

The Link between Remittance and Family Relationships in Chitwan Valley, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Every year, thousands of Nepali people migrate for employment in foreign countries so that they can send extra money – remittances – to their home country. Previously, scholars have focused on the effects of remittances on the economic development of sending countries like Nepal. However, the ways remittances influence smaller-scale institutions, such as the family, are seldom studied. This study examines the link between remittances and family relationship quality by analyzing the data from more than 800 Nepali adult men, drawn from a larger survey project in the Chitwan Valley, a southern region in Nepal. Since remittances could improve the living standards of left-behind family and ease financial tensions at home, I anticipated that work migrants have better relationships with their families than non-migrants, who cannot offer remittances. The findings show that compared to non-migrant men, labor migrants report significantly higher quality in some of their family relationships, but not all of them. Additionally, I found that those who remit more money do not necessarily have better family relationships than those who remit less. The results represent important initial findings in an understudied area of the research on remittances in the sociology of migration. These results also suggest that further research on the causal relationship between remittances and family relationships is warranted.

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INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the link between remittances from labor migrants and their family relationships, particularly with spouse, parents, and parents-in-law, in a setting that is currently experiencing an unprecedented level of out migration and changes in family behavior and relationships. Today, people migrate globally for several reasons, mainly because of enhanced economic prospects, for educational and training, for political refuge and also for other reasons. The total population of international migrants was estimated to be 175 million in 2000 (United Nations, 2002). Buch and others (2002) estimated the global amount of remittances was around \$ 81 billion each year during the 1990s. Labor migration has become a major source of household income in many developing countries. While there is a lot of academic and policy attention to the linkage between international migration for work and the economic development of a specific country or community through remittances that result from this pattern of migration (Harris and Todaro, 1970; Zimmermann, 1992; Papademetriou and Martin, 1991), the influence of remittances on migrants' own family members who stay home is seldom explored. As temporary work migration disrupts household composition, the relationship between migrants and their left-behind family could rapidly change.

In order to address the research gap, this study aims to answer two specific questions. The first one is whether the experience of temporary migration for work is linked to the relationship quality between out-migrants and their left-behind family through remittances. If so, the second question would be what the nature of the association between remittance and each kind of family relationship is. Based on Cutright's (1971) theory suggesting that a higher family income brings stability of

marriage, I anticipate that remittance could increase household income and consequently is related to a better marital relationship. However, on the opposite side, Becker (1974) and Santos (1975) also suggested that the changing family roles of members in the left-behind household could cause conflicts and therefore damage family relationships. Therefore, I also hypothesize the absence of the migrant would lead to a poor quality of some family relationships. The outcomes of family relationship quality would be mixed and different for each kind of family relationship.

To answer these questions, this study compares self-rated relationship quality with family members between a group of 425 Nepalese migrants (living in six of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries or now living in Nepal, having returned from abroad) and a stratified and randomized sample of 421 non-migrants who have not migrated out of the Chitwan Valley, Nepal. Most of the demographic characteristics, including age, gender, caste, and education level, are controlled by matching between the migrants and non-migrants in the selection of the non-migrant sample. The quality of family relationships is assessed based on the level of remittance.

In the following sections, we will first learn about the migratory and remittance patterns of Nepal. Then, I will provide some background information about our studied area, the Chitwan Valley. In literature review, I will discuss some previous research on the link between the economic circumstance of household and family relationships as well as how left-behind family members react to the temporary absence of household head. Based on other scholars' theories and findings, I will be able to construct a framework linking remittance of migrant labor to family relationship quality and provide hypotheses on different kinds of family relationship. I will also talk about how I collected

the data, measured variables, and did analyses with t-tests in the method section. Despite some limitations of the current research design, this paper serves a pioneer in the literature of work migration and family. There are still many puzzles waiting to be solved; further research on the causal relationship and other factors of work migration affecting family relationship quality are needed.

BACKGROUND

Study context: Nepal

Nepal is a country which has a long history of foreign labor migration, which began as work for foreign armies. Since the 1990s, labor migration has become pervasive in more foreign countries and industries. The nature of Nepalese overseas labor force is no longer limited to military but extended to other industries in order to satisfy the needs of the global economic changes. In recent years, Nepal has been going through many economic and political transitions. Corresponding to these social changes, part of the Nepalese population has been migrating within the country while others emigrate overseas to pursue economic opportunities. Migration within the country occurs mainly because of the unequal distribution of income and resources between urban and rural areas (KC. and B.K., 2003). International migrants mainly work in India, South Asia, East Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries¹, countries that have a huge demand for labor. Since Nepal is still in the early stage of economic development, the labor out-migrants contribute substantially to Nepal's poverty alleviation and infrastructure building with their international remittances (Graner, 2001; Seddon,

¹ The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait are the members of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf.

Adhikari, and Gurung, 2002; Thieme, 2006). Between 1995 and 2004, one-fifth of the poverty decline in Nepal was contributed by the inflow of remittances from labor migrants (The World Bank, 2005; Lokshin, Bontch-Osmolovski, and Glinskaya, 2007). Nepal is now widely referred to one of the “remittance economies”; it is the fifth largest recipient of remittances, which make up 23% of the country’s GDP or approximately \$3 billion US Dollars (Ratha, Mohapatra and Silwal, 2010). Not only is the general economy improved by remittances, some studies also show that, at the individual level, the left-behind family members become more materially satisfied while their family member earns money outside the neighborhood (Hermele, 1997; Russell, 1997). Using national level data from 1996, Regmi and Tisdell (2002) conclude that among Nepalese rural-to-urban migrants, remittances are spent on household expenditures, agricultural expenses, education of close relatives, buying lands, paying back debts and other uses. Another study also shows that Nepalese younger girls and boys benefit from more household’s expenditure on children’s education through remittances (Bansak and Chezum, 2009).

In the past, Nepali workers were most likely to work in India because of the free border, low transportation costs and shared culture (Bohra and Massey, 2009). Although India historically was one of the most common destination for Nepali migrants for obvious reasons, other parts of the world, particularly the Persian Gulf region, have gradually become popular in recent years. Among most of the Middle East and the Gulf countries, which hosted 206,572 documented Nepali migrant workers in total, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) are the most popular destinations; 91,267, 50,271, and 47,148 migrants are working in these countries respectively (Nepal Migration Year Book 2008). The huge oil fortune in Middle East attracts a lot of South

Asian workers, including Nepalese, to work in the construction sector there and remit money back home. The economic improvement contributed by remittances to both individual households and the country as a whole is very clear in the literature (Seddon and Gurung, 2002; Goldring, 2003).

Setting: Economic and migratory situation of Chitwan Valley residents

The Chitwan Valley is an Inner Terai valley located in the south of Nepal, sharing a border with India. In rural Nepal, the Chitwan Valley is one of the best areas to study migrants and issues around immigration because of its history of development and migration. Before the early 1950s, this valley was covered by virgin forests and only populated by the native Tharu people, who sparsely settled and mainly made a living by hunting and gathering. But since the mid-1950s, the Nepalese government started to open this valley for settlement by clearing the forest and allocating land to people from other areas in Nepal. People from neighboring hills and mountains, where there was scarce land for agricultural production, were attracted to settle in this valley (Shrestha, 1989).

To sustain the development of the Chitwan Valley, the Nepalese government built new roads and provided irrigation projects and social welfare services. Since 1979, the valley's largest town was connected to Kathmandu and other cities in Nepal and in India with paved roads (Shivakoti et al., 1997). The improvement in the transport network attracted more people from across Nepal to move into the Chitwan Valley. In addition to the internal migrants within the country, the Indian Terai crossed the border and settled in the study valley as well. According to the Chitwan Valley Family Study (CVFS) household survey data from Western Chitwan, as of January 2009, 13.4 percent of the

total 9,829 original respondents were foreign migrants and 27.5 percent had migrated within Nepal. Except the transportation enhancement, more schools, hospitals, community service centers, markets, and other social institutions were built as well (Axinn and Yabiku, 2001; Ghimire and Axinn, 2006). The successful economic development in the Chitwan Valley not only attracts in-migration, but also encourages the young people in local community to improve their lives through education. As Williams and her colleagues (2010) show, more of today's work force has been educated, compared to their parents or grandparents.² More young people go to school, join social activities, learn about foreign affairs through media, and hence expect to have higher standards of living. Many of them live and work away from home to pursue more and better economic opportunities.

While many people move into the Chitwan Valley from the rest of Nepal and India, there is an extensive out-migration from the valley as well. In addition to the most popular destination – India – the East Asian and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries also draw a lot of migrant workers from the Chitwan Valley with their blooming economies. In these growing economies, the construction industry needs foreign labor most, compared to the agricultural production and service sectors. To encourage its residents to earn foreign remittances to contribute to the country's financial well-being, the Nepalese government passed the Foreign Employment Act of 1985. With the passage of this effective Act, legal non-governmental recruitment agents now help to export Nepalese workers overseas and stimulate the flow of international migration to all parts of the world (Kollmair et al., 2006; Thieme and Wyss, 2005). According to the

²For those who were born between 1936 and 1945, only 31% ever attended school. However, 84% of people who were born between 1966 and 1975 ever received education.

same CVFS, out of the 1,316 foreign migrants, 43 percent were in the Middle East and the Gulf countries with 15%, 12% and 9.6 % in Qatar, Saudi Arab and UAE respectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reasons for remittance

Remittances' contribution to the family: Many researchers identify the family as the unit of analysis in migration and remittance questions because the entire family is sharing and trading off the costs and benefits of remitting (Stark and Bloom, 1985; Russell, 1986). Normally, larger units of related people like families and households, rather than individual actors, make the migration decision in rural and agricultural areas, such as Nepal (Chambers and Conway, 1992; DFID, 2002). Work migration is viewed as a part of a family adaptive strategy; it is used to diversify the family's pattern of labor use, reduce the risk and dependence on a single economic activity and maximize family rather than individual welfare (Stark and Bloom, 1985). As migrants move from underdeveloped areas to more urbanized areas, remittances that come from the wage differential could provide increased total income for the left-behind family. Taylor and his colleagues (2003) find that although a household's cropping income is decreased by the lost labor to migration, the income drop can be partially compensated by remittances from migrants. Remittances can directly increase the household's income and indirectly through more investment on agricultural productions in home neighborhood. In the event that agricultural production deteriorates at the family household, their standard of living can still be supported by migrant remittances. If nothing bad happens, remittances can also help improve the left-behind family's living standard.

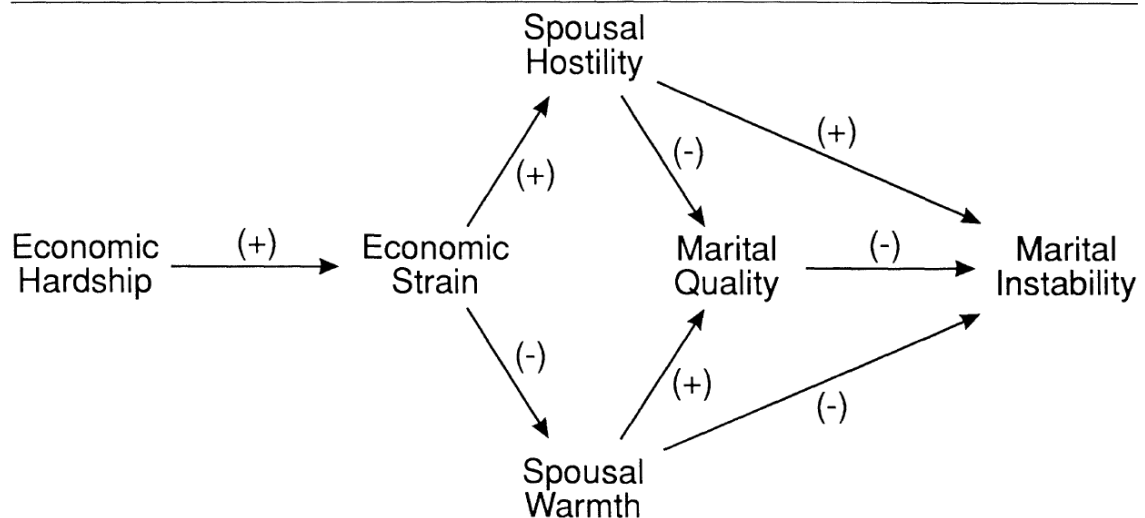
Remitting as an Individual Decision: In addition to the family adaptation strategy, we can also interpret sending money back home as an individual behavior. From the individual prospective, there are two explanations for monetary transfers back to relatives during labor migration. One explanation is altruism; a work migrant demonstrates his family obligations and loyalty by contributing monetary support to the household back at home. As Lucas and Stark (1985) wrote, "...certainly the most obvious motive for remitting is pure altruism – the care of a migrant for those left behind." Thus, remittances provide a way of fulfilling obligations and commitment to the family. Another explanation is that remittances are motivated by migrants' self-interest (Lucas and Stark, 1985). Due to the high risks associated with urban unemployment, migrants could maximize their own interests by maintaining close relationships with the family members back at the place of origin through remittances as an insurance against these risks. In case of losing their job in the area to which they've migrated, migrants can go back their homes in rural area and receive support from the rest of the family.

Financial situation and relationship quality

After discussing the causes of remittance, more importantly, we need to explore what effects remittance would bring to the migratory family. An extensive literature (Conger et al., 1990; Liker and Elder, 1983; Teachman, Polonko, and Scanzoni, 1987) shows that there is a strong relationship between general economic circumstances in the household and the quality of family relationships. In poor families, marital interaction is an important dimension influenced by financial issues in family and the working husband usually discusses with his wife, rather than other family members, how to spend the household income. In Liker and Elder's (1983) study, they showed that economic

hardship could deteriorate the marital relationship when the husband and wife argue over the use of the limited income. Conducting a quantitative study with self-report measures of marital quality and economic hardship, Liker and Elder (1983) concluded that the disagreement over monetary issues generates tense, explosive, and irritable behaviors of a couple toward each other. Based on this empirical evidence, Conger and his colleagues (1990) offer a general model explaining how the economic hardship leads to marital instability. They argue that economic hardship would first cause the economic strain, which then increases spousal hostility and decreases spousal warmth simultaneously. A higher level of spousal hostility and a lower level of spousal warmth would jointly lower the marital quality and eventually cause the marital instability. The following figure is derived from their paper to present the whole process.

FIGURE 1. THE GENERAL MODEL FOR THE ANALYSIS



With this general model, the authors analyzed 76 couples from a Midwestern county and the evidence showed the negative impact of economic hardship on marriage. However, the sample size of this study is too small to convince scholars of this correlation.

Therefore, my study on a much larger sample of Nepalese workers would be able to further test this hypothesis.

A lower level of household income can damage the relationship between husband and wife. Using the same logic of causation on the flip side, we may predict a higher level of salary would make the family better off and therefore could improve the marital relationship. Brody and his colleagues (1994) found the positive effect of a higher income level on marital quality. In their small sample of African Americans, they found that higher per capital incomes were related to higher marital happiness and lower marital conflict. It confirms the hypothesis that an economic improvement releases the marital anxiety and tension in a certain degree. This study's results are consistent to the hypothetical model raised in another study conducted by Cutright (1971).

In Cutright's (1971) study, the evidence indicates the strong correlation of family income to material consumption and assets, which then cause marital satisfaction and stability of marriage. To legitimize the positive impact of family income on marriage, he provides two explanations. One explanation is that the successful role performance in high income couples maintains mutual affection between husband and wife. Another explanation is that the stability of high income could constrain the chance of separation and divorce among richer couples. Both Brody et al. (1994) and Cutright (1971) empirically and theoretically support the argument that a higher family income improves the marital relationship. Since the overseas workers generally make much more money than non-migrants for their family, is remittance also related to the quality of spousal relationship? This present study addresses this question.

Changes in Family Roles and Conflicts

Change in Women's Role: While the husbands are absent at home, women need to take the major family and economic responsibilities and take care of the rest of the family even though it is not a voluntary choice. Men's out-migration leads to the redistribution of power and resources across the gender line. Hadi(2001) shows that the absence of men significantly enhances the decision-making capacity of women. Women in families where migrants have lived abroad for some years are three times more likely to raise their decision-making ability, comparing to those of non-migrant families. Some feminist researchers have further mentioned that left-behind wives are more active in agriculture (Jin 1990; Fei, 1994). Feng (1996) described a process of shifting agricultural activities from men to women. As a result of the family decision-making about migration, women usually stay at home to take care of the elderly and children while their husbands are working abroad. Women can also do some sewing and light agricultural work to make monetary contribution to their family. The progressively equalized working experience between wives and husbands may increase the marital instability of migrants and their left-behind wives (Becker, 1974; Santos, 1975). As the wife takes more responsibilities in economic and familial activities while the husband works abroad, she may assume to share more decision-making powers with her spouse. In Campbell and Snow's (1992) study, various factors of gender role conflict and family environment are found to account for 46.8% of the variance in marital satisfaction. The increasing expectation of women and the absence of men at home could result in spousal conflicts and consequently weaken the quality of marriage (Van Meter and Agronow, 1982).

Alternatives of Elderly Care: Not only do wives feel frustrated about the temporary absence of their husbands (Salgado de Snyder, 1987), the elderly parents left at home may also feel lonely and emotionally dissatisfied because of the out-migration of their adult children (Goldstein and Beall, 1986). As discussed above, migrants' wives may replace them as the head of household while they are away from home. At the same time, care for elderly relatives is also transferred and rotated among different sons who stay in local community. In the fieldwork by Biao (2007) in southeast China, migrant sons are willing to pay a certain amount of money to the brothers who stay back home to "buy out" their filial duty. For example, they pay for grocery delivery to their elderly relatives in the rural areas close to towns. Some neighbors are also very kind to give a hand to the rural elderly for free (Zhang, 2003). Since government- or community-run elderly care centers are very uncommon in Nepal, Nepali out-migrants can only rely on the traditional family and neighborhood care for elderly during their absence. Family-based care still seems to be the main form of elderly care. Despite the unchanged caring practice, the left-behind elderly still feel distant from and also abandoned by their overseas children. The long-distance separation dilutes the strong bonding between out-migrants and their parents.

Work migrants' responsibility of elderly care is mostly applicable to their parents but not necessarily to their parents-in-law. Nepal is a patriarchal society, where son-in-laws rarely live with or support their in-law family financially. According to Bongaarts' (2001) study, there are only 0.02 parents-in-law to each household head per Asian household in the 1990s. In Nepal, there are about 0.30 adult sons or daughters-in-law living with the head in each household (Bongaart, 2001, p.267). Parents-in-law are

neither the nuclear family nor stem family additions. Although son-in-laws do not support their parents-in-law directly, there is still a possibility that the benefits of remittance are passed on to parents-in-law from male work migrants through their wives (Borovnik, 2006, p.155). In some countries, husbands usually turn over the money to the wife who was responsible for spending the remittances (Brinke 2001). For the Nepalese case, there are no papers clearly discussing how remittance changes the relationship with parents-in-law. This research will be the first study relating remittance to the parents-in-law relationship.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Based on the above discussion of literature, I have constructed a framework to explain how remittance, the pivotal difference between migrants and non-migrants, is associated with the quality of different family relationships. My framework is presented below.

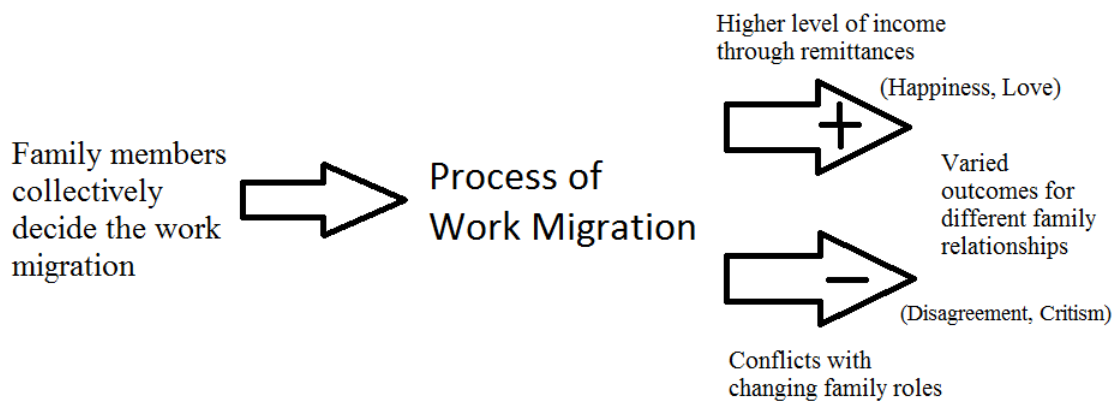


Figure 2: Model describing the association between remittance and family relationships

At the start of the migration process, the decision to work abroad is not solely made by migrants individually. Different family members are involved in choosing whether and how many members to send to overseas for working while they are

compromising to maximize the household interest. Once the decision is made, the work migrant would start working overseas and stay there for some time, usually one year or more. During the process of work migration, the overseas workers save most of their income and regularly remit money back home to support the left-behind family.

The existence of remittance is complicatedly associated with the relationships of work migrants with their left-behind family members. On one hand, the household's income level is largely enhanced by the remittance and the increased income level would improve the family relationships. On another hand, since the original breadwinner is away from home to work overseas, other family members need to take up his responsibilities and change the family roles in response to the family head's absence. Along with the changing family roles, conflicts among family members may become more frequent. Conflicts within the household would decrease the quality of family relationships.

For the first research question, I hypothesize that there is a difference in the quality of family relationships between migrants and non-migrants because the remittances improve the living standards of the left-behind family. For the second research question, since the remittance may have both positive and negative effects on family relationships, the outcomes could be mixed and varied, depending on the kind of family relationship. For the marital relationship, I hypothesize that the spousal relationship of migrants is better than that of non-migrants because remittance's positive impacts outweigh its negative impacts between couples to enhance the relationship quality. It is because, in developing countries, both husbands and wives share the same goal of improving the household's living standard, despite the possibility that changing

family roles may damage the family cohesion. Poor families are far more concerned about the financial situation than about the gender roles in family. For the parental relationship, I predict that will also be improved because work migrants are very likely to offer financial assistance to their own parents in a patriarchal society. Last but not least, the relationship of migrants with their parents-in-law is hypothesized to be neutral since the direct benefits of remittance from work migrants to their parents-in-law are very limited.

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this study are from the Nepali Migrants to the GCC Countries Study³ (NMGCCS) funded by the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. The NMGCCS builds directly on the Chitwan Valley Family Study (CVFS). The CVFS has been ongoing for more than a decade since 1996 and has had extremely high response rates for most follow up interviews since then. The newly created NMGCCS migration study component particularly aims at understanding the migrant population from the Chitwan Valley and provides information that is very helpful to answer my research questions. The interviewers were well-trained with technical survey skills, culturally appropriate methods, language and other skills before being sent to the field. Therefore, the collected data was of very high quality due to experienced researchers and interviewers.

The data I analyze are thus from the two linked projects: the individual level data of the CVFS from 1996 to 2008, and the baseline data of the individual-level NMGCCS

³ As an undergraduate intern for the Partnerships for International Research Education (PIRE) in University of Michigan, I was allowed to access the raw data that are not yet publicly available.

initiated in 2008. The original CVFS panel study from 1996 through 2008 was designed to study marriage and childbearing behaviors, but not migration, and it interviewed only the internal migrants within Nepal at a response rate of 94% in 2008. Therefore, a new baseline project focusing on international migration was initiated in 2008 to also include the external migrants, who are currently in a foreign country or who have returned to Nepal but are living elsewhere than their original households. The sample of work migrants was drawn from two sources; the first source includes household members in the 151 neighborhoods who were not in the origin household most of the time in the six months prior to the 2008 baseline interview, and the second source includes those who aged 15 or above and had migrated out for at least one year before, identified from the records of the 1996-2008 panel project. In 2008, 461 individuals had already been interviewed. They are either currently working in the Middle East (mainly in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, but also some in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman) or had work experience in those areas.

Two methods were used to interview work-migrants who were still staying in Gulf Cooperation Council countries and those who were back in Nepal. For those who had returned to Nepal for a short visit, face-to face interviews were administered by the CVFS interviewers at their home in Chitwan. Those who were residing in the GCC countries and didn't intend to return to Nepal within a year were interviewed by phone. It was more difficult to interview those still in the Persian Gulf than those returned to Nepal. The biggest challenge was to successfully locate and contact migrants who were still in the GCC countries. There were difficulties in collecting the residential or working address because migrants' families still residing in Nepal did not know their foreign

addresses. Also, conducting interviews via phone was not easy because migrants usually had no telephone land line or no spare time other than work time to be contacted. Despite all these challenges, a very high response rate of 87% was still achieved. Out of 526 eligible respondents, 461 complete interviews were conducted. The average interview length was 110 minutes; it included not only migration questionnaire, but also an individual base line interview and a life history calendar.

Measurements

Before comparing the family relationship quality between migrants and non-migrants, I will first briefly describe some characteristics, including age, gender, ethnicity, marriage status, and education level, of migrants and non-migrants by using life history calendar. For age, respondents were asked how old they were and answers were recorded in years. For gender, females were coded “1” and males were coded “0”. To measure marriage status, respondents were asked if they were married to at least one spouse at the time of the interview, with those married coded “1” and those not married coded “2”. To identify the ethnicity of migrants, respondents were asked about their fathers’ caste. Five major ethnic categories were used in this study: Brahmin and Chhetry (High Caste Hindus), Dalit (Low Caste Hindus), Newar, Hill Indigenous (Hill Tibeto-Burmese), and Terai Indigenous (Terai Tibeto-Burmese). Education level is measured by the number of years respondents were in school.

It is important to know the demographic characteristics of work migrants because they would be used to randomize a stratified comparison group of non-migrants later. Other than that, we also need to know whether work migrants remit money to support

their family at home, as the main goal of this project is to study the association of remittance with family relationship quality. Working overseas is never an easy life; the migrants have to support their own lives in a higher-living-standard country while saving most of the income to help their left-behind-family. Therefore, the migrant survey asked a number of questions regarding the financial situation of migrants. The respondents were first asked how much they earned in wage or salary in Nepalese Rupees every month. Then, they were asked whether they had sent any money, goods or gifts to their households in Nepal in the past 12 months. If the answer was yes, they were asked how much money they had sent or brought to their households in Nepal during that period of time. If the respondents were not sure about the exact amount of remittance, they were asked the same question with the request to provide an approximate amount.

As discussed before, it could be costly to live in a foreign country without family support. Therefore, we also measured the level of migrants' expenditures during their overseas stay by asking how much of money they saved after personal expenses. However, for the Nepalese workers in GCC countries, it is a common practice that the local employer provides his international workers with accommodations, which are considered job benefits. Therefore, respondents were also asked what other benefits besides wages were given by the job. Respondents could choose one or more choices from the options "Food", "Housing", "Health Benefits", "Health or Life Insurance" and "Something Else".

Independent variable

The independent variable in my analyses is the immigration status of the respondent. I will compare migrants (interviewed in the NMGCCS) to non-migrants (in the CVFS) in terms of family relationship quality. To categorize the non-migrant group, I used the life history calendar in the individual level CVFS data from 1996 to 2008 to determine whether a person had ever worked or lived abroad. The life history calendar is considered appropriate for gathering detailed and complicated retrospective life events data (Axinn et al., 1999). In the life history calendar, the interviewer marked down the respondent's place of residence. If the life history calendar shows that a person has never been out of the country in the period of 12 years, he or she was labeled a non-migrant. Within the migrant group, returned migrants (those who had had work experience in GCC countries before and currently back to Nepal) and overseas migrants (those who were still working abroad) are two main groups.

Dependent variable

To measure family relationship quality, I divide family relationships into three main types: the marital relationship, relationships with parents, and relationships with parents-in-law. To operationalize the quality of marital relationships, I will use three questions from the survey: "How often do you have disagreements with your (most recent) husband/wife?" and "How often does your (most recent) husband/wife criticize you?" which have response options "frequently (4), sometimes (3), seldom (2) or never (1)", and "How much do you love your (most recent) husband/wife?" with response options "very much (4), some (3), a little (2), or not at all (1)". Since polygamy is acceptable in Nepal, the questions referred to the most recent husband or wife.

To measure relationships with parents, I use an item asking “Would you say that your relationship with your mother is extremely happy (4), very happy (3), somewhat happy (2), or not happy at all (1)?” and an identical item that asks about the respondent’s relationship his father. For relationships with parent-in-laws, this same relationship quality item is asked for mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law individually.

Methodology

Instead of running regression models, I created a subsample from the non-migrants in the 2008 baseline study of CVFS who have very similar, if not exactly the same, demographic characteristics of the migrants for matched comparisons⁴. As the descriptive table shows later, females and those with ethnicities from other than the five main caste groups (upper caste Hindu, lower caste Hindu, Hill Tibeto-burmese, Newar, and Terai Tibeto-burmese) are very rare in the migrant sample; therefore, these groups were excluded when constructing the comparison group since the number of people in these groups is too small to generate meaningful conclusions. Using a strategy of matched comparisons– comparing average relationship quality for migrants and non-migrants who are equivalent on the matched characteristics – will have similar results as regression models do because many factors other than migration experience are controlled. The matched characteristics that were used to develop the comparison sample include age, gender, and caste.

⁴ Rather than creating a stratified random sample by myself, I asked the project’s programmer for help because of several advantages. First of all, the project’s programmer is experienced in statistical tools and already knows different datasets in the project very well. As it takes a lot of time for an undergraduate student to learn the statistical tools from nothing, it is more practical for me to ask for statistical help and analyze the data myself later, given the limited time in one semester. It saved much time that would have been spent learning statistical tools and I could use the time to improve the quality of the analysis. Also, because the programmer has been working on the datasets for a period of time already, he was also able to provide some suggestions about which high-quality data could answer my research questions.

After a matched comparison subsample of non-migrants was constructed, I first compared the mean scores on relationship questions between migrants and non-migrants by running t-tests to see if differences were significant. Also, because the migrant group has two sub-groups (returned and overseas migrants), I also controlled the location of migrants for analyses in the next table. Next, in cases where there were significant differences, I then turned to the second research question of how the quality of family relationships is changed at different levels of remittance by dividing migrants into two groups, high and low-level contributors, based on their level of monetary contribution to left-behind family. With one group of non-migrants and two groups of migrants, I ran one-way ANOVA (Analysis of variance) tests to compare the scores of these three different groups. Based on the different levels of average relationship quality across these groups, I provided some bar graphs to describe the associations between remittance level and different family relationships.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

Table 1 compares the demographic characteristics of the migrant sample in GCCS and the subsample of non-migrant in the CVFS in detail. In the original NMGCCS migrant sample, there are only 14 women (3.04%) out of 461 respondents, which is consistent with the finding in the literature that there are many more Nepalese men going aboard for construction and industrial work than women doing domestic service overseas. Also, males typically dominate the population of work migrants to the Gulf States from Nepal because the Nepalese government forbade recruitment of women in 1998 but restarted a few years later (Graner, 2001). However, some men are either forced (too old or too young to work abroad) or required (in order to maintain the local community

functioning) to stay behind. As there are so few women in the migrant group to study, we exclude all females in both matched migrant and non-migrant groups for analyses. The age of migrant group ranges between 20 and 44. The young ages of migrants show the fact that the Nepali people usually marry in their early youth and have the financial responsibility for a family since getting married. The mean and median of age are 31.6 and 31 respectively, which may imply that the Nepalese workers usually go abroad at the prime of their life because the overseas construction and manufacturing sectors usually need strong workers who can perform physical labor. For the matched non-migrant group, the mean age is slightly lower (30 years old) and the standard deviation is higher. The small difference in age distribution between two groups was created during the process of matching⁵.

Among the work migrants, almost 90% are married and only very few are single, divorced or widowed. This high proportion of married workers shows that the husband, as the breadwinner in household, needs to work abroad to make extra money to support his wife and parents back at home. Most of them also have children to support. Nepalese go abroad for work because they want to improve the living standard or they might not earn enough to sustain their wives and children if they stayed and did farming work in village. The financial needs of the whole family push husbands to pursue economic opportunities overseas. Among non-migrants, the marriage rate is very high (77%) too, because early marriage is encouraged in Nepalese culture, but not as high as the migrants'. This difference suggests that married people are more likely than unmarried

⁵ Instead of matching with the exact ages, the programmer divided people into a number of age groups, e.g. 15-24 years old are group 1, 25-34 years old are group 2, and etc, to do the stratified matching. The broad range of age groups may generate the slightly different age range between non-migrants and migrants.

people to work abroad because they need earn more money to support the left-behind family.

In terms of ethnicity, half of the migrants are from the Upper Caste Hindu. It is reasonable to believe that the privileged background can provide the higher social class more knowledge and international experiences of themselves or their parents for going abroad. The major five ethnic groups (99.4%) almost occupy the entire migrant group in the original sample. Therefore, in the matched groups, all other ethnic groups than those five major ethnicities are excluded. In education level, the majority of migrants have spent some years in high school but very few have obtained a college degree. In the general population of Nepal, very few people have the opportunity to receive higher education (Bohra and Massey, 2009, UNESCO, 2008). 68% of the migrants received some 0-10 years of education; with limited education, they could only do jobs that had physical rather than intelligence requirements, such as construction work. It may indicate that although the physical work overseas have a very low education requirement, foreign employers still want the Nepalese workers to have some education.

Table 1: Demographics of matched migrants and non-migrants in NMGCCS and CVFS

	Work-migrants in the NMGCCS (N=425)	Non-migrants in the CVFS (N=421)
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Gender	Male	425 (100%)	421 (100%)
	Female	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Age	Min.	20	15
	Max.	44	44
	Mean	31.57	30
	Median	31	31
	Standard Deviations	5.58	6.72
Marriage status	Married	380 (89.41%)	327 (77.67%)
	Non-married	45 (10.58%)	94 (22.33%)
Caste	Brahmin and Chhetry	201 (47.29%)	201 (47.74%)
	Dalit	48 (11.29%)	44 (10.45%)
	Hill Indigenous	87 (20.47%)	87 (20.66%)
	Newar	28(6.59%)	28 (6.65%)
	Terai Indigenous	61 (14.35%)	61 (14.48%)
	Others	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Education level	0 to 2 years in school	17 (4%)	48 (11.4%)
	3 to 10 years in school	274 (64.47%)	183 (43.47%)
	S.L.C. or above (high school diploma or above)	134 (31.53%)	190 (45.13%)

Next, I turn to the financial situation of work migrants. Table 2(a) shows the average amounts of work migrants' earnings, savings and remittances in Nepalese Rupees. The monthly earning mean of these 461 work migrants is 27319 Nepalese Rupees, which is much higher than the average income in Nepal⁶. Among these work migrants, 435 (94%) of them indicated that they had sent money back to their household in Nepal. The average amount of remittance is 19547 Nepalese Rupees.

⁶ As the World Bank statistics show, the GNP per capita of Nepal is 6883 Nepalese Rupees in 2009. For details, please see the report at http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/ddpreports/ViewSharedReport?REPORT_ID=9147&REQUEST_TYPE=VIEWADVANCED

Table 2(a): Financial situation of migrant labor

Amount (in Nepalese Rupees)	Monthly Earning	Monthly Saving	Monthly Remittance
Mean	27319	21361	19547
Median	24000	18243	16667
Max.	162160	141890	125000
Min.	7000	0	83.3
Standard Deviations	16352	13994	221856

1 USD \approx 70 Nepalese Rupees

The statistics also show that the work migrants spent only a small proportion of their salary for personal use and saved the remaining for other purposes. They usually sent a large part of the savings back to the household in Nepal. Instead of simply grouping the migrants based on the absolute amounts of savings and remittances, I categorized them into different group by the proportions of savings and remittances in income, as shown in the following tables 2(b) and 2(c).

Table 2(b): The proportion of saving (N=435)

% of Income for Saving	0-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-100
	13 (2.95%)	31(7.05%)	89(20.23%)	103(23.4%)	126(28.6%)	78(17.7%)

As table 2(b) shows, 97% of the migrants saved half or more of their income after personal expenses. This behavior is consistent with the main purpose of working abroad,

which is to save most of the income for helping the migrant himself or his family in Nepal financially.

I believe the degree of how committed a work migrant to his household back at home is reflected more accurately by looking at the proportion of income, instead of the absolute number, transferred as remittances. Table 2(c) shows how much of savings the migrant kept for remitting home to Nepal. This table's distribution is quite different from the previous one; almost 30% of work migrants sent less than half of their saving back home. It could be because the life of working abroad was not easy for migrants and they needed to save some money for emergency use while they lacked family and friend support abroad. Another interesting point in this table is that over 30% report having remitted an amount of money that is larger than their total reported savings. One explanation for this would be because the respondents exaggerated the amount of remittance. Another reason could be due to the phrasing of the survey question, as it asks "how much money did you send or bring to your household in Nepal (in the past 12 months/while in (COUNTRY)) during this period of time, including the value of any goods or gifts?" To answer this question, the respondents might also include valuable goods and money that they had accumulated more than a year ago but just sent back home within the past 12 months. For the income questions, respondents just reported the money that they had made in the past 12 months. Therefore, it was not entirely unexpected or unbelievable that the value of remittances during past 12 months could be higher than the amount of earnings during the same period for these migrants.

Table 2(c): The proportion of remittance (N=435)

% of Saving for Remittance	0-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-100	Over 100
	117	29	36	20	54	33	146
	(26.9%)	(6.7%)	(8.3%)	(4.6%)	(12%)	(7.6%)	(34%)

In addition to wages or salary, work migrants also received other forms of benefit, such as food, housing, health benefits, health or life insurance or others, from employers. Shown in table 3, nearly all migrants (97.5%) were provided some kinds of accommodation by employer while they were working abroad. The housing benefit saved a lot of money for work migrants so that they could send more money back home. Besides the housing benefit, a substantial fraction also received food (66.7%), health benefits (75.3%), and health or life insurance (30.5%) from work. All these employee benefits explain why work migrants could save a large portion of income and send money back home.

Table 3: Other forms of benefit (N=393)

	Food	Housing	Health Benefits	Health or Life Insurance
Yes	262 (66.7%)	383 (97.5%)	296 (75.3%)	120 (30.5%)

After descriptive tables about the financial situation of work migrants, table 4 shows us the number of respondents, the mean score, and the standard deviation of each family relationship measure for both migrants and non-migrants. The last column of table 4 lists the score difference by subtracting the average migrants' score from the average non-migrants' score, with significance level for the difference presented. The first three variables, in which the first two are negative and the third positive, show the relationship of respondents with their spouses. The non-migrants marked their frequency of disagreement with spouse as 1.89, which approximates a response of "seldom" (score of 2), and the migrants scored slightly lower at 1.79 on average. For the frequency of

spouses criticizing respondents, non-migrants' mean score is 1.66 while migrants' score is 1.57. Thus, Table 4 shows that non-migrants disagree and criticize their spouse more often than their migrant counterparts do, with differences of 0.10 more and 0.09 more, respectively, both with p-values < 0.05. Suggesting the same result but in an opposite direction, migrants report that they love their spouse much more, 0.36 point more on a scale of 4 at p-value < 0.0001, than non-migrants do. The gap in the extent of love for spouse is not only quite large but highly statistically significant. Both negative and positive questions imply that migrants have a better relationship with their spouse than non-migrants, supporting my hypothesis.

Table 4: Comparing scores of family relationships between migrants and non-migrants

Relationship with...	Non-migrant group			Migrant group			Difference (a - b)
	N	Mean Score (a)	S.D.	N	Mean Score (b)	S.D.	
Spouse							
Spouse (Disagreement)	327	1.8960	.6277	380	1.7921	.6428	.1039*
Spouse (Criticism)	327	1.6636	.6623	380	1.5684	.64	.0952*
Spouse (Love)	325	3.1754	.6644	380	3.5342	.5914	-.3588****
Parents							
Father ⁱ (Happiness)	267	3.3146	.7347	271	3.3948	.7117	-.0802
Mother ⁱ (Happiness)	282	3.4043	.6641	285	3.4667	.6685	-.0624
Parents-in-law							
Father-in-law ⁱ (Happiness)	195	3.0872	.7305	245	3.2122	.6683	-.1251†
Mother-in-law ⁱ (Happiness)	186	3.0054	.7090	237	3.1646	.6907	-.1592*

Scale of scores: Minimum=1 and Maximum=4

†p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001, ****p < 0.0001

ⁱ Only respondents aged 34 or younger were asked parents and parents-in-law question for original CVFS purposes. If his parents or parents-in-law are no longer alive, the respondent is not included for analyses. Therefore, smaller sample sizes for these questions are expected.

Next, let us look at the relationship with parents. Both non-migrants and migrants demonstrate high levels of happiness with their fathers (mean scores of 3.31 and 3.39 respectively) and mothers (scores of 3.40 and 3.47 respectively). However, the score differences between migrants and non-migrants are very small; only -0.08 for father relationships and -0.06 for mother relationships. Moreover, the differences in score are not statistically significant (p-values > 0.10); therefore, we cannot conclude that there is really a difference in the parental relationships between migrants and non-migrants.

Lastly, we can see a different story in the relationship with parents-in-law. In the last two rows of table 4, non-migrants say they are very happy with father-in-law (3.09) and mother-in-law (3.01). Compared to the non-migrants, migrants report an even greater happiness with their parents-in-law, with scores at 3.21 for father-in-law and 3.16 for mother-in-law. The score differences are marginally significant or significant; the relationship with father-in-law has a p-value < 0.10 and that with mother-in-law has p-value < 0.05. The results for relationship quality with parents-in-law do not fully support my hypothesis that migrants have a neutral relationship with parents-in-law due to the limited connections of the household head to his parents-in-law. The results show that both the migrant and his parents-in-law are satisfied with the improved economic situation.

These diverse results lead us to another question: why there are differences in relationships with spouse and parents-in-law, but not in the parental relationship? One

solution to this puzzle is by comparing the mean scores across different kinds of relationships. The parental relationships receive the highest scores of any family relationship: 3.31 and 3.39 for the paternal relationship and 3.40 and 3.47 for the maternal relationship. Following the parental relationship, marital relationship is also given high scores of 3.18 and 3.53. The relationship with parents-in-law gets the lowest scores, which range from 3.01 to 3.21. The very high scores of parental relationships tell us that the Nepalese people in Chitwan Valley have a strong connection with their parents, regardless of their immigration status. No matter whether they stay at home or work abroad, respondents have filial piety and report a harmonious relationship with their parents. Nepalese workers provide emotional and financial support to their parents. The working location of adult children does not change their supportive attitude towards parents.

Since the location of migrants may also matter to the relationship with family members, in table 4(a), I compared the quality of different family relationships between returned and overseas migrants. As the data show, except in three questions (spousal disagreement, criticism, and happiness with father-in-law), the quality of most family relationships is not significantly different between returned and overseas migrants. The higher frequencies of disagreement (0.10 at p -value < 0.0001) and criticism (0.14 at p -value < 0.05) between spouses for the returned migrants could be explained by the reaction of women to the re-emergence of their husbands after a long time of male absence at home. While males are working away from home, their wives take the responsibility of taking care of the household. Women become the household head during the nonappearance of men. However when males come back home from abroad, the

duties of husband and wife become ambiguous. Wives expect to take a more important family role once they have gained the power of control. Meanwhile, men assume their unchallenged role in household is restored once they return home. The gap in expectations between husband and wife generate disagreement and criticism. Therefore, it may explain why the returned migrants have more disagreement and criticism than the overseas migrants, who have fewer chances for communication and contact with their wives.

Returned migrants have a significantly better relationship with father-in-law (0.12 at p -value < 0.01 , but not with mother-in-law (0.17 at p -value > 0.1), than overseas migrants do. This is probably because all respondents are males in this study. It is not surprising to see that the son-in-law has more common grounds to share with his father-in-law due to their shared gender. Therefore, when the son-in-law returns home, he may have more chances to meet and talk to his father-in-law, which would improve their relationship with each other. On another hand, it is uncommon for the son-in-law to socialize much with the in-law female members, although he is back in Nepal. Therefore, the relationship with mother-in-law is not different between returned and overseas migrants.

Table 4(a): Comparing scores of family relationships between overseas migrants and returned migrants

Relationship with...	Returned migrants			Overseas migrants			Difference (a - b)
	N	Mean Score (a)	S.D.	N	Mean Score (b)	S.D.	
Spouse Spouse (Disagreement)	129	1.8605	0.768	251	1.7570	0.5663	.1035****

Spouse (Criticism)	129	1.6589	0.6903	251	1.5219	0.6087	.137*
Spouse (Love)	129	3.3798	0.6148	251	3.6135	0.564	-.2337
Parents							
Father ⁱ (Happiness)	101	3.4158	0.6967	184	3.4946	0.6528	-.0787
Mother ⁱ (Happiness)	96	3.3021	0.7272	175	3.4457	0.6999	-0.1436
Parents-in-law							
Father-in-law ⁱ (Happiness)	87	3.2874	0.7611	158	3.1709	0.6098	.1165**
Mother-in-law ⁱ (Happiness)	85	3.2706	0.7136	152	3.1053	0.6726	.1653

Scale of scores: Minimum=1 and Maximum=4

†p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001, ****p < 0.0001

ⁱ Only respondents aged 34 or younger were asked parents and parents-in-law question for original CVFS purposes. If his parents or parents-in-law are no longer alive, the respondent is not included for analyses. Therefore, smaller sample sizes for these questions are expected.

After answering the first research question, I move on to the second question, which examines the association of remittance by migrants with the quality of family relationships. To do so, I divide migrants into two groups based on the percentage of their savings that they remitted: low-level and high-level contributors, hypothesizing that the way it functions is by increasing familial living standards. As table 2(c) presented earlier, the proportion of savings used for remittance is varied among work migrants. But generally, the work migrants send most of their overseas earnings back Nepal to support their families.

However, it would be very arbitrary if I randomly choose a percentage as the cut-off point dividing low- and high-level contributors. For example, 50% seems a reasonable level to differentiate migrants because one may think contributing more than half of the income to family is already a very committed act. However, in the group of Nepalese overseas workers, it may not be the case. Shown in table 2(c), only 26.9% of people sent

less than an half of their income back home. The majority (53.6%) sent 80% or more of their income to support their families in Nepal. Therefore, it is necessary to test a few percentage-points between 50% and 100% in order to get the best cut-off point.

In order to find a rational cut-off point, I did look at the sample sizes of low- and high-level contributors based on three different percentage-levels, 50%, 80% and 90%. In table 5, the sample sizes of low- and high-level contributors are presented, grouped by the cut-off percentage. Normally, 50% seems to be an ideal cut-off point because people are considered committed if they contribute more than half of the income to family. However, when we look at the columns for 50% cut-off point, the sample sizes of two groups are very distinct. In spouse questions, the low-level contributing group one has only 96 people but the high-level contributing group has 266 respondents. There are also big gaps in sample size for questions about parents (76 vs. 192 and 68 vs. 185) and parents-in-law (64 vs. 165 and 62 vs. 159). Next, 80% and 90% were also tested to see if they could serve a good cut-off point. I concluded that 80% is a better choice than 90% to be the cut-off point due to the comparable sample sizes of low and high-level contributors. With the 80% cut-off point, the difference in sample size is no more than 23 (138-115 in mother's question). But with the 90% cut-off point, the sample size difference could be as high as 78 (220-142 in spouse's questions). Therefore, I am going to use 80% as the differentiating level because of the similar sample sizes for comparisons.

Table 5: High-level and low-level contributors with different cut-off points

Relationship with...	50%		80%		90%	
	Low (N)	High (N)	Low (N)	High (N)	Low (N)	High (N)

Spouse						
Spouse (Disagreement)	96	266	171	191	220	142
Spouse (Criticism)	96	266	171	191	220	142
Spouse (Love)	96	266	171	191	220	142
Parents						
Father ⁱ (Happiness)	76	192	126	142	161	107
Mother ⁱ (Happiness)	68	185	115	138	150	103
Parents-in-law						
Father-in-law ⁱ (Happiness)	64	165	108	121	140	89
Mother-in-law ⁱ (Happiness)	62	159	106	115	135	86

ⁱ Only respondents aged 34 or younger were asked parents and parents-in-law question for original CVFS purposes. If his parents or parents-in-law are no longer alive, the respondent is not included for analyses. Therefore, smaller sample sizes for these questions are expected.

The first three columns in table 6 display the mean scores of each family relationship among three groups of non-migrants, low-level contributing migrants and high-level contributing migrants. The latter columns of the table compare the scores among them.

Table 6: Comparing scores of family relationships among non-migrants, low-level and high-level contributing migrants

Relationship with...	Non-migrants' mean score (a)	Low-level Contributor s' mean score (b)	High-level Contributors' mean score (c)	Difference (b – a)	Difference (c – b)	Difference (c - a)
Spouse						
Spouse (Disagreement)	1.896	1.678	1.884	-.218***	.2065**	-.012
Spouse (Criticism)	1.664	1.485	1.67	-.178**	.185**	.006
Spouse (Love)	3.175	3.567	3.487	.392***	-.08	.312***
Parents						
Father ⁱ (Happiness)	3.404	3.484	3.437	.08	.033	-.047

Mother ⁱⁱ (Happiness)	3.404	3.443	3.333	.039	-.11	-.07
Parents-in-law						
Father-in-law ⁱⁱⁱ (Happiness)	3.087	3.278	3.174	.191*	-.104	.086
Mother-in-law ^{iv} (Happiness)	3.005	3.226	3.139	.221**	-.087	.134

Scale of scores: Minimum=1 and Maximum=4

†p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

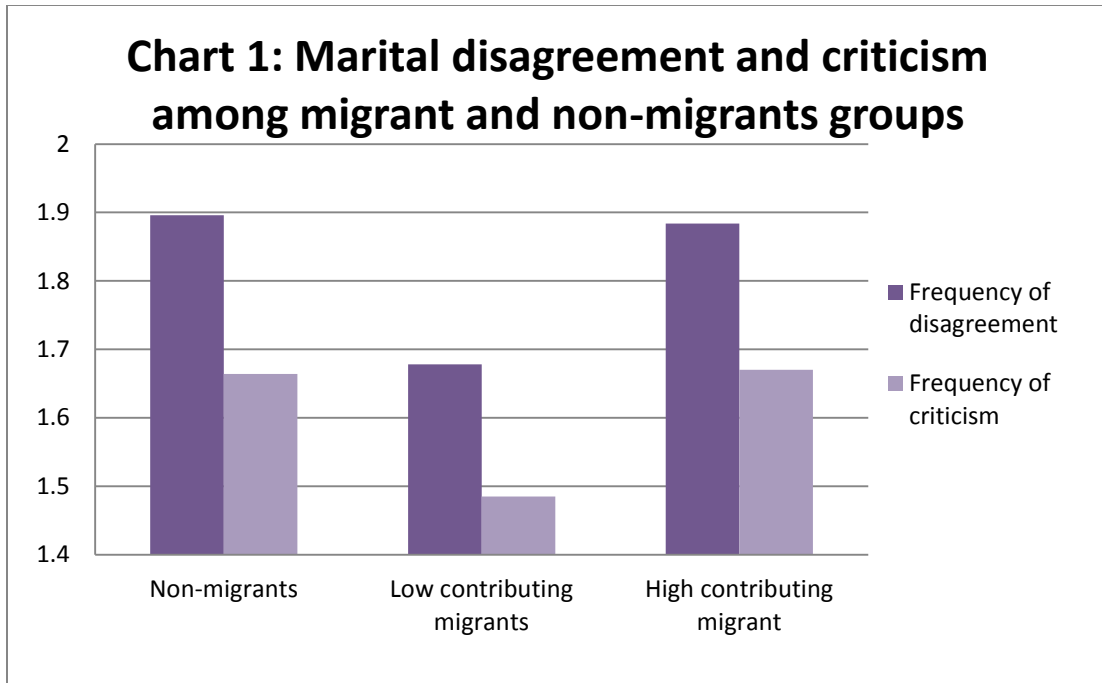
ⁱ N=267 for migrants, N=126 for low contributors, N=142 for high contributors

ⁱⁱ N=282 for migrants, N=115 for low contributors, N=138 for high contributors

ⁱⁱⁱ N=195 for migrants, N=108 for low contributors, N=121 for high contributors

^{iv} N=186 for migrants, N=106 for low contributors, N=115 for high contributors

Since the results for each family relationship vary, I will interpret the results and discuss the associations of remittance to the negative side of marital relationship, the positive side of marital relationship, the parental relationship and the relationship with parents-in-law separately. First, let us look at the results in the first two rows of table 6, spouse (disagreement) and spouse (criticism). Comparing non-migrants and low-level contributing migrants, low-level contributing migrants have much lower scores in the frequencies of disagreement (-0.22) and criticism (-0.18) at very high levels of significant (p-value < 0.001 and p-value < 0.01 respectively). Then, comparing migrants with different levels of remittance, we can see that high-level contributors have more disagreements (0.21) and criticisms (0.19) with spouse than their low-level counterparts at a very high significance level (p < 0.01) as well.



To make the results clearer, chart 1 visualizes what the data has shown us about the association between level of remittance and the negative side of marital relationship. Compared the non-migrants with no remittance to the low contributing migrants, the frequencies of disagreement and criticism between spouses is lower for low contributing migrants. However, within the migrant group, the higher contributing group has more disagreement and criticism than their lower contributing counterparts. The level of remittance does change the association with the frequencies of disagreement and criticism. The U-shaped trend of association, from no remittance to low level of remittance to high level of remittance, that describes the negative side of marital relationship not only answers my research question with its first two bars for comparison, but also tells us an interesting story with the whole chart. As shown in the first comparison between non-migrants and low contributing migrants, we can see a significant decline in disagreement and criticism from no remittance at all to some

remittance. Since the work migrants make extra money overseas and send back to their home in Nepal, it may improve the family living standard and consequently reduce the financial tension between spouses. Once the household's economic problems are solved by husband working abroad instead of earning little at home, spouses may argue less over financial problems. This could explain why the frequency of conflict drops when there are some remittances rather than nothing. However, this association does not continue at the higher remittance level. It is speculative that money can solve problems, but it can also create problems. After the basic needs are solved by remittance, family members may have different opinions on the spending of extra money. Since it is not easy to compromise with a final solution, spouses may be more likely to disagree and even criticize each other about the use of remittance. The higher the level of remittance, the more often spouses have conflicts, which is shown in the last part of the U-shaped trend.

After noticing the U-shaped trend of association between remittance and the negative aspects of marital relationship, I wanted to test whether the association with the positive aspect of spousal relationship would have a reverse U-shaped trend as well. Looking at the table 6(a), we observe a very big increase in the extent of love between non-migrants and low contributing migrants, which is 0.39 at $p\text{-value} < 0.001$. Then, comparing the low- and high-contributing migrants, we do not see any significant difference at all (-0.08 at $p\text{-value} > 0.10$). But when we compare the highly contributing migrants to non-migrants, we could also see a significant difference again (0.31 at $p\text{-value} < 0.001$). These data show that the existence of remittance is associated with reported love for the respondent's spouse, but the level of remittance does not appear to matter at all.

Table 6(a): Comparing scores of family relationships among non-migrants, low-level and high-level contributing migrants in spousal love

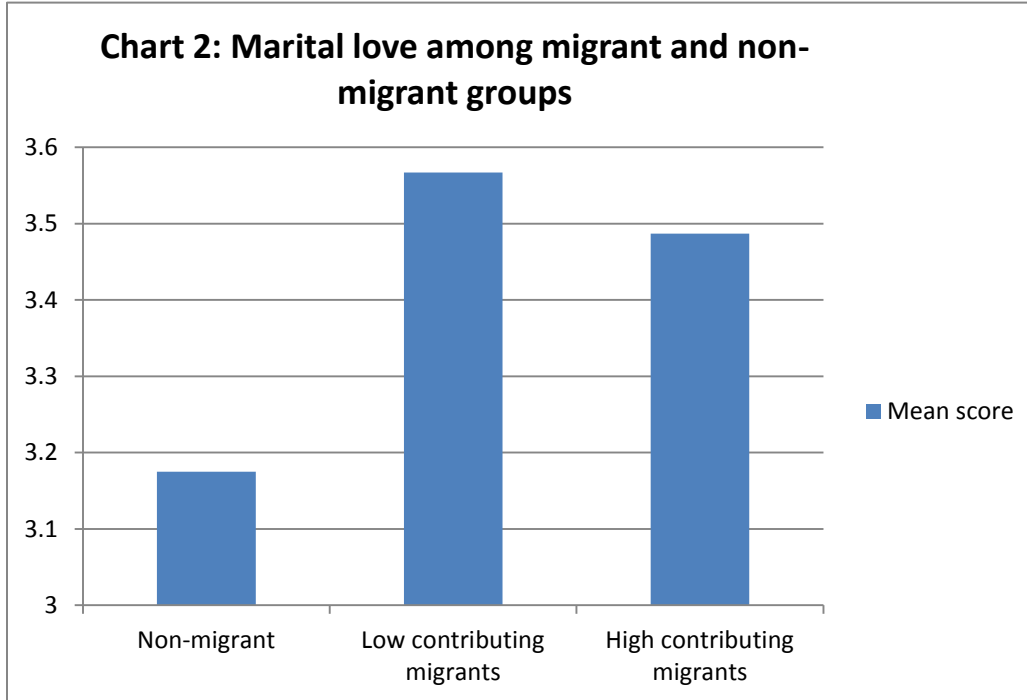
Relationship with...	Non-migrants' mean score (a)	Low-level Contributors' mean score (b)	High-level Contributors' mean score (c)	Difference (b – a)	Difference (c – b)	Difference (c - a)
Spouse (Love)	3.175	3.567	3.487	.392***	-.08	.312***

Scale of scores: Minimum=1 and Maximum=4

†p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

The chart 2 pictures the relationship between remittance and the degree of spousal love. Unlike the previous chart, this association has no reverse U-shaped trend as expected. We see a huge increase of love from no remittance at all to the lower level of remittance. As it is at the higher level of remittance, the degree of love neither goes up nor down from the level for those who are lower remitters. The first two bars of this chart are consistent with my hypothesis that remittance could improve the marital relationship by solving the financial crises. But this association is not continuous; the positive link of remittance to spousal love will stop a certain level of remittance and stay the same at high level. Although spouses may have disagreements and criticisms about the use of remittances as the level rises, the feeling of love to each other does not decline. Husband and wife will still love each other as long as their material life is not deteriorated. Another explanation for the different shapes of two curves rating the quality of marriage is that people possibly were trying to be “nice” when they answered positive questions. When the respondents were asked how much they loved their spouses, they didn’t want to show the negative side of their marriage. Therefore, respondents were more inclined to give the similar positive answers, either “some” or “very much”, to appear as nice

persons.



Following the examinations of marital relationship are the questions for the parental relationship. As shown in the table 6(b), we do not see any significant association of remittance with the parental relationships. For the relationship with father, the scores range from 3.40 to 3.48 among three different groups. The largest score difference is 0.08 and the smallest 0.03. None of these differences are statistically significant. The same results are seen in the relationship with mother. The score range is so narrow that the largest difference among three groups is only -0.11 (c-b). Chart 3 below shows that there is no link between remittance and the parental relationships, neither at a low or a high level of remittance. The relatively high self-rating scores explicate a very good relationship of Nepalese workers with their parents in general. The higher income level does not change work migrants' habit of supporting their parents

financially. Therefore, we do not see any significant association between remittance and the parental relationships.

Table 6(b): Comparing scores of family relationships among non-migrants, low-level and high-level contributing migrants in relationships with parents

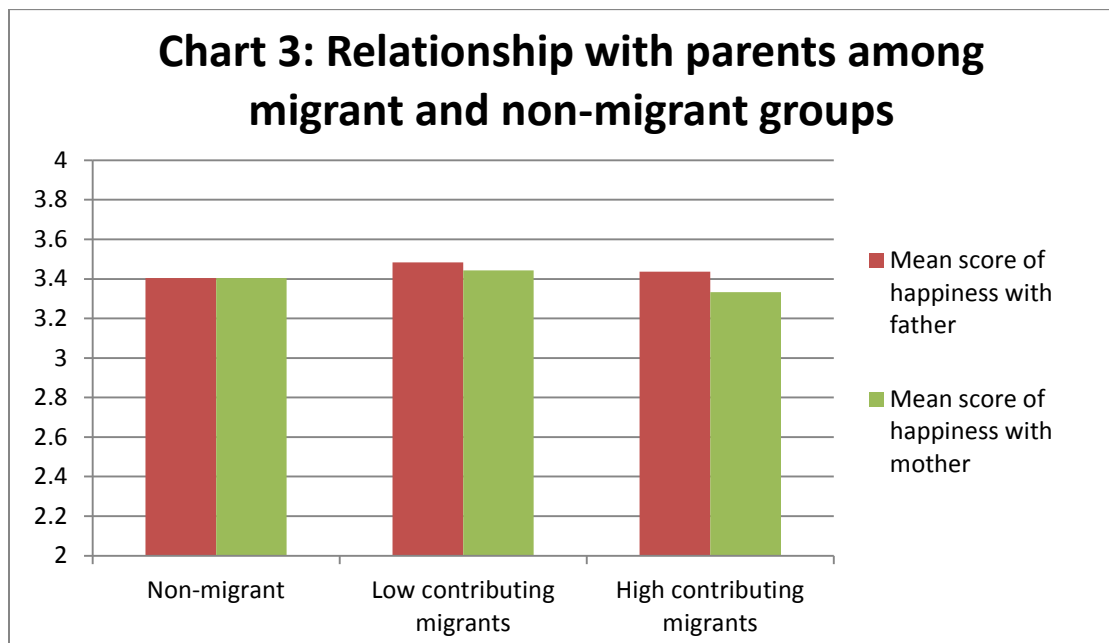
Relationship with...	Non-migrants' mean score (a)	Low-level Contributors' mean score (b)	High-level Contributors' mean score (c)	Difference (b – a)	Difference (c – b)	Difference (c – a)
Father ⁱ (Happiness)	3.404	3.484	3.437	.08	.033	-.047
Mother ⁱⁱ (Happiness)	3.404	3.443	3.333	.039	-.11	-.07

Scale of scores: Minimum=1 and Maximum=4

†p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

ⁱ N=267 for migrants, N=126 for low contributors, N=142 for high contributors

ⁱⁱ N=282 for migrants, N=115 for low contributors, N=138 for high contributors



Last but not least, we also analyze the association between level of remittance and the relationship quality with parents-in-law. In table 6(c), we see that the mean scores vary among three different categories of migrants and non-migrants. In both relationships

with fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law, migrants who sent money back home rated a happier relationship than non-migrants who didn't remit. The lowly contributing remitters have a higher mean score by 0.19 than non-migrants for the relationship with father-in-law, at p -value < 0.05 . In the relationship with mother-in-law, the lower contributing migrants give a higher mean score by 0.22 than their non-migrating counterparts at a more significant level ($p < 0.01$). However, comparing the lower and higher contributors of migrants, we do not see any significant difference in either question. This finding partially supports my hypothesis that parents-in-law are very restricted in gaining direct benefits of remittance from sons-in-law. While work migrants have a higher level of remittance, the surplus money probably does not go to the in-law family. Therefore, findings show that remittance is positively associated with the relationship quality with parents-in-law, which doesn't support my hypothesis that it should be neutral. This positive relationship is between no remittance and the low level of remittance.

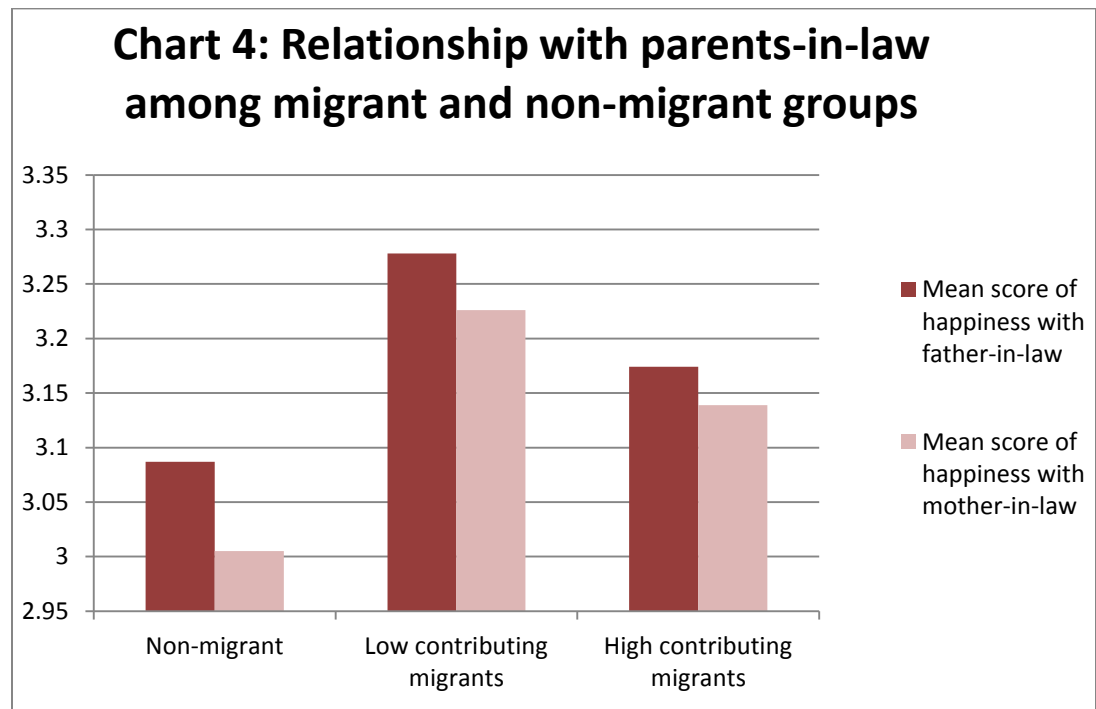
Table 6(c): Comparing scores of family relationships among non-migrants, low-level and high-level contributing migrants in relationships with parents-in-law

Relationship with...	Non-migrants' mean score (a)	Low-level Contributors' mean score (b)	High-level Contributors' mean score (c)	Difference (b - a)	Difference (c - b)	Difference (c - a)
Father-in-law ⁱ (Happiness)	3.087	3.278	3.174	.191*	-.104	.086
Mother-in-law ⁱⁱ (Happiness)	3.005	3.226	3.139	.221**	-.087	.134

Scale of scores: Minimum=1 and Maximum=4
† $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

ⁱ N=195 for migrants, N=108 for low contributors, N=121 for high contributors
ⁱⁱ N=186 for migrants, N=106 for low contributors, N=115 for high contributors

It is still unclear what this relationship is like at different levels of remittance. In chart 4 below, the happiness with parents-in-law is slightly lower at a higher level of remittance, but the difference across remitters is not significant. It could be explained by the fact that parents-in-law have limited channel to receive the benefits of remittance through their daughter. Even when the-son-in-law makes more money or remits a larger proportion of income back home, it is unlikely that his wife will transfer a significant part to her own parents. Without significant evidence, we are still unable to draw a solid conclusion from these data, however.



Combing all the above evidence, we can conclude that people's overseas working experience has a significant link with the quality of relationships with their left-behind family members, except their relationships with parents. One characteristic distinguishing work migrants from their counterparts who stay in the home country is their ability to earn more money and send it back home to improve the family's living standard.

Remittance has varied associations with the relationship with left-behind family members through raising the living standards. Generally, it appears that the whole family feels more satisfied materially and consequently has better relationships when migrants contribute to the left-behind family through remittances.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that the quality of family relationships is different for non-migrants and work migrants from the Chitwan Valley of Nepal. The associations of remittance to family relationship quality depend on the type of family relationship. For the marital relationship, male work migrants usually have less disagreement and criticism with spouse than non-migrants. They also tend to love their wives more than non-migrants do. However, there is no difference in the parental relationship quality between migrants and non-migrants. Work migrants also feel happier with parents-in-law than non-migrants, but not very significantly.

In terms of the level of remittance, migrants who contribute more to left-behind family have higher frequencies of disagreement and criticism with spouse than those who contribute less. The level of remittance does not matter to the extent of love between spouses. While the parental relationship is not linked to the existence of remittance, neither is it to the level of remittance. For the relationship with parents-in-law, it is still unsure how to associate the level of remittance with it. Remittance has different meanings to different kinds of family relationship, so does the level of remittance.

Limitations

One notable point about my argument is that the positive association of work migration and remittances are likely applicable to migrants from developing countries only, but still unknown for the migrants who move out from rich countries for other purposes than making money. In developing areas, the original living standards of people are so low that they have a strong desire to change their lives, and therefore, just a slight improvement in material supplies could generate a large positive psychological impact on the whole family. However, for the migrants moving from a rich country to another with similar developmental level, they may receive a relatively weak positive impact of remittance. Their living is improved too; but the improvement is not large enough to offset the negative effects of long-distance separation. This is also the reason why they would emigrate as a whole family (Greenwood, 1997), unlike the practice of work migrants in this study, which has one member working abroad and the rest staying at home. As the globalization of labor force becomes more common these days, future studies on out-migrants from developed countries are needed as well.

In this study, the comparison between migrants and non-migrants seems very appropriate to measure the association of remittance to family relationship quality because the literature shows that overseas migrants make much more money than local workers (Lokshin, Bontch-Osmolovski, and Glinskaya, 2009). However, this comparison is based on the assumption that the local workers make no or negligible monetary contributions to their family. In fact, it is possible that Nepalese workers could still make more income, if not a big fortune, at home than their out-migration counterparts. To improve the study design and make comparable groups, we should have also collected the data on the non-migrants' financial situations and examined the proportion of non-

migrants' income used for supporting their family. If the data showed that both the amount and proportion of monetary contribution from non-migrants were less than those of migrants, we may be able to make more appropriate comparisons of the remittances' association with family relationship quality between two groups. Restricted by the secondary data, the financial situations of non-migrants were not collected in the original study. I would suggest the GCCS study to collect such data for future research.

These data are very useful for measuring the differences in the quality of many family relationships; however, one important family relationship, the relationship with children, was missing. Many studies and theories in the literature have already demonstrated that the parents' experience of migration has a considerable impact on the behavior and mental development of their children (Liang, 2004; Women Federation of Meishan Municipality, 2004). Children in rural areas are looked after by their mothers alone or by grandparents as a result of their fathers' work migration. In the cases where fathers staying home are strongly involved in family activities, the paternal teaching and care would be missed by children when their fathers work abroad to support the family financially. These children may find difficulties adapting to the left-behind life; some feel abandoned, some have problems expressing difficulties or obtaining help, and some feel anguished about being left behind. Problems in socialization and psychological development would arise among children when their parents leave them for work overseas. Therefore, the relationship between parents and children could also change a lot before and after the out-migration experience. The current CVFS survey could add a new section about the relationship with children where respondents can self-rate how happy they are or how much they love their young children.

Another major weakness of this study is that some groups are so under-represented that I have no choice but to exclude them from analyses. For example, I didn't have a significant number of female migrants to study (only 14 women out of 461 work migrants). This extremely small number of women in the migrant group could not be used to make any meaningful comparisons to non-migrants. In fact, female migrants nowadays are not uncommon among international migrants and the male migrants do not necessarily dominate the migrant group. The ban of female migration to the Gulf States was partly lifted in January 2003. Nepalese women are allowed to work in restaurant, shops, and so forth. In addition, in spite of legal barriers and social stigmas attached to women who work abroad, women did not stop migrating but simply continued to do so through illegal channels to Gulf States (Thieme and Wyss, 2005). Estimated 200,000 Nepali women are currently working overseas (NESAC, 1998; TAF and Horizons, 2001). Female and male work migrants could have a very different response to the change in family roles while they are working abroad. Therefore, the conclusions made in this study are not applicable to female work migrants and their left-behind families as the studied subjects were solely males. A targeted recruitment for female migrants should be conducted to balance the gender proportion of this study and examine the different treatment of remittances given by male and female migrants.

Although the findings in this study show that there is a significantly difference in the quality of family relationships between migrants and non-migrants, we shouldn't overlook the fact that Nepali residents are self-selected to work overseas or stay in home country. There are some possible confounding factors that may determine both people's income as well as the quality of their family relationships. Households that receive

remittances and those that don't are likely to differ from each other in many observable and unobservable characteristics that are correlated with family relationship quality. For example, Airola's (2007) study on the expenditure pattern of remittances is biased because remittance recipient households are not randomly assigned. The overseas experience of parents may affect both the opportunity of the next generation working abroad and the inter-generational family relationships. Moreover, some people might start off with higher income and better family relationships than others. To accurately find out the causal relationship between remittance and family relationships quality, a longitudinal study is needed to measure the change in quality of family relationships over time.

Also, this research project serves only an exploratory study on the link between remittances and family relationship quality in a developing country. It shows a significant difference in family relationships between migrants and non-migrants, but it still hasn't given us a complete story about how these associations happen. What factors cause the change? What does work migration mean to different family members? Besides a quantitative analysis on the self-rate scores by migrants, in-depth interviews are also needed to explore what are exactly in the minds of work migrants and their family. Mixed method would be a better and more complete research design to answer the questions of whether and how the migration experience affects family relationship quality.

CONCLUSION

The empirical evidence in this study shows that there is a noteworthy difference in quality of some family relationships, but not all, between migrants and non-migrants. In addition, it shows that remittance matters more to some family relationships than to

others. Remittance has a significant link to the marital relationship; the rates of disagreement and criticism among spouses are lower with some remittance than with no remittance at all, but then the rates become high again at the higher remittance level. The level of love between spouses is also enhanced with the receipt of remittance, regardless of its level. However, work migration experience and remittance have no association with the parental relationships of overseas workers at all. I also failed to find support for my hypothesis that relationships with parents-in-law would be lower in the presence of remittances; in fact, they are better among those sending remittances when compared to the relationships of non-migrants.

Although this study provides us with a new perspective on the links between remittances and family relationships, it still has many unsolvable limitations in the research design. Restricted by the existing data that were collected for other research purposes, I had limited measures of family relationship quality. A more complete and accurate list of measurements on family relationships is needed in future studies. Moreover, my theoretical model only considers the role of remittances in the migration process. I believe there are many other elements in the migration experience affecting the quality of family relationships as well. Therefore, future researchers should generate a broader theory of how migration experience changes family relationship quality through other means than remittance.

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