

Prithvi Journal of Research and Innovation

[A Peer-Reviewed, Open Access Multidisciplinary Bilingual Journal; Indexed in NepJOL]

ISSN 2705-4888 [Print]; ISSN 2705-4896 [Online]; JPPS Star-Rated Journal

Volume 5; 15 December 2023; pp. 37-52

eJournal Site: <http://ejournals.pncampus.edu.np/ejournals/pjri/>

Parental Migration and Psycho-Social Challenges of Left-Behind Girls in Nepal

Sushil Sharma

Department of HPPE, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara, Nepal

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1982-0506>

Article History:

Submitted 22 September 2023

Reviewed 25 November 2023

Revised 29 November 2023

Accepted 02 December 2023

Corresponding Author:

Sushil Sharma

Email: sushil.bhattarai@prnc.tu.edu.np

Article DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.3126/pjri.v5i1.60690>

Copyright Information:

Copyright 2023 © Authors of this journal; With authors' permission, the copyright is transferred to the publisher for the first edition only. This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).



Publisher:

Centre for Research and Innovation
Prithvi Narayan Campus
Tribhuvan University, Pokhara, Nepal
[Accredited by UGC, Nepal]

Tel.: +977-61-576837

Email: research@pncampus.edu.np

URL: www.pncampus.edu.np

ABSTRACT

The study explores the effect of parental migration on the psycho-social well-being of left-behind girls in Nepal, considering the concerns arising from the parental absence. It aims to compare the psychosocial well-being of left-behind girls with that of non-left-behind girls, taking into account factors like the duration of parental abroad stay and the level of parental concern. Conducted during the academic session of 2079 BS in Kaski District, Nepal, the study employs a cross-sectional survey design with a representative sample of 144 secondary-level students. The well-being measurement framework is adopted to gauge the participants' overall well-being. The research delves into various aspects such as background characteristics, emotional turbulence, life contentment, and supportive mechanisms. Despite differences in age distributions and caste dynamics, both groups exhibit similar levels of life contentment and positive peer relationships. The findings of the study reveal that left-behind girls have the experience of higher emotional turbulence in some aspects, such as loneliness and unhappiness, while non-left-behind girls report more worry and sleep problems. The findings suggest that while the left-behind status is

significant, other factors such as family support and personal attributes contribute to the psycho-social well-being of both left-behind girls and non-left-behind girls.

KEYWORDS: Left-behind girls, life contentment, parental migration, psycho-social well-being

INTRODUCTION

The movement of people across borders is a complex phenomenon driven by a myriad of factors, ranging from the pursuit of economic opportunities and access to better education and living conditions to the imperative need to escape persecution, human rights abuses, and conflict. According to the United Nations (UN), two prominent forces underpinning this global phenomenon are economic factors and terrorism, as elucidated by Jaramillo et al. (2015).

As economies expand and individuals accrue greater financial resources, it is increasingly common for parents to contemplate relocating to foreign lands in pursuit of a higher quality of life for their children (Raturi & Cebotari, 2023). This phenomenon, often referred to as parental migration, has garnered attention and raised concerns regarding its consequences, especially for a particular group known as left-behind girls (LBG). The LBG are minors whose one of their parents has lived abroad for a duration of at least six months (Antia et al., 2020). The psychosocial well-being of these LBG is intimately intertwined with the quality of their lives, creating a bi-directional relationship with the parental migration (Raturi & Cebotari, 2023).

The nexus between economic prosperity and parental migration is discernible. As people gain access to greater economic resources, they are more inclined to invest in the well-being of their children, often by relocating to foreign countries (UNICEF, 2021). However, this phenomenon has prompted concerns regarding its potential effects on the LBG. In this context, the LBG pertains to minors whose parents or one of them has moved abroad for a period exceeding six months (Gan, 2019). The concept of psycho-social well-being is central to this discourse, encompassing the overall quality of individuals' lives, as delineated by Ross et al. (2020) and Sharma (2018). The psycho-social well-being, in this context, represents a confluence of physical and psychosocial factors, an amalgamation of attributes that contributes to happiness, life satisfaction, and the development of a positive outlook on one's physical and psychosocial welfare and environment (Bannink et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2021). Here, it is crucial to recognize that the connection between a child's psycho-social well-being and parental migration is inherently bi-directional.

In 2019, the global count of migrants reached a staggering 272 million, constituting 3.5 percent of the world's population (IOM, 2019). Among these international migrants, approximately 150.3 million are labour migrants. Notably, the gulf states host a substantial 11.7 percent of this labour migrant population (IOM, 2019). Over the past few decades, there has been an exponential surge in migration driven by employment opportunities, a trend that has primarily emanated from developing countries like Nepal and India in South Asia, as corroborated by data from the (ILO, (2018).

The phenomenon of migration for employment opportunities has been further catalyzed by the advent of globalization and liberalization worldwide, which have ushered in robust economic growth (IOM, 2019). Economically, countries like Nepal have reaped the benefits of these opportunities. However, the flip side of this "opportunity" has gradually come to light, as revealed by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (2018). While remittances have poured into these countries, adverse consequences in the form of psycho-social challenges and family disintegration have begun to surface, a concern jointly addressed by the International Organization for

Migration and Save the Children (2017). Intriguingly, the impact of these developments on the psycho-social well-being of LBG has remained a relatively unexplored domain within the realm of research.

According to data provided by the Department of Foreign Employment, the Nepali labour migrants obtained work permits for as many as 153 different countries between 2008/2009 and 2016/2017 (Ministry of Labour, 2020). An astounding total of 3,554,683 permits were issued during this period (MoLE, 2018). In the fiscal year 2018/2019, a substantial 236,211 work permits were issued, with Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Malaysia being the favoured destinations for the Nepali migrant workers, as affirmed by IOM, (2019). Notably, Qatar accounted for almost one-third (31.8%) of all work permits issued, followed by the UAE (26.6%), Saudi Arabia (19.6%), Kuwait (6.8%), and Malaysia (4.2%), as per IOM's statistics, for 2019 (IOM, 2019). This migration trend is graphically depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Work Permit Issuances in Nepal

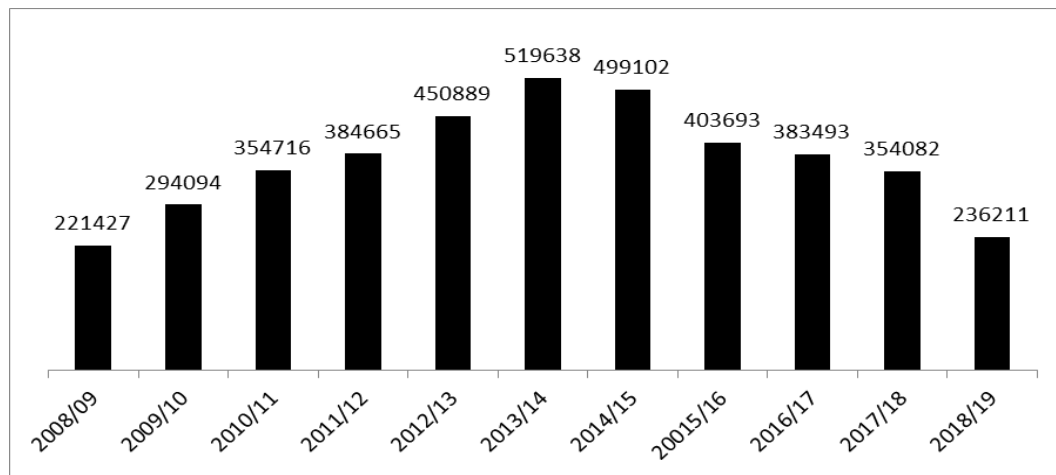


Figure 1 shows that the FY 2008/09 saw an escalating number of work permits issued for foreign employment, which continued up to 2013/14 and started to decline thereafter. With the gradual decline every year, FY 2018/19 saw the issuance of permit almost equal to the FY of 2008/09. The movement of people across borders is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by economic, social, and political factors. The impact of parental migration on the psycho-social well-being of LBC, particularly girls, is a subject of growing concern and research interest. As the world continues to witness unprecedented levels of migration, it is imperative to delve deeper into the intricate dynamics and consequences of this global trend in the psycho-social well-being.

In the context of Nepal, where parental migration serves as a decisive livelihood strategy for children, particularly given the limited employment opportunities (Kharel et al., 2021). This study delves into the effect of parental migration on the well-being of LBG. Parental migration plays a role in addressing immediate needs and facilitating long-term investments. The absence of parental guidance gives rise to concerns regarding how parental absence may influence the children. This study aims to uncover

the nuanced dynamics of parental migration and its repercussions on the overall well-being of children.

The above-mentioned studies suggest that the parental migration like economic access, supportive guardianship, etc. of the family has a connection to the improved health and well-being of the children. However, some others put forth the condition that the determining factor is whether the father or the mother is the absentee member of the family. Thus, this present study is yet to disclose the effect of parental migration on the psycho-social well-being of LBG as compared with the non-left-behind girls (NLBG) in the context of Nepal.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The cross-sectional survey design was used for the representative sample from all constitutional areas of Kaski District. Kaski District was chosen as the study area due to its status as one of the top five most literate districts (Ministry of Health and Population (Nepal) et al., 2023). Additionally, the largest metropolitan city in the region is situated within Kaski (Pokhara Metropolitan City, 2076 BS). This strategic choice aims to examine the effects related to migration in a context where educational attainment and urbanization may play significant roles. The nature of the data for this study was primarily quantitative, derived from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through surveys and secondary data were sourced from existing literature, government reports, and other relevant documents.

The study incorporated community schools in Kaski District—those schools where the classes run up to grade twelve. There are altogether 67 such secondary-level schools in Kaski District (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2016; Pokhara Metropolitan City, 2076 BS). According to constitutional distribution, there are three constituencies in Kaski District, where 26 schools constitute the number one, 16 schools constitute the number two, and 25 schools constitute the number three. To ensure a representative sample, nine schools were selected from the region using a cluster sampling method. Within these schools, a total of 144 students were chosen, with an equal representation from both the LBG and NLBG groups. This selection process involved a systematic sampling method, and 16 students were selected from each of the nine schools. The well-being measurement framework was adopted and used to measure the children's psycho-social well-being (Evidence Based Practice Unit, n.d.). To ensure the validity and reliability of the tool, it was thoroughly reviewed and pretested with a small subset of the target population, and adjustments were made based on the feedback and analysis of the pretested data. Data were collected through the prepared sheet by arranging two students on a single bench face-to-face. The data were subjected to statistical analysis to draw correlations, providing a comprehensive overview of the effects of parental migration. The ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. The informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they were aware of the study's purpose and their rights. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained to protect the privacy of the participants, and the study was conducted with sensitivity to social nuances.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section engages in a comprehensive discussion of the study's results, focusing on the main objectives, which are used to address the impact of parental migration on the psycho-social well-being of left-behind girls. The discussion begins with a thorough exploration of the demographic composition of LBG and NLBG. Central to the study is the nuanced examination of the effects associated with the duration of parental abroad stay, shedding light on the distinctive experiences of LBG. Moreover, a rigorous comparative analysis is conducted to unravel the differential impact of parental migration on the psycho-social well-being of LBG and NLBG. This study employs a multi-dimensional approach to measure psycho-social well-being, utilizing three key parameters: personal agency towards mechanisms for supporting good outcomes, emotional turbulence, and life contentment within the contexts of LBG and NLBG. The intricacies explored in this background lay the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities shaping the psycho-social well-being dynamics of LBG and NLBG amid the backdrop of parental migration.

Demographic Composition

In a country like Nepal, multiple ethnic groups and diversity can be found (Gurung et al., 2021). While the social behaviours, levels of awareness, and traditions of the people are often deeply connected to their caste and ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, there are evidences that an individual performance can be linked to a person's caste or ethnicity (Riekenberg et al., 2005). The present study focuses on students aged 15 to 19 years, from four different castes, analyzing and categorizing data using statistical measures. The distribution of respondents by age and caste is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondent

Types of Children	LBG		NLBG		Total	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Age						
15-17	44	50.6	43	49.4	87	100
18-19	28	49.1	29	50.9	57	100
Caste $p>.124$						
Dalit	18	60.0	12	40.0	30	100
Janajati	37	51.4	35	48.6	72	100
Bramhin/Chhetri	15	37.5	25	62.5	40	100
Others	2	100.0	0	0.0	2	100
Total	72	100	72	100	144	100

Table 1 presents the type of children based on their age and caste. The data is categorized into two main types: LBG and NLBG. It provides information on the age group distribution for each type of child. While the age group was categorized based on the period of adolescence (Sawyer et al., 2018). Among the LBG, 50.6 percent under in the age group of 15-17, while 49.1 percent fall in the age group of 18-19. For the NLBG, 49.4 percent fall in the age group of 15-17, and 50.9 percent fall in the age group of 18-19. The age distribution appears to be relatively balanced between the LBG and NLBG in each group, in which no significant difference observed ($p>0.86$).

Regarding the caste distribution, Bramhin/Chhetri and Janajati are the major ethnic groups of Nepal (Ministry of Health and Population, 2022). While the data reveals interesting patterns; among the LBG children, the majority (60.0%) belong to the Dalit caste, 51.4 percent come from the Janajati caste, and 37.5 percent are from the Bramhin/Chhetri caste. However, there are only two children (100.0%) from other castes in this group. On the other hand, among the NLBG children, the Dalit caste constitutes 40.0 percent, Janajati 48.6 percent, and Bramhin/Chhetri 62.5 percent. Notably, there are no children from other castes in the NLBG group. The p-value of 0.124 suggests that there are no statistically significant differences in the caste distribution between the LBG and NLBG.

This study suggests that being an LBG or NLBG does not significantly impact the age distribution among the two groups (Siddiquah, 2019). Both categories exhibit a comparable number of girls in the age groups of 15-17 and 18-19. However, the caste distribution shows some disparities between the LBG and NLBG girls (Amin et al., 2010). The LBG girls seem to have a higher percentage of individuals from the Dalit caste, while the NLBG has a higher percentage from the Bramhin/Chhetri caste. The presence of girls from various caste backgrounds in both groups highlights the importance of considering intersectionality when studying the experiences of LBG and NLBG.

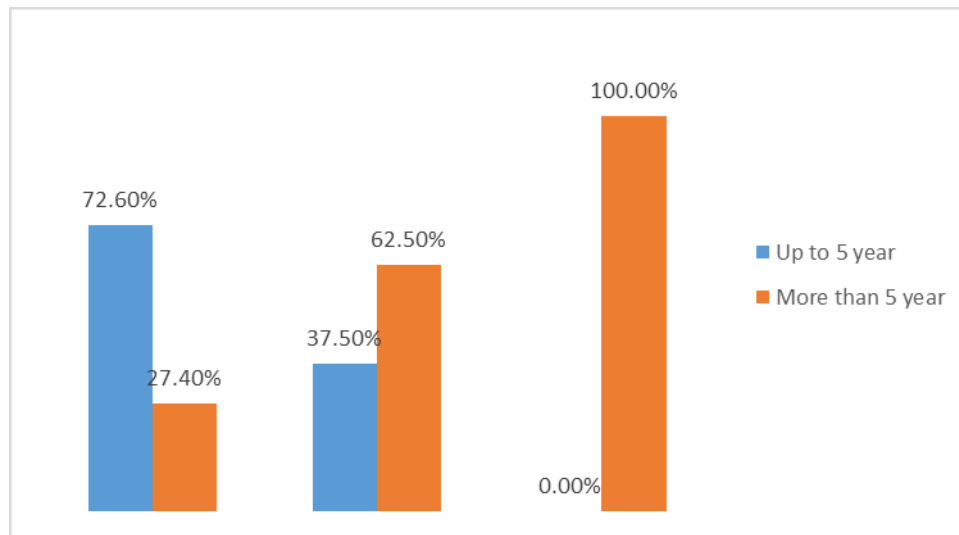
Duration of Abroad Stay

The duration of a parent's abroad stay is a pivotal factor influencing a child's psycho-social well-being, with longer separations often leading to heightened emotional distress, disruptions in attachment and bonding, educational setbacks, challenges in social development, and potential psychological issues. The left-behind children may experience feelings of abandonment, struggle to maintain consistent educational progress, and miss important social milestones and family connections (Antia et al., 2020). The parents are uncertain about the length of their stay abroad prior to leaving. However, the study discovered that their stay can range from one to more years. To simplify the study, the duration of their stay is divided into two categories: up to five years and more than five years. The duration of the abroad stay of parents is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows a comprehensive analysis of the duration of the abroad stay based on the individuals who migrated, categorized into two groups: up to five years and more than five years. The data reveals distinct patterns in the duration preferences of fathers, mothers, and cases where both parents have migrated. Starting with fathers, the majority (72.6%) have opted for shorter stays, falling under the category of up to five years. This suggests that a significant proportion of fathers prefer relatively the brief periods of abroad stay. In contrast, a considerable minority (27.4%) of fathers have chosen more than five years, indicating that a significant number of fathers are open to and have experienced longer durations of abroad stay. For mothers, the pattern is notably different. A substantial percentage (62.5%) have selected "more than five years, indicating a preference for longer durations of abroad stay. However, a notable minority (37.5%) of mothers have chosen up to five years, suggesting that some mothers also prefer shorter stays, but to a lesser extent as compared to fathers. The most striking observation lies within the cases where both parents have migrated. Here, a significant

difference is evident, as none of the families with both parents abroad have selected the up to five years' category. Instead, all cases with both parents migrated have chosen more than five years as their duration of abroad stay, indicating an overwhelming preference for longer durations. This finding suggests that when both the parents are involved in migration decisions, they are more likely to opt for extended and sustained abroad stays.

Figure 2
Duration of Abroad Stay of Parents



The analysis highlights varying duration preferences among fathers, mothers, and cases with both parents migrated. Fathers predominantly favor shorter stays, while a considerable proportion of mothers prefer longer stays (Arguillas & Williams, 2010). In cases where both parents migrate, a unanimous preference for longer durations is observed. These findings provide valuable insights into the complexities of family migration decisions, where the individual preferences of fathers and mothers can shape the duration choices and ultimately influence the well-being and dynamics of the family unit (Negraia et al., 2021).

Personal Agency towards Mechanisms for Supporting Good Outcomes

In assessing psycho-social well-being, one specific parameter stands out among several others: personal agency towards mechanisms for supporting good outcomes. This parameter serves as a crucial lens. It delves into the intricacies of the LBG and NLBGs' psycho-social well-being through four indicators that capture the resilience survey tests (Evidence-Based Practice Unit, n.d.). The indicators encompass the ability to control important aspects of their lives, confidence in handling personal problems, a sense of things going their way, and the accumulation of overwhelming difficulties. The assessment utilizes a binary scale. By examining these mechanisms and their impact, a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the psycho-social well-being of both the LBG and NLBG can be attained. To assess the well-being of LBG and NLBG,

significance levels were determined using the chi-square test ($p=0.05$), maintaining two degrees of freedom and a 95 percent confidence level. This statistical approach allows for a rigorous examination of the association between variables in the context of psycho-social well-being.

Table 2
Perceived Personal Agency and Resilience

Indicators	Agreed				Total	p
	LBG	NLBG	LBG	NLBG		
Able to control the imperative things in your life.	49	44.1	62	55.9	111	.010
Confident about your ability to handle your personal problems.	51	50.0	51	50.0	102	1.00
Felt that things were going your way.	57	45.2	69	54.8	126	.002
Felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could overcome them.	55	54.5	46	45.5	101	.101

Table 2 presents a comparison of the responses between the LBG and NLBG in terms of their background characteristics, specifically focusing on feelings of control, confidence, and difficulties in their lives. Regarding the feeling of being able to control imperative things in life, a higher percentage (55.9%) of NLBG agreed with this statement compared to LBG (44.1%). The statistical analysis indicates a significant difference ($p<0.01$) between the two groups in this aspect, suggesting that the NLBG have a stronger sense of control over important aspects of their lives compared to the LBG. When it comes to feeling confident about handling personal problems, there is an even distribution of responses between the two groups, both the LBG and NLBG had an equal percentage (50.0%) agreeing with this statement. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference ($p>1.00$) in this aspect between these two groups.

As for feeling that the things were going their own ways, a higher percentage (54.8%) of NLBG expressed this sentiment compared to the LBG (45.2%). The statistical analysis shows a significant difference ($p<0.002$) between the two groups, suggesting that the NLBG are more likely to feel that the things are going in their favor as compared to the LBG. In terms of feeling overwhelmed by difficulties, both the LBG and NLBG have similar responses, with the LBG having a slightly higher percentage (54.5%) as compared to the NLBG (45.5%). However, this indicates that this difference is not statistically significant ($p>0.10$).

The feeling of having agency can be broken down into a combination of fundamental elements, such as the experience of deliberate influence, the perception of initiating actions, and the sensation of being in control (Pacherie, 2007). The comparison and analysis of background characteristics between the LBG and NLBG reveal some interesting findings. The NLBG tend to have a stronger sense of control over imperative things in life and are more likely to feel that the things are going their own ways. On the other hand, there is no significant difference in the confidence to handle personal problems or feeling overwhelmed by difficulties between the two groups. One of the studies shares that some of the evidences suggest s that Americans may not only possess a higher sense of control but that this perception is also more closely linked to their well-being than in other countries (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2022).

These results provide valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of LBG and NLBG, potentially reflecting the impact of the left-behind status on their feelings of control and optimism about life situations. The policymakers and support organizations can utilize this information to design targeted interventions that address the unique needs and challenges faced by the LBG, aiming to foster a stronger sense of empowerment and well-being. However, a further research is necessary to explore the underlying factors contributing to these differences in perceptions and their potential impact on the overall development and well-being of LBG in the diverse contexts.

Emotional Turbulence in LBG and NLBG

The experience of emotional turbulence in the LBG and NLBG, assessing a parameter of psycho-social well-being using 15 indicators (Evidence Based Practice Unit, n.d.). These indicators encompass a range of emotions such as loneliness, unhappiness, worry, and anger, along with behaviors like hitting and breaking things. The assessment employs a three-point scale, measuring the frequency of these experiences as ‘never,’ ‘sometimes,’ or ‘always’ (Evidence Based Practice Unit, n.d.). However, recognizing certain limitations in the original approach, the author has modified the scale to a binary system. By examining these indicators, a comprehensive understanding of the children's experiences, feelings, and self-evaluation can be gained, shedding light on their overall psycho-social well-being. To assess the emotional turbulence of LBG and NLBG, significance levels were determined using the chi-square test (p=0.05), maintaining two degrees of freedom and a 95 percent confidence level.

Table 3
Emotional Turbulence of LBG and NLBG

Indicators	Agreed				Total	p
	LBG		NLBG			
Feel lonely	48	52.7	43	47.3	91	0.38
Cry a lot	66	55.5	53	44.5	119	0.00
Unhappy	45	57.7	33	42.3	78	0.04
Nobody likes me	44	62	27	38	71	0.00
Worry a lot	68	54	58	46	126	0.01
Problems sleeping	58	58.6	41	41.4	99	0.00
Wake up at night	56	49.1	58	50.9	114	0.68
Shy feel scared	65	52	60	48	125	0.21
Worry at school	51	56.7	39	43.3	90	0.03
Get very angry	69	52.3	63	47.7	132	0.07
Lose my temper	62	54.9	51	45.1	113	0.02
Hit out when I'm angry	33	66.0	17	34.0	50	0.00
Do things to hurt People	25	80.6	6	19.4	31	0.00
I am calm	59	46.1	69	53.9	128	0.00
I break things on purpose	16	72.7	6	27.3	22	0.02

Psychosocial well-being is an overarching concept, encompassing emotional and psychological well-being (Eiroa-Orosa, 2020). Table 3 shows that the comparison of psycho-social well-being between the LBG and NLBG through emotional turbulence reveals several noteworthy differences between the two groups. the LBG individuals

tend to experience higher levels of emotional turbulence in certain aspects. One of the studies found a significant correlation between life satisfaction among children in rural China, referred to as the LBG with a p-value of 0.004 (Song et al., 2018). Additionally, there was also a correlation observed in a similar context, but not as statistically significant ($P > 0.06$). The findings offer new insights into the understanding of LBG and suggest that efforts should be made to enhance life satisfaction (Song et al., 2018). For instance, a larger proportion of LBG respondents feel lonely compared to the NLBG respondents, with 52.7 percent of LBG girls agreed that they feel lonely, while the percentage for the NLBG is slightly lower at 47.3 percent in this study. The LBG individuals also report crying a lot more frequently, with 66 percent agreed as compared to 44.5 percent of NLBG respondents.

The LBG girls express higher levels of unhappiness, as indicated by 57.7 percent agreeing, whereas 42.3 percent of NLBG girls feel unhappy. Feelings of social isolation are also more prevalent among the LBG respondents, with 62 percent agreed that nobody likes them, whereas the percentage among the NLBG respondents is 38 percent. On the other hand, the NLBG girls seem to worry more and face challenges related to sleep. There are 54 percent of NLBG respondents worry a lot, while only 46 percent of LBG respondents report the same. Similarly, the problems with sleeping are more pronounced among the NLBG girls, with 58.6 percent agreed, as compared to 41.4 percent of LBG respondents. Despite these differences, both the groups show similar levels of feeling scared or shy, as well as waking up at night. Additionally, the levels of anger and temper-related indicators are relatively close between the LBG and NLBG respondents, with slight variations. While some of the researchers investigating social development have demonstrated that the occurrence of physical aggression usually reaches its highest point during the toddler years and subsequently declines as individuals grow older. A crucial observation is that the level of aggression displayed by an individual relative to others of the same age remains relatively constant throughout their life (Warburton & Anderson, 2015).

It is essential to consider the unique circumstances and challenges faced by the LBG, as these findings suggest they might experience more emotional turbulence as compared to the NLBG. Interventions and support tailored to address their specific needs may contribute to improving the psycho-social well-being of LBG and promote resilience and emotional health in both the groups.

Life Contentment in LBG and NLBG

Life contentment is another key parameter of well-being, that have with themselves is important for their overall psycho-social well-being (Singh & Misra, 2020). This study used a six-point Likert scale to measure this satisfaction. The scale was divided into categories of 'disagree' and 'agree,' (Evidence Based Practice Unit, n.d.) with more negative responses grouped together and more positive responses grouped together. Life contentment was measured based on seven conditions, including whether the girl child likes their life, wants to change things, and feels they have what they want in life, etc. To evaluate the life contentment of both the LBG and NLBG, it employed the chi-square test with a significance level set at 0.05., two degrees of freedom and a confidence level of 95 percent was established.

Table 4
Life contentment of LBG and NLBG

Statements	Agreed				Total	P
	LBG		NLBG			
My life is going well	68	49.5%	69	50.4%	137	0.69
My life is just right	71	50.7%	69	49.3%	140	0.31
Like to change many things in my life	68	51.5%	64	48.5%	132	0.22
I wish I had a different kind of life	64	50.4%	63	49.6%	127	0.79
I have a good life	63	48.8%	66	51.2%	129	0.41
I have what I want	57	54.3%	48	45.7%	105	0.09
My life is better than most kids	51	49.5%	52	50.5%	103	0.85

Table 4 shows that the comparison of psycho-social well-being between the LBG and NLBG through life contentment reveals interesting insights, with the percentage values indicating similarities and slight variations. When assessing the perception of life going well, approximately 50.4 percent of NLBG respondents agreed, while 49.5 percent of LBG respondents shared a similar sentiment. The difference in their responses was not statistically significant ($p > 0.69$), suggesting that both groups experience life contentment at comparable levels. One of the studies claims that if their fathers are not present at home, children have developed self-reliance, independence, and bravery. However, they also experience reduced confidence, feelings of insecurity, loneliness, and a sense of being less protected (Iqbal et al., 2014 ; Sharma et al., 2021).

Similarly, the statement "My life is just right" received agreement from 50.7 percent of LBG and 49.3 percent of NLBG individuals. Once again, the difference in responses was not significant ($p > .310$), further supporting the notion that life contentment is not significantly different between the two groups. While the desire for change in life was slightly higher among the LBG respondents (51.5%) compared to the NLBG respondents (48.5%), the difference in their responses was not statistically significant ($p > 0.22$). This suggests that both the LBG and NLBG individuals share comparable feelings about wanting to change aspects of their lives. One of literature also suggested that, individuals from both the LBG and NLBG have similar sentiments regarding their desire to make changes in various aspects of their lives. This commonality suggests that, regardless of their background, they harbor similar aspirations for self-improvement and transformation. It highlights a shared desire for personal growth and development among individuals from different backgrounds, emphasizing a fundamental human need for positive change in one's life circumstances (Sharma et al., 2021).

The statement "I wish I had a different kind of life" yielded responses of 50.4 percent agreement from the LBG respondents and 49.6 percent from the NLBG respondents. Once again, the difference was not statistically significant ($p > 0.79$), indicating that both groups harbor similar sentiments in this aspect of life contentment. Regarding the perception of having a good life, 48.8 percent of LBG respondents agreed, while 51.2 percent of NLBG respondents shared this sentiment. Although the percentages show a slight variance, the difference in their responses was not statistically significant ($p > 0.41$). Concerning the overall perception of life satisfaction, one of the studies presents that both of the groups LBG and NLBG shared almost common sentiments regarding their aspirations (Cui et al., 2021).

For the statement towards contentment of girls' lives, like "I have what I want," approximately 54.3 percent of LBG respondents agreed, as compared to 45.7 percent of NLBG respondents. The difference in their responses was not statistically significant ($p > 0.09$), though the percentage values show a subtle contrast in their life contentment regarding having what they desire. Lastly, for the statement "My life is better than most kids," 49.5 percent of LBG respondents agreed, while 50.5 percent of NLBG respondents shared this sentiment. Once again, the difference was not statistically significant ($p > 0.85$), indicating that both the groups perceive their life satisfaction relative to their peers similarly. One study claims that the study did not uncover any link between the present migration status of parents and the mental well-being of the children they have left behind (Adhikari et al., 2014).

Some of the studies have delved into the question of whether life satisfaction is a consistent and unchanging characteristic or if it fluctuates significantly based on external factors and life situations (Singh & Misra, 2020). The extensive body of research aims to determine whether the people tend to maintain a relatively stable level of life satisfaction over time, regardless of the events they experience, or if their satisfaction levels are susceptible to the influence of life events and circumstances. By exploring this aspect of human psychology, scholars seek to shed light on the complex interplay between internal traits and external influences that contribute to overall life satisfaction (Proctor et al., 2018).

The data suggests that the psycho-social well-being and life contentment of LBG and NLBG are quite comparable. While some slight variations in percentage values were observed, the lack of statistically significant differences highlights that both the groups experience similar levels of life contentment. It is important to consider various individual and environmental factors that may influence their well-being beyond their left-behind status.

CONCLUSION

It becomes evident that despite some similarities in age distributions between the two groups, there are significant differences in other aspects of their lives. The disparities in caste distributions highlight the influence of cultural and social factors on family structures and migration decisions. The higher representation of LBG families from the Dalit caste and NLBG families from the Bramhin/Chhetri caste suggests that the caste dynamics may play a role in shaping migration patterns. Moreover, the duration of abroad stays varies based on gender, implying different motivations or responsibilities for fathers and mothers during their migration. Understanding these distinctions can assist in designing support systems and policies that cater to the unique needs and challenges faced by each gender within migrant families. When it comes to resilience, the NLBG respondents displayed a stronger sense of control over important aspects of their lives compared to the LBG individuals. Additionally, the NLBG individuals were more likely to feel that things were going in their favor. However, both groups exhibited similar levels of confidence in handling personal problems and dealing with difficulties. In terms of emotional turbulence, the data indicated that the LBG respondents, particularly girls, experienced higher levels of loneliness, unhappiness, and social isolation as compared to the NLBG respondents. On the other hand, the NLBG girls reported more worries and sleep-related problems. While both the groups showed similar

levels of anger and temper-related indicators, these findings suggest that the LBG individuals may experience more emotional challenges. Regarding life contentment, both the LBG and NLBG respondents expressed comparable sentiments about wanting to change certain aspects of their lives. They also had similar perceptions of having a good life, despite slight variations in the percentages. The psycho-social well-being of LBG and NLBG individuals are almost similar. It is important to acknowledge the potential influence of various individual and environmental factors beyond their left-behind status on their well-being. These findings can inform the policymakers and support organizations in designing interventions tailored to the unique needs of these children, with the aim of promoting their resilience and emotional health. Further research is needed to explore the underlying factors contributing to these differences in perceptions and their potential impact on the overall development and well-being of LBG in diverse contexts.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend heartfelt gratitude to the Centre for Research and Innovation, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara, for generous funding and support, which made this research and publications possible. My sincere thanks also go to the school administration and students who took part during the data collection phase. I appreciate the support from anonymous authors who contributed to the literature review, as well as all those who provided a direct or indirect co-operation throughout this research.

REFERENCES

- Adhikari, R., Jampaklay, A., Chamrathirong, A., Richter, K., Pattaravanich, U., & Vapattanawong, P. (2014). The impact of parental migration on the mental health of children left behind. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 16*(5), 781–789. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-013-9809-5>
- Amin, H., Ali, T., Ahmad, M., & Zafar, M. I. (2010). Overview of gender equality and social inclusion in Nepal. In *Asian Development Bank* (Vol. 47, Issue 1). Asian Development Bank.
- Antia, K., Boucsein, J., Deckert, A., Dambach, P., Račaitė, J., Šurkienė, G., Jaenisch, T., Horstick, O., & Winkler, V. (2020). Effects of international labour migration on the mental health and well-being of left-behind children: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17*(12), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17124335>
- Arguillas, M. J. B., & Williams, L. (2010). The impact of parents' overseas employment on educational outcomes of filipino children. *International Migration Review, 44*(2), 300–319. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2010.00807.x>
- Bannink, R., Pearce, A., & Hope, S. (2016). Family income and young adolescents' perceived social position: Associations with self-esteem and life satisfaction in the UK Millennium Cohort Study. *Archives of Disease in Childhood, 101*(10), 917–921. <https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2015-309651>
- Brailovskaia, J., & Margraf, J. (2022). Relationship between sense of control,

- psychological burden, sources of information and adherence to anti-COVID-19 rules. *Journal of Affective Disorders Reports*, 8(January), 100317. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadr.2022.100317>
- Cui, S., Cheng, F., Zhang, L., Zhang, C., Yuan, Q., Huang, C., Zhang, K., & Zhou, X. (2021). Self-esteem, social support and coping strategies of left-behind children in rural China, and the intermediary role of subjective support: a cross-sectional survey. *BMC Psychiatry*, 21(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-021-03160-y>
- Eiroa-Orosa, F. J. (2020). Understanding psychosocial wellbeing in the context of complex and multidimensional problems. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(16), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17165937>
- Evidence Based Practice Unit. (n.d.). Wellbeing measurement framework for secondary schools. In *Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families*. ebpu@annafreud.org
- Gan, Q. (2019). Mediating effect of psychological capital and academic achievement on left behind children in rural areas. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, 300(Erss 2018), 124–127. <https://doi.org/10.2991/erss-18.2019.24>
- Gurung, O., Tamang, M. S., & Turin, M. (2021). *Perspectives on social inclusion and exclusion in Nepal To cite this version : HAL Id : halshs-03080977*.
- International Labour Organization. (2018). *International Labour Migration Statistics in South Asia: Establishing a subregional database and improving data collection for evidence-based policy-making*. International Labour Office, CH-1211. https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_645286/lang-en/index.htm
- International Organization for Migration. (2017). Social cost of migration on children left behind. In *Social cost of migration on children left behind*. International Organization for Migration. <http://library1.nida.ac.th/termpaper6/sd/2554/19755>
- International Organization for Migration [IOM]. (2019). *Migration in Nepal: A country profile 2019*. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mp-nepal-2019>.
- Iqbal, S., Mozmi, R. A., Iqbal, F., & Saeed, M. (2014). International male migration and its impact on education of children and wives left behind: evidence from Punjab Pakistan. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 02(06), 464–467. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2014.26054>
- Jaramillo, N. E., McLaren, P., & Ryoo, J. J. (2015). Education. In *Handbook of Sociology and Human Rights*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315634227>
- Kharel, M., Akira, S., Kiriya, J., Ong, K. I. C., & Jimba, M. (2021). Parental migration and psychological wellbeing of left-behind adolescents in Western Nepal. *PLoS ONE*, 16(1 January), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0245873>
- Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST). (2016). School sector development plan 2016/2017-2022/23. In *Government of Nepal* (Vol. 1999, Issue December).
- Ministry of Health and Population. (2022). *Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2022*.
- Ministry of Labour and Employment. (2018). Labour Migration for Employment|A Status Report for Nepal:2015/2016-2016/2017. In *Government of Nepal*.

- <http://nepal.iom.int/jupgrade/images/stories/CoM/LabourMigration>
- Ministry of Labour, E. and S. S. (2020). Nepal Labour Migration Report 2020. In *Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Government of Nepal*.
- Ministry of Labour, E. and S. S. (2022). Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022. In *Government of Nepal, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security*. www.moless.gov.np
- Negraia, D. V., Yavorsky, J. E., & Dukhovnov, D. (2021). Mothers' and fathers' well-being: Does the gender composition of children matter? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 83(3), 820–844. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12739>
- Pacherie, E. (2007). The sense of control and the sense of agency. *Psyche (Pasadena)*, 13(2007).
- Pokhara Metropolitan City. (2076). *Saikshik bulletin*. Pokhara Metropolitan, Saikshik prasahan mahashakha, Gandaki province. www.pokharamum.gov.np
- Proctor, C., Alex Linley, P., & Maltby, J. (2018). Life Satisfaction. *Encyclopedia of Adolescence, January 2001*, 2165–2176. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-33228-4_125
- Raturi, R., & Cebotari, V. (2023). The impact of parental migration on psychological well-being of children in Ghana. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(1), 192–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2022.2076070>
- Riekenberg, S., Witjes, B., Šarić, M., Bruchhaus, I., & Scholze, H. (2005). Identification of EhICP1, a chagasin-like cysteine protease inhibitor of *Entamoeba histolytica*. *FEBS Letters*, 579(7), 1573–1578. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.febslet.2005.01.067>
- Ross, D. A., Hinton, R., Melles-Brewer, M., Engel, D., Zeck, W., Fagan, L., Herat, J., Phaladi, G., Imbago-Jácome, D., Anyona, P., Sanchez, A., Damji, N., Terki, F., Baltag, V., Patton, G., Silverman, A., Fogstad, H., Banerjee, A., & Mohan, A. (2020). Adolescent well-being: A definition and conceptual framework. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 67(4), 472–476. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.06.042>
- Sawyer, S. M., Azzopardi, P. S., Wickremarathne, D., & Patton, G. C. (2018). The age of adolescence. *The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health*, 2(3), 223–228. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(18\)30022-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(18)30022-1)
- Sharma, S. (2018). Health inequality and equity in rural and urban setting in Nepal. *International Education & Research Journal [IERJ]*, 04(11), 21–23.
- Sharma, S., Devkota, B., & Acharya, D. (2021). Impact of parental migration on health of left-behind children. *Global Journal of Health Science*, 13(2), 77. <https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v13n2p77>
- Siddiquah, A. (2019). Effect of gender, age, grade level, subjects, and family income on the locus of control of secondary school students. *SAGE Open*, 9(1), 0–5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018823429>
- Singh, J. K., & Misra, G. (2020). Understanding contentment in everyday life. *Indian Psychological Review*, 54 & 55(4), 113–124. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345768995>
- Song, S., Chen, C., & Zhang, A. (2018). Effects of parental migration on life satisfaction and academic achievement of left-behind children in rural china—a case study in Hubei province. *Children*, 5(7), 87. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children5070087>
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2021). *Understanding child subjective well-*

being: A call for more data, research and policymaking targeting children.
globalinsight@unicef.org.

Warburton, W. A., & Anderson, C. A. (2015). Aggression, Social Psychology. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences: Second Edition* (Second Edi, Issue April 2019). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.24002-6>