be difficult to bear his expenses with those benefits. Thus, he hopes to move to a cheaper country after his retirement.

Similarly, two of the respondents had most of their family with them, and they did not feel the need to move anywhere. They shared that the U.S was like home to them.

One of them also added;

'I and my husband (both doctors) want to organize free health camps in underdeveloped countries and travel around the world helping people after our retirement. We want to give something back to the community, and as doctors, imparting medical services to the underprivileged would be ideal.'

It also corresponds with Coleman's idea of migrants connecting the most with co-nationals. Since the respondents had their families with them, they did not feel 'homesick,' and their adjustment to a foreign country was much smoother.

While most migrants did not show a keen interest in returning to Nepal, some did bring up the idea of 'identity' and how they felt lost in terms of where they belonged. Since long-term migrants spend many years in a foreign country assimilating into new cultures, it is understandable that they have a skewed sense of identity and belongingness. Maslow's hierarchy lists identity and belongingness as essential needs, and individuals need to have a strong sense of identity for their well-being. When someone loses their sense of identity and culture, it can cause a grief reaction (Eisenbruch in Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Some respondents in this study seem to have a sense of conflict and confusion regarding their identity.

One of the respondents in Australia shared that he had these thoughts about where he belonged and who he was as he approached old age. He shared that as a migrant who has spent so many years in Australia while his parents are back home, he wonders what his next steps should be. When probed if he had any plans to move back to Nepal, he shared that he would stay in Australia for at least ten more years until his kids are adults and then think about the next steps.

He further elaborated,

'I do not want to give up my Nepali citizenship. Maybe it is a way of conserving some aspect of my identity, but I have never even considered taking Australian citizenship. It is also practical because as long as I have my citizenship, my children also have easier access to Nepal.'

Similarly, talking about his identity, another respondent shared;

'I have always felt like an outsider. When I moved to Kathmandu from a small village, the locals made me feel like an outsider. When I moved to Poland, the culture and even the immigration policies treated me like an outsider. And then I moved to the U.K where I had to start everything from scratch. I guess that's my identity- an outsider trying to blend in. But I am happy. And I must tell you; I strongly believe that one can survive anywhere if they have a good education, great confidence, and a little money.'

Thus, in the case of long-term migrants, none of them had immediate plans of returning, and it was found that most of them had accepted their new environment as a permanent home for them.

8.3 Chapter Summary

It can be observed most interviewed migrants do not have plans to come back to Nepal. The findings do not align with Bijwaard & Wang (2016), who concluded that international graduates usually return to their home countries after graduation because of a lack of job opportunities in the host country. This study found that Nepali student migrants tried their best to elongate their stays in the host country and mostly decided to settle down there.

Similarly, the strong ties with fellow Nepali and locals also encouraged migrants to stay in the host country long term. These social bonds helped them feel included. In the case of serial migrants, it can be observed that serial migrants usually migrated until they entered their desired country in the Global North. Once they were in their preferred destination, serial migrants decided to settle down long term.

Recent migrants were focused on finding jobs and extending their stay in the destination country, and long-term migrants were primarily satisfied with their experiences in the host country. Some long-term migrants did share issues of identity crisis that they felt about their belongingness. However, migrants re-focused themselves on the more 'practical' aspects of their lives because of their responsibilities towards their families and children.

Since most migrants had chosen destination countries based on the ease of settling permanently rather than the quality of education provided, it can be concluded that they were clear on their goals from the beginning of the journey. All the respondents are focused on

elongating their stays in the destination countries and resettling permanently if possible. Even when it comes to the option for further migration, respondents are only interested if they are offered better opportunities than what they have at hand.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study and summarizes the significant findings regarding the migration experiences of Nepali Students. The chapter will give a brief overview of the topic, the research methodology that was deployed, and the core theories and concepts that are recurring throughout this study. The overall aim of this study was to explore and understand the overall migration experiences of Nepali students who are currently residing in or aspiring to move to the Global North. The study focuses on the motivations behind migration decisions, their actual experiences, and how they integrate into a completely new society in the host country.

The thesis is a qualitative study and was conducted based on primary and secondary data sources. In-depth semi-structured interviews with fourteen student migrants were the primary data sources. Out of the fourteen respondents, three reside in Nepal and aspire to move abroad soon. Four moved to a Global North country to pursue higher education less than five years ago, and seven are long-term migrants settled in the Global North. The respondents were selected using purposive, convenience, and snowballing techniques. The respondents were spread worldwide, so all the interviews were conducted online. I used semi-structured interviews for primary data collection because it allowed me to have a basic structure for my interviews and allowed me to go out of the set guidelines if something interesting and insightful came up.

Along with primary data, I also used secondary data to better understand the topic and compare my findings with current research work. I collected secondary data through extensive desk study, including reviewing journals, research papers, articles, etc. Reviewing literature also helped me identify the key themes and theories I could use to interpret my data and compare it to the larger picture.

My study has four overall themes: (i) motivations behind migration, (ii) actual migration experiences and adaptations of Nepali students, (iii) social integration of student migrants in the new society, and (iv) their future plans. I used the push-pull migration model to understand the key motivations behind Nepali students' decision to migrate. I explored the push factors to understand what pushed students away from Nepal and looked at the pull factors to identify the factors that attracted students to destination countries. I also explored

the migration networks that respondents developed before their migration journeys to facilitate their migration process.

Following Lysgaard (1995), I distinguished between different stages of respondents' adjustment to a new socio-cultural environment. Concepts of social integration, step-wise, circular, serial migration patterns, and a gender perspective also helped me better understand and interpret the migration experiences.

For my third theme, social integration into the new society, I used internal and external integration concepts, migrant networks, and step-wise, serial, and circular migration patterns. I looked into how students integrated into their societies and how they maintained relationships with peers from their previous destinations. Finally, I also briefly explored the future plans of migrants and used the push-pull model to understand their migration plans. The study also emphasized their social networks and briefly discussed their sense of identity as a factor influencing their future plans.

Based on these themes and theories, I explored these four research questions:

RQ 1: What are the key motivations behind Nepali Students' decision to migrate abroad for higher studies?

This study suggests that Nepali students migrate because they believe that their lives will be exponentially better in the destination countries than in Nepal. Various factors influence their migration decisions. The four recurring push factors identified through all the interviews were: lack of employment opportunities in Nepal, lower wages compared to expenses (inflation), dissatisfaction with the government and overall political situation, and the willingness to follow the '*trend*' of migration. Similarly, the four recurring pull factors identified through all the interviews were: better earning opportunities and higher wages, possibilities of staying longer in the destination country, and scholarships and financial aid provided in the destination country. Furthermore, even though Nepali students lack trust in the Nepali education system, education quality and the quality of the university are still not a very big priority for them. They tend to see migration primarily as a way to settle abroad and get a permanent residency in a Global North country. It contrasts with the work of previous

researchers (Kharel, 2011; Dhungel et al., 2013), who identified higher education as one of the key reasons behind student migration,

The findings suggest that Nepali students are unhappy with the current bureaucracy and the government and believe that they will not be able to build their lives the way they want in Nepal because of such institutional reasons. They think that Global North countries will provide them with better opportunities and higher wages, attracting them to such destinations. Students accumulate financial capital via loans, savings, and educational capital by passing various aptitude tests to facilitate their migration journeys. Students also develop strong migrant networks with the Nepali community living abroad to gather information and reduce migration risks.

RQ 2: What kind of experiences do these students have during their time in a foreign country?

The findings suggest that students have a starkly different experience than they hoped for when they move abroad. They often underestimate migration challenges before moving and are struck with cultural shock as they migrate. The findings suggest that students can feel lonely and disoriented as they try to adapt to an entirely new society. They employ various adaptation strategies, build networks and familiarize themselves with the new system to tackle a new environment. They can overcome the initial shocks and adjust to changes with the help of fellow Nepali communities and just by spending time in the new environment.

In terms of gender, it was found that women felt freer and more independent by migrating abroad and had more agency in their decisions. Men shifted their perspective toward gender roles and became more understanding of the gender dynamics once they moved abroad. Men, who usually grow up in a sheltered environment in a patriarchal society in Nepal, have to take care of themselves on their own when they migrate. These added responsibilities can feel challenging but also helps male migrants understand the gender dynamics that exist all around them. In terms of ethnic inclusion, the findings suggest that Nepali students do not face overt racism in Global North countries. It might be because of the higher education and awareness levels in Global North.

Similarly, the universities they attend are for international students, and hence, the community in the area is also used to a multicultural and accepting of diversity. Nepali

student migrants sometimes feel excluded from the locals because of the differences in culture and language. They also deploy various strategies to navigate the complex migration policies of destination countries to extend their stay. This includes explicitly choosing destinations where visa processing is more manageable, taking additional courses to keep the student visa valid even after graduating, and finding employment that ensures extended visas.

RQ 3: How do they navigate social interactions and integration in the host country?

The findings suggest that most Nepali migrants build the best social networks with fellow Nepali communities. The migrants share the same culture and language that provides a certain comfort level in an otherwise different environment. Even though some migrants interact with the locals and internationals comfortably, many find it challenging because of language barriers and cultural differences. Language can play a crucial role in influencing the social integration of migrants, and it is challenging for migrants who do not speak the local language to develop social networks. Hence, many Nepali migrants fall back on the Nepali community for their social needs.

RQ 4: What are their future plans in terms of migration?

The findings of this suggest that most Nepali student migrants want to settle abroad long-term. They are attracted to the better quality of life and higher wages of the Global North and would like to work there, at least until their retirement. The aspiring and recent migrants are focused on finding ways to settle abroad and hope to get a permanent residency. In contrast, long-term migrants are more restrictive and cautious about their decisions because of their family commitments. Unmarried student migrants are also willing to migrate to another country if opportunity strikes, but married migrants consider their families and children before making migration decisions. Some long-term migrants also feel a sense of lost identity because of their stay in the destination countries for such a long time. They reflect on their past experiences and make future decisions based on them.

Overall, the findings suggest that most Nepali students who migrate abroad plan to stay overseas and resettle there in the long term. They have high expectations from this migration

journey, but it is more challenging than expected when they decide to actually make the move. Students go through various stages of culture shock and employ multiple strategies to adjust to it. Migrating is a huge learning opportunity for them, beyond academic aspects, because it opens their eyes to new facets of life. Long-term migrants can find comfort in the destination country and have excellent networks with the locals but often fall back on the Nepali community for ultimate comfort.

This study provided rich and nuanced insights into the migration experiences of fourteen Nepali international students. However, it has certain limitations. Firstly, fourteen respondents spread worldwide is a relatively small sample to fully understand the multiple facets of student migration in Nepal. The findings of this study might not reflect every aspect of student migration in as much depth because of the small sample size. Similarly, this study looks into students residing in multiple Global North countries. While it allows us to have a more comprehensive overview of the migration experiences, it constricts us from going in-depth into experiences within each country. Hence, future research can be narrowed down and made more specific to understand the experiences of Nepali student migration in particular countries. Similarly, this study is exploratory and devises a qualitative methodology that requires a limited sample size and can leave out diverse perspectives. Quantitative research methodology covering a more extensive sample can also be an interesting way to capture diverse experiences and better understand migration experiences for Nepali students.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guideline used to Interview Aspiring Migrants

1. Basic information on their age, gender, education and profession
2. What are their migration trajectories? Have they migrated before? To another country or even another city within their country? How was that experience?
3. Why did they decide to/move to different countries? What motivations for migration do they have? Are the countries they are migrating to, their first choice or the only available destination?
4. How are they navigating the migration policies and other policies and restrictions in different countries?
5. Who are their helpers, facilitators of migration? How did they accumulate capital and other resources to move?
6. How are they planning to adjust into these new cultures and communities? Are they expecting it to be challenging? Do they think they will feel left out in any way?
7. What expectations do they have from this destination country? How are they expecting this experience to be like?
8. What are their future migration plans?

Appendix 2: Interview Guideline used to Interview Aspiring Migrants and Long-Term Migrants

1. Basic information on their age, gender, education and professions
2. What are their migration trajectories?
3. Why did they decide to/move to different countries? What motivations for migration did they have and what expectations? Were the countries they migrated to their first choice or the only available destination?
4. What did they do in different countries (type of jobs, studies, combinations, etc.)?
5. How did they migrate to different countries and how did they achieve the permanent residence? (if applicable)
6. How did they navigate the migration policies and other policies and restrictions in different countries?
7. What were the motivations and reasons for changes in reception countries? (if applicable)
8. Who were their helpers, facilitators of migration?
9. How did their residence and work in one country influence their further, onward migration?
10. Did they accumulate resources in one country which they used to migrate to the next country?
11. Which resources did they use to migrate, change countries, obtain permanent status (for example, networks, education or money they accumulated at previous destination, citizenship/ethnic capital, intermarriage?)
12. Do they engage in transnational practices /have contact/ties/frequently visit to some of their former receiving countries?
13. How did they adjust into these new cultures and communities? Were their challenges? Did they feel left out in any way?
14. What are their future migration plans?

