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The Empty Nest and Aging: Consequences of Youth Migration on Left behind Elderly Parents

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Abstract

This study was based on the consequences of youth migration on left behind elderly parents. The objective of this study was to assessing the socio-economic background of the elderly and the effects of youth migration on left behind elderly parents. Based on the study's aims, a semi-structured interview schedule of both open-ended and closed-ended questions was used to collect primary data in order to obtain meaningful information. To find out how younger people's migration affects older parents, a personal interview was conducted. The respondents were Kirtipur residents who were 60 years of age or older. According to the interviewees, their migrant family members reprimand them when their youngsters act out, skip school, or disregard their elders' advice. Only a small percentage of respondents said they occasionally experience mental and physical torture. In a similar vein, they had trouble bringing groceries, sugar, tea or coffee, edible oil, vegetables, and other essentials, as well as difficulties cooking. According to the majority of respondents, their grandchildren would bring those necessities including groceries.

Keywords

Migration, Younger people, Left behind, Elderly parents, Research.

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1. Introduction: Consequences of Youth Migration on Left behind Elderly Parents

One of the third factors of population change that has not received as much attention as fertility and mortality is migration. Mortality and fertility are two factors that have a distinct effect on population size than migration. While fertility and mortality both function within the biological framework, migration is not a biological characteristic, however social, cultural, political, and economic variables do have some impact on it (Bhende & Kanitkar, 1978).

Migration has existed for as long as human civilization. Studying the nature and history of migration at the national, international, and regional levels is crucial. The historical evidence of migration in various communities is now visible.

Human migration has historically been characterized by a transition from a condition of no human settlement to one of progressive migration. The majority of migrations (except from those that populate isolated areas like the Arctic or the Pacific) occurred during times of conflict, conquest, or population expansion. It began during the upper Palaeolithic period and continued until the Neolithic stage. Sedentary population growth into formerly sparsely populated or permanently unpopulated areas is a component of colonialism. Since roughly 3000 BC, different distinct groups of people have migrated from one part of the world to another. They have had a significant impact on the human story in doing so. These individuals can be classified as groupings in a variety of ways, although few of them are involved in racial distinctions. The world's most common migration was among Semitic tribes, Indo-Europeans, Indo-Europeans in Asia, Indo-Europeans in Europe, and the Jewish Diaspora, which lasted from the second century BC to the fifth century AD.

The phenomenon of migration is complex. Since the importance of economic factors and the economic motive for migrants serve as pull factors, they may have a favorable impact on the financial well-being of migrants and their families. In addition to improving one's financial situation, migration may also bring about better social conditions, access to education, and better health care, all of which can lead to higher incomes. Even if migration happens to get away from the unstable circumstances that exist in the place of origin, it can also occasionally strain the bonds between parents and children. The family and elderly parents are supported financially by the migration, but it may also leave a care gap.

Desperation or distress situations have developed in the rural sector as a result of rising unemployment, crop failures, debt, poor credit facilities, lack of other

options, droughts, and poverty levels in rural areas in recent years. Because of this, the country's poor, laborers, and marginal and small farming groups are moving around, temporarily abandoning their homes to seek work and a living in other affluent rural and/or urban locations. (Smita, 2007).

People migrate inside a country for a variety of reasons, which we might categorize as push and pull causes. The things that encourage people to relocate inside a nation are known as push factors. On the other hand, pull factors are those that draw or draw individuals from other parts of a nation. Centrifugal or impulsive push factors and centripetal or attractive pull factors are sometimes used to describe the process of migration, which is the result of the interaction between centrifugal and centripetal inclinations. (Mitchell, 1989)

The high natural rate of population growth that puts pressure on the available resources, the depletion of natural resources, natural disasters like earthquakes and famines, and severe social, religious, or political conflicts that force people to migrate elsewhere for safety are some examples of the push factors that exist in the place of origin. The development of new industries that offer fresh chances for profitable work, access to better education in urban areas, favorable weather, etc. are the pull forces. (Zar, 2005).

These driving forces also compelled young people in my study to leave their families and aging parents behind in pursuit of work. It affects women, children, their health and education, and it has a major effect on elderly parents. Because of their age and handicap, the elderly are rarely migrated. The empty nest syndrome affects elderly adults who are nearing the end of their lives. the issues of elderly parents who are compelled to care for their grandchildren because they are unable to migrate. The study addresses issues related to daily life activities, physical and psychological well-being, and caring for grandkids.

Both intra-household relationships and individual household members are impacted by migration. Migration may have different intra-household effects when one family member migrates alone or even when family members migrate together seasonally. Understanding how the movement affects both the migrant households and the source communities, as well as how it affects women, children, and the elderly, both as migrants and as those left behind, is crucial.

The study mainly focus at problems with elderly parents who were abandoned by their kids and are unable to move. They talked about the challenges and troubles of daily life, as well as a number of topics related to their social lives, money, and day-to-day issues. Their health issues have been investigated, and the effects of the migration process on their mental and physical health have also been discussed. Seniors and their families are affected by migration. because it affects things both positively and negatively. It also affects the elderly, non-migrant grandchildren and those left behind. When their children move away, the elderly take on the role of primary caregiver for their grandkids. Elderly parents who are left behind by their

family may experience health issues as a result of migration. The migration has an impact on older people's physical and mental health and well-being. Children and elderly non-migrants who are left behind must deal with several difficulties in their everyday lives.

Becoming older is a common and normal occurrence. It starts the moment a person is born and lasts till they pass away. When someone reaches a certain age, they can be referred to as elderly. Around the world, different people have different ideas about old age. For the age groups of 55, 60, and 65, there are three distinct cutoff points. While it starts at age 65 in Western nations, those who are 60 years of age or older are regarded as old in Nepal. The age of around 55 is regarded as the start of the old age period, taking into account physiological changes.

2. Theoretical Framework

International migration, according to the UK government's Office for National Statistics, is "the movement of people from one country to another and is often defined by the period they live in each country" (White, 2021). "Shifting of people or an individual or group of individuals from one cultural area to another, which may be permanent or temporary" is the literal definition of migration (Rajan & Neetha, 2018).

Lee offers a concept that takes into account both the spatial and temporal aspects of migration. According to him, migration is a shift in a person's permanent or semi-permanent habitation that involves an origin, a destination, and any impediments that stand in the way (Lee, 1966). Migration has no universally accepted definition. The definition of a migrant changes depending on their socioeconomic and political goals as well as the rules and regulations governing migration (King, 2012).

Alfred Marshall, a well-known British economist, expressed the following opinions about migration: "The best blood from all over England is absorbed by the big towns, and London in particular; the most enterprising, the most talented, the people with the best bodies, and the strongest personalities go there to find scope for their abilities" (Marshall, 1920).

For some people, being elderly was a luxury, but not for everyone. People can now expect to live longer because of the significant advancements in the health sector. In Nepalese culture, aging and the elderly are highly valued. According to *Manusmriti*, life consists of four phases: "(i) *Brahmacharya* or celibacy (ii) *Grihastha* or householder, when a person is supposed to do all his responsibilities towards his family including to his parents and society (iii) *Vanaprastha*, time to leave all the worldly pleasures for spiritual growth, and finally (iv) *Sanyasa* is the life stage of renunciation" (Britannica, 2017). '*Vanaprastha*' is the period of old age in which people fulfill all of their responsibilities.

One aspect of aging is the development of complex health disorders, which do not fit into any particular illness category because they only appear later in life.

These are commonly known as geriatric syndromes. (WHO, 2018). In their research, Jaul Efraim and Barron Jeremy divided age-related declines into the following categories: physical function, psychological and cognitive, social/environmental, immuno-sciences, urologic changes, somatic disease and various chronic disorders, sensory changes, muscle strength and fat changes. (Jaul & Barron, 2017). The body undergoes a number of fundamental changes as increasing in the age of the people, and the chance of developing chronic illnesses increases. (WHO, 2015).

3. Methodological Approach

The starting point for scientific investigation that describes the general study plan is research philosophy. In order to get knowledge, this study uses scientific procedures and assumes that the phenomena are objective. This study's entire foundation is a survey that evaluates older people's socioeconomic backgrounds and the impact of younger people's migration on their elderly parents. A semi-structured interview schedule of both open-ended and closed-ended questions based on the study's objectives was used to gather the primary data. To find out how younger people's migration affects older parents whose family migrates, a personal interview was conducted. The respondents were Kirtipur Municipality residents who were 60 years of age or older. Kirtipur Municipality's ward number eight was chosen due to the high level of migration in comparison to the other nine wards. Using a purposive sampling technique, 50 respondents were chosen as a sample in order to achieve the goal. Excel was used to organize, modify, check, and tabulate the data, and descriptive statistical measures were used to analyze the results. Informant consent, a minimum similarity index, respect for local customs and culture, and personal safety were all upheld in order to uphold academic ethics. Nevertheless, this study is restricted to a specific number of producers in Panga's Kirtipur Municipality ward number 8.

4. Results and Discussion

The researcher focuses on evaluating elderly peoples' socioeconomic backgrounds and the consequences of youth migration on their elderly parents who are left behind. This section covers the respondent's age, educational background, and gender, among other pertinent variables. For this reason, the researcher collected this data.

4.1 Age of the Elderly Parents

If a person has reached a certain age, they might be referred to as "aged". Around the world, different people have different ideas about old age. For the elderly, there are three distinct cutoff ages. age ranges: 55, 60, and 65. People who are 60 years of age or older are regarded as elderly in Nepal; in industrialized nations, this distinction is made at age 65. Age composition of the selected respondents has been depicted in Table-1 on the next page.

Table-1: Age of the Elderly Parents

Age of the Elderly Parents	Number	%
60 and 70 above	12	24.0
71-80	26	52.0
81- 90	8	16.0
91- 100	4	08.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table demonstrates that, of the 50 responders, the vast majority (52 percent) are between the ages of 71 and 80, 24% are between the ages of 60 and 70, and 16% are between the ages of 81 and 90. Just 8% of respondents, or those between the ages of 91 and 100, were in the oldest-old category with deprivation in health. A larger portion of elderly parents (52%) are in the 71-80 age range, which is a critical period for providing care, whether it be medical, physical, or social. Organizations or family members supporting elderly parents may need to focus their resources on this age group.

4.2 Gender of the Elderly Parents

An excess of men is indicated by a sex ratio above 100, while an excess of females is indicated by a sex ratio below 100. The sex ratio is a measure of the composition of male and female senior individuals. An equal number of males and females is indicated by a ratio of 100.

The 2021 National Population and Housing Census found that Nepal's old population had a sex ratio of 97.7, or almost 98 men for every 100 women.

Table-2: Gender of the Elderly Parents

Gender of the Elderly Parents	Number	%
Male	10	20.0
Female	40	80.0
Total	50	100 .0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The gender of the responders is displayed in the above table. Only 20% of the responses were men, with the majority (80%) being women. The sample showed clear signs of the feminization of aging. It was because they were superior to men. It was discovered that in Kirtipur municipality ward no. 8, Panga, there were more left behind old women than men because women tend to live longer than men, which could explain the higher percentage of elderly females,

4.3 Level of Education of the Elderly Parents

Elderly people's educational records and well-being are closely related because education makes it possible for them to be more adaptive to shifting

socioeconomic circumstances. A person who can read and write is considered literate.

The Population Census 2021 indicates that 76.2% of people are literate overall. The literacy rates for men and women are 83.6% and 69.4%, respectively.

Table-3: Level of Education of the Elderly Parents

Education of the Elderly Parents	Number	%
Illiterate	30	60.0
Literate	13	26.0
Primary	7	14.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Regarding the education of the elderly parents, above table shows that 60% are illiterate. This represents the largest group, with 30 elderly parents who have not received formal education or have very limited literacy skills. This could be due to historical socio-economic conditions, lack of access to education, or cultural factors that might have limited opportunities for education in their time. Similarly, 26% are literate. Means 26% individuals can read and write, but likely have not completed formal schooling. This suggests a basic level of education, but they may not have pursued further academic development. Furthermore, 14% have primary education: These 14% individuals have at least completed primary school, indicating a slightly higher level of education compared to the illiterate or merely literate groups.

4.4 Marital Status of Elderly Parents

Marriage is a significant event in people's social lives. 33.1% of Nepal's old population was never married, 61.8% was married, 4.5% was a widow or widower, 0.2% was divorced, and 0.4% was separated, according to the country's 2021 National Population and Housing Census.

Table-4: Marital Status of the Elderly Parents

Marital Status	Number	%
Married and having spouse	17	34.0
Divorced	1	02.0
Separated	4	08.0
Widow/widower	28	56.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table shows the respondents' marital status: 34% were married with a spouse, and 56% were widows or widowers. Because there was no such thing as divorce in the past, only 2% of respondents were divorced, and only 8% of respondents were separated, meaning that the spouses lived in different homes with

their children. It shows that 66% of the respondents do not have life partners, which undoubtedly has an impact on their lives today.

4.5 Religious Affiliations of the Elderly Parents

Social identity formation is significantly influenced by affiliation with religion. 81.19% of Nepal's population is Hindu, 8.21% Buddhist, 4.39% Muslim, 3.17% Kiratist, 1.76% Christian, 0.01% Sikh, and 0.01% Jain, according to the country's 2021 census. The majority of people are Hindus, followed by Buddhists, Kiratists, Christians, Sikhs, and Jains.

Table-5: Religious Background of the Elderly Parents

Religion	Number	%
Hindu	43	87.0
Buddhist	5	11.0
Christian	1	02.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

When the researcher observe the religion of the respondents, above table gives the details of type of religion the elderly parents followed. Hinduism is the predominant religion in this group, making up 87% of the population (43 out of 50 individuals). This is a clear majority, suggesting that Hinduism is the most widely practiced religion in this particular population. Buddhism represents 11% of the group, with 5 people identifying as Buddhist. While a minority, this is still a significant proportion, reflecting a smaller but notable presence of Buddhism. Christianity is the smallest group, with only 1 individual identifying as Christian, making up just 2% of the total population.

4.6 Abuse faced by Elderly People

Abuse or mistreatment of the elderly is not a new phenomenon. It alludes to deliberate abuse and disregard. According to Glendenning (1999), neglect is an act of omission, whereas elder abuse or mistreatment is an act of commission. Physical, psychological, social, and other forms of mistreatment are all possible. Mistreatment also includes deliberate neglect, denying the elderly their regular rights, and taking advantage of them. "A single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person" is the WHO (2015) definition of elder abuse. Furthermore, elderly people are being neglected and abused by their family members on an emotional, physical, and financial level. Respondents to this study were asked about the abuse they experience from their co-resident grandkids and migratory family. Table-6 depicts the responses of the selected elderly parents on types of elder abuse.

Table-6: Types of Elder Abuse

Types of elder abuse	Number	%
Scolding	18	36.0
Physical abuse	1	02.0
Mental torture	1	02.0
No answer	30	60.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Above table shows the types of elder abuse they face, scolding is the most frequently reported form of elder abuse, with 36% of the group (18 individuals) indicating that scolding is a form of abuse. This suggests that verbal abuse or mistreatment is quite common, possibly indicating that it is a prevalent issue in the context this data is coming from. Physical abuse and mental torture are reported at very low rates, with only 2% (1 person each) indicating these types of abuse. While these forms of abuse are serious, their occurrence in this data set is relatively rare compared to scolding. The low numbers for physical and mental abuse could suggest that these forms of elder abuse are less recognized or reported in the group, or they could simply be less common in this particular instance. A significant 60% (30 individuals) did not answer the question or did not acknowledge experiencing any abuse.

4.7 Problem faced in Daily Activities

As parents grow older, they become increasingly dependent on their caregivers or younger family members for assistance with daily activities and routine tasks. In most cases, their children serve as the primary caregivers, providing both physical support and emotional companionship. However, in the absence of children or other caregivers, many elderly parents face significant hardships and are compelled to seek assistance from neighbours or other members of the community. In many migrant households, although adult children leave their own children in the care of grandparents, they often provide limited support to the elderly themselves, placing an additional caregiving burden on ageing parents. The elderly also confront numerous challenges. Their actions, like as skipping school and walking around all day without telling the elderly, cause them a lot of issues. The elderly were really concerned about them, thus society and family members shouldn't hold them responsible for their negligence.

The activities of daily living include housework, money management, food preparation, shopping, and other activities, while the activities of daily living (ADL) include bathing, dressing, cooking, eating, and using the restroom. The elderly require assistance with both of these activities as they get older.

Table-7: The Person assisting of the Elderly Parents in Cooking

Cooking Assistant	Number	%
Myself	2	04.0
Grandchildren	29	58.0
Neighbours	13	26.0
Relatives	2	04.0
No answer	4	08.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table indicates about the person who assists respondents in cooking. 58% (29 respondents) indicated that their grandchildren assisted them in cooking. This is the largest group, showing that grandchildren are not only emotionally important but also play a practical role in helping the elderly with daily tasks like cooking. This could reflect strong family bonds and the intergenerational support system in place. 26% (13 respondents) mentioned neighbours as their source of assistance with cooking. This suggests that in some communities, neighbours play an important role in offering help with tasks, indicating a sense of community and mutual support. Only 4% (2 respondents) indicated that they managed cooking by themselves. This low figure suggests that most elderly individuals in this group may need help with cooking, either due to physical limitations, time constraints, or a preference for assistance. 4% (2 respondents) stated that relatives (other than grandchildren) assisted them with cooking. This number is similar to those who reported being self-sufficient, showing that extended family members may not be as involved in helping with this specific task. 8% (4 respondents) did not provide an answer. This could imply that they either don't need help, don't want to disclose this information, or may not have been comfortable responding

Table-8: The Person bringing Groceries and Basic Things

Support Person	Number	%
Myself	6	12.0
Grandchildren	28	56.0
Neighbour	9	18.0
Relative	7	14.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table shows the person who will bring groceries and basic things like sugar, tea/coffee, edible oil, vegetables and other necessary things for them. 56% (28 respondents) reported that their grandchildren assist in bringing groceries and basic items. This is the largest group, reinforcing the strong role that grandchildren play in supporting their elderly family members, both in terms of emotional support and practical help with daily tasks such as shopping. 18% (9

respondents) indicated that neighbours help them with bringing groceries and basic things. This suggests that a smaller but significant portion of elderly individuals rely on their neighbours for practical assistance, indicating a strong sense of community and neighbourly support. 14% (7 respondents) mentioned relatives (other than grandchildren) helping with groceries and basic items. This is a smaller group, which might indicate that extended family members are less involved in day-to-day support, perhaps due to geographic distance or other factors. 12% (6 respondents) stated that they bring groceries and basic things themselves. This suggests that small groups of elderly individuals are still self-sufficient in managing essential tasks like shopping, though it is a relatively low percentage.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how younger people's migration affects older parents who are left behind. Elderly parents who were left behind had numerous issues. Elderly parents in the area I studied experienced physical and psychological torture, as well as reprimands. This result was in line with Glendenning's (1997) research. According to Glendenning, neglect is an act of omission, but elder abuse or mistreatment is an act of commission. Physical, psychological, social, and other forms of mistreatment are all possible. Mistreatment also includes deliberate neglect, denying the elderly their regular rights, and taking advantage of them. The results of this study are also consistent with those of Jaul Efraim and Barron Jeremy, who categorized age-related declines into the following categories: physical function, psychological and cognitive, social/environmental, immuno-sciences, urologic changes, somatic disease and various chronic conditions, sensory changes, muscle strength and fat changes, and urologic changes (Jaul & Barron, 2017). As stated by them this study also came to similar conclusions. The elderly become unable of performing the instrumental activities of everyday life, such as housework, money management, food preparation, shopping, and dressing, eating, cooking, bathing, and using the restroom, as their ages increase. Increase in the age leads to the necessity for the aid in these tasks of elderly and the elderly people take assistance of grandchildren, neighbours and relatives. The study's conclusions are acknowledged theoretically. According to the suggested theoretical approaches, elderly parents who are left behind frequently experience physical, psychological, social, or other forms of abuse or mistreatment.

6. Conclusion

This study's main focus is on the effects of migration of younger people on left behind elderly parents in Kirtipur Municipality ward no 8. Left behind elderly parents confront many obstacles in their day-to-day lives, which also has effects for their health and well-being. First of all, elderly parents who are left behind have experienced various forms of elder abuse. The fact that the majority of respondents did not respond well to questions about elder abuse suggests that family members may have subtly abused them. According to several respondents, their relocated family members reprimand them when their grandchildren act out, miss school, or

ignore their grandparents' advice. Only a small percentage of respondents said they occasionally experience mental and physical torture. Secondly, they encountered difficulties when cooking. The majority of those surveyed said that their granddaughters are particularly helpful and considerate. Thirdly, they had trouble bringing groceries and necessities like sugar, tea or coffee, vegetables, edible oil, and other items they needed. Majority of the respondents reported that their grandchildren will bring groceries and basic items for them.

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